



visit *Drâa*
Tafilalet | **TOURISTIC**
GUIDE

THE PROVINCE

Errachidia

Touristic Guide of The Province of Errachidia

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Errachidia

Oases, Ksours and Valleys

This rich province hosted Sijilmassa, the first Islamic city and commercial crossroads of Morocco located in the Grand Tafilalet. Cradle of the Alaouite dynasty, the province of Errachidia is rich in palm groves, Kasbahs, valleys and the desert of Merzouga.

Located in the central south of Morocco, the province of Errachidia is bordered to the north by Midelt, to the west by Tinghir and Zagora and to the southeast by Algeria. It is the capital of the region Drâa Tafilalet. Spread over 60,000 km², the province of Errachidia is home to a population of about 418,451 inhabitants (2014 census). Thanks to the irrigation of the rivers Ziz, Gheris and Guir, which originate in the High Atlas, life has become possible in this arid region. The Ziz palm grove, which stretches for 150 km from Errachidia to Rissani, offers magnificent landscapes. Arfoud, the main city of Tafilalet together with Rissani, is now the national capital of dates where an international exhibition is organized every year. The road to El Jorf where the remains of the ingenious Khetaras (ancestral irrigation system) lie, passes by Ksar Touroug and its beautiful oases before reaching the Ghri palm grove irrigated by the river wadi of the same name.

A Rich Intangible Heritage

In addition to its oases, the province of Errachidia has a remarkable intangible and historical heritage inherited from the peoples who enriched the civilization of Grand Tafilalet. The remains of the city of Sijilmassa still demonstrate its glorious past as a crossroads of caravan trade between Africa and the West. 100 km from this medieval capital lies the city of Rissani, which saw the birth of the Alaouite dynasty that arrived in Tafilalet in 1631. Now called Moulay Ali Chérif, Rissani is famous for its Ksours, its old houses and its weekly souks held on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. Traders gather there to display their local handicrafts but also dates from Tafilalet, spices, vegetables, animals and fabrics.



The Palm Grove of Grand Tafilalet Between Ziz, Ghris and Guir

The palm grove of Ziz constitutes with the oasis of Ghris, the great palm grove of Tafilalet. This one is reputed to be the largest palm grove in the world: it would count approximately 80.000 palm trees. Although it relies on the underground waters of the river wadi, the Ziz palm grove produces the best varieties of dates in Morocco. The Ziz River, which irrigates these oases, flows between the Ziz gorges in the heart of limestone cliffs. In perfect harmony with nature, nomads and sedentary Berbers live along the Ziz, benefiting from its water for crops and livestock. Errachidia is a perfect stop to visit this site where Kasbahs such as the one of Ifri where the dam forms a magnificent pond lined with palm trees. Arfoud, which closes the crossing of the Ziz, is also the world's largest open-air fossil museum where a dedicated craft industry is flourishing. Arfoud was once a sea. Further south, 50 km away, lies the majestic desert of Merzouga with its 150 m high sand dunes.



The Little Treasures of The Ghris Palm Grove

In a more recent historical era, the ruins of Sijilmassa in the Tafilalet are the last vestiges of this flourishing caravan trade crossroads between the 8th and 18th centuries. In Rissani, cradle of the Alaouite dynasty, the Moulay Ali Chérif mausoleum and the Ksar Abouam where the grandfather of the Alaouites resided are must-sees. The Ksar Akbar as well as the one of Oulad Abdelhalim are architectural jewels that are worth the detour during your visit. Further north lies the palm grove of Ghris, 14km long and fed by the river wadi Ghris. This garden of Eden located between Errachidia and Tinghir on the N10 is a valley of palm and olive trees that can be visited by bike or donkey. The valley of Ghris is a perfect starting point to visit the gorges of Amellagou... The guides of Goulmima can also take you to the small dunes outside the city for a night in the bivouacs of the nomads or simply make you visit the Ksar of Igoulmimen rehabilitated for the second time by the Ministry of Culture and partly inhabited. The rural pottery of Tadighoust is accessible by track through the source of Taltefraout are other curiosities to discover in the surroundings of Goulmima.

