



Tour Name

Gnawa Music Experience

Tour City

Essaouira

Tour Snapshot

Step inside the sacred and traditional world of the Gnawa, an Afro-Moroccan group whose music and culture are the heartbeat of Essaouira. Meet with Gnawa masters and experience their addictive music in hidden domains inaccessible to Essaouira outsiders.

Highlights

- Explore the sacred Gnawa traditions and sites with a local musician guide
- Meet a local *kuyu* (Gnawa dancer) for a dance presentation and display of their traditional garments
- Learn the history and craft of the ornate lute-like *guembri* instrument
- Join a Gnawa *maalem* (master) in his private quarters to hear him play the traditional Gnawa melodies
- Enjoy a cup of Moroccan tea to the sounds of Gnawa fusion at a local music hotspot

Local Impact: How you taking this tour will benefit the local community:

- Help keep ancient Moroccan musical traditions alive by meeting local Gnawa dancers and musicians and learning about the culture behind the music. A portion of your tour fee is donated to the Gnawa music community in Essaouira.

Inclusions: Local English-speaking guide, tea, Gnawa demonstrations/performances.

Exclusions: Personal shopping, tips / gratuities.

Schedule details

- Duration: 2.5 - 3 hours
- Meeting point:
Inside Bab Sbaa, below the clock tower (L'Moganna)
- Find the exact meeting point with what3words: [///local.lyrics.coherent](http://local.lyrics.coherent)
- Starting time: 5.30 PM
- Ending point:
Near Moulay Hassan Square (in the Medina)

Full Itinerary

Kick off your Essaouira tour under the iconic clocktower to begin a journey back in time and tradition. Weave through the medina to visit *azaouia*, or temple of the Gnawa people, a sacred place reserved for traditional *lila* rituals, often performed to treat psychological ills, drive out evil spirits, or remedy scorpion stings. These *lilas* still take place and usually last all night long and into the wee hours of the morning.

Follow a *kuyu*, or Gnawa dancer, to his private home for some tea and a demonstration of the sometimes acrobatic Gnawa dance moves, accompanied by an explanation of their typical clothing. Often made at home, these intricate designs are unique to the Gnawa performers and include bold colours, embroidery, and cowrie shells.

Our Essaouira tour continues the private quarters of a *maalem*, or Master, to learn about the making of the *guembri*. This lute-like instrument is the base of all Gnawa music and you'll get to learn how it's made and hear it played. Rarely do outsiders get invited into these personal spaces, generally reserved for Gnawi, musicians and their friends. Despite often having no formal training, the *maalem*, the leader of any Gnawa troupe, is highly studied in the rhythm, emotion, and sound of the *guembri* and its songs. They grow up in families and circles of musicians or healers, learning the calls and chants from an early age. *Maalem* are highly respected in Essaouira and have much traditional knowledge to share.

Finish the evening as hip locals do in Essaouira — chilling at a local music spot, grooving to soulful music that fuses Gnawa with Jazz, Latin, Reggae, and more. Your local guide can recommend where to have dinner or carry on the night, if you're so inclined!

Additional information

Inclusions: Local English-speaking guide, tea, Gnawa demonstrations/performances.

Exclusions: Personal shopping, tips / gratuities.

Dress standard: As we will be entering sacred and private spaces, please be considerate of local tradition and wear appropriate clothing. We recommend covering the shoulders to the knees for both men and women. As we will walk over some uneven terrain, comfortable walking shoes are recommended. Evenings can be cold so a warm layer is advisable. An umbrella, rain jacket and close toed shoes may be necessary in January and February.

Your Trip: For your Urban Adventure you will be in a small group of a maximum of 12 people

Confirmation of booking: If you have your voucher, your booking is confirmed. We'll see you at the start point. Get in touch if you have any concerns or require more information via the email address or phone number (business hours only) on your voucher.

Additional Information: We believe in Responsible Travel. A reusable bag is recommended to carry any purchases and reduce plastic bag waste.

Closure of sites: If there are any sites visited on the trip that can be closed at limited prior notice for any reason. Eg for official visitations, please provide comment and the alternate site that will be visited.

Child Policy: This is a child-friendly tour, but is not stroller-friendly. Children between the ages of 6 and 11 inclusively are permitted on this tour at the rate listed above. Please select 'child' above when booking. Children under the age of 6 are

permitted to join this tour free of charge. Please inform us at the time of booking if you'll be bringing a child under the age of 6. You can do so in the special request box on the checkout page. Please note that this tour may include narrow stairs and tight spaces, and is therefore not suitable for strollers.

Local contact

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