

Spring 2014

# When in The Maghreb: The Western Tourist's Quest for Meaningful Experiences in Post-Colonial Morocco

Erin Willahan  
*SIT Study Abroad*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp\\_collection](https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection)

 Part of the [Leisure Studies Commons](#), [Near and Middle Eastern Studies Commons](#), and the [Tourism Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Willahan, Erin, "When in The Maghreb: The Western Tourist's Quest for Meaningful Experiences in Post-Colonial Morocco" (2014). *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*. 1797.  
[https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp\\_collection/1797](https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/1797)

This Unpublished Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the SIT Study Abroad at SIT Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection by an authorized administrator of SIT Digital Collections. For more information, please contact [digitalcollections@sit.edu](mailto:digitalcollections@sit.edu).

# **When in The Maghreb: The Western Tourist's Quest for Meaningful Experiences in Post-Colonial Morocco**

Willahan, Erin  
Academic Director: Belghazi, Taieb  
Project Advisor: Bennis, Said

University of Oregon  
International Studies, Humanities  
Africa, Morocco

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for MOR: Multiculturalism and Human Rights, SIT Study Abroad, Spring 2014

“As I see the world, there's one element that's even more corrosive than missionaries: tourists. It's not that I feel above them in any way, but that the very places they patronize are destroyed by their affection.”

- Tahir Shah, *House of the Tiger King: The Quest for a Lost City*

## ABSTRACT

The goal of this paper is to shed light on why Western tourists come to Morocco and to analyze how cultural tourism developed here as an institution. In doing so, the research hopes to explore the implications of cultural tourism in Morocco with respect to modernization and imagined geographies inherited from a colonial past. Through analysis of official tourism strategies, trip packages, online reviews, interviews, and personal experiences the research will examine tourists through a sociological lens and attempt to characterize the relationship between tourist and attraction. It will find that the tourists observed tend to place a great deal of importance on having an “authentic” experience and will explain the process through which select sights in Morocco have been transformed into something significant to Western tourists. Through these findings it will be possible to infer that Western tourists’ expectations of Morocco influence the way in which Moroccan culture is displayed to them and to explore how this constructed reality perpetuates colonial legacies.

Key Words: Leisure Studies, Post-colonial studies, Tourism

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my academic directors Taieb Belghazi and Abdelhai Moudden for their enduring support throughout the course of this project. I would also like to thank my academic advisor, Professor Bennis Said for his interest in my project and availability to help me see its completion. Additionally, I could not have begun my research without Professor Sadik Rdadd who generously spent time helping me to understand the development of tourism in Morocco. Further, I would like to recognize Malia Allen for being there for me every step of the way as a translator, travel companion, editor, and true friend as well as all of my peers in the SIT program for always being willing to give me insight on these issues. I am also grateful to all of my interviewees for sharing their experiences with me.

## Introduction

In 2013, over 5,000,000 foreigners from predominantly Western countries traveled to Morocco as tourists, representing 12% of the country's GDP (Ministry of Tourism, 2013). Morocco hopes to double this number by 2020. A major part of the Moroccan economy, tourism has been used over the past 100 years as a source of economic and social growth. But, even as tourism projects are undertaken in an effort to modernize Morocco, the nation has been branded as authentically pre-modern and often depends on the maintenance of this image to continue to attract foreign tourists. As a tourist in Morocco myself, I am invested in understanding and critically confronting my own motivation to travel to Morocco. Thus, this paper seeks to understand the development of an Orientalist imagined geography centered on authenticity as a brand strategy and its impact on the way tourists perceive Morocco today.

In achieving this goal, I will first discuss the literature already available on tourism as a social phenomenon and the motivations of tourists in the general sense. Through Dean MacCannell's book, *The Tourist*, I will introduce the framework through which tourist attractions can be evaluated as an interaction between the tourist and the attraction. I will then provide a brief history of tourism as an institution in Morocco from the French Protectorate to recent initiatives and tourism development projects. I will discuss the impact of this historical legacy on imaginative geographies surrounding Morocco's national brand and the role of Orientalism in shaping Western perceptions of authenticity in Morocco. I will hypothesize on the role this may play in the actions of both producers and consumers of cultural tourism in Morocco. I will then give an analysis of the methods used to evaluate tourist perceptions of Morocco in the narrow

scope this study allowed and justify the use of each method within the context of my over-arching questions. In the subsequent chapter, I will report on the results gleaned from my research. I will discuss what my findings may explain about the relationship between the Western tourist and Morocco as a tourist attraction and the influence tourism has on both producer and consumer in the context of orientalism and modernity. In my conclusion I will provide a summary of my research findings and its implications for further relevant studies.

### **Methodology**

I relied on several sources to gather research on what draws tourists to Morocco and begin unpacking the histories behind these motivations. Given the time constraints, the scope of this study was small. Even with more time, the diversity of tourists coming to Morocco as well as the diversity of experiences they can have in Morocco makes it impossible to generalize about the motivations of the tourist as a homogenous group. Rather, this and other studies can provide a snapshot of a select group of tourists and characterize their interactions with Morocco as a tourist attraction within the sociological and historical frameworks described in the next chapter. In attempting this, I mainly focused on those tourists participating in cultural tourism trips through alternatives to the stereotypical “mass tourism,” which is usually defined as centering on “surf, sand, sea, and sex” (Martin 2013). I used a combination of content analysis, coding of online tourism package reviews, informal interviews, and personal and participant observations, to:

- 1) Determine what attracts (or is thought to attract) tourists to Morocco as based on marketing strategies. In other words, what constructed markers for tourist sites in Morocco are present and how they are constructed
- 2) Determine what aspects give the observed tourists a meaningful experience in Morocco and how the markers associated with tourist sights affect this perception.

### **Tools Used**

As mentioned before, it would be impossible for any study to accurately generalize the opinions of all Western tourists regarding their choice to travel to Morocco. In order to determine what attracts a foreign tourist to Morocco most efficiently, this study relies on looking at what foreigners are *believed* to want in Morocco as a tourist destination. The first sources used to this end are the tourism strategies taken from the Ministry of Tourism and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which will provide data on the way Morocco is officially branding itself.

The second is a content analysis of the material used by the adventure tourism company, Exodus to promote its “Undiscovered Atlas” vacation package. This will also be useful in establishing what tourists are thought to want out of an experience in Morocco and establishing the markers that Exodus trip participants are exposed to prior to their trip.

Then, to determine how tourists perceive Morocco and how it relates to the markers assigned to Morocco as a tourist attraction, I collected data from online reviews written by past participants in the “Undiscovered Atlas” tourism package. This trip,

organized the U.K. company, Exodus, is geared toward British tourists who want to partake in an alternative to “mass-tourism”. Reviews of the trip by past participants are anonymous and posted on the Exodus website. Each reviewer is asked the same questions, providing my study with helpful consistency. I coded 23 out of the 25 reviews written between 2011 and January 2014 for common themes and motifs. I coded the Exodus reviews using preliminary codes and then lumped those codes into broader themes to begin to analyze the reviewers’ perceptions about their Moroccan experience. I used a combination of Lozanski’s (2011) theories on post-colonial travel and MacCannell’s (1976) thoughts on authenticity as a guide for what my over-arching themes would be<sup>1</sup>. Picking out common themes within the reviews was helpful to determining the most important aspects of a “successful” or “meaningful” trip. They also reveal any underlying assumptions about Morocco through both what is consistently written and what is consistently left out. MacCannell (1976) claims that sightseers’ first contact with a sight “is not the sight itself but some representation thereof” (p. 110). So, a comparison of the codes analyzed in these reviews along with the trip description is also a method of determining if and how the marker (i.e. the description) influenced their involvement with the “sights” themselves.

In addition to coding these online tourist reviews, I conducted formal research in the medinas of Fez and Marrakech. I chose these locations for their reputations as “must-see” tourist destinations. The medina of Fez was of interest to me especially after reading Porter’s (2007) analysis of its development as a tourism site discussed in the literature review chapter of this paper. Marrakech is considered the top tourist destination in

---

<sup>1</sup> A diagram charting the assigned codes along with review excerpts is provided in Appendix A.

Morocco and accounts for the most foreign visitors each year. Hotels in Marrakech alone accounted for 31% of overnight stays in tourist accommodations in 2013 (Ministry of Tourism, 2014). Thus, a study on tourism in Morocco would be incomplete without on the ground information from this city.

