

TRIP ITINERARY BY

Thomson



Gravel Morocco

Gravel Morocco

DEPARTURES

November 12th 2022

PRICE FROM

AUD \$5,995

DURATION

8 days / 7 nights

NON-RIDER FRIENDLY

Yes

RENTAL BIKE

AUD \$700

An epic journey to a different world, from the Atlas mountains to the Saharan sand-dunes

Exotic adventure guaranteed on this epic journey across the mountains and desert plains of Morocco.

We've partnered with Moroccan adventure travel experts, Grup Xaluca (based in Barcelona and Marrakech), to bring you this magnificent gravel adventure in Morocco. With Xaluca's expert local knowledge, extensive support, and their network of luxury Moroccan hotels – combined with the gravel riding experience of our Gravel Project Manager, Marc Gasch, we're able to offer you a unique and epic trip to this exotic country.

TOTAL DISTANCE

407 km

TOTAL ELEVATION

3,517 m

DAILY AV. DISTANCE

68 km

DAILY AV. ELEVATION

586 m

The trip starts in the most mesmerising of Maghreb cities, Marrakech, continues in the Atlas Mountains near Dades, before crossing the Saghro mountain plateau and reaching the Saharan desert plains in Arfoud. You'll ride around the incredible Erg Chebbi sand dunes, sleep under the desert stars in the luxury bivouac campsite provided by Xaluca, before heading north along the Kasbah route to finish the ride close to the famous market town of Rissani.

Expect a truly epic trip, designed for riders with experience in riding technical gravel trails and who welcome both a challenge and adventure.

Join the Thomson staff and the local Xaluca experts on this epic journey across Morocco. Are you ready?

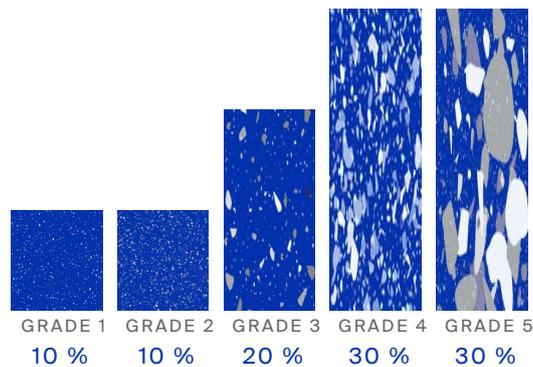
Gravel Morocco

TRIP TECHNICAL DIFFICULTY



Technical, advanced gravel, where classic gravel and paved roads will be combined with some rocky fast descents, technical steep climbs and random mountain challenges.

RIDE SURFACES



BIKE SETUP RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDED TIRES

700x45

Morocco is tough on tires (and body). We recommend 700x45's, or even a 650b wheel-set with 2.0 upwards mixed tyre (even a MTB tyre, bring the widest you can fit in your frame for best comfort and absorption) The terrain is dry and loose so tubeless is also critical to avoid flats and for a more comfortable ride.

RECOMMENDED GEARING

38T x 10-42

We recommend a minimum gear ratio of 0.95
using a 38T chainring × 42 rear cog (or equivalent).

Check your gear ratios at
www.bikecalc.com/gear_ratios.



Itinerary



DAY	DESCRIPTION	DISTANCE	ELEVATION	HOTEL
01	Welcome to Marrakech			Hivernage Hotel & Spa
02	Transfer and warm up ride in Boulmane du Dades	30 km	237 m	Hotel Xaluca Dades
03	The Big Dades Loop	55 km	991 m	Hotel Xaluca Dades
04	Crossing the Saghro Range	106 km	1,333 m	Kasbah Hotel & SPA Xaluca Arfoud
05	Heading into the Sahara Desert	58 km	337 m	Xaluca Luxury Bivouac
06	Loop around the Erg Chebbi dunes	66 km	410 m	Hotel Riad Xaluca Merzouga
07	The Kasbah's road	92 km	209 m	Kasbah Hotel & SPA Xaluca Arfoud
08	Salam Alaikum!			

Itinerary

Day 1

Welcome to Marrakech

We've added an extra day to the start of our trip so you can discover the mesmerising city of Marrakech. Our staff will meet you at the airport before the private transfer to your luxury hotel in Marrakech. After checking in to the hotel we'll have a brief orientation meeting where we'll review the itinerary for the upcoming week and you'll get the chance to meet your fellow adventurers and the Thomson crew. Our mechanics will then be on hand to help you get the bikes prepared for the first ride that will take place tomorrow.

In the evening you'll enjoy a fascinating walk through the medina (old town) and the labyrinth of alleyways that host the city's souks, ending up in the famous Djemaa el Fna, Marrakech's main square. You'll dine at one of the top restaurants in Marrakech, overlooking the square, where snake charmers, musicians, storytellers and street-food vendors come together for this unique Maghreb spectacle.



Itinerary

Day 2

DISTANCE

30 km

ELEVATION

237 m

Transfer and warm up ride in Boulmane du Dades

After a scenic transfer from Marrakech in the morning (including a drive over the famous Tizi n'Tichka pass, the highest in Africa!), you'll have a quick lunch at the fabulous Dades Xaluca Hotel, then head out for a beautiful warm-up ride and your first contact with the Moroccan terrain.

Your first ride is mostly flat and a nice combination of asphalt and off-road trails. Leaving the town of Boulmane du Dades, the route heads out into the Moroccan countryside through several typical small villages and farms, before arriving back at the hotel. In the evening enjoy a delicious Moroccan dinner, then relax at the hotel terrace and watch the sunset over the desert.



Itinerary

Day 3

DISTANCE

55 km

ELEVATION

991 m

The Big Dades Loop

After yesterday's "appetizer" loop, today the riding gets serious with a magnificent 55km loop that starts and finishes at the hotel in Dades.

The ride ventures into the foot-hills of the Atlas mountains with several climbs approaching the 2.000m mark. After the small town of Boutaghrar, you'll cross the M'Goun river and head into a remote mountain desert landscape, eventually riding through the spectacular "Gorges du Dades", a series of rugged gorges not to be missed. You'll spend another night at the fabulous Dades hotel where you can hit the jacuzzi-spa before another great Moroccan dinner.



Itinerary

Day 4

DISTANCE

106 km

ELEVATION

1,333 m

Crossing the Saghro Range

Today you'll leave the Dades Valley and head into the Saghro, a desert mountain range situated after the Atlas mountains and the gateway to the Sahara Desert.

After leaving Boulmane du Dades, you'll climb to the Touririte Peak and the small town of Ikniouen at around 2000m. From Ikniouen, the route gets even more remote as you enter an amazing mountain plateau with beautiful valleys, dry river beds and remote villages, where the local kids will run along side you looking for candy or pens. After 100km you'll arrive in the small village of Alnif where the ride ends and from there you'll jump in one of our 4WD support vehicles for a short transfer to the next hotel in Arfoud.



Itinerary

Day 5

DISTANCE

58 km

ELEVATION

337 m

Heading into the Sahara Desert

Don't get fooled by the rather short distance, these 60 km "ain't easy."... If you have had desert landscapes in the previous days, you are now heading for the "real" desert: sand, dunes, camels, etc... think Lawrence of Arabia here.

The ride starts from the hotel in Arfoud following the 4WD tracks that head to the town of Merzouga, home of the famous giant dunes. No worries, you won't actually be riding the dunes themselves, but observing them from a short distance. Be ready though as you may have to cross a few patches of loose sand, but nothing major, just part of the adventure! (and a cool surprise waiting for you...) By mid-route, you'll enjoy amazing views of the Erg Chebbi sand dunes.

This evening you'll sleep under the desert stars in luxury bivouacs, an unforgettable experience – and if you're up for it you can even enjoy a sunset dromedary ride, courtesy of the folks who manage the Xaluca bivouacs.



Itinerary

Day 6

DISTANCE

66 km

ELEVATION

410 m

Loop around the Erg Chebbi dunes

Today's ride is a truly life-changing experience with this incredible ride around the famous Erg Chebbi sand dunes.

Amazing photo ops all day long during this ride, so make sure your phone/camera is fully charged before you head out. We are avoiding the major dune passes and just finding a bit of sand in the north and south crossing, but nothing major, just a few meters each way.

And our groups is going to be one of the first ones to sleep in the new Xaluca Riad Hotel, a luxury accomodation with an infinity pool just in front of the giant dunes, amazing!

Don't forget to book your massages in advance for this one, the Spa and services are top!



Itinerary

Day 7

DISTANCE

92 km

ELEVATION

209 m

The Kasbah's road

Today you'll leave behind the giant sand dunes as you head north to the town of Rissani, famous for its farmers' market. Travel back 500 years in time as the local farmers converge on the town on their donkeys, ready to sell their vegetables and spices to the tiny shops in the centre of town. Another unique experience!

We'll finish our day in the same hotel in Arfoud where we started our dunes adventure, with some time to enjoy the spa and a great dinner to end a fantastic adventure in Morocco.



Itinerary

Day 8

Salam Alaikum!

Unfortunately your journey through Morocco has come to an end.

You can choose from 2 different Drop-off options:

Option 1: Drop off in Fes

Private transfer in our support vehicles to your hotel in Fes

Journey time from our final hotel in Arfoud to Fes is approximately 6 hours so expect to arrive in Fes mid-afternoon

Option 2: Drop off at Er-Rachidia Airport

Private transfer in our support vehicles to the airport in Er-Rachidia

Journey time from our final hotel in Arfoud to Er-Rachidia Airport is 1 hour

Important:

there is 1 flight from Er-Rachidia to Casablanca. The flight departs from Er-Rachidia at 7:30am, our shuttle will drop-you off at the airport at 6:00am if you prefer this option, you'll need to book your flight from Er-Rachidia to Casablanca. Bike boxes are not permitted on the plane, so if you choose this option you will need to use one of our rental bikes. Please inform our Customer Service staff if you prefer this option





What's Included



ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

8 days / 7 nights fully accompanied trip

All accommodations

All breakfasts

All dinners

TRANSPORTATION

Pick-up at Marrakech Airport

Drop-Off at Fes Airport

All transportation during the trip

All luggage & bike box transfers

CYCLING SUPPORT

1 x Ride Leader for every 8 guests (approx.)

1 x 4WD support vehicle for every 5 guests

Experienced bike mechanic

Park Tools Toolkit

Daily ride gpx files provided

NUTRITION DURING THE RIDE

Energy bars, gels and sports drink

Variety of snacks and local specialties

Bottled water

What's Not Included



Airfare

Travel and personal insurance

Additional hotel expenses i.e. phone charges, mini-bar, gratuities

Staff gratuities

Pick-up/Drop-off Info



PICKUP LOCATION	TIME	DROPOFF LOCATION	TIME
Marrakech Airport		Fes	4:00pm
		OR	
		Er-Rachidia Airport (check Day 8 Itinerary for full details)	6:00am

Rental Bikes

RENTAL FEE
AUD \$700

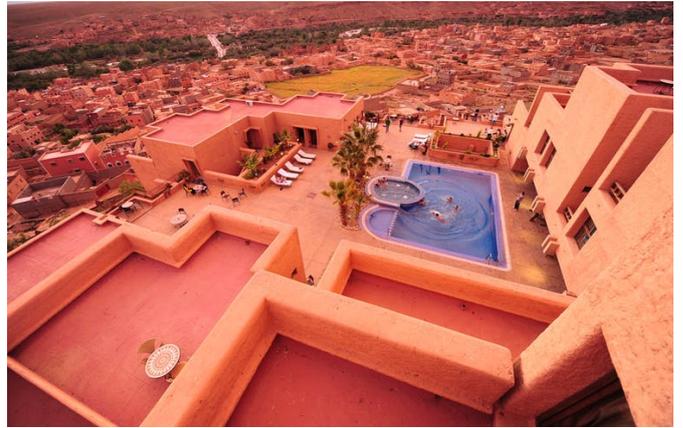
OPTIONAL INSURANCE
AUD \$95



Hotels



Hivernage Hotel & Spa



Hotel Xaluca Dades



Kasbah Hotel & SPA Xaluca Arfoud



Xaluca Luxury Bivouac



Hotel Riad Xaluca Merzouga





Gravel Morocco

We hope this itinerary has whetted your appetite for a trip with Thomson Bike Tours.

Our best-in-class service starts from the moment you get in touch, so please feel free to drop us a line with any questions you may have. We look forward to welcoming you for an experience you will never forget.

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