



American Horticultural Society
Travel Study Program

THE ENCHANTING GARDENS AND ALLURE OF MOROCCO

March 8–17, 2023

WITH AHS HOST KEITH TOMLINSON AND
TOUR LEADER ANTONIA LLOYD OWEN OF SPECIALTOURS



Dear Friends of the American Horticultural Society,

I'm delighted to present another spectacular AHS tour, The Enchanting Gardens and Allure of Morocco. This spectacular journey will take us from coastal Tangier in the north with its European influences, to Fes, the fascinating cradle of Moorish culture, and finally south to Marrakech, the most "African" of the cities and a true oasis.

Let me share with you just a few of the many highlights we'll experience.

Did you know that Morocco was the first country to recognize the United States? We'll learn all about that at the Tangier American Legation Institute for Moroccan Studies, the only U.S. National Historic Landmark on foreign soil. It has served as a symbol of American engagement with the Islamic world since the early days of our Republic. Perhaps our most surprising revelation will be Tangier's private gardens. These are homes of expatriate Europeans who have fallen in love with northern Morocco and its gardening climate. The private gardens on our tour are superb, each a surprise and sparkling with originality.

Come with us to discover the Exotic Gardens of Bouknadel, the dream and passion of Marcel François, a French horticulturist. We'll see why this achievement has been classified as a cultural heritage site.

I'm sure you have a picture of historic old Fez in your mind's eye — its passageways, sights, sounds, and smells — gleaned from reading or hearing friends' travel tales. Well, on our guided walk, you will make your own memories for the ages as we wend our way through the labyrinthine medina featuring the spice market, tanners' quarter, bazaars, and the exterior of El Karouine Mosque.

Don't miss this opportunity to explore Volubilis, part of the Roman Empire for 800 years. We'll see the ruins that include a magnificent colonnaded shopping street, baths, the capitol and the forum, several houses with mosaics, and an impressive triumphal arch built in 217. No less refined a connoisseur than Yves Saint Laurent fell in love with Majorelle Garden in Marrakesh (or Marrakech, as it's known to the French), so I'm confident we will too. The late fashion icon first laid eyes on it in the '60s and became so enamored that he later purchased it. We'll also visit a small museum that houses Saint Laurent's collection of Maghrebi decorative art.

What could be more enticing than the idea of a secret garden? Le Jardin Secret is a unique and extraordinary attraction. It was designed as a reflection of paradise on earth. Dating back 400 years to the Saadian dynasty, it was lovingly restored by English landscape designer and author Tom Stuart-Smith.

Our tour leader is Antonia Lloyd Owen of London-based Specialtours. Antonia, who has been with Specialtours since 2002, has a degree in History of Art & Architecture. She has guided several AHS tours, and her organizational skills and personal charm ensure an efficient and enjoyable journey. Host and former AHS director Keith Tomlinson is a naturalist, public speaker, and experienced world traveler. Recently retired, he had a long career in environmental education and public garden management, including over 20 years as garden manager at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens in Northern Virginia.

The accommodations will befit the discerning AHS traveler. The El Minzah Hotel Tangier by Le Royal Hotels & Resorts, centrally located in the heart of Tangier, is considered one of the most prestigious hotels in North Africa and has been a favorite of many dignitaries, royals and celebrities alike. Riad Fès, part of the Relais & Châteaux collection, has been recently restored to its original glory. La Tour Hassan in Rabat is an elegant 5-star hotel that was recently renovated in Moorish and Contemporary style. The Jardins de La Koutoubia hotel in Marrakesh is set in the heart of the city's medina, right next to the Jemaa el Fna square.

I personally invite you to accompany us to Morocco in March. Our tours are in great demand and sell out quickly, so make your reservations as soon as possible. For your convenience, a reservations form is enclosed in this brochure.

Most sincerely,



Suzanne Laporte
AHS President and CEO



THE ENCHANTING GARDENS AND ALLURE OF MOROCCO

WITH AHS HOST KEITH TOMLINSON AND TOUR LEADER ANTONIA LLOYD OWEN OF SPECIALTOURS



Join AHS host Keith Tomlinson and tour leader Antonia Lloyd Owen for this once-in-a-lifetime garden travel experience.