I chose interview participants in Fez and Marrakech based on their ability to speak English and their locations in areas heavily trafficked by foreign tourists. My strategy for initiating interaction with the tourist participants was to approach foreigners who spoke to me in English first.<sup>2</sup> After this initial contact, I would introduce myself as a student conducting research on tourism and ask if the interviewee would mind speaking with me about their experiences travelling in Morocco. All of the interviewees I approached in this way were willing to talk with me and gave me either oral or written consent.

I conducted a group interview with four tourists in Fez and interviews with four tourists in Marrakech, all of which were in English. In Fez, all four interviewees were travelling together. Their group consisted of two married couples travelling to Morocco from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Joan and Martin, and Peter and Dana. They all appeared to be in their 50's to 60's. The interview lasted around two hours. The interview took place at The Clock Café in the medina of Fez.

In Marrakech, I conducted two interviews at the Glacier café, overlooking the Jmaa al Fna square in the old medina, one of the area's top tourist attractions. The first was with a Belgian woman and the second was with a Welsh couple. I also conducted an interview at a nearby restaurant with an older Dutch man who was travelling in Morocco

---

<sup>2</sup> Whether to ask me to take their picture or if a nearby seat was taken

for one month. A list of the questions asked in these interviews can be found in Appendix B, however as the interviews were informal and conducted more conversationally, the list of questions was more of a guideline.

On top of the information collected through formal research processes during the three weeks allocated for this project, I have been a participant in tourist activities since my arrival in Morocco in January 2014. As such, I will rely on my own personal participant observations and self-reflection on my experiences as a tourist in Morocco in supplementing the claims of this paper.

Originally, I wanted this research to focus more on the impact of tourism on the toured. This would have involved more of a focus on shopkeepers and Moroccan participants. However, given time constraints and the language barrier the study is more one-sided in analyzing the tourist side of this interaction. I hope to correct this imbalance with a more in-depth and complete study of all parties in the future. Further, I experienced some difficulty in gathering information in Marrakech due in part to my reluctance to be around tourists. However, self-reflection on why I so despised being in such close proximity to large groups of other Western tourists proved to be research in and of itself. I hope to attempt to objectively evaluate this instinct within the context of MacCannell's theories of authenticity and in comparison to the other aspects of my research such as the Exodus reviews.

### **Literature Review**

The theoretical frameworks I used as a basis for analyzing my research observations were mainly derived from Professor Dean MacCannell's (1976) in-depth

sociological examination of sightseeing and tourism in his book *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. Though written almost 40 years ago, MacCannell's development of a social theory lens to assess tourism continues to be useful in characterizing tourism in a modern context. I will briefly define some of the terms used by MacCannell in this section and then refer back to some of his theories in the latter sections when discussing the results of my own research.

In *The Tourist*, MacCannell (1976) discusses tourism as a social phenomenon arising out of modern individual's increasing feelings of alienation from his/her own culture and identity. He states that "for moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere: in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles"(MacCannell, 1976, p. 3). This suggests that tourists conceptualize other cultures in both static and arguably patronizing ways, and that they value a perceived "simpler lifestyle" because it contrasts with their own lived realities, which they see as inherently inauthentic in its complexities.<sup>3</sup> Thus, in the context of MacCannell's (1976) assumptions, "authenticity" is in contrast to the daily life of the Western tourist and involves a process of "othering" where, the western tourist projects authenticity onto other cultures as something in opposition to his/her own, less authentic life. Similarly Scott McCabe (2005), in his essay on the different types of tourists one encounters, posits that there are several modes of tourism with varying degrees of attachment to authenticity. He suggests that the more alienated a tourist is from his/her own society,

---

<sup>3</sup> One may argue that this notion of stagnant "purity" and "simplicity" found in the perceived "non-modern" society is a product of the lack of deeper understanding of the culture being toured and this paper will discuss that idea further in the subsequent section on Orientalism.

the more avidly he/she will seek out and value an “authentic experience” in touring the lives of others (McCabe, 2005).

MacCannell (1976) further discusses how authenticity is diminished as a function of how many tourists are present at a given site. In other words, the more tourists visible at a sight, the less attractive the attraction becomes. He claims that this is because tourists do not like other tourists (MacCannell, 1976). There is a "rhetoric of moral superiority that comfortably inhabits this talk about tourists" (MacCannell, 1976, p. 9) in which tourists do not like to think of themselves as such. Rather, they wish to be perceived as going beyond other “‘mere’ tourists to a more profound appreciation of society and culture” (MacCannell 1976, p. 10).

In order to do this, the tourist seeks out experiences that connect him/her to a tourist sight on an intimate level (MacCannell, 1976). MacCannell (1976) introduces the concept of “front” and “back” regions to characterize the authenticity that tourists covet. A “front” region is what is displayed for the benefit of the tourist while a “back” region is the lived reality of the culture on display (MacCannell, 1976). Many tourists, MacCannell (1976) claims, are constantly trying to gain access to this mysterious “back” region, a private space regarded as the epitome of authenticity. Others are content to experience the less authentic “front” region presented to them, in part because it is safe (MacCannell 1976). It is this acceptance of inauthenticity that earns these tourists the derision of their fellow travellers (MacCannell, 1976). It also establishes authenticity as a direct function of how obvious it is that a sight has been constructed for the sake of the tourist.

When purveyors of tourism realize that it is access to these “back” regions that draws tourists in, they capitalize on it and transform the space into a “front” region

masquerading as a private, authentic space (MacCannell, 1976). Thus, if access is gained, the very presence of the tourist in the seemingly “real” space inevitably alters the nature of that space and its authenticity. According to MacCannell (1976), "sightseers are motivated by a desire to see life as it is really lived, even to get in with the natives, and at the same time, they are deprecated for always failing to achieve these goals" (p. 94). This could mean that tourists who have “gotten in with the locals” are unfounded in exhibiting moral superiority over those lesser tourists who are content with the more obviously contrived “front” region. In addition to extrapolating MacCannell’s social theories about authenticity onto actual touristic experiences in Morocco, I will also describe how such “moral superiority” over other tourists manifests itself in the context of Morocco.

The relationship between “marker” and “sight” is another concept taken from *The Tourist* to explain tourism in Morocco within this paper. MacCannell (1976) defines a “marker” as information about a sight or the representative signifier that alerts the tourist that an attraction is worth seeing. The “sight” is the observed destination or the object itself. Without the marker as a point of reference for why a sight is important, it cannot become a tourist attraction. So, what is classified as a tourist “sight” is socially constructed, often arbitrarily, through the markers bestowed upon it (MacCannell 1976). As such, sightseers’ first contact with a sight “is not the sight itself but some representation thereof”(MacCannell, 1976, p. 110).

MacCannell (1976) gives the dichotomy of “marker involvement” and “sight involvement” to differentiate between two types of relationships a tourist may have with an attraction. In the “marker involvement” relationship, a sight may or may not be remarkable in and of itself, but the sightseer places a high value on it anyway because it

has been constructed as important (MacCannell, 1976). MacCannell remarks that “marker involvement can prevent a tourist’s realizing that the sight he sees may not be worth his seeing” (1976, p. 113) indicating the tourist would not desire to visit the sight for the sight’s qualities alone. Conversely, “sight involvement” occurs when a sight loses its markers and becomes valuable to a tourist in and of itself (MacCannell, 1976). Using this framework, we can attempt to determine what markers are employed to transform sights in Morocco into tourist attractions and how colonial legacies are both upheld and transcended when the desire for authenticity is exploited in this process. While there is a wealth of resources on tourism in general<sup>4</sup>, none of the literature I came across critically examined these issues under the lens of colonial legacies in Morocco and so I hope to begin filling this gap through this paper.

### **Historical Background of Tourism in Morocco**

From 1912 until claiming independence in 1956, Morocco was under the rule of the French Protectorate. A history of colonialism and orientalism have undoubtedly left an enduring impact on the way tourism is done here and why people come to Morocco. However, there are two persisting colonial legacies in particular that I will lay out here and later discuss in reference to my own research. These are 1) the construction of “useful” and “useless” Morocco and 2) the development of tourist attractions during the French Protectorate on the basis of imagined geographies.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Including, *Independent Travel: Colonialism, Liberalism and the Self*, a thorough analysis by Lozanski (2011) on the implications of travel in the post-colonial context  
<sup>5</sup> “Imagined geographies” in the context of my paper refers to Edward Said’s theory that perceptions about the spaces inhabited by the “other” are socially constructed and reflect Orientalist projections.

