

Morocco's High Atlas

A Tour for the North American Rock Garden Society

18th – 25th March 2026

Marrakech is our gateway to the majestic scenery of the High Atlas Mountains. The little hamlet of Imagira is our base, set in the valley above Asni on the route up to the famous Tiz n'Test Pass. We will spend 6 nights in the elegant Sel d'Ailleurs, a privately owned hotel where we will be the only tenants.

Day 1 18th March **to Marrakech and the Mountains**

An hour and a half from the airport we will have crossed the plain on which Marrakech stands and driven up through increasingly mountainous scenery before arriving at our lovely hotel. We'll gather in the attractive and homely sitting area for drinks before a supper that will feature many wonderful dishes. **Please note** that participants should schedule their arrival for no later than mid-afternoon on March 18. If you arrive the day before, please contact Greentours for extra night bookings in Marrakech.

Day 2 19th March **The Kik Plateau**

This morning we'll head for the Kik Plateau. The beautiful white flowering gorse *Retama monspesia* flowers by the road on the way up alongside *Reseda phytoloma*, *Reseda elata* and *Reseda lutea*. Up on the Plateau we'll walk through some tiny fields before crossing over a rocky outcrop. Rocky field edges abound with *Aristolochia paucinervis*, *Asparagus horridus*, White Bryony and the lovely purple poppy relative *Roemeria hybrida*. *Lavandula multifida* is common and the nightshade family shrub *Withania frutescens* has green bell-like inflorescences. Reaching a rocky outcrop which protrudes from an arid hill with spectacular stripes of coloured rock, we'll find the lovely large pink flowers of *Ajuga reptans* and *Centaurea pullata*.

Descending the other side of the plateau we will stop for the unfailingly stunning orange striped *Linaria cathartica*. This grows amongst beautiful orange *Calendula stellata* and yellower *Calendula arvensis*, the rather fabulous *Cladanthus arabicus*, and purple *Fagonia cretica*. A gully with increased moisture has Red-horned Poppy *Glaucium corniculatum*, *Asphodelus ramosus* and the rather rare *Androcymbium gramineum*. Nearby we'll encounter the unusual brown bluebell *Dipcadi serotinum*. Our final rocky outcrop of the day has two fabulous plants, lovely blue *Iris planifolia*, and the truly gorgeous red-purple *Linaria maroccana*.

Day 3 20th March
Tizi Ouzane and Tougramane Gorge, Amaziz Mountains

A day full of unusual plants starts with the strange succulent chasmophytic aster *Kleinia anteuphorbium*. Nearby are the rather prettier tufts of the purple crucifer *Moricandia suffruticosa*. Our next stop is dominated by white flowered *Cistus albidus* interspersed with plentiful *Lavendula multifida* and the rayless shrubby aster *Phagnolon rupestre*. Amongst this rather fine vegetation we'll find the cream 'dandelion' *Picris albidus* and the delicate scrambling snapdragon-flowered *Kickxia heterophylla*. Near Amizmiz the shrubby *Lavandula pedunculata* subspecies *atlantica* is common. Growing with it are some lovely little herbs including *Vicia subatlantica* and *Viola subatlantica*. Here we'll look for our first *Narcissus romieuxii*. Growing with these is the beautiful yellow (red-spotted) *Linaria amethystea* subsp *multipunctata*. *Allium roseum* flowers in both white and red forms and tucked in amongst the *Ferulas* (both *tingitana* and *communis*) are *Scilla peruviana* and Tassel Hyacinth. This is a rich area for pea flowers such as *Lathyrus setifolius*, *Vicia benghalensis*, *Vicia amphicarpa* and *Ononis laxiflora*. *Cistus heterophyllus* flowers pink on the hillsides amongst small 'bushes' of *Coronilla viminalis* and the chunky wine-red heads of *Anthyllis vulneraria reuteri*. Between the contorted boulders on a rocky promontory are flat green areas where a host of tiny plants grow. Here are lots of the purple stars of *Romulea bulbicodium* and between patches of Dwarf Palms is tiny white-flowered *Trifolium subterraneum*, the patch forming, teeny-leaved stemless yellow pea *Lotononis maroccana*, and a good number of the stemless asphodel *Asphodelus acaulis*.