Itinerary Highlights

TUESDAY, MARCH 7 — DEPART UNITED STATES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8 — TANGIER (D)

Welcome to Morocco. This North African country is about the size of California, with most of its coastline on the Atlantic Ocean and the remainder on the Mediterranean. We'll arrive at Tangier Ibn Battouta Airport (TNG), then transfer by private coach to our first lodging, the Hotel El Minzah. Unwinding is the first order, with leisure time this afternoon until cocktails, followed by a welcome dinner at the hotel.

THURSDAY, MARCH 9 — TANGIER (B, L, D)

We'll kick off our tour with a real adventure. As we set out on foot with our local guide, we'll encounter the Tangier of legend: winding through the atmospheric kasbar ... views of the Strait of Gibraltar ... the labyrinthine alleys of the old medina ... the walls of a 15th-century Portuguese fortress. Our first stop will be at St. Andrew's Church, completed in 1890, which features a marvelous blend of interesting and disparate components. The interior of this Anglican church is decorated in high Fassi style, with the Lord's Prayer in Arabic over the altar. Behind the altar is a cleft that indicates the direction of Mecca, with carved quotes from the Quran. Next, we're off for a stop at the garden and home of a renowned interior decorator. His luxuriant garden is adorned with paths, pools, and terraces on a slope overlooking the Strait of Gibraltar. We'll lunch privately before returning to the hotel. This evening will resemble a social visit rather than a tour, as we drop in on—and dine at—the impeccably refined home of a gardener and London art dealer. A teaser for this evening: the home and garden can best be described as “magical.”

FRIDAY, MARCH 10 — TANGIER (B, L, D)

This morning will get off to a brilliant start as we visit private gardens on “The Mountain,” the most desirable residential district of Tangier. The area has long been popular with royalty and the European expatriate community. Our first stop is at the Tangier home of Umberto Pasti, an Italian writer who maintains one of his residences, featured in *World of Interiors* magazine, here. (We'll visit his other Moroccan home later in our travels.)

The garden meanders uphill to a little pavilion and house full of artifacts and curiosities. The well-developed and elaborate small garden was inspired by the old plantings that once flourished in Tangier, so we'll see a profusion of roses, begonias, jasmine, fruit trees, ferns, and tropical palms. Fans of small wildlife — birds, lizards and, Pasti's favorite, frogs — will have an extra treat. Next, it's an early light lunch at a delightful private home, which the owner calls her “house in the woods.” We'll continue on to the Tangier American Legation building and a visit with Curator, Mohammed Jadidi. The first American-owned property outside the United States, the five-story mansion commemorates the historic cultural and diplomatic relations between the United States and the Kingdom of Morocco. It has served as a symbol of American engagement with the Islamic world and North Africa since the early days of our republic. In fact, Morocco was the first country to recognize the United States. We'll learn more at the Tangier American Legation Institute for Moroccan Studies, a cultural center, museum, and research library. The legation was listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places in 1981 and was subsequently designated a National Historic Landmark, becoming the only one on foreign soil. Its collection of paintings illustrates the city's past, and there's a wing dedicated to expat writer and composer Paul Bowles. The site played a key role in the success of the World War II Allied landings in Morocco and Algeria. We'll have dinner together tonight to compare notes and become further acquainted.

SATURDAY, MARCH 11 — FEZ (B, L, D)

We'll bid farewell to Tangier this morning, as we leave with our luggage. As we head toward Fez (or Fès, to the French), we'll visit Rohuna, Umberto Pasti's country home. Rohuna was recently featured in international design media such as the United Kingdom's *House & Garden* magazine. Umberto has arranged a garden tour and lunch for us, and we'll likely meet Belgian botanist Bernard Dogimont, who assists Umberto with his garden creations. Our lodging in Fez will be at the Riad Fès hotel, where we'll dine tonight.

