

Discover the South in twelve days

An itinerary for desert lovers : it follows the partly dried out river of the Drâa to the Atlantic Ocean through spectacular desert landscapes and back across the rugged mountains of the Anti Atlas.



Best season :

Mid October to end of April

Accommodation :

Top class hotels,
charming guesthouses,
two bivouac-style luxury camps.

Highlights :

The Iriki lake, the dunes of Chegaga,
the mouth of Drâa,
Tafraout and its rocky compositions.

Travel distance :

2500 km

Without delay, we leave Ouarzazate on the famous road of the thousand kasbahs. These traditional fortress-like constructions made out of loam, combine an impression of robustness with surprisingly brittle materials. First luxury overnight at *BOUMALNE DADÈS* and last preparations before the great off-road adventure. Heading South we will find our first piste, crossing a mountain-pass, with sumptuous views of rocky formations comparable to the American canyons. The day's journey comes to an end in *ZAGORA*, the final tourist destination before the endless desert, right in the middle of the lush palm grove



of the Drâa valley. At this point the Drâa river is barely more than a thread of water in its vast bed. The next day will first take us to M'hamid: end of the tarmac - end of civilization – and the beginning of sand. A well-defined piste will enable us to reach the dried out lake of Iriki bordered by a sea of dunes, the *CHEGAGA*. The one night experience spent in desert, will for many remain an unforgettable memory. The following day the landscape will

change rather quickly to become harsh and stony. Then, in the middle of nowhere *TATA* will appear, a large borough halfway through our Moroccan crossing to the West. The river Drâa which we inevitably follow for some time, remains visible through the landscape which it carefully carves; thus digging valleys, modeling plains and basins, as with *ASSA* our next destination. This is also the starting point of a faster, less-technical former Paris-Dakar piste, which will



take us to *EL-OUATIA* on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, where we will

spend the night in a pleasant motel. This new section is synonymous of new landscapes too : an often rough sea, a rocky coast strewn with dunes of fine sand, and finally the mouth of the Drâa, semi-river semi-lake. Not being able to cross it, we will circumvent before setting our *CAMP* on its northern edge. Our journey will take us through a wild and uninhabited coastal area to an immaculate white beach, before reaching *FORT BOU JERIF*, a local

style guesthouse kept by Guy and Evelyne. The desert landscapes are finally relayed by attempts at agriculture and cattle farming. Our return to civilization will take place in the evening, in the animated village of *TAFRAOUTE*, known for its rock formations of which the Napoleon cap and the work of a Belgian artist are some of the most striking examples. Our final lap will cross the Anti-Atlas through landscapes of unchanged but contrasting aridity : a chaos of burst rocks, at times pale as if bleached by the sun, and at others, dark as if blackened by intense heat. We overnight in the heart of the mountains at *TALIOUINE*, the city of the saffron. The end of our trip will take us to an architectural master-piece and splendid testimony of the golden age of this area, the famous Ksar of *AIT BEN HADDOU*, where we will stay overnight. Last stop before arriving back in Ouarzazate, is the kasbah of Telouët, one of the many residences that belonged to the Glaoui, an important leader of ancient times who controlled the region from North to South as late as the years of French protectorate.

