

# Al Hoceima Natural Park Route

Marocco

Duration: 5 days

# Itinerary

## DAY 1. Al Hoceima

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The town of Al Hoceima, located in the bay of the same name, is a city of blue and white houses perched on cliffs facing the sea, on a slope leading down to the fishing port from the city centre.

The influence of Spain is visible in this city, founded in 1920 during the years of the Rif War and which still preserves some of the architectural features of the colonial period. In Mohamed VI Square, the city centre, located on Quemado Beach, is the Melchor de Jovellanos cultural centre, of Spanish ownership, in what used to be the former headquarters of the military command. Nearby, is the Royal Palace and access to the port and beach, as well as Chiita Park. To the south, the Plaza del Rif or Florido, the old city centre and Cala Bonita. To the west, the Cebadilla beach.

Facing the city, in the bay, the Peñón de Alhucemas is located, with its lighthouse, its church and fortifications, the Peñón is a silent witness of the history of the country. Twelve kilometres from Al Hoceima, near Souani beach, in the heart of a wooded area, one can visit the ruins of Al Mazamma, the old port of the medieval city of Nekor.

Al Hoceima is a city dedicated to tourism and fishing. In the summer season, its lively streets are filled with visitors attracted by the beaches and nature of the province. Every evening, the boats arrive at the port with the daily catch from the sea which is distributed in the markets, restaurants and eating houses around the port and in the city.

The headquarters of RODPAL are located in Al Hoceima. RODPAL is a network of organizations that work together to preserve the National Park of Al Hoceima, offering solutions for sustainable development compatible with the conservation of natural heritage. The organization integrates associations dedicated to the promotion of sustainable tourism, the preservation of traditional fishing, agriculture or beekeeping, in an attempt to stimulate the development of initiatives that combine economic profitability with the conservation of the natural environment.

## DÍA 2. Tafensa, Taoussart, Adouz

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Al Hoceima National Park can be accessed from the east, from Izemouren, in the direction of Tafensa, or from Rouadi, 30 kilometres from the city of Al Hoceima, a town known for its souk or Sunday market, Had el Rouadi, and for the Rif folk crafts market based mainly on wicker, clay pottery and traditional wood carving.

Taoussart and Adouz are two douars, or villages, located within the Al Hoceima National Park. From Rouadi, we head towards Taoussart. One the way to this small douar one truly starts to get to know the National Park of Al Hoceima. The Bokkoya massif forms an environment with a great variety of native vegetation and animal fauna. The coastline features a rugged rocky coastline. The limestone massif continues to the sea, forming cliffs that in some cases reach 700 metres high, creating a landscape of great visual richness.

The historic town of Adouz, which dates back to the 12th century, is located twelve kilometres from Rouadi, no more than two kilometres from the sea, on a vantage point of about 600 metres above sea level, surrounded by a broken limestone relief. Considered to be the historical capital of the Berber tribe of the Bokkoya, a mosque built in the 14th century, reflecting the economic and spiritual influence of the douar, still stands at the entrance to the village.

The strategy of promoting rural tourism in the area of Al Hoceima, with the collaboration of organizations such as the Movimiento por la Paz (MPDL) or the Asociación Catalana por el Tiempo Libre y la Cultura (ACTLC), has led to the design of different walking and cycling routes and the establishment of several rural houses, or “gites”, in the towns of the park. In the area closest to Al Hoceima, “La colina del viento” stands out. This is a typical rural house of the Rif region located at the entrance of the park, in the area of Tafensa. In the Tadarth Nrayas Ali rural house, in Rachid, Adouz, visitors can relax and most likely enjoy a dish of Harira: a traditional soup made of vegetables and meat, which is eaten mostly served during Ramadan.

The hiking trails, designed to promote ecotourism in the park, enable visitors to discover coves with crystalline waters hidden among the cliffs. The 700-step beach, which is named after the steps one must descend to reach the beach, can be reached from Taoussart; a walk between small villages, whitewashed hamlets, fruit trees, forests of carob trees, fig trees, thyme, rosemary, lavender and araar, brings us closer to the cliffs and to the coast, to the Taydywine cove. The cove of Bousekour is located to the east, closer to Al Hoceima. To the west, the coves of Topoz or Tikkit are not far from Adouz.

The Spanish NGO CERAI develops different projects for the social and economic promotion of women in some of the rural communities of the Al Hoceima area. Its projects have included training for the creation of agri-food micro-enterprises, support for entrepreneur women in rural areas and the strengthening and adaptation of a forest nursery in the douar of Tafensa, in the rural community of Izemouren.