SUNDAY, MARCH 12 — FEZ (B, L)

After breakfast, we'll experience old Fez. The city has a unique flavor and ambience thanks to its Spanish/Moorish architecture. Highlights of this UNESCO World Heritage Site include the ornate doors of the royal palace and a fascinating guided walk through the winding streets of the medina. Our senses will reel as our guide takes us through the spice market, tanners' quarter, bazaars, and the exterior of El Karouine Mosque. Lunch will be in the exotic gardens of Le Jardin des Biehn. We will stroll through the restored Jardin Jnan Sbil (formerly Bou Jeloud), and subject to reopening after restoration, visit the Dar Batha Museum of Moroccan Arts, housed in a late 19th century palace of Spanish-Moorish design with a tranquil enclosed Andalusian garden. We'll return to the hotel to freshen up; tonight we'll dine independently.

MONDAY, MARCH 13 — FEZ (B, L, D)

Today we'll make a visit that will profoundly affect the way we think about ancient Rome. Our destination this morning is

Volubilis, a Roman city for 800 years until the early 9th century. The ruins include a magnificent colonnaded shopping street, baths, the capitol and forum, several houses with mosaics, and an impressive triumphal arch built in 217. Our memorable day will continue as we arrive in Meknes, one of Morocco's four great Imperial cities. We stop for lunch at Riad Palais Didi, where the patio and terrace overlook the walled city. We'll visit the tomb of Moulay Ismail — the Sultan of Morocco from 1672–1727 — and see the imperial granaries, the stables, and the Agoudal basin, a reservoir for the royal gardens. We'll continue to the capital city of Rabat to stay at the magnificent hotel, La Tour Hassan, where we shall have dinner tonight.

TUESDAY, MARCH 14 — MARRAKESH (B, L, D)

We'll leave with luggage this morning for Salé, which lies across the Bou Regreg river from the capital, Rabat. The whitewashed houses of this city, dating from the 11th century, harken back to an earlier era. We'll continue to a wonderful stop at the Exotic Gardens of Bouknadel, a horticultural and artistic achievement that has been classified as a national cultural heritage site. In 1951, Marcel François, a French horticulturist, bought this plot of land. He traveled all over the world, collecting plants from countries such as China, Japan, Congo, Brazil, and Polynesia. He then set about creating gardens by duplicating the landscape and habitat of the places where he found the plants. Walkways lead you through the various gardens, which feature secret passages, an aviary, waterfalls, swamps, pools, fountains, and bridges. We'll have to tear ourselves away in order to return to Salé for lunch. After lunch we shall drive by the Tour Hassan and Mausoleum of Mohammed V.

Then it's on to Marrakesh, crossing the rich agricultural plain until the snow-capped mountains of the High Atlas appear in the distance and Marrakesh is in our sights. We'll check in to our Marrakesh accommodations, Jardins de La Koutoubia Hotel, which sports a fascinating history. "Koutoubia" is a European interpretation of the word for "books" or "libraries," as booksellers used to ply their trade outside the nearby Koutoubia mosque. Its spectacular minaret towers over the hotel and Jemaa el-Fna, the main square and meeting place for centuries. In addition to



many fascinating stalls, there are entertainers including acrobats, story-tellers, and snake charmers. Tonight we'll enjoy dinner at the hotel.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15 — MARRAKESH (B, L)

Today's events will begin with a tour of the Majorelle Garden, which was originally designed in the 1920s and opened to the public in 1947. When the late Yves Saint Laurent fell in love with the garden on a trip to Marrakesh in the 1960s, he returned years later to purchase and restore the property. The Majorelle's old studio was





turned into a small museum for the designer's collection of Maghrebi decorative art. With time, we'll also explore the Yves Saint Laurent Museum, a tribute to the late icon's couture creations. A relaxing lunch awaits, with a buffet by the pool at the legendary Hotel La Mamounia. This afternoon we'll visit the Anima Gardens. Nestled in the foothills of the spectacular High Atlas Mountains, this is a space designed by the Austrian multimedia artist André Heller. Surprising sculptures of magical characters are hidden among shady pathways and flowerbeds filled with wildflowers, cacti, water features, palm trees and tall grass. Extending over 7 acres, this botanical creation demonstrates that it is possible to reconcile a remarkable garden with a social and ecological durability. We'll be on our own for dinner tonight in Marrakesh.

