

BERBER TRAVEL **ADVENTURES**

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Info Sheet – Day at the Berber Souk

Introduction

The Berber souk excursion is the perfect opportunity to see a traditional Berber market day in the High Atlas mountains. It makes an excellent day trip from Marrakech, and we make sure you get back there by evening.

The weekly market (souk) takes place every Tuesday in Amizmiz, a small town about an hour south of Marrakech. Each week, hundreds of small farmers descend from the surrounding mountain villages, bringing whatever fruits, vegetables, grains, or livestock they are ready to sell in town. In return, merchants from Marrakech along with local merchants sell items unavailable in the mountains: tea, coffee, sugar, packaged foods, cooking items, clothing, shoes, electronics, and much more. Local men, women, and children from Amizmiz also flock to the souk, getting food and supplies for the week and inevitably greeting the many acquaintances they encounter.

During the excursion, you'll get the chance to tour the weekly market and have morning tea there, and then walk to a small village nearby for lunch in a Berber home. We encourage you to take the opportunity to learn how the people live and get a taste of their culture. Feel free to ask questions and interact with those you meet (using your guide as translator, of course!).

Here is some information about what you can expect during the Berber souk excursion. Please read everything carefully before starting your excursion. If you have any questions, please email us in advance.

What to Have for the Day

You'll need to have the following:

- a good, comfortable pair of walking shoes or hiking boots
- for women: long trousers that cover your legs completely (for the summer months, find something still relatively cool and comfortable)
- for men: long trousers are normal, but shorts in the summer months are acceptable
- shirts that are modest and cover at least your shoulders and upper arms; no tank tops
- a warm fleece/sweater/jacket for cold months (not necessary in summer months)
- a waterproof jacket/shell or even an inexpensive plastic rain poncho (in case it is rainingnot necessary if the weather is clear)
- a backpack for the walk out to the village. It does not need to be a large, professional pack – just large enough to carry water and any personal items you want with you.
- sunblock cream for skin protection
- a hat and/or sunglasses (they'll make your time in the sun much more comfortable)
- any prescription or over-the-counter medications you need for the day

Bargaining for Goods at the Berber Souk

There is absolutely no requirement to buy anything at the souk. In fact, most of those who tour it simply enjoy seeing the excitement of a rural Berber weekly market, with all the social and commercial exchanges that take place. However, there are a number of items available that former customers have bought at the souk: henna, spices, rugs, Berber shoes, pottery, Berber clothing for men and women, handmade wooden kitchen utensils and much more. If you would like to purchase something, your guide can ask the price of any item. Bargaining is normal, so it is best to decide beforehand how much you are willing to pay for something. If you offer a price and the merchant accepts, it is expected that you will purchase the item, so only make offers after you have decided you really want an item.

Full Day Itinerary

- 9:00 AM Depart from Marrakech
- 10:00 AM Arrive in Amizmiz and tour the souk
- 11:30 AM Start walking out to a nearby Berber village
- 12:30 PM Arrive at village
- 1:00 PM Lunch in a Berber home
- 2:30 PM Start walking back to Amizmiz
- 3:30 PM Depart from Amizmiz
- 4:30 PM Arrive in Marrakech

These times are approximate, and the actual schedule for the day may be adjusted due to circumstances or individual preferences.

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Walking, Health, and Safety

The normal Berber souk excursion includes about 1 ½ hours of walking around the actual weekly market, followed by an hour of walking out to a nearby village for lunch, with another hour after lunch to return to Amizmiz. To reach the Berber village, we'll be taking an established route used by locals. The walk will not include any steep climbing, but it will be slightly inclined and you should be in good physical condition. If you ever need a break, let your guide know...no problem!

To stay healthy during your excursion, drink plenty of water, especially in the summer months when you're walking out to the village. Wearing a hat and sunglasses also protects you from the sun, as does sunblock cream applied beforehand. Your guide will have a basic first aid kit, but there won't be oral medications in it. So if there is something you think you might need (ibuprofen, acetaminophen, allergy pills, etc.), please bring it with you.

Food and Drink

Lunch will be provided for you during the excursion. You should consider having a good breakfast the morning of the excursion, however.

The actual meal will depend upon the host family we'll visit. Major meals like a "tajine" normally include meat and vegetables and often bread. For these types of meals, you will need to eat using the bread—we'll show you how. Couscous with vegetables and meat is often eaten with spoons. Vegetarians should let us know ahead of time whether they are okay eating vegetables cooked in the same dish with meat; if not, we'll need to make arrangements for separate, strictly vegetarian meals.

We'll have bottled water for drinking. You will need to carry your water for the day, so have a light backpack with you. If this is a concern, let us know ahead of time so we can discuss other possibilities.

Accommodations and Facilities

We'll visit the home of a Berber family for lunch. However, do not expect running water or normal bathroom facilities. Most of the homes have a "squat" toilet where you squat (not sit) over an opening and then (if you wish) rinse with soap and water. We'll have toilet paper as well. If you need a toilet during the walk out to the village, you'll have to settle for a "natural setting."

Respecting the Culture

Our excursions are meant to give you the opportunity to personally experience the life and culture of the Berber people. Therefore, it is important to respect that culture during the time you come in contact with it. Clothing should be relatively modest and cover the legs, shoulders, and upper arms (Moroccan villages are not like the big cities where you might see more western dress). Taking photos is an important part of the Berber souk excursion and encouraged, but please ask first before you photograph someone; some don't like being photographed.

During your time in the village, please remember that you're visiting someone's home. As much as possible, try to be aware of rubbish/trash and/or dirty shoes.

Even for married couples, public displays of affection (such as kissing) are considered inappropriate and will cause the family and villagers to avoid us. You should refrain from this in public.

Young children may approach you and ask for things. Consult your guide.

Tipping

We make it very clear on our website that our stated price includes everything for the day. You will not need to spend any money beyond the cost of transport and our excursion price. Nor will we ever take you to a merchant and pressure you to buy something—you can be 100% certain of that. However, we are occasionally asked, "But what if I want to tip the host family, guide, or donkey owner? Is that acceptable?" Culturally, and according to our company policy, yes. But no one is expecting it and there will be no awkward moments or pauses in anticipation of one. We're simply happy to have you come on one of our excursions.

We look forward to seeing you! Email us with any further questions.