

Birding Ecotours



BIRDING TOUR MOROCCO: BEST OF NORTHWEST AFRICA

GENERAL INFORMATION



Temminck's Lark is one of Morocco's most striking lark species and one of many we will look for during the tour.

TOUR OUTLINE

On this Morocco birding tour, we visit the best birdwatching sites in the country, covering an exceptional diversity of habitats, from the High Atlas Mountains and arid desert plains to the vast dunes of the Sahara, Atlantic coastline, and productive coastal wetlands. The tour targets North African endemics and desert specialists, and is well timed in spring to enjoy the many European migrants that winter in, or pass through, Morocco on their way north.

We begin in the High Atlas Mountains, searching for key species such as **Levaillant's Woodpecker**, **Atlas Wheatear**, and **Crimson-winged Finch**, before moving south through the stunning and endless desert landscapes around Boumalne du Dades and Merzouga. Here we focus on Sahara and semi-desert species including the threatened **African Houbara**, **Crowned Sandgrouse**, a superb diversity of larks and wheatears, and many palearctic migrants. The tour then continues west through the Anti-Atlas to Ouarzazate, then to the beautiful historic town of Taroudant, before heading to the Atlantic coast where wetlands and coastal scrub hold species such as **Marbled Duck**, **Audouin's Gull**, and the remarkable **Northern Bald Ibis**, providing a fitting end to a highly varied spring birding tour.

DAILY ACTIVITIES, PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS, AND TOUR PACE

The tour is run at a fairly relaxed pace overall, though in order to cover the wide range of habitats and bird species, travel is necessary and there are several one-night stays. As a result, the tour can feel fast-paced at times, although we minimize the number of single night stops where possible. There are a few substantial travel days, such as the transfer from Merzouga across central Morocco to Ouarzazate, which takes around five hours.

Our days typically begin at around 07:00. Breakfast will either be taken at the hotel before heading out birding, or as a boxed breakfast eaten in the field. Bird activity usually drops during the heat of the middle of the day, and on transfer days we will plan our transfers during this period where possible. On days where we are not transferring to another hotel, we will rest and refresh during this period, and have a nice lunch at a local restaurant. Birding generally resumes in the early or late afternoon, and we expect to finish most days at around 18:00. We hope to see the main nocturnal target species, **Pharaoh Eagle-Owl** and **Egyptian Nightjar**, at daytime roosts, so dedicated night birding should not be required.

Birding throughout the tour is a mix of roadside stops and short walks along trails or quiet roads through open desert, mountain forests, rocky valleys, wetlands, and coastal scrub. Much of the birding in Morocco takes place in open habitats, which often provides excellent opportunities for photography. Some days will be physically easy and largely vehicle-based, while on others we may walk up to around 4 miles (6.4 kilometers), usually along quiet roads or mountain trails, with frequent stops made for birding.

SPECIES RECORDING (BIRD LISTS AND ANIMAL LISTS)

Ahead of the tour we will email you a detailed daily itinerary complete with meeting/arrival instructions. We will provide you with a printed blank diary page within the itinerary document so that you can note down any names of birding sites that you may want to log. Each evening your tour leader will go through the itinerary with you to let you know any specifics to be aware

of for the following day (e.g. clothes and equipment needed, breakfast time, time for leaving hotel, key target birds we will be looking for, etc.). On the first night of the tour you will be given a bird list and list of other animals possible on the tour (or a blank list to write them in as we go). We follow the latest IOC (International Ornithological Congress taxonomy) for birds and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for all other animals recorded during the tour so all itineraries and checklists follow these taxonomies.

Each evening we will go through the daily bird and animal lists, logging all the species from the day. The listing session is optional, we realize that some of our clients aren't fussed about the listing aspect, but others are. If you do not want to take part in the nightly bird list that is perfectly fine, but it is a useful way to remember what was seen during the day, so recommended.

PASSPORT, VISA, AND ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Most visitors to Morocco do not require a visa for tourist stays of up to 90 days. However, entry and exit requirements can change at short notice, so it is essential to check the latest information on the official Visit Morocco website before travel. Do not assume you will be eligible for visa-free entry without confirming current regulations.

Citizens of the United States (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, and Canada can currently enter Morocco without a visa for tourism for stays of up to 90 days. Please confirm details via your own government's advice, see here for the US, here for Canada, here for the UK, and here for Australia. Citizens of other countries should check their own government guidance and contact the nearest Moroccan embassy or consulate for up-to-date requirements.

