Morocco’s rich history is complemented by the influential role that the Jewish population played in the country’s art, education and culture.

The Kingdom of Morocco remains one of the only two Arab countries that still has an active Jewish community. Prior to 1948 and establishment of the State of Israel, Jews numbered some 300,000. Estimates are that today’s Jewish population is less than 5,000. Emigration at various times in the 20th century, particularly in 1948, 1956 and 1967 took many Moroccan Jews to France, Israel, Canada or the United States. However, the Jews that remain in Morocco live freely and can travel as they choose out of the country. The warm feelings that the Moroccan Jewish diaspora retains, still brings many of them back to Morocco for visits. In addition, Morocco’s tolerant attitudes also makes it a destination for Israelis who want to safely explore an Arab country, particularly one with the richness of history and architecture of Morocco.
Day 1: Sunday, March 11 – Departure from the US
Departure from JFK for your overnight non-stop flight to Casablanca, arriving the following morning.

Day 2: Monday, March 12 – Arrival in Casablanca
Upon your morning arrival in Casablanca, you will be met by your English speaking Moroccan guide. We immediately begin our exploration of Casablanca by visiting some of the JDC sponsored programs, thus providing an opportunity to understand how Federation and JDC funds help support programs in Morocco. Transfer to your deluxe hotel.

After a bit of time to refresh yourself from the flight, we depart for an orientation of Casablanca, which is home to Morocco’s largest Jewish community. The orientation will include the Museum of Moroccan Judaism of Casablanca, which showcases religious, ethnographic and artistic objects that reflect the history, religion, traditions and daily life of Jews in the context of Moroccan civilization, as well as a visit to the famous Hassan II Mosque, the largest in the world outside Mecca (the only Moroccan Mosque that can be visited by non-Muslims.)

The Jewish community contributed to the construction of this mosque, which was inaugurated in 1994, as a way of honoring King Hassan’s role as a protector of Morocco’s Jewish community.

Dinner this evening will be at Morocco’s Jewish club providing the opportunity to meet some of Casablanca’s Jewish community.

DRAFT – SUBJECT TO CHANGE
The Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh and the Gil Travel Group, reserve the right to make any itinerary changes as of February 24, 2017
Overnight in Casablanca.

**Day 3: Tuesday, March 13 – Meknes/Fez**

After breakfast, we check out of the hotel and depart eastward, with our first stop being the city of Meknes, where we visit the *mellah*, the old Jewish quarter with its synagogue and six-hundred year old cemetery, which helps provide some of the Jewish history of Meknes, one of Morocco’s four “Imperial Cities”. Today, the Jewish community is very small.

Following your visit to Meknes, we continue on to Fez, Morocco’s fabled city, just over an hour away. Considered the spiritual and intellectual capital of Morocco, we will be seeing the rich architecture of this exotic city as well as learning about its Jewish history.

Dinner and overnight in Fez.

*Cityscape of Fez*

**Day 4: Wednesday, March 14 – Fez**

Today is fully devoted to Fez. Our visit will include the *mellah*, the 17th century Ibn Danan synagogue, the Jewish cemetery and the King’s Palace, one of the most sumptuous complexes in Morocco.
You will also have time to walk through the maze of alleyways, which are too narrow for motorized vehicles and with the up and down slopes, a walking tour that is only suitable for hearty and healthy walkers. Perhaps one of the most important sites for Jewish visitors is the home of Maimonides. Moses Maimonides was from Cordova Spain and was a highly revered and prolific medieval scholar and philosopher. When Jews were being told to convert Spain under the rule of the fanatical and rather extreme Almohad Berber dynast at the end of the 12th century, Maimonides and his family chose to go into exile, rather than convert. He had already gained a reputation as a prolific medieval scholar and philosopher. He settled in Fez, where he researched and wrote his famous commentary on the Mishnah. Your touring will include a visit to Maimonides’s home in Fez.

