

# Moorish Delights of Andalusia and Morocco

25 April– 13 May, 2010

## Lead by Fiona Wright

A long time ago a kingdom existed where the Three Peoples of the Book lived together and created a culture of incredible beauty. These were the Muslim, Jewish and Christian Moorish people of Andalusia in Southern Spain and Morocco.

On this journey we will have a chance to trace a little of their history through some of the beautiful remains left behind: incredible architecture, gardens to equal those of paradise, delicious food and music. In Morocco, Africa is more strongly comes into the mix where a rich layer of textile culture is still to be seen— think Magic carpets, softest leathers, rich embroidery...

A feast of impressions, splendid palaces, rich tapestries, labyrinth like markets or souks, Medinas or walled cities, deserts and oasis, old Kasbahs; the famed Imperial cities, and off the beaten track to some of the smaller, colourful local markets, sunset and then sunrise in the Sahara desert are all to be visited.

Inspired by Moorish splendour we will work on a travel journal as a record of our observations and the inspirations arising- a piece of work that will potentially stand alone as an art work and certainly be a recourse for future inspiration.

This journey will be a literally a moving workshop, a group of like minded souls, out to look, explore, discuss, a tutor to facilitate these explorations; the chance to experience a very remarkable corner of our world. A small sketch book, handful of pencils or paints and/or some swatches of cloth to stitch a sketch [the silk seller in the market has a whole rainbow of threads!] and digital camera- a small handful of tools to capture so much!

We will have it sit around the campfire on the edge of the Sahara to experience Berber music, wander the maze of alleys in the old cities, sit in café's with sangria and watch the locals pass and snack on delectable treats along the way! Oh the sacrifices one sometimes makes for their artistic development!

Something to think about...John Ruskin pointed out the importance of sketching when travelling is not to become a great artist rather it is about taking the time to look and really observe, really notice where you are. [I don't see myself as much of a drawer so I call it making diagrams to catch ideas and am so much more relaxed about it- hey call it what makes you comfortable!]

Watch yourself when you are somewhere new- if you just click with a camera what is your experience? If you sat for a moment and made a quick doodle/ sketch/ diagram [depending on the word you are comfortable with] what would your experience of the location be like? Let us use a combination of the two.

Woven into the itinerary of the tour and the daily notes will be a series of exercises, if you are inclined these can lay the basis to your creative journey/ journal.

If you can, do try and read these, they really set the scene

“A Handful of Honey” by Annie Hawes

“Leo of Africa” by Amin Maalouf

“Tales of the Alhambra” by Washington Irving.

## Cost – Au \$6350 -twin share

[all inclusive except your shopping]

Single supplement Au \$930

Deposit \$1000 to book today

Last date for deposit 24 January, 2010

Full payment due 14 February, 2010

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## Day 1– Sunday 25 April, 2010

Madrid

Arrivals today– we will meet at our hotel –address supplied when booking completed

## Day 2-Monday, 26 April, 2010

Madrid –Cordoba

An early start to board the high speed train for Cordoba, arriving in the middle of the day we can drop our bags and head to the Mezquita; originally a mosque, a cathedral was built over it...this is the fabled building with a forest of striped arches, it showcases the beauty that can arise when Muslim and Christian culture intermingle. The rest of the afternoon is for exploring the old city at your leisure.

We will meet up at an open air café for drinks and dinner, it is the perfect spot to watch the locals take their evening promenade...perhaps we will follow suit before we retire for the night. [breakfast, dinner]

## Day 3-Tuesday, 27 April, 2010

Cordoba-Granada

Breakfast and time to visit Alcazar de los Reyes Cristianos, this peaceful Fort has a dreaded history to be told...but later after we have seen it in daylight!

Then a bus through the glorious countryside of olive groves, old castles and villages to Granada.

We will wander down to the Capilla Real, final resting place of Isabella and Ferdinand of Spain then soak up the local vibe for the afternoon before gathering together to act like the locals, wandering the tapas bars for a snack, to listen to the music and have a good laugh!

[breakfast, tapas and drinks]

## Day 4-Wednesday, 28 April, 2010

Granada

The Alhambra! This palace complex was built in the Muslim way to reflect paradise; elegant buildings, intricate mosaics and gardens full of scented flowers and sparkling water features– it must come very close.

We will have an early start to be inside before the day's crowds arrive and then spend much of the day soaking up it's beauty. In the evening we can daydream it together over a drink before dinner in an open air café and watch the people pass. [breakfast]

## Creative Arts Safaris tours are

– art and culture based with a hands-on, get out and about type attitude.

- all inclusive utilising good quality mid-range up to flash accommodation and excellent dining experiences – we look for atmospheric places to stay [off the beaten tourists trails where possible] always good, clean bathrooms, friendly service and comfortable rooms.

- groups of 8-14 participants

*These trips are not traditional package tours, rather it is hoped we can travel as a group of friends; Creative Arts Safaris have done the research, our tutor handles the artistic side and a host makes sure it runs smoothly; we all share our observations and knowledge along the way. [any info you pick up in preparation is easy to share with the group via the internet and helps you 'meet' the others too]*

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**Day 5– Thursday, 29 April, 2010** **Granada-Tarifa**

An early start and a relaxing afternoon.