Visa-free entry is granted provided you have:

- A passport valid for six months beyond your arrival
- At least one blank passport page for entry and exit stamps
- A passport that is in good condition, as damaged passports may be refused entry

Visa-free stays cannot be extended beyond 90 days without permission. If you overstay without an approved extension, you may face fines or delays when departing Morocco. Always ensure your passport is stamped on entry, as missing entry stamps have caused difficulties for some travellers when leaving the country.

Please make sure that you bring a photocopy of your passport with you on the tour, to be kept in a different location to your original passport, in case of loss/damage. This can be kept with other important documents such as vaccine certificates, emergency contact details, and insurance documents. Digital copies of these saved on a "cloud" system can also be useful.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

As per our standard Terms and Conditions, we strongly recommend that you purchase comprehensive trip cancellation insurance to protect against unexpected events that might cause delays and interruptions to travel. Your insurance should also cover illness, medical issues, accidents, repatriation, loss of luggage or valuable items, flight delays/cancellations, and ideally

medical evacuation included. Failure to purchase adequate insurance could be costly if something unexpected occurs.

HEALTH, VACCINATIONS, AND MEDICAL CONDITIONS

We recommend that you are up to date with routine vaccinations before travelling to Morocco, including measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), tetanus, diphtheria, polio, chickenpox, flu, shingles, and COVID-19. Hepatitis A is strongly recommended for all travelers, and Hepatitis B and Typhoid vaccinations would be beneficial. Rabies is present in Morocco in stray dogs, though the risk to travelers is low with precautions. Do not touch or feed stray dogs, and inform your guide to help you seek medical advice promptly if bitten or scratched. To reduce risk of insect-borne illnesses such as leishmaniasis use insect repellent and wear long sleeves and trousers, especially in the evenings. There is also a low risk of water-borne diseases such as schistosomiasis and leptospirosis, so swimming or wading in freshwater bodies should be avoided. Mild stomach upsets are not unusual, so it is sensible to carry basic medication such as anti-diarrheal tablets, just in case. Please carefully read the [CDC traveler advice](#) which contains information on required vaccinations to enter Morocco.

As per our general [Terms and Conditions](#), we require you to notify us at the time of registering for this tour of any medical conditions that we should know about (these should include, but not be limited to, walking/mobility issues, allergies, heart conditions, diabetes, epilepsy, long-term illnesses etc.). While in Morocco we will not be far from major hospitals, located in the capital Marrakesh, and Agadir. Please make sure that you are covered with suitable medical insurance in case of an emergency while on the tour, because without insurance the cost for medical care is likely to be extremely high.

SAFETY, DANGEROUS ANIMALS, AND LOCAL CUSTOMS

Morocco is generally a safe and stable destination, with crime rates lower than the [United Kingdom](#) and [United States of America](#). As with travel anywhere in the world, visitors should remain aware of their surroundings and take sensible precautions, particularly in busy tourist areas such as city centers, markets, and transport hubs. Petty crime, including pickpocketing and bag snatching, can occur, so please keep a close watch over personal belongings such as bags, wallets, cameras, and optics.

Although the risk is low, terrorism remains a global concern. Past incidents in Morocco have been rare, and the authorities maintain a visible security presence, particularly at hotels and tourist sites. We recommend staying alert in crowded public places and following the guidance of local authorities and your tour leaders. Demonstrations and protests can occur, especially in cities, and while most are peaceful they may disrupt travel and should be avoided if encountered. We work with experienced local guides who monitor local conditions both before and during the tour.

While encounters are uncommon, Morocco is home to several venomous scorpions and snakes, including the beautiful **Desert Horned Viper**, particularly in desert and semi-desert environments. Caution should be taken while out in the field. Always check footwear before putting it on, watch where you place your hands and feet, and do not touch or approach any wildlife. Sturdy walking boots are essential to provide added protection for feet and ankles, and it is important to follow your guide's advice at all times.

Morocco is a predominantly Muslim country with conservative social customs. Visitors are expected to dress modestly in public, particularly in rural areas and towns, with shoulders and knees covered by both men and women. Alcohol is available in licensed hotels, restaurants, and bars, but drinking in public places is illegal. Photographing government buildings or local people without permission is also not permitted.

FOOD AND WATER

We recommend not drinking tap water in Morocco. An ample supply of drinking water is available throughout the tour in our vehicle, so please bring a refillable water bottle to try and reduce the amount of plastic waste generated during the tour. Ice is considered safe in high standard restaurants and hotels but should probably be avoided in rural areas or on street stalls.