During this colonial period, France divided the country up into “useful” and “useless” Morocco. “Useful” Morocco was the resource-rich and easily accessible places of interest to France and the places that were developed in the areas of commerce, government, and tourism. Meanwhile, “useless” Morocco encompassed the primarily rural, Amazigh<sup>6</sup> areas that were largely excluded from French development efforts. “Useless” Morocco included regions in the mountains and the desert that were geographically and linguistically isolated and difficult to reach in addition to possessing few natural resources coveted by the French. Professor Sadik Rdadd (2014, personal communication) believes that the geographic and linguistic isolation of “useless” Morocco is part of what kept many of the Amazigh traditions alive there. Thus, it was their perceived “worthlessness” that led to a purposeful exclusion from exploitative efforts of French colonization. And yet, it was this exclusion that allowed them to maintain the guise of unadulterated “authenticity” Western tourists so desperately crave. This policy of neglect inadvertently led to the preservation of traditional Amazigh traditions, customs, and laws.<sup>7</sup> In many ways, Morocco continues to be divided along these colonial lines, with many areas once considered “useless Morocco” remaining marginalized and underdeveloped. I will make the argument later in this paper, however, that diversification of the tourism product can help to transcend this colonial partition.

---

<sup>6</sup> To clarify, I use the term Amazigh and Berber interchangeably in this paper to describe the same group of people, indigenous to North Africa. “Berber” which is no longer considered politically correct, is only used when necessary to the clarity of the paper.

<sup>7</sup> This was also due to the institution of the Dahir Berbere, a French “Divide and Rule” policy designed to divide the Arabs and Amazigh. Under the Dahir, sharia governed the Arabs while customary secular laws governed the Amazigh.

This leads me to the second colonial legacy relevant to this paper: that of tourism as a colonial institution. Ironically, in “useful” Morocco, the French instituted increasingly Draconian preservationist policies in many of the ancient medinas in order to maintain a certain “authenticity” associated in this context with Oriental “exoticism” (Porter, 2007).<sup>8</sup> This was done in part to attract European tourists. In Fez, for example, General Lyautey initially instituted preservationist policies to mitigate the impact of the Protectorate on the populace (Porter 2007). However, in 1937 a new policy of preservation of Fes’s old medina for the main purpose of attracting tourists was put in place by Lyautey’s successor, General Nogues. Under the pretense of decentralization and modernization of Morocco through tourism, Nogues’ administration prioritized the enforcement of preservationist legislation in Fez for the purpose of increasing tourist revenue (Porter, 2007). This transformation of the “sight” of Fez’s medina into a tourist attraction relied on pre-existing Orientalist markers of an unchanging, static place. France was essentially attempting to “develop” Morocco through an economic project hinging on keeping it stuck in the past. The reality constructed is, in fact, the inorganic result of preventing the medina from modernizing with the rest of the city. Thus, the ostensibly authentic medina becomes a “front” region constructed by the French and displayed as a “back” region to the tourist. Further, Porter explains, this constructed tourist attraction persists to this day:

The same fascination with a timeless locale, with the medieval, backward and chaotic unruliness of the medina which characterized the writings of French colonial officials and travel writers, emerged anew in contemporary writings about Fez. Unknowingly, contemporary visitors to Fez’s medina are wooed by the

---

<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, they also instituted modern French education in the new parts of cities, creating a class of Moroccan cultural elite just outside the ancient walls of the medina (Porter 2000)

result of extended and extensive colonial intervention. Contrary to being a spontaneously productive environment, the site visited to date is the outcome of almost 50 years of colonial preservationist policy. (Porter, 2007, p. 72)

Porter's exposition on the development of tourism in Fez is but one example of how the French Protectorate manipulated the image of Morocco both in country and abroad to adhere to Orientalist stereotypes of a "magical", "unchanging", and "pre-modern" society. It also betrays the importance of authenticity to western tourists as the growth of places was purposefully stunted to maintain an aura of "authenticity" for the benefit of foreign tourists. However, an analysis of current tourism projects and goals promoted by the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism shows that Morocco's national "brand" still relies on the perpetuation of these same imagined geographies as will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

## **Results**

### **Ministry of Tourism and USAID Projects**

Vision 2020 is the current plan of development for tourism in Morocco put forth by the Ministry of Tourism. Its goals include attracting 20 million tourists to Morocco by the year 2020 and doubling its arrivals of tourists from "key traditional European markets (Ministry of Tourism, 2014). It states its commitment to the continuation of tourism as one of the engines of economic, social, and cultural development in Morocco (Ministry of Tourism, 2014). To do so, it cites "authenticity", "diversity", "quality", and "sustainability" as its core values. In discussing authenticity, the Ministry (2014) states that authenticity is part of Morocco's "marque" (brand), and it is this authentic brand that gives Morocco a competitive advantage over other countries, which rely on mass tourism

schemes. It claims, “Vision 2020 cultivates historical choice through a proactive approach to preservation, conservation and enhancement of cultural and natural heritage of the Kingdom” (translated, Ministry of Tourism, 2014). It goes on to cite Morocco’s diversity of landscapes and cultures as its most important comparative advantage (Ministry of Tourism, 2014). Overall, the national brand and tourism strategies undertaken by the Ministry of Tourism reflect a reliance on “authenticity” and “diversification” in tourist schemes as a way to attract more tourists and maintain Morocco’s regional competitive advantage in attracting European tourists. For example, one of the programs being undertaken to help fulfill to goals of Vision 2020 is the “Patrimoine and Heritage” project. It aims to “Enhance the cultural identity of Morocco through the structuring and valuation of tangible and intangible heritage of the Kingdom and the construction of consistent and attractive tourism products” (translated, Ministry of Tourism, 2014).

Similarly, the USAID report on its development of rural tourism in Morocco as a means of diversifying the rural economy, stated that “more independent travelers are straying off the beaten track than ever before in search of genuine ethnic experiences” (USAID, 2006, pg. 2). This claim was based off several studies including a survey that found “that two out of three tourists want more contact with Morocco’s small towns and villages” (USAID, 2006, pg. 2) and that the top reasons tourists travel to rural areas include “scenery, cultural heritage, [and] interaction with rural populations” (p. 31). The report urges the creation of “a strong visual identity for rural tourism in Morocco...to establish a consistent and recognizable rural tourism ‘brand’” (p. 19). It recommends that the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism promote the rural tourism brand “alongside beach,

golf, and cultural tourism” (p. 50). This “brand” hinges on the promotion of the assets listed above in which ideally crafted travel itineraries, amongst other facets, maximize time spent with locals and cultural heritage (USAID, 2006). The brand is also designed to target “major European markets, namely France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom” (p. 17). The report includes pictures of several rural markers it sees as worthy of capitalizing on as tourist attractions. One such picture, of a guesthouse in the Rif region, is underlined by the caption “ethnic elements reflected in the architecture and décor appeal to tourists looking for an authentic experience” (p. 4). Another, of a man making pottery, reads “A Moroccan artisan in Immouzer makes pottery using traditional techniques handed down through the generations” (p. 16). Above the discussion on the creation of a rural tourism brand, another picture depicts a scene where “Tourists take a donkey ride through a rural area in Immouzer” (p. 18).

The USAID recommendations, accompanying photos, and survey results all reflect the idea that authenticity, in the form of tradition and interaction with “back” spaces, attracts Western tourists and rural areas need to work to make their authenticity more visible. The USAID (2006) report eventually concludes that:

A host of stakeholders— from tourism officials to village associations—are now more aware of the economic benefits sustainable tourism development can bring to rural Morocco. Building on this momentum will go a long way toward firmly establishing Morocco as a competitive destination that appeals to the increasingly adventurous international tourist. (p. 55)

USAID (2006) advocates for the creation of a tourism strategy appealing to the “adventurous international tourist” who seeks the authentic experience of “interaction with rural populations”. It claims that this is a sustainable form of tourism that will

economically benefit rural Morocco, a region whose colonial identity as “useless Morocco” has been maintained. However, as Kristin Lozanski (2011) claims in her critical analysis of alternative travel and colonial legacies, “tied to the search for the Other is an assumption of entitlement to know the Other” (Lozanski, 2011, pg. 479). In other words, the access to authentic “back” regions that the “adventurous” tourist feels entitled to is a continuation of the colonial sense of entitlement to Moroccan culture. The very strategy employed to aid “useless Morocco” in transcending its colonial legacy of neglect and marginalization is simultaneously implicated in the continuation of colonial legacies of Orientalism and Western entitlement to do so.

