Marrakech: Gardens, Culture & Cuisine

October 3-12, 2027

In support of the UC Botanical Garden

Come with us to discover the fascinating gardens and culture of Marrakech, the centuries-old walled city that dazzles visitors with its colorful souks, vast palm groves, exotic gardens, and amazing artisans. We will enjoy visits to exceptional private homes and gardens, learn about Moroccan cuisine with a cooking class and special meals, and we will explore the nearby High Atlas Mountains, with our host and ethnobotanist Gary Martin. Our house party includes 8 nights at our luxury boutique hotel located in a lush palm grove. The tour is planned for a small group, escorted by Katherine Greenberg, garden designer and UC Botanical Garden Board member.



Jnane Karwan

Sunday 3 October Travel day. USA to Marrakech

Monday 4 October MARRAKECH / Jnane Tamsna Arrival **D**

Independent arrivals to Marrakech. Transfers provided from the airport to Jnane Tamsna, a trip of 30 minutes. Settle in, enjoy a refreshing swim, book a restorative massage or stroll in the garden. In the evening, have drinks and canapés followed by dinner. For early arrivals, lunch is available at own expense.

Tuesday 5 October MARRAKECH / Jnane Tamsna and Medina **BLD**

After a leisurely breakfast at Jnane Tamsna, we will visit Gary's oasis gardens and explore the khettara water harvesting tradition whose vestiges are still evident in the Palmeraie. Meryanne will show architectural and design elements of Jnane Tamsna. After a buffet lunch, we will spend the afternoon getting to know Marrakech with knowledgeable local guides who will accompany us to historic monuments and places. The 19th century Bahia Palace, which is known for its colorful zellij tilework, carved stucco walls, painted cedar wood ceilings and remarkable riad garden, is the first stop. Then we visit the Culinary Arts Museum of Marrakech, set inside a historic, beautifully restored 18th-century palace, for an exploration of herbs and spices used in Moroccan cuisine and a tasting of Moroccan tea and pastries. After a visit Marrakech's main square, the Place Jemaa El Fna and a late afternoon dip into the souks, we return to Jnane Tamsna for cocktails, canapés and dinner with wine at home.

Wednesday 6 October MARRAKECH / Tahanaout and the Ouirgane Valley **BLD**

After an early breakfast at Jnane Tamsna, we depart for Tahanaout, a rural town that is the capital of Al Haouz Province and a gateway to the High Atlas. We will visit the garden and workshop of Abderrahim Yamou, an artist – originally trained as a biologist – whose abstract work draws on botany and nature. We then visit the nearby Al Maqam Artist Residence, a peaceful creative sanctuary that hosts art studios, an exhibition gallery, a library, a literary café and simple accommodation, all set among ancient olive trees. Created by Moroccan painter Mohamed Mourabiti, it is a place where multimedia artists, painters and poets regularly gather to share ideas, host exhibitions and run community art workshops. Our next stop is Marigha, a village higher up – at 1200 m above sea level – in the High Atlas. We will have lunch at Olinto, a hotel set in 4 hectares (10 acres) of fragrant gardens, landscaped areas and old olive groves. We will visit the estate after lunch, with an optional 1-2 hour hike through nearby landscapes to learn about High Atlas fauna, flora and geology or alternatively free time to wander in the Olinto gardens. We will make our way back to Jnane Tamsna in the late afternoon, just in time for botanical cocktails and canapés followed by dinner with wine.