Mealtimes are likely to be within normal eating hours, but these will be somewhat flexible depending on our birding/travel plans and so if you need to eat food at a specific time of day (e.g. to agree with medication you are on) you may need to bring snacks to supplement the above, such as cereal bars, protein bars, and dried fruit etc. We will not make regular stops at convenience stores, but there will be occasional opportunities to purchase items when time allows.

Dietary preferences are generally well catered for at the hotels we use and in restaurants throughout Morocco, particularly in larger towns and tourist areas. Moroccan cuisine is varied and flavorful, with meals commonly based around chicken, lamb, fresh vegetables, flatbread, rice, and fragrant spices. Traditional dishes such as tagines and couscous are staples, and on the coast there is often access to fresh seafood. Breakfast is usually simple and often includes bread, eggs, jam, fruit, juice, tea, and coffee. Lunch will either be taken at cafés and restaurants, or provided as a picnic with fresh bread, cheese, tuna, salads, and local fruit. Dinner is typically taken at our accommodation and is often a highlight, ranging from classic tagines to vegetable-rich couscous, and in more tourist-focused hotels may be served as a buffet. Vegetarian options and some Western-style dishes are usually available, making meals suitable for most tastes.

CURRENCY

The official currency of Morocco is the Moroccan Dirham (MAD) and is used for most transactions. While credit and debit cards can be used in larger restaurants, hotels, and some larger markets, many smaller shops and vendors will prefer payment in cash. Paying in local currency generally offers better value and avoids card surcharges.

It is possible to exchange or withdraw money on arrival at major international airports in Morocco, and ATMs are widely available in towns and cities. We can also advise during the tour on where and how to exchange money locally. We recommend carrying some local cash for everyday purchases, particularly when away from larger towns. Please remain vigilant when using ATMs and handling cash, especially in busy public areas.

WEATHER/CLIMATE

Morocco is located in north-west Africa, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Sahara Desert. This setting, combined with the Atlas and Anti-Atlas mountain ranges and

extensive arid landscapes, strongly influences the country's climate. Spring, from March to May, is one of the best times to travel, though conditions vary greatly by region and elevation.

In March, daytime temperatures in lowland areas are often cool to mild, typically around 50 to 68°F (10 to 20°C), with cold nights, especially in desert and mountain regions where temperatures can drop close to freezing. By May, lowland daytime temperatures commonly rise to 77 to 95°F (25 to 35°C), with much stronger sun and warmer nights.

On this tour we experience a wide range of climates. In the Atlas and Anti-Atlas Mountains, cooler conditions prevail due to altitude, and in March daytime temperatures in the High Atlas can be as low as 32 to 41°F (0 to 5°C), with freezing mornings, wind, and occasional lingering snow possible. In arid and desert regions, including the edge of the Sahara Desert, conditions warm rapidly through spring, and by May daytime temperatures can reach around 95 to 104°F (35 to 40°C), while nights can still cool quickly after sunset. The tour concludes along the Atlantic coast, where temperatures are generally milder and moderated by sea breezes.

Rainfall in spring is generally low, especially in desert areas, though occasional rain or even snow may still occur in the mountains. Windy conditions are possible in both mountain and desert regions and can make temperatures feel significantly colder or hotter than expected.

ELECTRICITY AND COMMUNICATION

The power plug sockets in Morocco are Type C and Type E, which are used widely across continental Europe, including countries such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands, as well as in parts of [Asia](#) and [Africa](#).

The standard electrical supply in Morocco is 220 volts (V) with a frequency of 50 hertz (Hz). Further details (and photos) can be found [here](#). Adaptors are therefore likely to be required for many visitors, and in some cases a voltage converter may also be needed. Travelers should take care when using appliances designed for different voltages or frequencies. All hotels used on this tour have Wi-Fi, and mobile phone coverage is generally very good throughout Morocco.

TRANSPORTATION AND LUGGAGE

Transport during the tour will depend on the group size. For larger groups, a comfortable minibus will be used as the main tour vehicle, with 4×4 vehicles used for accessing remote sites such as the Sahara Desert. For smaller groups, we are likely to use one or several 4×4 vehicles throughout the tour, depending on group size. Please pack as lightly as possible for this tour, bearing in mind that you will be travelling with all your luggage on transfer days. A medium-sized, soft-sided and robust duffle bag is likely to be the best option for both the tour vehicles. You will be expected to load and unload your own bags as we move between locations during the tour.