### **“Undiscovered Atlas”<sup>9</sup>**

The “Undiscovered Atlas” is listed under the “Walking and Trekking Trips” section on a sleek website run by the U.K. tour group, Exodus. With the slogan “Where Adventure Begins”, Exodus offers adventure tourism itineraries in over 90 countries including Morocco. The “Undiscovered Atlas” trip offers consumers an 8-day trek into the Anti-Atlas Mountains. The advertised highlights of the program include “a fantastic winter trek in the dramatic and isolated Anti-Atlas mountains” and experiencing “warm hospitality from small Berber communities” (Exodus, 2014). Indeed, the brief description goes on to mention interaction with local Berber communities several times, touting that there is “plenty of contact with the local villagers” and that “walking through small villages brings close contact with the local way of life” (Exodus, 2014). The accompanying photos advertising the trip include scenes of participants walking through

---

<sup>9</sup> A copy of the “Trip Notes” found on the Exodus website is included in Appendix C

the mountains in addition to images of locals with donkeys, and a picture of a group of tourists taking tea in what appears to be a village home. Indeed, the itinerary for the sixth day on the “Undiscovered Atlas” trip states, “The villagers are very friendly and if you are lucky you may get invited in to try some local mint tea and delicacies.” (Exodus, 2014, p, 2). The title of the trip itself, “Undiscovered Atlas” connotes that the area in which tourists will travel is somehow an area in which humans have never before set foot, despite the many surrounding Amazigh communities located there. The title and ensuing description is a marker that signifies it as a relic of the era of colonial expeditions, and seems to conjure up romantic images of anthropological exploration of “pre-modern” societies.

### **Summary of Coded Exodus Reviews<sup>10</sup>**

According to Lozanski (2011),

The desire for virginal exploration and discovery that underpins an off-the-beaten-track orientation to travel leads to more insidious forms of travel, in which travelers come to invade the private spaces of locals, often along lines of classed, racialized and gendered lines (see e.g. Palmer, 1998). Ultimately, efforts to get away from city centres and from other tourists and travelers are under-pinned by notions of authenticity that can be located in pristine spaces and uncontaminated peoples (p. 478).

Additionally, MacCannell (1976) points out that tourists seek authentic experiences because they feel disconnected from their experiences in the “modern” world.

MacCannell (1976) states, “Modern man has been condemned to look elsewhere, everywhere, for his authenticity, to see if he can catch a glimpse of it reflected in the

---

<sup>10</sup> A list of questions participants were asked as part of the online review process is included in Appendix D

simplicity, poverty, chastity or purity of others” (p. 41). With these themes in mind, I coded the “Undiscovered Atlas” reviews and categorized them into seven themes. These themes are by no means exhaustive and they all overlap to some degree. For example, a quantitative analysis of the codes showed that 74% of the reviews contained codes signifying a “desire for virginal exploration.” However, this theme could be expanded to encompass the categories, “remarkability of pristine places” and “remarkability of uncontaminated people”, which were found in 61% and 52% of the reviews, respectively.

Meanwhile, 87% of the reviews contained codes correlated to “desiring access to back regions” and 43% contained codes for “desiring to escape modernity”. In terms of analyzing language that could be considered Orientalizing, 61% of the reviews contained “romanticizing language” such as “exotic”, “fantasy”, “magical”, and “charming.” This figure was derived from the word choice solely, rather than the tone of the entire review, so that number is potentially much higher.

Though I included the code “away from other tourists” under the “desire for virginal exploration” theme, 22% of respondents mentioned being away from other tourists specifically as one of the trip’s merits. All of the reviews that mentioned being away from other tourists also contained codes for “desiring access to back regions.” We can infer from these results that participants’ perceptions of authenticity went hand in hand with the degree of interaction with locals and the proximity to other tourists. Exodus succeeded in making the tourists feel as if they were geographically distant from other

tourists and going beyond other tourists in vacation quality by participating in a perceived “intrepid adventure”<sup>11</sup> with genuine interactions with local people.

Both of these aspects clearly made the tourists feel as though they were having an “authentic” experience. Additionally a review describing the excursion as “A trip back in time” with “biblical scenes of robed goat herds and women collecting water from wells and streams” makes the experience seemingly more authentic and exhibits MacCannell’s (1976) correlation between authenticity and the simplicity of the Other. It is also exhibitivive of the ways contemporary perceptions of Morocco are an extension of the colonial preoccupation with “stagnant”, “pre-modern” societies. Porter’s (2007) analysis of Fes is equally applicable in the case of this review. In it, he points out, “the same fascination with a timeless locale, with the medieval, backward and chaotic unruliness of the medina which characterised the writings of French colonial officials and travel writers emerged anew in contemporary writings” (p. 72).

The frequent mentioning of contact with local people throughout the reviews points to the influence that access to “back” regions has on the tourist experience. One review mentioned, “it was great to get away from traditional tourist areas and to experience authentic Moroccan culture in the rural Berber villages.” Another praises the fact that there were “No tourists other than ourselves, and uplifting contact with the friendly and hospitable locals when we met them.” Desiring access to “back” region is also shown by the fact that 39% of the reviews specifically mention having tea with a local Berber woman as a highlight of the trip.

---

<sup>11</sup> “Perception of intrepid adventure” was another category used to lump codes such as “wild”, “rugged”, and “challenging”. 43% of the reviews contained codes for this category

However, based on the pictures in the online photo gallery and the reviews, it appears that every group of “Undiscovered Atlas” participants gets the opportunity to have tea with a “local”. This occurrence is not sheer “luck” as described in the trip notes mentioned before, but rather an event incorporated into the itinerary from the start. This is one example of how a “back” region is transformed into a “front” region in such a way as to make the tourist feel as though they are gaining access to some piece of authentic local life in a very happenstance way, when really the entire encounter was planned out for the sake of the tourists themselves. The event of having tea in a local woman’s home is something regarded as authentic by the tourists because it is perceived to have taken place in the private, “back” space of the woman’s home. According to Terziyska (2012) this space “provides the mystery, the sense of intimacy, which creates the feeling of the ‘real’”(p. 5). This imitated authenticity is made more believable by its initial representation in the itinerary as something that may or may not occur, dependent on a real interaction between the tourist and local people. The perceived spontaneity of the situation allows the tourist to feel they have broken through into a more “authentic” experience, despite the fact that the experience they base this authenticity on is constructed for their benefit. Their experience is therefore arguably no more “authentic” than that of the tourist scorned for his/her contentment in the safer zones of obvious “front” regions. Rather, the experience from which these adventure tourists derive their moral superiority has merely crafted itself a more digestible façade.

Yet, whether or not the authenticity of these interactions is staged, it appears that when the illusion of this “trip back in time” is compromised, tourists have a less meaningful experience. This is evidenced by one reviewer’s complaint:

“I was disappointed that we did not have pack mules but instead our equipment was transported in a vehicle. This meant that our overnight camps had to be near a road. I felt that this distracted from the 'Undiscovered' quality of the trip although I also appreciate that it enabled more opportunities for contact with the local people as we were inevitably near a village.”

In this instance, the tourist did not want to be reminded of his/her own condition as a tourist and thought the authenticity of the advertised “undiscovered” area was jeopardized by its proximity to a road, which is likely associated with modernity and inauthenticity. For her, this was only remedied by the opportunity to have “contact with the local people”—an authentic experience that seemingly balanced out the inauthenticity of being nearer to “civilization”.

## **Tourist Interviews**

### **Fez**

The interviews conducted with Joan, Martin, Peter, and Dana<sup>12</sup>, four American tourists in Fez, proved to be fruitful in terms of gathering information about their motivations for coming to Morocco and their travel plans. They began their trip in Marrakech where they hired a driver for eight days to take them to Fez and other top attractions. When I asked what made them decide to come to Morocco, Joan answered that she was “fascinated by its exoticness” and the “chance to see really different things.” Martin cited the “variety of topography and cultures” as a reason and went on to mention the Atlas Mountains, Berber villages, Kasbahs, and desert that they had seen or would see before returning to the U.S. All four interviewees also commented on the “astounding friendliness” of Moroccans when asked what surprised them most. Peter also remarked

---

<sup>12</sup> Names have been changed

that he likes Fes better than Marrakech because it had retained some of its uniqueness. He stated, “I hope Morocco doesn’t lose its uniqueness as it becomes more modern” because he would “hate to see [its traditions] forgotten”. Dana agreed but quipped that she did not like all of the traffic in the narrow streets of the Fes medina, joking “If you don’t get run over by a motorbike you get stepped on by a donkey.”

Peter went on to compare his experience to a song titled “The Marrakech Express”<sup>13</sup> which he claimed came out of his “romantic past”. When asked about their favorite parts of their trip so far, Dana said the “camel trip was unique” and mentioned the “supreme beauty of the sand.” Peter chimed in that he had a “Lawrence of Arabia moment as the camel train headed into the dunes.” He also enjoyed observing Moroccan daily life and said he would be content to spend all day watching interactions between people in the medina.

