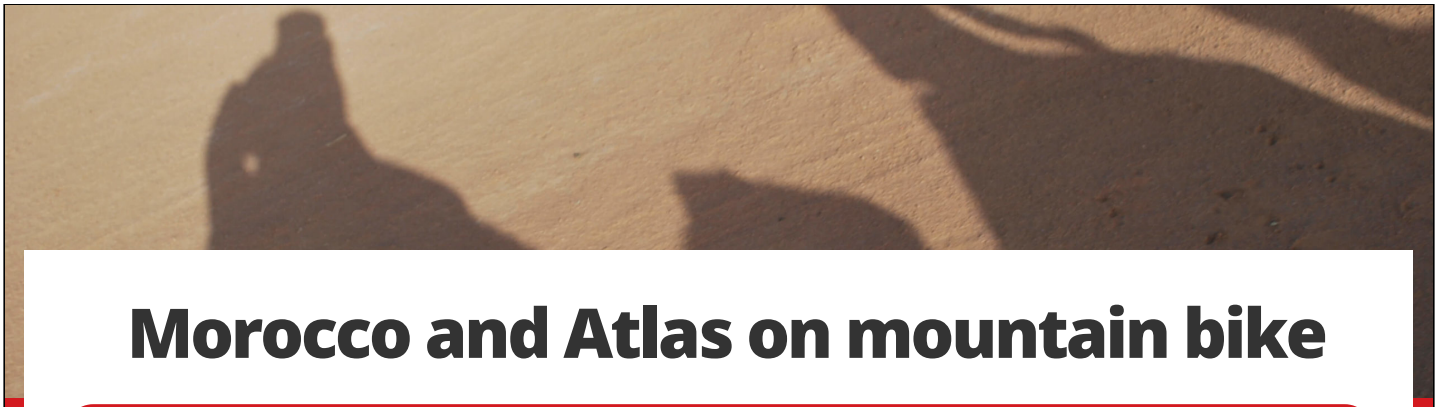


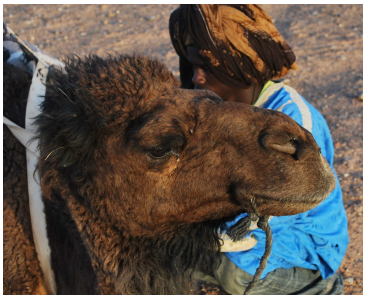
Morocco and Atlas on mountain bike

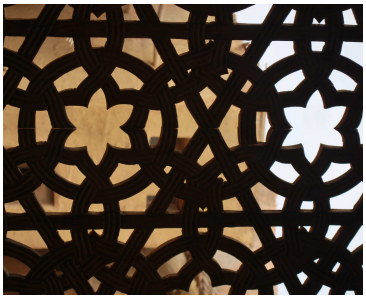
Cultural, Sports

Country : Morocco April 2011

The most beautiful pictures







Morocco is well known for the beauty of its landscapes, its cities, its souks, its desert and its mountains. But when you come from Switzerland, the mountains can appear ridiculous. Well it is not the case with the Moroccan Atlas, whose Toubkal culminates anyway at more than 4000m. And why not to do it by mountain bike?

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By Olivier Paudex

Casablanca

Morocco is mainly cities, sand, Bedouins and their camels. But it is also breathtaking landscapes, timeless architecture worthy of the best Hollywood movies. Morocco can be visited by rental car, bus, motorcycle, but also by bike.

Visiting Morocco often means landing in the capital Marrakech, renting a car, and making your way to other sites. For meteorological reasons independent to the organization, this trip began in Casablanca, the plane diverted to the largest economic city in Morocco.

Souk

Each Moroccan city has its market. An essential visit for a scenery refreshment.



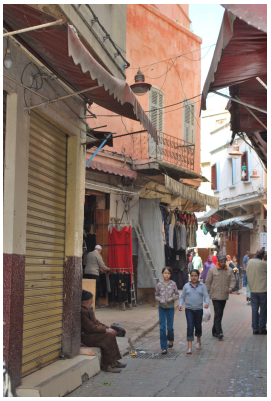


The essential Moroccan souk

The streets of old Casablanca

Casablanca built its new city, but had the intelligence to keep its old neighborhood, where the innumerable stalls of merchants extend.