So far we have been travelling at a cracking pace, today we move onto the little seaside village of Tarifa, a much slower pace and our launching point for Africa and Morocco.

Tarifa is the most southerly point in Europe; we will be able to walk out on a sand spit and have the Atlantic Ocean lapping on our right hand side and the Mediterranean Sea on our left. Wander the old town and relax.... Great place to sketch the view or just dream of Africa, we can see Morocco across the Straights of Gibraltar. [breakfast, dinner]

**Day 6– Fri, 30 April, 2010** **Tarifa-Chefchouen/ Morocco**

An early ferry and we leave Europe behind and head to mystical Africa, crossing the Straights of Gibraltar we reach Morocco, landing at Tangiers where we be met by our Moroccan guide Mohamed. Climbing into our a/c vehicle we will wind our way up into the picturesque Rif mountains and the quaint little village of Chefchouen, a perfect start to Moroccan life. [breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 7– Sat, 1 May, 2010** **Chefchouen**

Chefchouen is in the heart of the cactus 'silk' producing areas of Morocco— today is a day to potter around the local area and see what is happening, spend time working on our journals and perhaps start stitching a 'wanderers' scarf' of lovely cactus silk.

[Breakfast, dinner]

**Notes**

**Weather** at this time of year definitely warm, the good news is we travel in an air-conditioned mini-bus, it can be cool in the evenings...

**Clothing**- light weight cotton clothing is good- to respect local customs best for skirts or trousers to be mid-calf length at least, tops short sleeves, not too revealing. Light, loose layers work well with the climate. Generally I find 3 or 4 outfits sufficient, there is always the opportunity to pick up things along the way. Pack a pair of socks and cardigan for the cool of the morning. Sun Hat?

**Shoes**- sensible walking shoes. Surfaces are often rough and you really want your footing stable so you can focus on all the wonderful things everywhere to look at!

**Money** ATMs are everywhere so you can use a travel card or visa debit or credit advance easily. If you plan to use a card overseas DO warn your bank to expect overseas activity- some will freeze the card wondering what is happening. Money changes abound to change travellers cheques or currency.

**Camera** we have a laptop so can download your pictures onto a memory stick [ don't forget your connection leads and stick]

**Power** 240 volts, European adaptor plugs necessary

**Begging?** Is generally not to be encouraged, giving gifts of pens and lollies to children is encouraging them to learn a begging mentality [if you like to give a gift to children we can hand it onto a school]. A dirham or two for a very old person is kind.

**Tippling?** We cover tips for the group- eg bags into and out of hotel, dinner etc. If you receive a personal service eg cup of tea through room service, laundry delivery it is customary to give a small tip. If you enjoy the commentary of a guide or a performance a tip is a good idea. Set something aside for our driver- he will take us safely and comfortably through the adventure of many exciting roads.

Step lightly on our environment, be frugal in water use, turn off power switches, take rubbish with you where possible.

Say NO to Plastic! please bring a carry bag for your shopping.

**Day 8– Sunday, 2 May, 2010** **Fez**

Or should I write FEZ! The oldest of the Imperial Cities, this ancient city has always been regarded as the region's religious and cultural centre. Its 9th Century Old City- Fez el-Bali- is the oldest living, breathing, functioning Medieval Islamic city in the world. Hicham [our man in Fez] will take us to the Medina today, and reveal such delights as the history of Fez, the tanneries and some of the wonderful monuments and souks will be uncovered. Lunch will be in the Medina...and an afternoon to explore together.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 9– Monday, 3 May, 2010** **Fez**

We will start the day in an old townhouse for a calligraphy lesson and then lunch in the garden [last year we had lunch then the calligraphy, but lunch was so good we got very sleepy!] then wander deep into the Medina to the Caravanserai at the Place an-Neggarine and then explore the souq again in the afternoon.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 10– Tuesday, 4 May, 2010** **Fez–Azrou-Erfoud**

An early start for Market day! Breakfast early and then on the way to this quiet little town that really lights up at the weekly souq or market, where locals from the surrounding areas come into to sell their glorious woven rugs to traders from the towns. The area is rather picturesque and we might catch a glimpse of some Barbary Apes [of the monkey variety!] in the cedar forests. Then a big drive through some truly magnificent scenery of the Middle Atlas Mountains and the Ziz River Valley to our staging post for the Sahara, Erfoud.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 11– Wed, 5 May, 2010** **Erfoud– desert camp**

This is Mohamed's home town, so will definitely visit his brother's shop and pick his brains—his has an extensive knowledge of all the many varieties of Moroccan carpets...

Lunch will be couscous made by Mohamed's family [ a real treat!]

We'll take the back road by 4x4's to the sand dunes of the Sahara, along the way visiting a mountain of fossil encrusted black marble and passing Bedouin tents -we have a chance to sleep under the stars tonight -on beautiful Moroccan carpets of course! Or in Bedouin tents.

Dinner will be served under the stars and music will follow.