Al Maqam artist residence



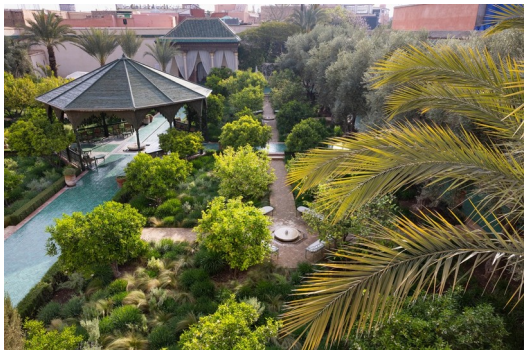
Olinto

Thursday 7 October MARRAKECH / Marrakech Medina **BLD**

After breakfast at Jnane Tamsna, head to the Riad Laarouss neighborhood in the heart of the Marrakech Medina. In front of the Mohamed V College, meet with guides knowledgeable about the cultural history of Morocco. They will accompany us to Medersa Ben Youssef, a historic former Islamic college founded in the 14th century and renowned as a masterpiece of Arab-Andalusian architecture. After a short explanation of its design and historical significance, we tour the courtyard, prayer room and the upper-level student rooms to experience its architectural grandeur. Proceed to Dar Bellarj, an artist residency and cultural space to learn about the Mamans Douées (Talented Mothers), a group of local women of the Medina who preserve Moroccan traditions of arts, crafts, cuisine, gardening and music. We then walk for 15 minutes in the medina to our lunch spot, Flowers, a rooftop bar and restaurant led by Swedish-born chef Richard McCormick, who arrived in Marrakech after years running some of Helsinki's most talked-about restaurants. Inspired by North-African & Mediterranean flavors, and describing his cuisine as “a botanical garden on your plate”, he sources produce from local growers (including Jnane Tamsna) and crafts seasonal sharing plates over an open fire. Mid-afternoon, continue to Le Jardin Secret, a garden designed by renowned English landscape architect and garden designer Tom Stuart-Smith, who is known for blending naturalism with modernism. Visit the exotic garden, featuring plants from around the world experimentally cultivated in Marrakech, followed by the Islamic garden, restored following a traditional nineteenth century layout of four sections separated by pathways and irrigation canals, with a focus on geometry, water and tranquil reflection. Then enjoy a final site, Dar El Bacha, a restored 1910 palace that houses the Musée des Confluences. The Museum highlights the diverse influences that shaped Moroccan identity, displaying artifacts ranging from Berber carpets to Islamic manuscripts and a permanent collection from the philanthropist Patty Cadby Birch representing four continents. Return to Jnane Tamsna for early evening refreshments followed by dinner.



Dar Bellarj



Jardin Secret

Friday 8 October MARRAKECH / Guelíz **BLD**

After breakfast, we depart to Guelíz for a self-guided visit of Jardin Marjorelle, Pierre Bergé Museum of Berber Arts and Musée Yves Saint Laurent, with a tea break at Moro Marrakech, a concept store the Financial Times has called “Morocco's chicest boutique”. Madison Cox, President of the Fondation Jardin Majorelle, hosts us for lunch at Villa Oasis. Mid-afternoon, we have free time in Guelíz before visiting Galerie El Beqal, which hosts the Blue Ribbon bakery, Booklore book store, Farm Slimane local products shop and Napa Bar.

After exploring these establishments, we gather at Booklore for a discussion with sociologist Dr. Sofyan Essarraoui on contemporary issues related to Morocco’s cultural diversity. We end the evening dining with him at Farmers, which recently made the list of the Middle East & North Africa's 50 Best Restaurants. A farm-to-table restaurant, it partners with Sanctuary Slimane, a permaculture farm on the outskirts of Marrakech to source high-quality and responsibly grown produce. We will arrange a shared menu of self-trained Moroccan chef Driss Aloui’s nature-to-table cross-cultural dishes, accompanied by sommelier Simone Mérette-Jara’s selection of Mediterranean wines.



Majorelle Garden

Saturday 9 October MARRAKECH / Marrakech plant nurseries **BL**

After a leisurely breakfast at Jnane Tamsna, we will explore Cactus Thiemann with Magda Thiemann, daughter of Hans Thiemann, who created this 7 hectare (17 acre) succulent plant nursery in the mid-1960s. Over the years, it has provided cacti for Anima, La Mamounia, Majorelle Garden, Villa Oasis and other gardens we will visit on this trip. We return to Jnane Tamsna for a buffet lunch before heading to a second plant nursery, Palm Orchids. Sadek Tazi, its creator, will be on hand to guide us around his innovative horticultural space, which incorporates species from around the world that are adapted to Marrakech's climate. He will show us the unique accommodations he has created, inspired by the mudhif traditional reed houses made by the Ahwari people (also known as Marsh Arabs) in southern Iraq. Accompanied by biologists from Global Diversity Foundation, we will discuss the use of native species in xeriscaping.



Palm Orchids plant nursery

We will then return to Jnane Tamsna for rest and relaxation before heading to the restaurant of your choice for dinner (at own cost). Our recommendations,are all within 20 minutes of Jnane Tamsna.

Sunday 10 October MARRAKECH / Rest, relaxation and optional adventure **BLD**

A Sunday at Jnane Tamsna, as adventurous or as relaxing as you wish. For the intrepid, rise early for a hot air balloon excursion (at own cost), offering breathtaking aerial views of local landscapes, including rural Amazigh villages, oases, the Jbilet mountains and the distant High Atlas. Alternatively, sleep in and take a leisurely visit of the palmeraie on camel back or in a side car (at own cost). Late morning, there will be a Moroccan cuisine cooking class followed by lunch, both set in the Jnane Tamsna gardens. The afternoon is free, with an opportunity to experience Sofyan Essaraoui's Black Morocco tour, shop in the Medina on your own or with a guide (at own cost), or to visit MACAAL, one of the first major museums on the continent dedicated entirely to contemporary African art (at own cost). Return to Jnane Tamsna for early evening refreshments followed by dinner.



Hot air balloon



Camel ride

Monday 11 October MARRAKECH / Ourika **BLD**

Have an early breakfast before departing for Ourika where we will visit Dar Taliba, an all-girls residential boarding house that features an ethnobotanical garden – developed by Global Diversity Foundation and its partner Moroccan Biodiversity and Livelihoods Association – that supports cultural preservation, education, and student meals. We take a short drive to the Nectarome garden where locally produced cosmetic products are on sale. Lunch – a blend of traditional Moroccan dishes and European-inspired Mediterranean cuisine – will be at Kasbah Bab Ourika, a boutique hotel perched on a hilltop with spectacular views of the mountain landscapes. On the way back to Jnane Tamsna, visit the Anima Garden, a lush, three-hectare art and botanical oasis that features hundreds of exotic plant species, including bamboos, cacti and palms. After a one-hour drive, we arrive at Jnane Tamsna for rest and relaxation before cocktails and canapés and our final, gala dinner.



Dar Taliba gardens



Anima garden

Tuesday 12 October MARRAKECH / Departure **B**

Our final day will begin with breakfast at the time of your choice, starting at 7 am for those who have early flight. For those with a late afternoon or evening flight, lunch is on offer at own cost. We may have availability at Jnane Tamsna for anyone wishing to extend their stay, and we can recommend riads for those who would like a taste of life in the Medina.

Tour Escort Katherine Greenberg, a garden designer and author, has been fascinated with Moroccan gardens and culture since her first visit to the country thirty years ago, when her father was working in Morocco. She has escorted several tours to Morocco in support of the UC Botanical Garden and was a speaker at the 2015 Majorelle Garden Symposium in Marrakech. Currently on the Advisory Board of the UC Botanical Garden, Katherine is a past president of the Mediterranean Garden Society and Pacific Horticulture Society.

Gary Martin and Meryanne Loum-Martin, our hosts in Marrakech, created Jnane Tamsna, their boutique hotel and garden about 25 years ago. Gary is an ethnobotanist with a PhD from UC Berkeley and Director of the Global Diversity Foundation. He is also an Honorary Board Member of the UC Botanical Garden. Meryanne is a talented designer and author of Inside Marrakech: Enchanting Homes and Gardens (Rozzoli, 2020). The book is beautifully written, with descriptions and photos of some of the places that we'll be visiting in Marrakech.

Tour Price

$6034 per person double occupancy in a superior room

$6860 single occupancy superior room (only 2 available)

$6960 per person in a deluxe room

$7646 single occupancy in a deluxe room (3 available)

Based on a minimum of 16 guests. (maximum 18 guests)

INCLUDES:

- 8 night's accommodation, in superior rooms all with private bathrooms
- All hotel taxes and service charges
- Breakfast daily- lunches and dinners as noted in the itinerary
- Deluxe private transportation
- Special English-speaking escort and local guides
- All sightseeing and entrances as per the itinerary
- Escorted by Katherine Greenberg
- Tax-deductible donation of $500.00 to UCBG

COSTS DO NOT INCLUDE:

- Airfare
- Tips to your guide
- Travel Insurance

For reservations and further information contact:

Sterling Garden Tours
2907 Shelter Island Drive, Ste. 105-419 San Diego, CA 92106
Tel: 619 299 3010 x10 cheryl@sterlingtoursltd.com

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IMPORTANT: Submitting this form and paying tour deposit confirms you have read and accept the Terms and Conditions for this tour. Please review and be sure you understand the terms and conditions before registering.

RESERVATION FORM ---PLEASE COMPLETE ONE FORM PER PERSON TRAVELING

Full Name as on your passport: _____

Name you prefer to be called:_____Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Dr:

Date of Birth:_____Passport #_____ Issue Date: _____

Expires:_____Country:_____Telephone:_____

Email: _____Address: _____

City, State, Zip, Country _____

Emergency Contact Name and Phone #_____

Special Food or Physical Requirements: _____

Member UC Botanical Garden? ____ Need help booking flights?____Planning to arrive early or stay after tour?____ ____

HOTEL ROOM *Please check appropriate room type*

Superior Double Room, One Large Bed:_____ Two Beds:_____

Deluxe Double Room, One Large Bed:_____ Two Beds:_____
*Sharing room with :*_____

Superior Single Room, _____ (only 2 available)
Deluxe Single Room _____
I would be willing to share if a roommate is available_____

LAND-ONLY TOUR PRICE AND DEPOSIT INFORMATION

$6034 per person double occupancy in a superior room
$6860 Single occupancy superior room (only 1 available)
$6960 per person sharing in a deluxe room
$7646 single occupancy in a deluxe room (3 available)

A non-refundable **check** deposit of $1000.00 per person is required to register for the tour.