The responses from this round of interviews pointed to a romanticizing of Morocco similar to that found in the Exodus reviews. Many of the comments made were in line with the themes prevalent in the reviews as well. Peter’s enjoyment in watching locals interact also reinforced my previous observations that seeing locals in their authentic day-to-day interactions is part of a meaningful experience for many tourists.

## **Marrakech**

In Marrakech, I camped out at various cafés surrounding the Jmaa al Fna Square in the ancient medina. The square is where foreign tourists congregate to begin the tourism ritual. Gazing down from the terrace of *The Glacier Café*, it is obvious that

---

<sup>13</sup> The group Crosby, Stills and Nash, released “The Marrakech Express” in 1963. See Appendix E for the lyrics

tourists far outnumber Moroccans in this part of Marrakech. From my vantage point atop this tourist terrace, I looked down on the scene below: Between snake charmers, rows of gaudy carriages led by horses, street performers, women aggressively soliciting henna tattoos, constant throbbing of drums, and innumerable fresh orange juice stands, the square is truly a mecca for the tourist seeking the stereotypical Moroccan experience. Bedecked in red hats emblazoned with the green star of Morocco's flag, Nikons dangling at the ready from around their necks, tourists walk through the square in packs, led by guides dressed in Tuareg garb with camel hair sandals. These guides take visitors on color-coded circuits winding through the streets of the medina. The tourists here are different than those in Fes or Rabat, in that they seem more irreverent of cultural norms and standards like those of modest dress.

At *The Glacier*, people are obligated to overpay for a drink for the opportunity to sit on the terrace with "panoramic views" of the square below. They then take numerous pictures of the scene from different angles. After sitting on the terrace for less than thirty minutes, I was asked by three different groups to take a picture of them in front of the view. I struck up a conversation with two of these groups. The first was a solo female traveler in her 60's from Belgium. It was her third time to Morocco. Unfortunately, a language barrier meant that our conversation did not progress very far and the most applicable information I gleaned from it was that she comes to Morocco every year.

The second interview was more helpful for my research. My interviewees were a couple, Mary and Ben, in their early 40's travelling from Wales. They had been to Morocco once before when they took a vacation to Agadir. This time, they were staying in Marrakech solely. Mary said Morocco was "like another world" and that that they

came for the culture, the climate, and the diversity. They expressed disdain for tourists who only come for the sun, however. Mary claimed that a lot of British people come to Morocco for vacation for the sun and stay in the hotel the entire time. Her husband added that these people “haven’t been to Morocco, they have been to a hotel.”

Mary and Ben’s perceptions of Morocco seemed to contain the same tone of exoticism common to the other sources analyzed. They also exhibited “moral superiority” over other tourists (British) who were not trying to engage in the culture. However, my initial mental response to Ben’s disdainful comment was that he has not “been to Morocco” either—rather, he has been to Marrakech. My personal observations of the many places I visited in Morocco over the past three months lead me to think Marrakech is very different than most places in the country, and that this is due in large part to the high volume of tourists there. I did not voice my condescension, of course. But, the fact that I was compelled to use my own experiences in less touristy areas of Morocco to discount the validity of my interviewee’s experience gives me further evidence that discrediting the activities of fellow tourists for their lack of “authenticity” is a common practice among travelers and one way of attempting to distance oneself from the negative label of “tourist.” It also made me painfully aware of my own quest for “moral superiority” in an authentic and meaningful experience abroad.

At another café facing inward to Jmaa al Fna, I interviewed Alan, a Dutch man presumably in his late 60’s. He was well dressed in a white blouse, a bright orange watch, and carried a matching orange bag. He was travelling alone and had been in Morocco for a month before jetting off to Rio de Janeiro. After having been in Fes, his favorite city in Morocco, he “did not think Jmaa el Fna was anything special to see” and agreed when I

suggested perhaps people come because it is in most guidebooks as a “must see”. He said that a lot of tourists he saw in Marrakech seemed to only want to visit attractions for the pictures rather than really *seeing* the site. When I asked him about his experience in Fes he got very excited and began telling me about being invited to and attending a wedding while he was there. He did not know the bride or groom prior to his trip, and it was unclear to me how he came to be invited. He also mentioned talking with a man making a documentary at the tannery.

Overall, his comments about Marrakech being “nothing special” and his criticism of photo-happy tourists indicate he is the kind of tourist for whom a meaningful experience is derived from “sight-involvement” rather than “marker-involvement.” His criticisms also indicated that he too discounted the experiences of most other tourists. He made sure he was not implicated in the activities of lesser tourists by mentioning his interactions with locals in Fes and displaying a moral disdain for “photo-happy” tourists in Marrakech.

### **Conclusion**

Lozanski (2011) points out, “contemporary forms of travel are haunted by their parallels to the formal practices of colonialism which preceded them” (p. 466). The objective of this paper was to critically examine the colonial legacies perpetuated in Morocco through tourism as a major institution. To this end, the sociological lens devised by MacCannell (1976) to analyze the actions and experiences of tourists proved highly applicable. In studying Western tourists in Morocco, the research findings lean towards an affirmation that Orientalist stereotypes attract tourists to travel to Morocco. These

stereotypes are prevalent throughout the research and include the romantic belief that Morocco is somehow static and timeless. In its limited scope, the research also confirms MacCannell's (1976) correlation between traditionalism, and the romanticized "Other" and authenticity.

In the business of attracting tourists, as Terziyska (2012) states, "the consumers' perception of authenticity is constructed and maintained by modern mass media through an extreme form of 'time-space compression' " (Terziyska, 2012, pg. 5). True enough, marketing strategies deployed by USAID, the Ministry of Tourism, and tourism companies like Exodus inadvertently brand the "toured" locales as static, undiscovered, and even primitive, notions with clear roots in Orientalism and colonialism. While this branding reflects the assumed desires of tourists, it also ensures that tourists arrive with Orientalist markers already intertwined with their idea of Morocco. These pre-conceived images are then reinforced by "staged" authentic experiences in country, which serve to validate the perceived authenticity of those markers.

Underlying motivations aside, the research clearly demonstrated that tourists engaging in rural, adventure excursions like the "Undiscovered Atlas" trip find meaningful experiences when they get the chance to interact with locals in villages. More so, the interest of tourists in visiting rural places as shown by USAID and the recent interest in developing rural tourism by the Ministry of Tourism means that the tourism product is finally becoming democratized to extend its economic benefits to areas once neglected as part of "useless Morocco". Thus, the research does appear to show that the perpetuation of one colonial legacy (Orientalism) is allowing Morocco to transcend another (the exclusion of rural areas from development as "useless Morocco").

However, this sparks the question of sustainability and ethics. A topic for future study may include analyzing the sustainability of a rural tourism strategy which uses the rural “authenticity” created by isolating marginalization to attract tourists while simultaneously relying on the cooperation of the toured rural people who want to modernize. Other topics that merit further investigation the imbalance of power between the Western tourist and the Moroccan citizen and in what capacities this affects the touristic encounter in favor of the tourist, from ease of entry to advantageous exchange rates.

### Works Cited

- Exodus. (2014). *Undiscovered Atlas* [Brochure]. Retrieved from <http://www.exodus.co.uk/morocco-holidays/walking-trekking/undiscovered-atlas/tma>
- Lozanski, K. (January 01, 2011). Independent Travel: Colonialism, Liberalism and the Self. *Critical Sociology*, 37, 4, 465-482.
- MacCannell, D. (1976). *The tourist: A new theory of the leisure class*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Martin, G. (Presenter). (2013, August). *International travel and tourism*. Lecture presented at INTL 101 class, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR.
- McCabe, S. (2005). 'Who is a tourist?' A critical review. *Tourist Studies*, 5(1), 85-106.
- Porter, G. D. (September 06, 2000). The city's many uses: cultural tourism, the sacred monarchy and the preservation of Fez's Medina. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 5,2, 59-88.
- Royaume du Maroc Ministere du Tourisme. (2014). *Tourisme en chiffres* [Tourism in figures]. Retrieved May 3, 2014, from <http://www.tourisme.gov.ma>
- Royaume du Maroc Ministere du Tourisme. (2014). *Vision 2020*. Retrieved May 3, 2014, from <http://www.tourisme.gov.ma>
- [Review of the Trip Package *Undiscovered Atlas*, by Anonymous et al]. (2014). Retrieved May 3, 2014, from <http://www.exodus.co.uk/community/reviews/TMA>
- Terziyska, S. (2012). Interpretations of authenticity in tourism. *Science&Research*, 4.
- United States Agency for International Development. (2006, March). *PROMOTING RURAL TOURISM* (Chemonics International Inc, Comp.). Chemonics.