Dinner tonight will be at the Jewish club of Fez. Overnight in Fez.

Day 5: Thursday, March 15 – Fez to Rabat
This morning, we depart Fez to Rabat the capital of Morocco, where our visit includes the 12th century Hassan Tower. Begun at the end of the 12th century under the direction of Sultan Yacub al Mansour, the intent was that
it be the largest minaret in the world, at that time. Due to his death within four years of the start, construction stopped and the tower that remains is approximately half the height that was originally intended.

Suggestions will be made for your independent lunch. Rabat has numerous options.

Touring continues with a visit to the Jewish quarter of Rabat and the Oudaya Gardens.

Dinner and overnight in Rabat.

*Carpet shop in the medina of Marrakech*

**Day 6: Friday, March 16 – Marrakech**
We depart Rabat this morning for a drive south to Marrakech. Upon arrival in Marrakech, we will have some light touring. You will then have some free time back at your hotel to change for the Shabbat.

Services tonight will be at a local synagogue, within walking distance of the hotel. Shabbat dinner will be in a private home.

Overnight in Marrakech.

**Day 7: Saturday, March 17 – Marrakech**
This morning, those who wish to attend Shabbat services, will be able to walk to the synagogue if they choose. Lunch will be in a family home, followed by a walking tour if Gueliz, often referred to as the “new town”, as this was built under the French and is where most of the Marrakech Jews reside.
We regroup mid-afternoon at our hotel for more touring of Marrakech, including a visit to Bahia Palace, the herbalists in the medina. There will also be time to walk through the maze of alleyways and shops that make up the medina of Marrakech.

Dinner tonight is independent. Searching design and food magazines, as well as online sources, one finds that Moroccan cuisine and the restaurant scene in Marrakech is hot! Numerous suggestions will be provided, as well as instructions on how to get to the restaurant of your choice. You can also visit the famous Djema Fna, Morocco’s central square that turns into a circus type atmosphere at night with crowds coming to the market to listen to the variety of local musicians, enjoying the many food stalls and the exotic atmosphere that has carried on for generations in Marrakech, including snake charmers.

Overnight in Marrakech.

**Day 8 – Sunday, March 18 – Marrakech/Ourika Valley**

This morning we visit the old quarter, the mellah and its 500 year old Aljama Synagogue followed by our departure for an excursion out of Marrakech to the Ourika Valley. The primary purpose of this excursion is not only to see the relatively remote village, but to meet the last of the Berber Jews remaining in the village. Historically, there were many Berbers of Morocco who converted to Judaism and remained in their rural villages. We will also visit the grave of Rabbi Shlomo Bel Hence, considered a tzadik, or righteous scholar by Morocco’s Jews. Late day return to Marrakech.

Dinner and show tonight in Marrakech.

*Djema Fna in Marrakech and snake charmer*
Day 9 – Monday, March 19 - Marrakech/Casablanca
This morning we depart for a return to Casablanca. Upon arrival in Casablanca, we will have the opportunity to visit more of the city and any JDC sites that we did not visit at the beginning of the tour.

Our “Farewell Dinner” will be in a nice setting.

Overnight in Casablanca – Hyatt Regency.

Day 10 – Tuesday, March 20 – Casablanca
Transfers will bring you to the airport for your departure flights back to the U.S.

One of the many gardens of Marrakech

HOTELS

Casablanca: Hyatt Regency ★★★★★ Nights of March 12 and 19

Fez: Marriott’s Jnan Palace ★★★★★ Nights of March 13 and 14

Rabat: Sofitel Jardin des Roses ★★★★★ Nights of March 15

DRAFT – SUBJECT TO CHANGE
The Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh and the Gil Travel Group, reserve the right to make any itinerary changes as of February 24, 2017
Marrakech: **La Naoura ★★★★★** Nights of March 15, 16 and 18
https://www.hotelsbarriere.com/fr/marrakech/le-naoura.html