THURSDAY, MARCH 16 — MARRAKESH (B, L, D)

A memorable day to be sure. We'll visit the Bahia Palace, which was created in the 19th century, built by the wife of the Vizier, with a series of halls with ceilings painted in floral designs, enclosing courtyards and the typical riad garden. We'll then see the ruins of the El Badi Palace. The palace, the wonder of its day, was built 1578-94 by al Mansour, but dismantled in 1696 by Moulay Ismail, who used the marble to embellish his new capital in Meknes. We'll continue to the Palmeraie, an impressive palm grove of several hundred thousand trees outside of Marrakesh. Situated on the northern edge of the city, it covers an area of 54 square miles. We'll catch our breath at lunch, a poolside break at Jnane Tamsna in the Palmeraie, with ethnobotanist and co-owner Gary Martin who created the nine-acre organic garden. This afternoon, we'll be treated to a visit of the nine-acre garden 'Le Jardin Secret'. This area is divided into an exotic garden filled with plants from all over the world and Islamic garden designed to facilitate the irrigation of the grounds, reminds you of the description of heaven as narrated in the Quran. We'll return to Marrakesh for dinner at Dar Yacout. Our final night together will be filled with reminiscences and fond farewells.

FRIDAY, MARCH 17

Our Moroccan adventure will draw to a close, as we'll leave with luggage for Marrakesh airport for return flights home.

While revisions of this itinerary are not anticipated, the AHS and its travel partners reserve the right to make changes, with or without notice, which may become necessary.





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JOIN US FOR MANY ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EXPERIENCES, INCLUDING:

- Exclusive visits to wonderful private gardens and refreshments hosted by their owners.
- The Tangier American Legation Institute for Moroccan Studies, the only National Historic Landmark on foreign soil.
- The Exotic Gardens of Bouknadel, the dream and passion of French horticulturist Marcel François, classified as a national cultural heritage site.
- Old Fez, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a memory for the ages as we make our way through the labyrinthine medina featuring the spice market, bazaars, and more.
- Roman Volubilis, with ruins that include a magnificent colonnaded shopping street, the Capitol and the Forum, mosaics and an impressive Triumphal Arch built in 217.
- The magical Majorelle Garden, owned and restored by Yves Saint Laurent.
- Le Jardin Secret, an extraordinary garden dating back 400 years to the Saadian dynasty and lovingly restored by English landscape designer and author Tom Stuart-Smith.

THE EXCELLENT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THIS PROGRAM ARE:

- Le Royal El Minzah Hotel Tangier. Centrally located and one of the most prestigious hotels in North Africa, frequented by dignitaries, celebrities and royals since 1930.
- Riad Fès hotel, Fez. Riad Fès, part of the Relais & Châteaux collection, has been recently restored to its original glory. Located in the core of the ancient city, Riad Fès will make us feel as if we've traveled back in time.
- La Tour Hassan in Rabat is an elegant 5-star hotel in the embassy district. Built in 1912, it has been recently renovated in Moorish and Contemporary style.
- Jardins de La Koutoubia Hotel, Marrakesh. Set in the heart of Marrakesh's medina, Jardins de La Koutoubia is right next to the Jemaa el Fna square and the walls of the 13th-century Riad Ouarzazi.

Please refer to the reservation form for pricing and instructions for reserving your place on this AHS Travel Study Program tour. For more information about Travel Study Program tours, please contact development@ahsgardening.org or (703) 768-5700, ext. 127. Information is also available at www.ahsgardening.org/travel.

Designed with the garden-travel connoisseur in mind, the American Horticultural Society Travel Study Program offers exceptional itineraries that include many exclusive experiences and unique insights. Your participation benefits the work of the American Horticultural Society and furthers our vision of *"A land of sustainable gardens, cultivated by a diverse population with a common passion for plants."*