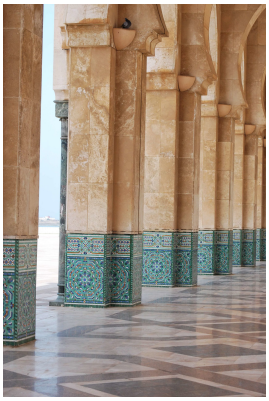
The streets of the old quarter

The Hassan II Mosque

The Hassan II Mosque is without a doubt the jewel of Casablanca. The exterior and the inner courtyard can be visited.









The Hassan II Mosque





Mosaics of the Hassan II Mosque

The Church of the Sacred Heart

The church was built in 1930 by the architect Paul Tournon. Today desacralized, it hosts exhibitions and cultural events.



Church of the Sacred Heart of Casablanca

Fez

The journey continues by bus. 2nd largest city after Casablanca, located in northeastern Morocco. It is located about 250km from Casablanca. The transitions between cities are long. Travel time must be taken into account, but also the countless hours of waiting in bus stations. The trip to Fez takes a whole day.

Fez appears to be straight out of the desert that surrounds it from all sides.





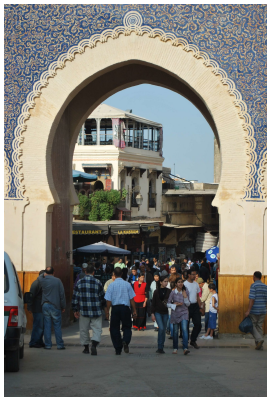
City of Fez

The city gates

The city has several entrances and exits. Once inside the walls, you have to be careful not to get lost. Fez is a real labyrinth. Children have fun redirecting, for a reward, the tourists who got lost.









The city gates

The craftsmen of Fez

A little nod to my father whose profession was woodturning.





The craftsmen of Fez

The streets of the Fez maze

Be careful not to get lost in the maze of alleys. And even more to the pickpockets and the beaters. Without a guide, it is advisable to know how to find your way or to hire a child for a small reward.





Moulay Idriss Zerhoun, Volubilis and Meknes

Two villages that really deserve a visit. Unfortunately, the buses do not go there. It will be necessary to rent a car with driver for the day. However, the organization is very easy, just ask in any hotel.





The hill of Moulay Idriss and its houses

The architecture and its colorful doors

Walking in the streets of the city, unlike Fez, is without risk. The city having been built on a hill, it is very simple to return to its starting point. The inhabitants are overflowing with creativity in the decoration of their front doors. Each one more beautiful than the other. The colors used give the impression of a large open-air fresco.



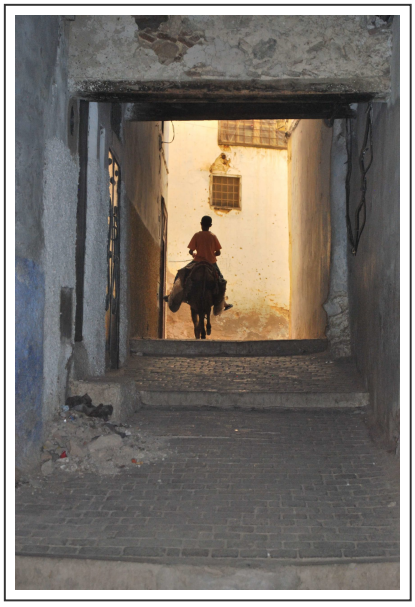


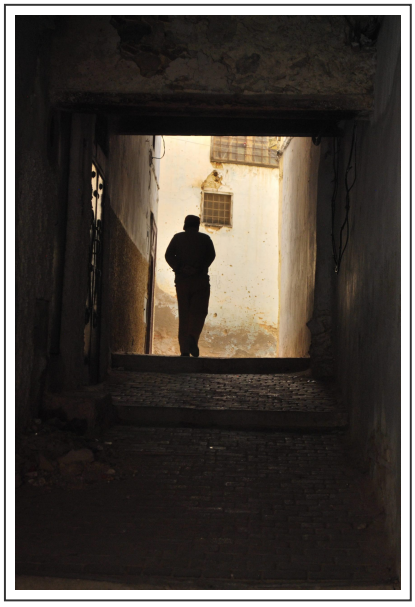
The colored doors of the houses of Moulay Idriss

The alleys

The alleys often go from the full light to the darkness of a passage under the tracks, which gives breathtaking images.















