



A sincere feedback about large group tours

Many travelers ask why we don't organize large group tours that provide cheaper services but cheap experiences come at a high price, this is an honest feedback from a foreign travel agent who wanted to see for herself why we don't operate this kind of tours anymore after explaining that these tours do not meet our quality standards and do not reflect in any way Morocco's culture and famous hospitality, an image that our company aspires to maintain and improve.

~MDT Manager : Ibrahim

Emma Snipp, health and safety inspector for a very large travel agency:

With thanks for your help in arranging my participation on the Merzouga desert tour (via 'Reda Bus Transporte Touristique') last month during what I have been led to believe was the coldest weather Morocco has experienced since the 1970's.

It was a great shame the driver/guide did not speak any English during the complete tour and hence I had to rely on the other passengers to advise me what to look at out of the window at, what we were stopping for etc. It was also a trip that really did not commence until the mountain road reopened at approximately 10.30am so we could have delayed our 7am start to compensate.

Unfortunately during the tour I was exposed to several safety risks, lots of quality issues and animal welfare issues that I believe to be of bad practice too. I have highlighted my findings below and I've also included our good practice guidance on accommodation, activities and transportation for your information as well as the current ABTA Working Animal guidance as ways of helping you to improve the product provided.

Driver/Guide:

Did not speak any English (in fact his only words to me were 'Ca va Madame')

No safety briefing was provided and the seat belts were only worn by the local Moroccan passengers whenever we approached a road security check only to be unfastened once we had passed by. On one occasion the driver braked/swerved

suddenly causing two of the passengers to fall off their seats hitting heads/knees on impact

The driver frequently used his mobile phone to make/receive calls and take pictures etc. whilst driving

On several occasions the driver drove off without checking all the passengers were inside or that the side door was shut

No guide was provided for our visit to the Kasbah Ait Benhaddou after our lunch stop so we had to fend for ourselves and work out what the history etc of the place was

At the Auberge Restaurant des Peupliers and the Nasser Palace the driver did not make any attempt to check us in or allocate the available rooms (sharing or not) we had to do this ourselves.

Diver participated in 4x4 dune bashing while we camel trekked

Guide (Todra Gorge)

Spoke good English but the other Moroccan passengers insisted he spoke French/Moroccan as they could not understand English

This was the same at the rug co-operative we visited so I had to rely on other passengers to translate for me so I could understand

Transport (Ford 8-seater mini bus):

I had to clean the outside of the windows so I could see out and take pictures as we were driving

Accommodation (Auberge Restaurant des Peupliers, Dades Gorge):

Contained two wood burners (located in the reception and at the end of the first floor corridor) and an open fire in the lounge which smoked profusely and could be seen accumulating around the doorway/ceiling (we had to open a window). A large gas fired heater was also provided in the lounge

Naked candles were positioned along the first floor corridor at floor level. These could easily have fallen over and set the rugs/ wooden floor alight and with the children running up and down the corridor created a safety risk

No heating was provided in the bedrooms and considering the -2 to -7C temperatures we were experiencing we had to pay extra for the air conditioned or a gas heater to be provided

There was no fire alarm, no smoke detectors, no carbon monoxide detectors, no fire extinguishers, no emergency evacuation details in the bedrooms and no emergency signage provided

Room number 9 - the toilet was not screwed/fixed to the floor so it was very unstable to use

Accommodation (Nasser Palace)

Used as a breakfast and toilet stop only

We were promised the use of hot showers in the morning after the desert camp but were not allowed to use them as we had to drive back to Marrakech

Accommodation (Merzouga camp):

No safety briefing was provided (guests/staff smoking, what to do in the event of a fire etc.)

Very limited/dim lights working

Rugs on the sand caused trip hazards to several customers

There was no electric for guests to use

Limited bedding was provided considering the very cold weather conditions (tents at maximum capacity meant guests had a maximum of two blankets each)

Staff frequently poured engine oil over the lit open fire to increase heat and light

There was no mobile phone reception so not sure what would have happened in a medical or other emergency