Fancy arriving by camel? It is all organized or choose to cruise through the dunes in our 4X4s.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

**Day 12– Thurs, 6 May, 2010****Desert camp -Hassi Labied**

Not far this morning, to a lovely Auberge on the edge of the dunes, a chance to shower and freshen up, write postcards perhaps, then head into Rissani and the busy local market, check out the donkey parking lot, the date market and other sights and as it approaches sunset we will visit a group of extraordinary musicians of the Gnaoua people.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

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### Day 13– Friday, 7 May, 2010

#### Hassi Labied/ Dades Gorge

This morning we will potter around some of the many historic ruins in the Rissani area for some great photo opportunities, see if we can unearth some clues to the past- this area was a staging point for camel trains of up to 20,000 beasts that crossed the Sahara carrying gold and salt and slaves.

Visit Ksar el-Fidal and its collection of rugs and artefacts. We then go onto visit Todra Gorge for lunch. When you arrive you will be gob-smacked at the sensational scenery but also might feel a touch of déjà-vu -this is quintessential adventure country from many an exciting movie- we just need whip cracking and fast moving horses rushing by! Berber villages and palm trees dot the landscape. Home tonight will be in the Dades Valley, where we hope to meet up with local artist Fatima Mellal [www.fatimamellal.net](http://www.fatimamellal.net)  
[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

### Day 14– Sat, 8 May, 2010

#### Dades Gorge -Ait Benhaddou

Roses have made El-Kelaa famous throughout the Middle East and we are passing through in rose season, should smell good as we head down the Valley of 1000 Kasbahs through desert, past palm groves, oasis and ancient forts or Kasbahs. Ouzazate for lunch, if there are no movies in production we can see where the movies Gladiator, Mummy I & II,

#### Creative Arts Safaris tours include:

- departures last day of tour

*[we are happy to organise pick-ups if you arrive earlier or depart later at an extra fee, we are also happy to help with accommodation etc if you wish to stay longer]*

- accommodation from the evening of Day 1 up to and including the night of our Farewell Dinner

*Our accommodation is generally mid-range. We use heritage type hotels where we can. All places are clean, friendly and have western bathrooms! It is ambiance and friendliness we are looking for.*

- all transportation, road taxes and fuel costs for the tour
- all breakfasts and many other meals

*Food is a reflection of the culture and we are pleased to say we will sample a range of good dining experiences.*

- sightseeing entrance fees [which covers the use of a still camera]

- all tuition fees

- all tips for meals, bags etc are included *See tipping in the notes section for tipping for personal requests or other tipping instances.*

#### You need to cover:

- some meals
- drinks and bottled drinking water
- laundry

- the one expense that we can't 'guestimate' for you is shopping! *[this is not a shopping expedition but you will see some amazing things and you will probably want to indulge!]*

- **airfares**

- **travel insurance**

- **visa** [where necessary]

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Kingdom of Heaven and many others came to life -fingers crossed. You might remember our stop tonight from Gladiator....

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

### Day 15-Sun, 9 May, 2010 Ait Benhaddou-Marrakech

Off to Marrakech, we arrive in time to wander through the Djemma el-Fna before a fabulous dinner cooked by the ladies who own our riad. This amazing market place is declared by UNESCO to be of world cultural importance for Oral Traditions and Performances. Keep a handful of coins in your pockets to give the many performers, dinner is from a huge choice of open air cafes in the centre of the square.

[inc- breakfast, lunch, dinner]

### Day 17-Monday, 10 May, 2010

#### Marrakech

A wander through the souq souk to The Musée de Marrakech and Ben Youssef Medersa. After that earlier tantalizing meander through the souks, there is some free time to explore before we meet in the evening to check out the Djemma el-Fna. Perhaps you would like a visit to the Hammam or bath house— an experience to be highly recommended.

[inc- breakfast ]

### Day 16-Tuesday, 11 May, 2010

#### Marrakech

The Maison Tiskiwin this morning— its fabulous collection tells the story of the Berber people's from all around the Sahara [boy does it make you want to travel further!] The afternoon is free to wander the area, we will meet at our riad for dinner this evening. The ladies of the house are happy to have us help cook if you would like to pick up a few Moroccan recipes.

[breakfast, dinner]

### Day 18-Wed, 12 May, 2010

#### Marrakech /Casablanca

A bit of time for last minute things this morning before meeting for a mid morning departure to Casablanca. On this, our final day in Morocco, we will wander through one more medina and local souk along to Rick's Cafe for a drink...for those nostalgic about the movie Casablanca it is on the screen here in this elegant restaurant, a fitting setting for our farewell dinner

[inc- breakfast, dinner]

### Day 19-Thursday, 13 May,2010

#### Casablanca / Home

Departing from Mohammed V International Airport, Casablanca -we will organize airport transfers in time for your flights

[inc- breakfast]

An Old Berber saying...or two.

Trust in Allah, but tie up your camel first.

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The dogs may bark, but the caravan passes on.

\*

The heart, not the money, is the real force in the medina.

\*

Love, pregnancy, and riding upon a camel cannot be hid.

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