The alleys of Moulay Idriss

The market

The olive market, a local product, is well known far beyond the city.



Moulay Idriss olive market

The tea

Tea, a national and healthy drink in hot countries. It is served very hot, with a lot of sugar and mint.



The ritual of tea, knowing how to aim...

The archaeological site of Volubilis

At the exit of Moulay Idriss is the archaeological site of Volubilis. Some beautiful mosaics are represented, worthy passage of the Roman Empire.





Volubilis, its mosaics and its inhabitants

The alleys of Meknes

Another city, located a little further southwest of Moulay Idriss, Meknes is also a labyrinthine city, but nothing to do with Fez. Its alleys are at the top of the others, high in colors.



The alleys of Meknes

Meknes Hammam

The steam baths are part of the Moroccan culture and more widely Arab countries. They are often handcrafted constructions.



The hammam of Meknes

Merzouga

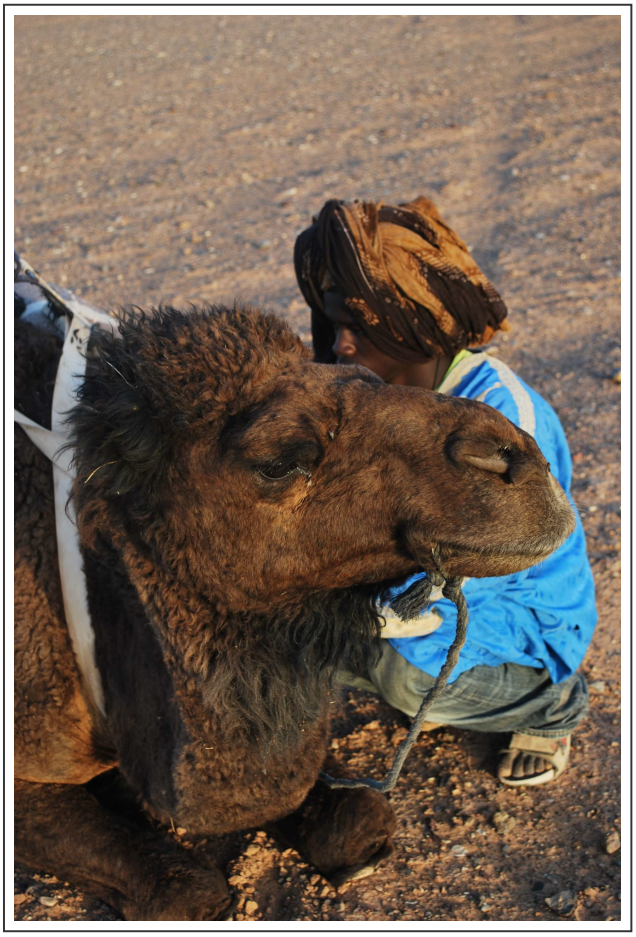
The journey continues by night bus. From Fez, it takes more than 8 hours by bus to reach Merzouga and the gates of the desert.

