

# Sofitel Morocco

## Golfing in Morocco with Sofitel Hotels

In Morocco, golf fits quite naturally into the majestic spectacle of its natural landscape. Sofitel offers some wonderful golfing holidays for the golf enthusiast, combining the pleasure of the sport, beautiful golf courses, wellbeing facilities and the art of hospitality.

In El Jadida, Rabat, Fez, Marina Smir, Agadir and Marrakech you find top-quality courses added to the pleasure of a holiday at Sofitel... giving you the best things in life.

Morocco is not a country readily associated with golf holidays. True, most people's perceptions of the North African country evolve around lazing on the beach in Agadir or sightseeing and shopping in the souks of Marrakech. In fact, Morocco has a dozen great 18-hole championship courses, all of them in superb condition.

The jewel in Morocco's golfing crown is undoubtedly Royal Golf Dar Es-Salam, close to the Imperial City of Rabat. Dar Es-Salam consists of 45 holes, all designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr, broken down into the Red and Blue courses (both 18 holes) and the Green, with nine. In the 1980s, the Red Course was twice named as one of the world's 50 best golf courses by prestigious US publication Golf Magazine. It still is.

The layout is a stunning challenge for golfers of all levels, perfectly manicured and with some of the best greens you could hope to putt on, which winds its way through a forest of cork trees. The fairways are also lined with a variety of eucalyptus, cypress, orange and pine trees that add to the beauty while three come into play at the 9th, a lovely par-3 of 172 metres that is the course's signature hole, the 11th and 12th.

**Antiquity on display on the world famous Red Course at Royal Dar Es Salem**



**A choice of French or Moroccan cuisine at the Sofitel Diwan Rabat**

What makes Royal Dar Es-Salam even more remarkable is that you can play any course, or any combination of the Red, Blue and Green courses, all day long, as many times as you like for just €45. Incredible value. And, with all three courses playing a total of just 6,000 rounds a year, even the Red Course is never crowded – especially on Mondays when Royal Dar Es-Salam is officially closed.

If you're a guest at the Sofitel Diwan Rabat the hotel has a special arrangement with the golf club allowing you to play on Mondays when all the courses are completely deserted, apart from the very occasional royal four balls, complete with caddies and security guards



**Sofitel El Jadida overlooks the golf course where adventurous driving is encouraged and quick and hard greens test your putting skills**

Sofitel has arrangements with 10 of the country's best golf courses in Morocco and Diwan Rabat also operates golf packages centred on Rabat and Royal Golf Dar Es-Salam but which also include rounds at nearby Royal Ben Slimane, a beautiful course opened in 1996 and designed by Robert Von Hagge, as well as at Mohammedia. It is a links course about 45 minutes from Rabat and close to Casablanca, and is Morocco's third oldest course.



**At Ben Slimane, an immense lake inhabited by perch and ducks stretches the length of the golf course**

becomes a links and the closing par-3 16th, par-4 17th and par-5 18th play right by the foaming white breakers of the Atlantic. The 16th tee provides the best views, most notably of a hug old shipwrecked trawler that stands right out of the water about 100m off-shore.

**Sofitel Marrakech features Moroccan and Andalusian-style architecture**



These Sofitel golf packages in Morocco can also include a stay and a round of golf at the Sofitel Royal Golf El Jadida. This beautiful resort hotel and striking course are located about 90km south of Casablanca, beside the Atlantic Ocean.

Designed by the American, Cabell Robinson, El Jadida is for the most part a gorgeous parkland layout that plays through avenues of pine and eucalyptus trees with several picturesque lakes coming into play on five holes. But it is the final three holes that really take the breath away as the course suddenly



**Cabell Robinson has used the terrain at The Dunes Golf club to perfection**

Sofitel Royal Golf El Jadida is a great golf course and the resort and should definitely be include in any Moroccan golf holiday, as should the two courses at Agadir, Morocco's main seaside resort situated south. The Golf les Dunes Club (27 holes) is another Robinson design and is the better of the two. Golf du Soleil, designed by Fernando Muella has 36-holes. Both courses have the wonderful southern mountains as a backdrop as well as being adorned with beautiful purple bougainvillea everywhere, so even if your golf's not up to scratch, you can't help but enjoy the scenery.

The fabled city of Marrakesh has three great courses. The Royal Golf Club of Marrakesh is the country's second oldest course, founded in 1923 yet still a beautiful challenge today. Its fairways are lined with thousand of trees and three's no escaping those Atlas Mountains again. Special golf packages are available with the Sofitel and Spa, situated in the heart of the town.

The other two courses around the red city are more modern. The Palmeraie Golf Palace, another Trent Jones Sr design which opened in 1993, has fairways lined with palm trees. It's a magnificent layout and a great challenge. The Amelkis course, which opened two years later, is another Cabell Robinson design, a typically American-style course with lots of bunkers and water hazards, and huge, undulating greens.

Tetouan's course is Royal Golf de Cabo Negro, yet another Robinson design that is a real holiday golf course, friendly and welcoming to golfers of all levels yet still challenging from the back tees.

Founded in 809, Fez remains the spiritual intellectual and cultural capital of Morocco. It has managed to preserve its traditions, notably with its Koranic Universities, its famous Karaiyine Mosque and its 30,000 craftspeople. Its Medina, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a maze of narrow streets in which it is a delight to lose yourself and properly experience the bustle of its souks. Within the ancient ramparts overlooking the Medina the authentic 19th-century palace Sofitel Palais Jamai invites you into a dreamworld.



**Above: The pool at the Sofitel Palais Jamais is set in a symmetrical courtyard**

**Below: Superb views over Fez from the terrace at Sofitel Palais Jamais**

The Royal Golf's setting is countryside looking out towards the summits of the High Atlas. The raw materials: a magnificent olive grove. The architect: Cabell Robinson. He really put his heart

into this project, accentuating the natural contours of the terrain to produce the undulating fairways and the treacherously sloping greens – playing with the great lake, drawing it out, dividing it into three for the greater delight of the golfers, providing the greens with a whole battery of defences: trees, water, bunkers, giant bunkers and monumental bunkers, the largest covering 1,200 square metres.

All in all, Morocco is a great golf destination with superb courses that are still very cheap to play, and with a year-round golf-friendly climate. It is set to become an international golf holiday spot, so golfers should go there before everyone else discovers it and while the fairways are still relatively deserted.

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