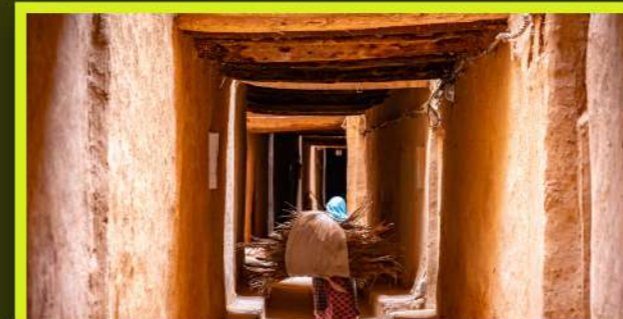


Must-sees in The Province of Errachidia

The Tafilalet has hosted Sijilmassa, the first Islamic kingdom of Morocco. The Alaouite family settled there in 1631 and still reigns over Morocco. The Ksours and Kasbahs of Tafilalet stretching as far as the eye can see as well as its cultural, spiritual and natural heritage are to be visited almost all year long.

The Road of Majhoul

The road of Majhoul criss-crosses, in a pleasant way, all the territory of Tafilalet. From El Khorbat museum in Tinjdad to Amellagou through Goulmima in the Ghris valley. Then heading to Errachidia along the road that passes through Rich, the Ziz Gorge and the Khetaras. From Errachidia, the capital of the region of Drâa Tafilalet to that of dates and Mejhoul Arfoud, the road can lead you to the dunes of Merzouga to return to Rissani and along the road to Jorf to return to Tinjdad. The stages stop in various lodgings, oases, ksours and date production cooperatives. A total immersion in the life of the inhabitants of Tafilalet and the discovery of the geology of this territory, its history and the production of dates and its derivatives as well as local crafts. This ecotourism trip is the work of the program of sustainable territorial development of the oases of Tafilalet aiming to develop and manage the oases differently.



The Khetaras

This thousand-year-old system of underground irrigation and equitable water management has served in the great Tafilalet for centuries. The khetara is a set of tunnels, wells, separated by 10 m from each other, and dedicated to the ventilation and extraction of soil but also for the cleaning and maintenance of the gallery. This ecological system can drain the water from the network in a constant speed towards the surface thanks to the action of gravity. The gallery is dug manually by the workers with a slight inclination of less than 5 or 6 millimeters per meter. The water is stored or redistributed directly to the users according to the water law with an obligatory participation in the maintenance operations. An interesting example is open to visit near El Jorf on the road leading from Arfoud to Tinghir. The keeper of the Khetara will lead you into this now dry tunnel to give all the explanations on this ingenious system.



The Mausoleum Moulay Ali Chérif

The entrance to the Mausoleum built in 1966 in Rissani is through a monumental ceramic covered gateway topped by a dome. One arrives directly in the large room that houses the tomb of Moulay Ali Chérif, the first founder of the Alaouite dynasty. The sacred enclosure hosts a courtyard, a patio and the mosque.

The Ruins of Sijilmassa

The first great city of Morocco founded in the Tafilalet valley in the 8th century, Sijilmassa was the stage town for caravans linking the Sudan to the Maghreb and the Mediterranean. The exchange of gold, ivory, salt, local handicrafts and slaves ensured its great wealth and fame. In its glory days, Sijilmassa had 600 kasbahs and as many neighborhoods. The most important kasbah, an important center of the Berber Zénètes, had the palace of the Emir (prince), the Great Mosque, a workshop of monetary striking as well as an important trading market.

Fossil Quarries of Arfoud

Arfoud conceals several quarries of marine fossils dating back several hundred million years. The city of Arfoud is the largest open-air fossil museum in the world. In the primary era, (500 million years BC), the southeast of Morocco was covered by the sea before becoming an oasis of fossils. Today, nearly 500 varieties of fossils exist in Arfoud over an area of about one hundred square kilometers. We can mention the trilobites, the fossilized skeletons of dinosaurs, turtles or crocodiles... The craftsmen of Arfoud are in charge of cutting, sculpting and shaping decorative objects from fossilized stones. Fountains, tables or washbasins are created from these prehistoric stones.

Jbel Mdouer

This circular mountain, with a peak of 1417 m, is located 19 km from the city of Rissani and close to the Oued Ghris on the road to Alnif. It would have sheltered one of the towers of Sijilmassa whose purpose was to control the routes of the commercial caravans. Jbel Mdouer overlooked the Souk Ibn Akla, which was a gathering point for caravans, goods and merchants from Sijilmassa. The beauty of this desert site has attracted film producers who have shot scenes from major international films as well as music videos.