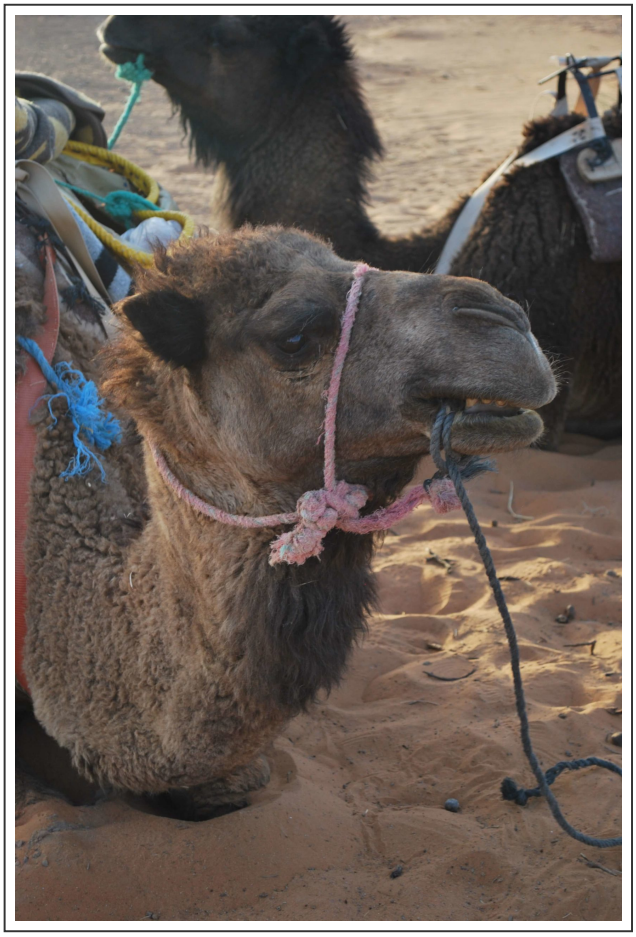


The desert, its Bedouins and their camels









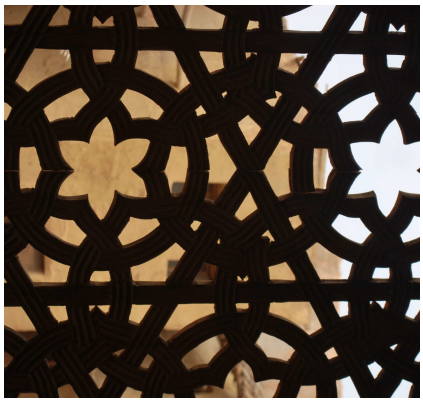




and sunset

Ouarzazate

There are no less than 15 hours of travel between Merzouga and Ourzazate. The bus leaves in the late afternoon and arrives in the early morning. Ourzazate is an oasis in the middle of the desert where life has gradually settled down. It's cool there, compared to the desert of Merzouga. Ourzazate attracts tourists attracted by motor sports in the middle of the desert, in buggy or motorcycle. But it is also possible to practice mountain biking.


Gastronomy, market and architecture delight the eyes





Tea and hospitality are sacred by locals

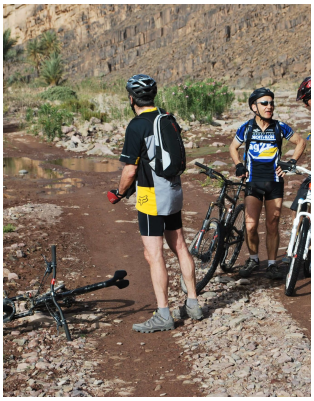
Mountain bike trek in the atlas

Starting from Ourzazate, one of the goals of this trip was to make a 4-day mountain bike trek in the atlas. It's physical and it climbs. But the region really worth the detour. Sensations guaranteed, especially the descent. Wonderful landscapes that go from yellow sand to snow peaking on the summits, then going down, by rocky all black plains.













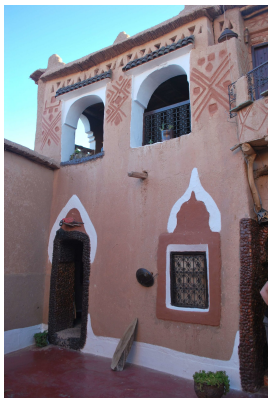











KASBAH ASSAKAR










Marrakech

The journey was soon coming to an end. A last drink between cyclists, then departure for Marrakech. It is the most famous city in Morocco and yet it is not the most populated. Marrakech was the starting point of this trip, but as explained at the beginning of this story, it became the point of arrival. It takes about 4 hours to reach it from Ourzazate. There was not enough time to visit this city, another time for sure.



Lampes typiques sur un marché de Marrakech