## Appendix A

Chart of Exodus review excerpts with dates,  
ratings, and preliminary codes

Codes divided by final themes

Stars	Date	Exodus Review	Preliminary Codes
5.00	2/5/2014	If you love wild, untouched remote places -- clean, clear air and stunning rugged, raw mountain scenery -- and the sensation of having to walk to get there-- then you'll love this trip.	Wild, undiscovered, rugged nature
		A trip back in time --biblical scenes of robed goat herds and women collecting water from wells and streams	Static, traditional, authentic
		The increasingly charming Berber villages -- the last 2 villages and the last campsite were delightful; (sic)	Berber villages as quaint, charming
		The contrast between the rugged sandstone desert rock and slate scree with the beautiful oasis villages, irrigated fields, crops and palm trees;	Adventure, danger, wild, rugged nature
		Climbing into remote mountain spaces and looking back down to the valleys; The exhilaration of the height and the exertion to get there --and then to look back, and down and across.	Remote, undiscovered
		To wake into a frosty morning, but be trekking in bright warm sunshine in t-shirts a couple of hours later; and then to lay in the sun for a lunch-time kip by mid day.	Sun as a selling point
		When I had a slight knee injury and was unable walk for a short time, he dealt with it brilliantly -- had the first aid kit to hand, bandaged my knee and then arranged a donkey ride for the rest of the afternoon.	Donkey ride
		I was cosy at night with a thermal vest and leggings, a merino jumper, a flanelette night shirt, a cashmere polo neck jumper, and thermal socks -- all inside my duck down cocoon sleeping bag! I could then sleep cosy and open the door of my tent and sleep under the magical star-filled sky. Fantastic!	Fantastical, magical, reference to stars
		A fantastic winter trip -- the sense of open freedom, the heat of the sun, the mountain streams, snow, oasis, villages, mountain and town people, goats, palm trees, clear night skies ..... a day at Agadir and then at Touradant -- a lot happens in the week	Fantastic, nature, goats/pastoral imagery, celestial imagery
5	1/8/2014	Excellent trip! Beautiful, fun, different, gives you the taste of real Morocco. I was amazed by the beauty of Anti-Atlas mountains. It was my first time trekk, but definitely won't be the last.	"The real Morocco", nature
		Being welcomed in the home of local Barber woman Fatima, having tea in her home. [As the most inspirational part of reviewer's trip]	Interactions with locals as important, Berber woman
5	1/7/2014	This trip is an opportunity to explore Morocco away from the hawkers and noise of the city, to encounter its landscapes and people. As important is doing it in the company of a group of people brought together to create their own dynamic. It was fascinating and fun.	Escape, tranquility, landscapes, nature
		I shall always remember hearing giggling during a picnic and turning to see a group of Berber women taking photographs of us, hearing and seeing the goatherds across the valley, seeing Ishmael going down a vertiginous slope with his mule - in his slippers	Goatherds, Berber women, Mule
		The opportunity to camp in remote and unspoilt sites inevitably means that days and distances are long. But at the end of the day the delicious meal and candlelit conversation is worth the journey.	Remote, undiscovered, undeveloped
		A week to forget the outside world and live totally in the moment.	Escape from "the outside world"
5	1/5/2014	The final campsite was marvellous with it's natural spring and bathing pool. I only wish it had been warm enough for me to immerse in (but then it was December).	Marvellous, nature
		The scenery is spectacular, but limited in colour, so if you want to get some good pictures, wear bright colours. It will give your photo's a bit more panash.	Landscape, colors, importance of photo opportunities
		One last thing - the mule is called Snowy (Thanks Pradeeb!)	Mule
5	11/23/2013	We also had a delightful stop-off at a local lady's house for tea and biscuits.	Locals
5	3/19/2013	Immensely glad I took this trip. A good escape from cold, grey UK. the walking was decent and just challenging enough to make you feel you had earned the wonderful food we were served every day.	Escape

		A wonderful experience off the usual tourist track, giving an insight into the kindness of the Berber people.	Authentic experience, exotic, "off the usual tourist track", locals
		Being so in the wild that my alarm clock was a donkey! and feeling I was walking through a geology textbook..awesome.	Wild, donkey, imagined, "Like a textbook"
		Do try a hammam, authentic, not tourist, it will clean places you didn't know were dirty!	Importance of authenticity, importance of dissociating with other tourists
5	3/14/2013	Just generally a great trip. Well organised, well lead and not a single hassle. Even when the weather didn't play its part there wasn't a hassle.	Ease of access
		The Anti-Atlas is a great place for escaping the world, marvelling at the surroundings and enjoying the company of like-minded people.	Escape, marvel
		A great escape from the dreary of European winter.	Escape
		The changes to the itinerary and the way in which the holiday is run are fantastic with the use of mules making it a real escape from reality. The locals are incredibly hospitable and it is nice to see them proud of their heritage and culture.	Mules, "Escape from reality", locals, culture
5	3/11/2013	A great week - was challenging without being tough and felt away from typical tourist sites.	Challenging as positive, "away from typical tourist sites"
		Once the sun came out the colours and views became clearer and richer and it really felt like we had earned it!	Sun, colorful, richness
		We went to Fatima's for tea (in one of the local villages) which was really interesting. I also did the traditional hammam in Tarroudant at the end which is one of the most authentic experiences I have had.	Locals, authenticity, authentic experiences, traditional
5	3/7/2013	An excellent trip offering the chance to see a side of Morocco little visited by tourists.	Undiscovered, away from touristy areas
		The chance to see how Moroccans lived away from the tourist routes and the friendliness they showed. The chance to take tea in the villagers houses showed this to the full.	Locals, authenticity, importance of being away from other tourists, traditional
		The supporting mule staff were excellent and the food on trek was great	Mules
4	3/5/2013	This was a challenging walk in the most extraordinary terrain. It was beautiful in the extreme, made even more beautiful by the emptiness and tranquillity of the surroundings.	Challenging, rugged nature, extremes, tranquility
		No tourists other than ourselves, and uplifting contact with the friendly and hospitable locals when we met them.	Importance of being away from other tourists, Locals, hospitality of locals, "contact" with locals
		Probably the stunning night sky shimmering with a myriad of lights, completely unavailable to us in this form in England. The trip was worth it for this alone.	Celestial imagery, something impossible to see at home
		A young local man, clearly highly focussed on his job as our leader, but yet full of humour, knowledge, and humanity to us as demanding, stumbling, inept tourists - well some of us anyway.	Recognition of self as a tourist, recognition of cultural "ineptitude"
		For anybody needing a bit of a break from the tedium and intensity of life in modern England this trip is exactly the tonic you need. Come back refreshed and uplifted and with sore knees!	Escape from modernity, refreshing
5	2/19/2013	This trip far exceeded my expectations; it was remote and beautiful, passing through stunning and hugely varied landscapes.	Landscapes, remoteness
		The walking was pitched just right, demanding but not too hard	Challenging
		I enjoyed this whole trip from start to finish, and the fact that there were no other groups trekking this route enhanced things for me.	Importance of being away from other tourists
		Looking at the stars on a freezing cold night, sitting on the rocks high above a series of rock pools cutting down through a gorge, walking through the last wadi surrounded by high pink cliffs, and trees covered in almond blossom.	Nature, magical, exotic
		I loved the hospitality and the beauty of the 2 villages where we stopped for tea.	Locals, hospitality
		I found the environment really interesting, with all the traces of previous cultivation high on now-arid hills.	Landscape

