

## Morocco & Western Sahara, 10 Dec 2006 - 7 Jan 2007

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For a month of travel, Morocco and the Western Sahar were my venues, a fantastic month of wandering the deserts and mountains from Marrakech southward. Seeing the majority of target birds and specialities, the sites visited included many of the famous localities, such as Merzouga, the Tagdilt Track and Oued Massa, plus a trip down into the far south of Western Sahara.

For convenience of reading, I have divided this report into two halves:

The Southern Loop - two weeks with a rented car, covering the classic Moroccan birding localities from the Sahara in the east, the High Atlas mountains and the coastal spots north and south of Agadir.

Western Sahara and Coastal Birding - all by public transport or hitch-hiking, the second two weeks of the trip saw me exploring the lesser known parts of Western Sahara, travelling as far south as Dakhla, a bare whisper from the Tropic of Cancer. With time to spare, I also revisited all the well-known coastal spots north and south of Agadir.

### Money Matters.

Morocco is a very reasonably priced destination, both in terms of airfares to get there and prices once in the country. I flew from London with British Airways to Marrakech and returned from Agadir, the flight costing just £80 return, including taxes. Ryan also flies to Morocco now, allowing even cheaper access if booked in advance.

At the time of my travel, the exchange rate was about 1Euro = 11 dirhams, similar rates throughout the country, including at the airport. For the budget traveller, Morocco is a dream - for the entire month, not including car rent and petrol, I spent only 250 Euros! Obviously car rental and petrol costs can be split by the number of participants, but in our case, the two weeks' hire was quite cheap and the petrol about 250 Euro too (covering 3700 km). Accommodation generally cost about 50-60 dirhams per night for basic, but okay rooms - only at Merzouga (200 dirham, with food) and in Agadir (150 dirham) did I pay significantly more.