### DÍA 3. Tikkit beach

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From the city of Adouz we can begin a visit to some of the marabouts of the area. This word comes from Arabic (murābi) and refers to small chapels or funerary temples, normally located in unpopulated areas, built in recognition of the holiness of a venerable person. Probably related to pre-Islamic forms of worship, the marabouts are typically located near a water source, a stream or a well, almost always in high places. Their sanctity has helped to preserve the vegetation of their immediate surroundings. The marabout of Lala Tikkit or Lala Miomouna is highlighted. This is only marabout in the area built in honour of a woman, supposedly a holy princess, born on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, who arrived alone to the Kabyle of the Bokkaya, fleeing from war, and who surrendered everything for spiritual life and prayer.

The beach of Tikkit, hidden at the foot of the mountain, is a small beach featuring round pebbles. This is a good place to go diving or snorkelling and to enjoy the rich marine biodiversity of the Mediterranean coast.

### DÍA 4. Taunil, Torres, Bades

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A path among almond trees, prickly pears and palm hearts separates Adouz from the douar of Taunil. In its rural souk we can find a good sample of the characteristic craftsmanship of the area, including hats, djellabas, clay handicrafts and braided palm leaves.

From Taounil, we continue to Torres. The village is named after the five towers built by the Portuguese on the hilltop at the northern side of the village. The closeness of the mountains and cliffs and the beaches that surround this small fishing village have made Torres a highly-valued destination for inland tourism in Morocco.

On the way to Torres, the douar of Jnanate is known for its abundance of fruit trees. The “gite” or rural house of Jnanate is established within the framework of a local program aimed at promoting responsible tourism, based on the conservation of cultural and natural heritage. Here, visitors can taste the homemade bread baked in a traditional oven and the seasonal fruits and vegetables, grown in the garden of the rural house.

From Torres, it is possible to hike along the coast, following natural paths, until Bades, the second Islamic city built in Morocco, after Nekor. Nowadays, it is possible to visit the remaining ruins of its ancient walls and buildings.

Bades beach is a gravel cove facing the rock of Vélez de la Gomera. Of Spanish sovereignty, this rock measures 260 meters long, between 15 and 100 meters wide and 87 meters high at its highest point. Among outstanding scenery, the rock is located at one end of Cape Baba surrounded by mountains. Originally, the rock was a small island very close to the coast. An earthquake left the island permanently attached to the mainland in 1930. The rope that separates Morocco from the Spanish islet is the smallest border in the world, measuring only 85 metres long.

Before returning to Torres, a boat trip along the coast of Bades will help us to discover small secluded coves and caves hidden in the rocks.

## DÍA 5. Cala Iris

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At the western end of the Al Hoceima National Park, no more than five kilometres from Torres, Cala Iris is located, a fishing village nestled in a horseshoe-shaped bay featuring one of the finest beaches on the northern coast of Morocco. Surrounded by the mountains that conform the park and facing the islets that stand out in the bay, Cala Iris offers a striking landscape.

After a day at the beach, we can start the return journey to Al Hoceima, to return to our starting place in Melilla or Al Hoceima itself, or continue westwards, towards Tangier or Tetouan.

# Activities

**RODPAL** (NGOs for the Development of Al Hoceima National Park)  
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**AZIR "Association pour L'Environnement"**  
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# Accomodation

## **Casa Paca Alhucemas**

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## **Gîte Colina del Viento**

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www.youtube.com/watch?v=znZjGVjxl6A

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## **Gîte d'Aduz**

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## **Gîte Rural Jnanate**

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## **Eco-Camping Amis de Cala Iris**

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# Useful information

## **Language**

Arabic (official), Berber, in addition to French, Spanish and English..

## **Visas**

Spanish citizens do not require a tourist visa to visit the country. A valid passport is required for a minimum of three months.

## **Currency**

Moroccan Dirham.

## **Generally recommended vaccines**

Hepatitis A, Tetanus-diphtheria.

## **Recommended vaccines in special circumstances**

Typhoid Fever, Hepatitis B, Rabies, Flu, Pneumococcal, MMR vaccine.

## **Climate**

The coast has a warm, Mediterranean climate. In the interior the climate is hotter, drier and more continental. The summer is quite dry with high temperatures. The rainy season on the coast is from November to March.