ACCOMMODATION

We use good-quality hotels throughout our time in Morocco, and many of these are beautiful authentic Riad hotels. These are comfortable, modern, and well accustomed to international tourists, and importantly, they are well located for access to birding areas. All accommodations

have private en-suite bathrooms with hot water, 24-hour electricity, Wi-Fi, and air conditioning. Laundry services are available throughout.

We use “standard” rooms, as is typical for most group birding tours globally, and these are deemed sufficient for most participants. If you would like to upgrade to a higher standard of room, such as a “luxury” option, this may be possible in some locations depending on availability. Please note there will be an extra charge for room upgrades, and please contact us as early as possible to discuss options.

WHAT TO BRING:

Clothing

In Morocco in spring, weather conditions can vary greatly, so layered clothing is recommended. Lightweight, breathable birding clothes in muted colors work well for warmer days, particularly in lowland and desert areas, while sun protection such as a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen is essential. Early mornings and evenings can be cold, especially in the Atlas Mountains and desert regions, so packing warm layers, including a fleece or sweater, is important.

Long trousers are useful not only for warmth during cooler periods but also for protection against sun and insects. Rain is generally uncommon in Morocco during spring, though occasional showers, and even snow in the mountains, are possible, so a lightweight, packable rain or windproof jacket is advisable. Sturdy walking shoes or lightweight hiking boots are best for birding on uneven ground, while sandals or slip-on shoes can be useful in the evenings or when visiting traditional restaurants.

Equipment

Binoculars are essential for all birding, and a camera is highly recommended. Your guide will carry a telescope throughout the tour, though given the amount of open terrain you may wish to bring your own if you prefer.

If you are unsteady on your feet or concerned about uneven or rocky ground, a walking stick or hiking pole can be useful, particularly when birding in the Atlas Mountains. Due to dusty and sandy conditions, especially in desert regions, a small hand towel or washcloth is useful for cleaning optics and other equipment in the field. Carrying a small personal first aid kit is also advisable for minor cuts, blisters, and basic medications, including remedies for mild stomach upsets.

FIELD GUIDES

The Collins Bird Guide (Svensson, Mullarney, and Zetterström, 2023) is by far the best field guide for Morocco and the wider Western Palearctic. It is widely regarded as the standard reference for bird identification in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, and covers all species likely to be encountered on this tour. The guide features exceptionally clear and detailed illustrations, showing multiple plumages and flight views, with concise text and distribution maps placed

alongside the plates, making it very effective for use in the field. The main drawback is its size and weight, as it covers a very large region and can be cumbersome to carry in the field. However, the Collins Bird Guide is also available as a mobile app, which many will prefer as it provides the same high-quality illustrations and information without the need to carry the physical book.

The Field Guide to Mammals of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East (Aulagnier, Haffner, Mitchell-Jones, Moutou, and Zima, 2025) is an excellent reference for anyone interested in the mammals encountered on this tour. It provides clear and authoritative species accounts covering identification, habitat, behavior, and distribution, supported by high-quality illustrations and detailed range maps. Due to its comprehensive coverage and size, it is best regarded as a reference guide rather than a field guide to carry while birding, and is ideal for use in the vehicle or for evening study.

Amphibians and Reptiles of Morocco (Martínez del Mármol, Harris, Geniez, de Pous, and Salvi, 2019) is the most comprehensive guide available to Morocco's diverse herpetofauna. It covers all amphibian and terrestrial reptile species recorded in the country, with detailed identification information, high-quality photographs, distribution maps, and notes on habitat, biology, and taxonomy. The size, level of detail, and cost makes this book a specialist reference guide rather than a field guide.

USEFUL APPS AND WEBSITE RESOURCES

Merlin – an app that can help you identify birds by sight (from photos) and sound (from recordings) and is a useful tool to aid bird identification. The app is being expanded all the time with new data and regional information so is worth keeping an eye on. We recommend downloading the Middle East pack for this tour.

eBird – there is a wealth of information contained on this website and the mobile app is now excellent and useful too. Photo, video, and sound galleries are available for practically every species in the world through The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library.

Aves Vox – a good app that enables the downloading of bird songs and calls from the xeno-canto website onto your cell phone.

IOC World Bird List – this website contains all the latest details on the world of global bird taxonomy. You can read about newly described species, splits (creation of a new species) and lumps (deletion of a species) of existing species, and plenty of other important information.

Birds of the world – a brilliant website that contains information for all global bird species, with information on identification, distribution, habitat, behavior and more. While the site is less useful for species identification than a field guide, it provides a detailed overview alongside photographs, maps, videos and audio recordings.