The Celestial Staircase, The Golden Spiral and The City of Orion

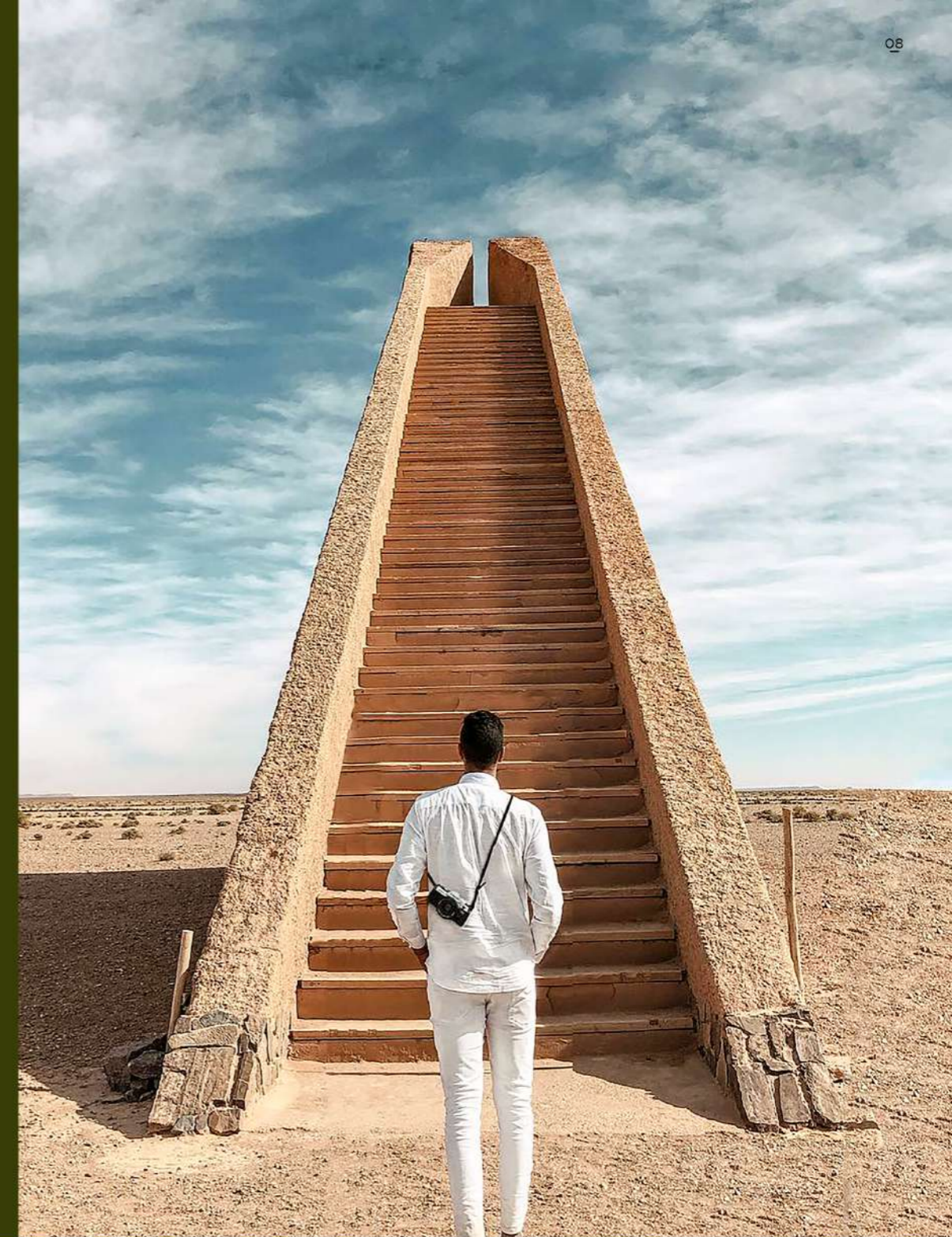
These three monumental sculptures by the German artist HannsjoergVoth were created respectively in 1980, 1993 and 1998 in the middle of the desert in the plain of Marha near the oasis of Fezna. It is possible to observe them from a distance for security reasons.