Day 4 21st March
Azzaden Valley & Tizi Ousse

We pass through the red canyon lands around Asni before turning into the Azzaden Valley and heading uphill. Soon we'll spot the striking purple and yellow *Polygala balanense*. The road continues along the side of a spectacular mountainous valley. Above are snow-topped mountains the slopes between with sparse *Thuya*, then quite suddenly we'll be in a dense oak woodland *Quercus coccifera* forest on a north facing aspect. This changes to scattered *Juniperus phoenicea* bushes and gnarled and ancient *Juniperus oxycedrus* trees. There are clumps of Dwarf Palms (*Chamaerops humilis*), towering to six feet tall, so probably reaching their maximum age of around fifty years. The bottom third of the precipitous valley is a marvel of ancient engineering, with incredible terracing over every possible inch and villages stacked on the steep slope. Next is the beautiful cerise flowered aster *Rhodanthemum gayanum*. Here are Atlas Ground Squirrels and Levaillant's Woodpecker. Hundreds of Alpine Chough fly acrobatically in the blue sky above waterfalls festooned with Maidenhair Fern. We'll find lovely *Bellis caerulea*, the yellow flowered shrubby *Adenocarpus anagyriifolius*, and *Borago trabutii*. On the return journey we may stop at mineral and fossil shacks, Morocco is justifiably famous for both!

Day 5 22nd March
Imlil: Tizi n'Tamatert & Tacheddirt

En route we'll stop by a large boulder by to see beautiful clumps of flowering *Rhodanthemum atlanticum* an attractive white aster with pink undersides growing with architectural Rustyback Fern. Nearing the Tizi n'Tamatert pass we'll find an area of the endemic *Cedrus atlanticus* and stop to admire the mountainous views. In a grassy area we'll find the brightest yellow *Narcissus jacquemoudii* amidst a mass of the purple stars of *Romulea bulbocodium*. *Narcissus waiteri* glows ghost-like on the serpentinite bluffs that rise above the road, these otherwise free of vegetation. *Daphne laureola* flowers here too. There are some really beautiful plants up here. *Anacyclus pyrethrum* appears nothing more than a simple white chamomile until one looks underneath – the petal undersides are deep, deep red. There's matt-forming alpines such as white and pink *Ononis cristata* subspecies *cristata* and yellow *Medicago suffruticosa*. If desired we can stop in Imlil, a town famed for its hiking and mountain activities and with tourist shops to match. Some of the local shops have baskets heaped with local produce such as almonds, walnuts and thyme.

Day 6 23rd March
Sidi Fares & Oukaïmedan Ski Resort

En route to the high country of Oukaïmedan we'll stop to enjoy some glorious *Globularia eriocephala*. Nearby is the rare *Sideritis villosa*. Spectacular clumps of *Narcissus jacquemoudii* decorate roadside as we near the ski resort of Oukaïmedan. We'll walk the alpine slopes above where plump lilac *Colchicum triphyllum* is scattered throughout the short turf. Crimson-winged Finches and Shore Larks are amongst the alpine birds here.

Day 7 24th March
Marrakech: Majorelle Garden & The Secret Garden

En route to Marrakech we'll stop by a small reservoir where *Linaria moroccana* grows thickly by the roadside with other lovely flowers including *Volutaria lippii* and *Adonis macrocarpa*.

Inside Marrakech we'll start at the Majorelle Garden. The Majorelle is the result of a life-long love affair between the French-born artist Jacques Majorelle and Marrakech and the inspiration he found in the vibrant colours and street life of the city. Gradually, he purchased additional land, extending his holding by some 10 acres. In the grounds around the residence, Majorelle began planting a luxuriant garden which would become known as the Jardins Majorelle (Majorelle Garden). The garden became his life's work and he devoted himself to developing it for almost forty years. Following his divorce in the 1950s, Majorelle was forced to sell the house and land. After this, the garden was neglected and fell into disrepair. The garden and villa were

rediscovered in the 1980s by fashion designers Yves Saint-Laurent and Pierre Berge. They set about restoring the gardens and the former's ashes were scattered in the gardens in 2008.

We'll also visit the Secret Garden, a historical monument dating from the Saadian dynasty situated in the Medina of Marrakech. Reflecting the magnificence of Moroccan architecture, it offers two green spaces, the "Tropical Garden" where plants from all continents live, and the "secret garden".

Day 8 25th March

Departure

For those that are departing later in the day our hotel is conveniently located in the central kasbah and so you can explore this lovely old city for as long as you want before departure.

Tour Price:

The price is \$2965 per person based on a double occupancy room; single occupancy is \$3625.