		This is a trip to Morocco with none of the hassle often associated with cities like Marrakesh.	Importance of being away from other tourists
4	1/3/2013	Remote and rocky .Splendid views and wonderful sunrises - an opportunity to see the full Milky Way and maybe the odd shooting star	Remote, celestial imagery
		In a remote camping spot -seeing the sunrise over the mountains- it was my birthday !	Remote, landscape
		I enjoyed the the remoteness and by contrast the bustle of the towns and going around the souk .Meeting local Berber people and having very sweet tea sitting on the carpeted floor in the cool peacefulness of a village house felt like going back in time	Remoteness, Locals, "Berber people", tranquility, static, "like going back in time"
3.5	1/2/2013	Watching the Sunrise over the mountains. Meeting villagers and taking tea with them.	Landscape, locals
		Make sure you are willing to put up with the discomforts; so that you can experience and enjoy the superb wilderness scenery.	Wilderness, scenic, challenging
5	12/26/2012	You really feel like you have entered another world - the landscape is wild, barren and astonishingly beautiful.	"Another world", landscape, remoteness, wild, rugged
		<sup>2</sup> The view from Jebel Siroua is just stunning - you have an amazing 360 degree view of the craggy mountain ranges and the snow topped High Atlas mountains in the distance. It's an incredible landscape - dusty mountains and a clear sky.	Landscape, view, rugged,
		It's so peaceful, empty and so very far from any kind of human life. It looks kind of lunar - it's spectacular. And, at night, the starry sky is worth being a bit cold for!	Peaceful, empty (Away from people), celestial imagery
		The group leader is great - he is passionate about what he does, is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and is great at bringing people together. As he is local he knows the area, the people and the history of his country really well.	Local
4	10/24/2012	A challenging, wilderness trek through the (mostly) harsh, barren, landscape of a tranquil and calm area, passing through Berber villages, rugged rock formations and hidden gorges.	Rugged, remote, "Berber villages", tranquility
		<sup>2</sup> Wherever the terrain allows, women work small, stony allotments with hand tools and push primitive wooden ploughs behind donkeys. It's hard to believe that this archaic way of working the land is continuing so close to Europe.	Work, women, donkeys, "primitive", "archaic", fantasy, contrasts with Europe
		Despite being barren and harsh, the huge open landscape has it's own beauty, albeit a very different kind of charm from the picturesque mountains in Europe.	Barren, harsh, landscape, charm
3.5	4/16/2012	Overall a great holiday.For me the trekking was hard enough to be a little challenge without distracting from the pleasure of hiking in the mountains. Anyone who has a reasonable level of general fitness should be able to manage this trip.	Challenge
		I was disappointed that we did not have pack mules but instead our equipment was transported in a vehicle. This meant that our overnight camps had to be near a road. I felt that this distracted from the 'Undiscovered' quality of the trip although I also appreciate that it enabled more opportunities for contact with the local people as we were inevitably near a village.	Mules, value of being remote, undiscovered, contact with locals
4	3/3/2012	This was a very interesting trek in a lesser known region of Morocco. It was great to get away from traditional tourist areas and to experience authentic Moroccan culture in the rural Berber villages.	Undiscovered, value of being away from other tourists, authentic experience, "Berber villages"
		Looking up at the African sky at night. Some of our group went for 'night walks' just to look at the stars. We had one occasion when a whole group of us just looked up in silent awe for about twenty minutes - this was the most inspirational moment of the trip for me.	Celestial imagery, "African sky"
		Lachen was a very good group leader - he had a good sense of humour and was enthusiastic to answer questions about Moroccan culture, no matter how many we asked! His English was excellent, as was his knowledge of the local culture.	Importance of knowledge about local culture
4	2/19/2012	each day the walks were great with stunning views and just enough challenge	views, landscape, challenge

		This is a great trip. A weeks great walking with no electricity or phones really relaxes you. Never do you have to think "money, keys, did I lock the door"- it really is a total break from your everyday life. The food is fantastic-amazing what they produce from their tiny cooking tent.	Desire for escape, simplicity, change of pace, remoteness
5	2/6/2012	This was an extraordinarily enjoyable experience, allowing freedom to really see and 'soak up' the atmosphere of the Anti - Atlas mountains at their unspoilt best.	Unspoilt, immersive experience
		A spell of simplicity in an otherwise complex life!	Simplicity, escape from complex life (modernity)
		His knowledge and ability to pass on interesting facts about the country, the peoples and their culture was always appreciated and greatly helped bring about a consistently rewarding experience	Want to learn about people and cultures
4	1/22/2012	I had been worried because I don't usually do camping/minimal facilities holidays but the country, the locals, the people in the group, fantastic scenery, remoteness and simpleness made up for any hardship	Locals, fantastic scenery, remoteness, simplicity
4	1/19/2012	good walking in varied scenery away from civilization . friendly and competant leader. a nice break !	Scenery, away from "civilization"
		freindly and competant. a good ambassador for his country and faith. (Guide)	ambassador of faith?
4	1/4/2012	A great trip through remote areas of the Anti Atlas, with a winning combination of solitude and the chance to meet local people. A difficult trip to organise for yourself, it's one that relies on Exodus and their contacts to make it happen. Great fun.	Remote, solitude, contact with local people
		A Berber feast on Christmas day, in a tent under a beautiful starry sky. Wonderful singing from our Berber cooks, guide and assistants. Appalling effort from the British contingent! A memorable day.	Berber, celestial imagery,
		This is a great trip to do at Christmas - sunshine, exercise and nutritious food at the very moment that the UK is on the sofa, bloated with turkey and falling out with the family. A relatively affordable way to escape the family Christmas, and to maintain tanned smugness throughout January!	Escape
5	2/28/2011	Very good. I really enjoyed it. It exceeded my expectations. There was a good guide and his team were friendly too and looked after us well. Good scenery, good varied food. The walking pace was just right. I thoroughly enjoyed it.	Scenery
		Climbing Jebel Aklim. Was a good testing climb and had wonderful views.	Wonderful views
		Drinking tea and eating some food in a Berber family's house in the city of Cats.	Tea, time spent with Berber family

## Themes derived from preliminary coding

### Perception of intrepid adventure

*Found in 10/23 reviews (43%)*

Wild  
Adventure  
Danger  
Challenging  
Extremes  
Rugged  
Wilderness  
Barren  
Harsh

### “Desire for virginal exploration”

*Found in 17/23 reviews (74%)*

Undiscovered  
Remote  
Remoteness  
Unspoilt  
Solitude  
Empty  
Away from other tourists  
Off the beaten track

### Remarkability of “pristine spaces”

*Found in 14/23 reviews (61%)*

nature  
pastoral  
landscapes  
tranquility  
refreshing  
peaceful  
views  
scenery

### Romanticizing language

*Found in 14/23 reviews (61%)*

Exotic  
Fantastical  
Fantasy  
Magical  
Marvellous  
Wonderful  
Charm  
Celestial Imagery  
Colors

Sun  
Richness  
Something impossible to see at home

### Desiring access to “back” regions

*Found in 20/23 reviews (87%)*

“The real morocco”  
Authenticity  
Interactions with locals  
Locals  
Culture  
Berber People  
Berber villages as quaint, charming  
Berber woman  
Hospitality of locals  
“Contact” with locals  
Tea with local Berber woman  
Importance of leader’s knowledge about local culture  
Desire to learn about local culture

### Remarkability of “uncontaminated peoples”

*Found in 12/23 reviews (52%)*

Static  
Traditional  
Comparison to going back in time  
“Primitive”  
“Archaic”  
Simplicity  
Goatherds  
Mules  
Donkeys

### Desiring to escape modernity

*Found in 10/23 reviews (43%)*

Escape  
Escape from reality  
Escape from modernity  
Escape from complex life  
Escape from civilization  
Contrasts with Europe  
Change of pace  
Immersive experience  
Simplicity

## **Appendix B**

### **Questions posed to Exodus “Undiscovered Atlas” participants via the online review portal**

1. What was the most inspirational moment of your trip?
2. What did you think of your group leader?
3. Do you have any advice for potential travellers?
4. Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Trip Notes for “Undiscovered  
Atlas” (2 pages)**

# Trip Notes

## UNDISCOVERED ATLAS

Trip Code: TMA  
Country: Morocco  
Amended: January 2014  
Edition No: MRD 1 2014  
Valid from: 01 Jan 2014 - 31 Dec 2014

ADULT  
GROUP

MODERATE  
CHALLENGING



### HIGHLIGHTS

- A genuinely remote trek in the stunning Anti Atlas
- Fantastic mountain scenery of terraced valleys, oases and wonderful views of the isolated southwest
- Scenic campsites close to local villages, providing contact with the friendly local people

### SUMMARY

The Anti Atlas is a volcanic mountain chain extending southwest from the High Atlas. Extremely hot in summer, it is an ideal region for winter exploration; in fact it is one of the few places close to Europe where the climate lends itself to trekking at this time of year.

On trek, we enjoy views of fortified kasbahs perched above beautiful terraced valleys, wide oases stretch out before us and even the snow-covered High Atlas Mountains to the north on our ascent of Jebel Aklim (2531m). The jagged mountains of this area surround isolated, self-sufficient villages where we understand the importance of agriculture. This is the way of life for local villagers, with livestock farming and olive oil production as well as the famous argan oil, much revered by Moroccans. There is a unique economic organisation based on the adult males migrating to the large Moroccan cities to seek work, which means many of the villages appear to be inhabited only by women and children. The trek ends in Taroudant, one of Morocco's five Imperial cities, with time to explore the souks and ancient perimeter walls.