Travel Insurance is highly recommended.

Checks should be payable to Sterling Tours, Ltd, and mailed with this form and signed terms & conditions to:

Sterling Tours, Ltd
2907 Shelter Island Drive Ste #105-419 San Diego, CA 92106
Tel: 619 299-3010x 10 cheryl@sterlingtoursltd.com www.sterlinggardentours.com

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Terms & Conditions

This information is important. Please read it carefully and sign below. Submission of an online or printed Booking Form along with payment of required trip deposit indicates you have read and expressly agree to these Terms and Conditions. If there is something that you do not understand please ask us about it!

Reservations and Payments – A non-refundable deposit of $1000.00 per person is required at the time of booking. Written confirmation will be provided upon receipt of deposit. Balance of payment will be due 90 days before departure. The tour price is based on exchange rates in effect as of October 5, 2026, and are subject to adjustment on the final invoice.

Number of Guests - A maximum of 18 guests per tour can be accommodated. A minimum of 16 guests are required to operate the tour at the quoted price. Purchase of non-refundable services outside of tour itinerary (such as your international air) before the minimum number of guests have registered is at the sole risk and expense of the guest. Sterling will advise when the tour has been filled by participants so that you may proceed with purchasing your international air.

Cancellations – All cancellations must be made in writing. As noted, your deposit is non-refundable. The final payment is due 90 days prior to departure and is non-refundable. Accordingly, we strongly recommend that you purchase appropriate cancellation insurance.

Hotels – The Hotel is shown on your itinerary. Sterling Tours reserves the right to change any hotel through any circumstance---the substitute will be of equal or higher quality.

Scheduled Activities – Every effort will be made to provide such services as listed, but where unavoidable circumstances necessitate changes, the best substitute alternatives will be made at the discretion of Sterling Tours, the local escort, or the ground operator without financial compensation to tour members.

Service Fees & Taxes – Today there are frequently service charges and taxes imposed by hotels, suppliers, and governments. These fees and taxes are included to the extent possible, but where pre-payment is not allowed the amounts concerned must be paid locally by tour members.

Travel Documents - A passport valid for at least 6 months after the last date of this tour is required for this trip.

Baggage – Sterling is not responsible for loss, theft or damage to your baggage---travel insurance is strongly recommended to protect against loss. Guests are responsible for airline and government-imposed baggage regulations and fees.

Exclusions – Your arrangements exclude international airfare, passports, visas, excess baggage charges, items of a personal nature such as laundry, communication expenses, room service, meals not specified in your itinerary, optional sightseeing and other excursions, and any items not listed in your documents.

Travel and Trip Cancellation Insurance – We strongly recommend that you purchase Travel Insurance. We do not sell travel insurance. We suggest Travel Guard, which you can find online at www.travelguard.com

Physical Capabilities - The tour includes a SIGNIFICANT amount of walking and use of stairs and steeply sloped pathways on uneven or unpaved surfaces. Some of the places we will be visiting can only be seen on foot with no other access possible. Guests with limited mobility MUST consult with Sterling prior to tour registration.

Responsibility Clause – Sterling Tours – the "Operator", Cheryl Nichols, Group Facilitator, and Katherine Greenberg, Tour Escort, guides and/or agents or representatives, act only as facilitators for the various companies involved in providing included visits and services. They assume no responsibility or liability in connection with the service of any means of conveyance which may be used either whole or in part in the performance of its duty to the passenger. Likewise they will not be responsible for any act, error or omission or for any personal injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, irregularity or inconvenience which may be occasioned by reason of any defect in any vehicles, or through any act, neglect or default, or any company or person engaged in carrying out the purpose for which tickets or coupons are issued, whether negligent or not, including, but not limited to, any act of God, terrorism or war. In the event it becomes necessary or advisable for the comfort or well-being of passengers, or for any reason whatsoever, to alter itinerary or arrangements, such alterations may be made without penalty to the Operator. The right is reserved to withdraw any or all tours should the condition's warrant, also to decline to accept or retain passengers as members of the tour. Legal proceedings against the Operator may be instituted only in a State or Federal Court within the County of San Diego, State of California, and any claim involved in such proceedings shall be decided in the County of San Diego, State of California. Any legal proceedings against the Operator must commence within one year following the date of tour completion. Neither the Operator nor Cheryl Nichols, nor any organization involved in the tour shall in any case be liable for compensatory damages and you hereby waive any right to punitive damages.

Please sign you agree to our Terms and Conditions as stated above.

X_____

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