Included in the price

Dinner and transport from airport to hotel on March 18 and breakfast to return to airport on March 25. Services of your leaders. Please note: Drinks, tips, and items of a personal nature such as travel insurance, are not included. Please note that if you arrive earlier than the 18th or stay later than the 25th, airport transfer is on your own.

Leaders

Stephano Doglio, Julia Corden

Group Size

Minimum is 5 and the maximum is 15. Only one leader will accompany a group of 8 or less.

Weather and Pace

It will be warm and sunny for much of the time. Rain is possible, usually as short-lived showers or thunderstorms. It can be cool, or even cold, in the highest areas. Walking is restricted to no more than two or three miles in any one day, and always at a slow pace, ideally suited to photography. Though the area is mountainous, much of the fauna and flora is visible from, or close to, the roads. However, sturdy footwear is still suggested.

Gratuities

Gratuities are included for meals but tips for bus driver and/or guides are at your own discretion.

Information Related Registration, Payments, and Cancellation

You must be a NARGS member to register. If you need to renew your membership or to join the society, please do so via the NARGS website (www.nargs.org) or contact Bobby Ward at nargs@nc.rr.com if you have questions or need help.

Registration will be on a first come, first serve basis. Space on this tour is limited to 15 guests. Your space is not guaranteed until a deposit is paid. The deposit is \$1000 USD. Before submitting your deposit, send an email to nfld.todd.boland@gmail.com to confirm space availability. You will receive an email confirming space availability and a link to the Google Registration Form. Guests travelling together must EACH fill in a Google Registration Form.

Deposit Payment

To pay the deposit for the tour, use the PayPal link on the NARGS website (www.nargs.org). After logging onto the website, click on the "Donate" button at the top of the homepage. Then type Morocco Tour in the "Purpose of Donation" box, select Educational trips from the "Program" picklist, select Other for the "Amount" list, then fill in the \$1000 USD deposit amount, and then click the "Add to Cart" button. On the next page, check that the amount is correct and then click the "Checkout" button. On the next page, select "Secure checkout" with Credit Card or with PayPal account as the "Payment method" and confirm your address. You will then be routed to the PayPal website where you can pay via either a PayPal account (if you have one) or select Pay with Debit or Credit Card.

Final Payment

NARGS will email a reminder regarding final payment information in early January 2026. The preferred method for final payment is by check from a U.S. bank denominated in USD. The check should be payable to NARGS, note Morocco Tour on the memo line of the check, and be mailed to NARGS, POB 18604, Raleigh, NC 27619-8604. Payment may also be made via credit card through our Stripe payment system which should be up and running by January 2026. Failure to make final payment by February 1, 2026 will result in reservation cancellation and full loss of the deposit.

Cancellation

Cancellation requests must be submitted in writing to NARGS by the person making the reservation. Cancellations after deposit is paid but prior to the final payment due date will forfeit 50% of deposit. Failure to submit final payment by due date will result in forfeiting 100% of deposit. Cancellations after final payment is made but more than 30 days before start of the tour will forfeit 50% of tour cost. No reimbursements or credits will be given for cancellations within 30 days of start of tour unless another person can be found to fill the space. Each registrant is urged to obtain private trip insurance to cover any emergency requiring cancellation. If the tour is cancelled by NARGS for any reason, all payments minus banking fees and incurred expenses will

be refunded to registered participants. If the tour is cancelled by NARGS, any person who had previously cancelled will not be entitled to this refund.

Information Related to Insurance, Waivers, and Public Health Requirements

Insurance

The tour price does not include insurance to cover costs associated with medical treatment, repatriation, flight cancellations, baggage loss, travel interruptions, cancellation fees, or other expenses. Each registrant is urged to assess their personal situation and to obtain private insurance to cover these costs if needed.

Waiver of Liability

By submitting a tour deposit, you are acknowledging that you are aware of the risks associated with travel and that you will not hold NARGS or others associated with the tour responsible for any delays; changes in itinerary, staffing, or accommodations; injuries, illnesses, or deaths; or any circumstances beyond the control of NARGS.

Public Health Requirements

All participants must comply with public health requirements for international travel in their country of residence and in the tour host country. During the tour, participants may be in close contact with other participants and the general public. To the extent possible, participants should comply with U.S. and local public health guidelines, and must comply with all local public health requirements. If you do not feel well during the tour, let the tour guide know. The guide will assist in locating medical services, but these services may be distant and less extensive than those available at home. Each participant will be individually responsible for paying the cost for these services and associated transportation.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions, please contact Todd Boland at nfld.todd.boland@gmail.com