The Rock Engravings of Taouz and Alnif

The rock engravings date back thousands of years and are an indication of the first human presence in the region. The engravings of Taouz lie 21 km south of Merzouga. Similar engravings have been found in the region of Alnif, 95 km from Rissani. The illustrations show cattle and antelopes accompanied by human beings or writings in Tifinagh. They can be discovered during 4X4 or camel rides.

Ksar and Museum El Khorbat

Located 50 Km east of Tinghir in the lower Toudgha Valley, Ksar El Khorbat was built in the 19e century and recently restored. Half of the houses are inhabited. On the other hand, the rest is converted into a guest house, museum and craft workshop... The museum, opened in 2002, covers three restored houses on three levels in Ksar El Khorbat. It consists of 22 rooms and covers the different aspects of the life of the inhabitants of the oases of southern Morocco covering agriculture, trade, crafts, pottery, the tribal system, dress code, festivals, war, worship, food, architecture, nomadic life ...



The 6 Ksours you Should Absolutely Visit in The Province of Errachidia

Ksar Meski

Is built on a rocky hill on the right bank of the Ziz wadi. It is the only Ksar to also use stone as a building material.

Ksar Mâadid

Located in Arfoud, it is one of the most beautiful ksours of Tafilalet. Well preserved, it includes four walled quarters stuck to each other. Its high walls and majestic doors give it a typical architecture of southern Morocco.

Ksar Abouam

Built in the 17th century in the center of Rissani, it was once the temporary residence of Moulay Ali Chérif, grandfather of the Alaouites. This well-protected Ksar still houses some 300 families. It was also the shooting location of major film productions.

Ksar El Fida

This Alaouite Kasbah was built in 1854 by Sultan Moulay Hicham, son of Moulay Ali Cherif. It was the residence of the region's chief until 1965. Today, the Ksar El Fida is an archaeological museum. A guided tour of the place is led by one of the inheritors of the place.

Ksar Oulad Abdelhalim

4 km East of the center of Rissani, this Ksar was built in 1863 by Sultan Sidi Mohamed Abderrahmane and inhabited by his son Moulay Rachid. It was the administrative, judicial and council of war headquarters. This sumptuous Ksar still preserves the Riad, the stable and the arsenal. The interior is in ruins but the sculpted entrance is monumental and its mud brick ramparts bear witness to a glorious past.

Ksar Igoulmimen

Located halfway between Errachidia and Tinejda, the city of Goulmima hosts the ksar of Igoulmimen with traditional adobe architecture. The doors of the fortified ksar are protected by two watchtowers that protected the inhabitants during the raids conducted in the past by rival tribes. Its narrow alleys, light holes and large wooden doors lead to modest dwellings. The Ksar also opens up to the open air overlooking the oasis and the orchards surrounded by palm trees and irrigation canals.



Customs and Traditions

The ethnic mixture of the Errachidia region between Africans from Sudan and Ghana, Amazighs and Arabs has created a remarkable heritage of musical, clothing and gastronomic traditions.

Gnaoua Khamlia in Merzouga

Located in the desert of Merzouga, the douar Khamlia hosts a black community that maintains the mystical and spiritual music of Gnaoua. During the exchanges of valuable products (gold, ivory and slaves...) promoted by the trans-Saharan caravans, the influx of African populations is important towards the whole Moroccan territory. Settled since that time in the village of Merzouga, the Gnaoua of Khamlia perpetuate their ancestral art. Dressed in white costumes, their spiritual words and gestures accompanied by the Qraqeb and the Gambri instrument remind us of their attachment to this musical tradition transmitted from father to son. Groups such as Pigeons de sable or Bambaras from the village Khamlia still maintain this tradition.





International Date Fair of Arfoud

This region in the heart of Tafilalet, rich in dates, celebrates the harvest of this ancestral fruit in October of each year. This festival of the farmers of Arfoud has been transformed in recent years into an annual trade show visited by Moroccans and foreigners. The festival is usually held during the third week of October depending on the harvest, combining sales and exhibitions with singing and dancing shows.

The Cuisine of The Province of Errachidia

The culinary art of the province of Errachidia draws on local agricultural products and is often based on meats. Cattle breeding helps because it is widely practiced by nomads in the valleys and the desert of Tafilalet.

Medfouna

This stuffed bread with a mixture of small cubes of meat, hard-boiled eggs, almonds, onions and spices (salt, cumin, ginger and sometimes chili) originates from the town of Rissani near Arfoud. It is available to order from the butcher in the town's popular souk, where you can choose the cut of meat you prefer. A young boy takes the ingredients by bicycle to the local oven and returns an hour later with the hot stuffed bread packed in a box and ready to be eaten.

Mechoui

Prepared from a whole goat or sheep, the Sahrawi mechoui requires 3 to 4 hours of cooking in the traditional clay oven (Koucha). It is cooked in the walls of the oven heated with wood and palm leaves.



Harira Warguia or Moroccan Arugula Soup

Usually prepared by the poor inhabitants of the Ksours of Grand Tafilalet, this soup is cooked with arugula, turnip, meat and spices. It is the equivalent of the Aassida with corn semolina, a nutritious soup known to the Berbers of Souss and the Atlas Mountains.

Tafernout Bread

This bread, found throughout the southern region, is baked either in the traditional oven (Koucha) or in the hot sand at 50°. The latter is heated with wood and hot stones.

Tajine of Okra (Mloukhia)

This tajine of beef or lamb is seasoned essentially with okra. This exotic vegetable known in North Africa and the Middle East comes after cooking with a viscous and gelatinous texture. Nutritious and tasty dish, the tagine of okra is available in spring summer because of the requirements of culture of the vegetable.



Day Trip to Erg Chebbi, The Sand Dunes of Merzouga and its Surroundings

The golden dunes of Erg Chebbi, 150 m high, form a stretch of sand located in Tafilalet, 40 km south of Arfoud near the village of Merzouga. This area is 22 km long and 5 km wide and is easily accessible. Upon arrival at the village of Merzouga, you are in the dunes. You can either choose to climb the sand dunes on foot or take a camel ride into the desert with the countless experienced desert guides or better yet, spend the night in a bivouac contemplating the most starry sky you have ever seen. Other treasures near Merzouga include the prehistoric rock engravings of Taouz and the M'ifis mines of quartz, kohl, barite and copper located 11 km from Merzouga. A tea with the nomads of Merdani is possible as well as the visit to the village of Gnaoua Khamlia, on the way back. In addition to the sand dunes, other unexpected natural landscapes in this desert are formed as soon as there is some rainfall. A few kilometers from Merzouga, the Dayet Srijj lake, which has been dry for a long time, welcomes pink flamingos and a great biodiversity of migratory birds as soon as it rains.

Useful Information

To improve the travelers' stay, here is some useful information about the facilities and infrastructure of the province.

Climate

The province is known for its dry climate with mild winters and very hot and sunny summers. The best time of year to visit the province of Errachidia for summer activities is from late May to late September.

Local Time

Morocco is on a single time zone GMT + 1. During the month of Ramadan, Morocco switches to GMT. The Drâa Tāfilalet region is no exception to the rule.

Spoken Languages

The population speaks Berber and Arabic. The signage is in French and Arabic, sometimes in Tifinagh. The guides, the staff of the hotels and the guest houses speak French, English and other languages considering the tourist vocation of the province.

Hotels

The province provides hostels and hotels as well as beautiful riads. In general, accommodation and food in the province are affordable and suitable for all budgets.

Air Transport

Errachidia has an airport Moulay Ali Cherif connected to Casablanca by a regular flight.

Airport - City Center Shuttle

From the airport, it is easy to find different types of transportation on the way out, whether it is cabs or tourist ground transportation.

Land Transportation

The province has a network of land-based tourist transporters offering several options varying from 4x4 all-terrain vehicles to 60-person buses. The CTM (Compagnie du Transport au Maroc) offers routes connecting the cities. Comfort is assured and speed is controlled.

Travel Agencies

For visitors looking for adapted trips, there is no lack of travel agencies. Several programs are offered, and customized trips can also be made. The travel agent takes care of all the details: advice, reception and accompaniment, reservations, travel and transfers...

Emergencies

Police : **Tel : 19** | Firemen : **Tel : 15** | Roadside assistance : **Tel : 177** | Phone information : **Tel : 160**



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Conseil Régional
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www.visitdraatafilalet.com
info@visitdraatafilalet.com