This fantastic winter trek through untouched, dramatic scenery is rarely visited by Europeans and is the perfect opportunity to get

closer to the welcoming and friendly Berber people and learn more of their culture.

### IS THIS TRIP FOR YOU?

This trip includes 5 days point-to-point walking with full portage. The maximum altitude is 2531m, with an overall average of 1830m. This trek involves walking on rough trails and paths scattered with loose stones; some days are demanding although no great altitude is reached and there are no great extremes of temperature to contend with. It is possible that on some nights there may be a frost, especially between November and February.

Please note that the walking is generally a more moderate B grade, with some C grade walking but you should nevertheless be able to cope with this harder walking.

Accommodation standards are below those of Europe and more comparable to sub-Saharan Africa. Please note that all camping is in wild camps, as few official campsites exist in the areas required. On some dates, flights may be indirect via Casablanca although the majority of dates use direct flights.

### LAND ONLY ITINERARY

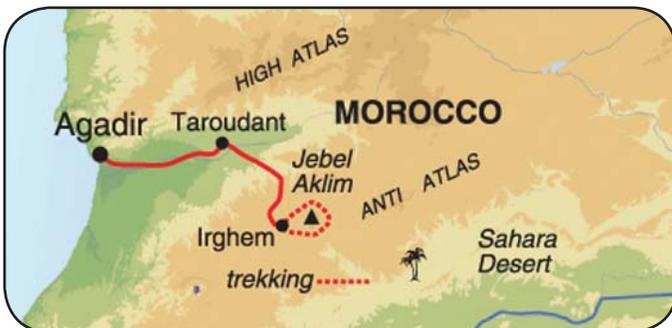
The entries in bold at the end of each day indicate the type of accommodation normally used (if different standards of accommodation are used - see accommodation section below for key to codes), and meals included (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner).

#### Day 1 Start Agadir

Depending on your arrival time there may be some time for self exploration of this wonderful coastal city. **SH**

#### Day 2 Taroudant & Irghem

We drive to Taroudant where we have a brief tour including time for a coffee in the square that is often filled with snake charmers and story tellers. We have lunch in the oasis of Tiout before continuing onto Ighrem, a copper town that has survived for centuries on its trade of pots and water urns with the Saharan caravans. It lies on a plateau near the Tizi'n'Touzlimt pass (1820m), where the road to Tata and the desert landscape meet the Anti-Atlas range. We start our trek into the mountains towards our camping spot for the evening, Tagragra



ABTA  
ABTA No. Y0751





No. 1, perched on a plateau the sunrise in the morning is well worth the early rise.

Distance: 3 h (by vehicle) 1 1/2h walking. Alt. gain: 920m Alt. loss: 220m **FC (BD)**

### Day 3 Trek to Amal and Tagdicht

A long first day as we first climb over a col and then a series of spurs before entering a broad valley. Then we walk past an abandoned mine towards the head of the valley and after reaching the beautiful village of Amal, we finally cross over a pass for the final stretch of today's walk in beautiful evening light to the village of Tagdicht. We camp on a traditional 'threshing' platform that lies between the many agricultural terraces and is just outside a village at the foot of Jebel Aklim.

Distance: 6 h Alt. gain: 450m Alt. loss: 250m **FC (BLD)**

### Day 4 Ascent of Jebel Aklim

Today is a steeper day's walking. We climb Jebel Aklim (2531m), one of the highest summits in the Anti-Atlas that offers excellent views to the High Atlas as well as Jebel Siroua. The summit is reached via a high col and a series of spurs before pausing for a scenic picnic lunch and then descending to our camp at Tagragra No.2. This area is one of the most remote in this range, yet is still surrounded by Berber villages. The valleys are full of brightly dressed women and children at the time of harvest working the fields.

Distance: 6 1/2 h Alt. gain: 800m Alt. loss: 900m **FC (BLD)**

### Day 5 Irtem & 'City of Cats'

We travel from Tagragra through the wonderfully remote village of Irtem. Walking through these villages, we have the real opportunity of communicating with the Berber people, enjoy their friendly conversation, (mainly through hand gestures and basic French), and gain true insight into their traditional way of life. We finally arrive at our campsite for the evening close to the village of M'dint (City of Cats). Nestled within a valley of olive groves and small trickling streams this overnight is protected from the elements and provides a peaceful resting spot.

Distance: 6 h Alt. gain: 300m Alt. loss: 600m **FC (BLD)**

### Day 6 Tizgue

Leaving the village of M'dint, where the olives are still pressed in the traditional way, we cross two cols slowly weaving our way up the valley. The villagers are very friendly and if you are lucky you may get invited in to try some local mint tea and delicacies. We pass through ancient olive plantations and admire the irrigation channels before resting for a picnic lunch under the shady trees. Be sure to hunt out the small river for a soothing foot dip! We work our way up the last pass of Tizgue for a steady uphill push, well worth it as we are rewarded with views of our entire trekking route. Our camp rests next to ancient argan trees and there is a natural series of rock pools where we can enjoy a swim and a wash to the sun setting.

Distance: 7 h Alt. gain: 750m Alt. loss: 650m **FC (BLD)**

Moroccan wares or relax in one of the Hamman steam baths before our farewell meal.

Distance: 3 h Alt. gain: 500m Alt. loss: 400m **SH (BL)**

### Day 8 End Agadir

Trip ends after breakfast. **(B)**

---

## ACCOMMODATION

---

Camping on this trip is always in wild camps, as official campsites simply do not exist in the areas we visit. Wild camping means there is no ablutions or toilet block; however, there is sometimes the possibility to find a private spot at a nearby river for a quick wash. Ground conditions and space permitting, a basic toilet tent is erected at each camp. All camp chores are done for you from erecting and dismantling your tent to all the cooking and washing up. A table and chairs are also provided for meal times.

Morocco is opening up more and more to mainstream tourism due to increasing coverage from airlines. However, accommodation standards are more often comparable with those found in Sub-Saharan Africa rather than Europe and you should come prepared for this. All the hotels we use are of a similar standard, clean and functional although the rooms and facilities may be basic and limited and the breakfasts simple.

### Single Accommodation:

You may request a single room on this trip subject to availability. The cost of a single supplement is £100 (or approx. US\$160), which applies to the week (including nights spent in a tent).

### Extra Accommodation:

If you would like Exodus to organise additional accommodation for you at the start and/or end of your trip, please contact the office at least 4 weeks prior to departure.

**KEY TO ACCOMMODATION:** We indicate in the itinerary what type of accommodation is provided on each day. The descriptions are guidelines only and are used to give an idea of the accommodation offered, rather than an exact description.

**SH Standard Hotel, Lodge or Gite** - no-frills hotel, usually with twin rooms and en suite facilities. Service and amenities are generally adequate.

**FC Full-service Camping** - two person tents sometimes in a private or public campsite that contains a communal ablutions block and other amenities and sometimes in a wild camp with toilet tents and mess tent or dining equipment provided. All camp chores are done for you from erecting / dismantling of your tent, to cooking & washing up.



## **Appendix D**

### **Guiding questions for tourist interviewees**

1. What made you decide to come to Morocco?
2. What is your favorite part of Morocco so far?
3. What most surprised you about Morocco?
4. What is one piece of advice you would give to people wanting to travel here?
5. What was the hardest part of travelling to Morocco?

## Appendix E

### *Marrakech Express*

Crosby Stills Nash

Looking at the world through the sunset in your eyes  
Traveling the train through clear Moroccan skies  
Ducks and pigs and chickens call, animal carpet wall to wall  
American ladies five-foot tall in blue

Sweeping cobwebs from the edges of my mind  
Had to get away to see what we could find  
Hope the days that lie ahead bring us back to where they've led  
Listen not to what's been said to you

Would you know we're riding on the Marrakesh Express?  
Would you know we're riding on the Marrakesh Express?  
They're taking me to Marrakesh  
All aboard the train, all aboard the train

I've been saving all my money just to take you there  
I smell the garden in your hair  
Take the train from Casablanca going South  
Blowing smoke rings from the corners of my mouth

Colored cottons hang in the air  
Charming cobras in the square  
Striped djellabas we can wear at home  
Well, let me hear ya now

Would you know we're riding on the Marrakesh Express?  
Would you know we're riding on the Marrakesh Express?  
They're taking me to Marrakesh

Would you know we're riding on the Marrakesh Express?  
Would you know we're riding on the Marrakesh Express?  
They're taking me to Marrakesh  
All aboard the train, all aboard the train, all aboard

Songwriters  
NASH, GRAHAM

Published by  
Lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC