



Fact Sheet

Destination Morocco

Population:	33.5 million
Language:	Arabic/French/Tamazight
Time:	GMT/UTC 0
Electricity:	220V, 50Hz
Dialing Code:	212
Currency:	Moroccan Dirham = 100 centimes

General

The Kingdom of Morocco will surprise with its vibrant and diverse cities, vastly differing regions, from the beaches of the Atlantic to the immense solitude of the Sahara desert. Morocco is located at the extreme northwest part of Africa. Morocco maintains an international border with Algeria to the east, to the south is Mauritania and to the north is Spain. The borders of Morocco with Spain include a water border through the Strait and land borders with two small Spanish autonomous cities, Ceuta and Melilla. Morocco has a moderate, subtropical climate, however, inland, the temperatures can be quite extreme, getting very hot in the summer and quite cold in the winter. In mountainous areas such as the Atlas range temperatures often drop below zero and the peaks remain snow-capped throughout most of the year. Northern Morocco is rainy during the winter, whereas in the south, at the edge of the Sahara, it gets bitterly cold.

History

The Berbers are known to have settled in the area thousands of years ago and at one time controlled all of the land between Morocco and Egypt and were unmoved by a succession of invaders including the Roman occupancy of the area. By the 8th century, Arabia had conquered all of the North African region and brought Islam to the area. After numerous splinter groups succeeded in gaining the territory of Morocco, it was in the early part of the 19th century that Europe took an interest and France eventually occupied the entire country, apart from a small Spanish stronghold in Tangier. Mohammed V finally brought independence to Morocco and was proclaimed king in 1957 and was succeeded four years later by his son, Hassan II. Morocco now enjoys the liberal rule of Mohammed VI who came to the throne just before his 35th birthday in 1999. He has been most active in the field of social policy, and more specifically, in women's rights and continues to ensure that the country grows and progresses economically, socially and globally.

Visa Requirements

Please note that visas are the responsibility of the traveller. The visa requirements vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. We keep the following information as up to date as possible, but rules do change. It is important that you check for yourself.

Generally visitors holding passports from England, Australia, Canada, USA, EU countries and Japan will be issued visas on arrival into Morocco. Other nationalities including visitors with a South African passport will need visas prior to arrival.

Please ensure that your passport has at least a further 6 months validity and spare pages for any visa stamps.

Travel Insurance

It is mandatory for you to organise travel insurance prior to your departure and we will ask for details of your insurer and the emergency contact details before you leave home.

Health and Medical

Inoculations are not required for entry to Morocco and although not required, it is preferable to have preventative shots against polio, tetanus and typhoid. However, you are encouraged to seek advice from your own medical practitioner for specific advice and requirements. Bottled water is recommended. Medical services are well developed and hospitals throughout the country have doctors who have been trained overseas and speak English. You should carry prescriptions of any medications you may need, making sure you have the generic name as your specific brand may not be available. If you wear glasses, bring a spare pair and a copy of the prescription as well.

Safety and Security

Morocco is a very safe country to visit and travel around. There is very little crime or anti-Western sentiment. After all tourism is their economy. You can expect security checks as we travel around and of course like anywhere else you need to be aware of your surroundings and ensure the safety of your personal belongings.

Telecommunications

As long as you have global roaming on your mobile telephone you will have no problem connecting to the providers in Morocco. Email devices such as Blackberry are a bit more hit and miss but we have found that 3G devices may be more successful than the older models. All the large hotels have internet access and there are many internet cafes in the larger cities and towns.

Useful Travel Information

Currency: The Moroccan Dirham is divided into 100 centimes. The currency fluctuates and prices are often given in Euros. Changing money on the street is illegal and the best place to exchange money is at the many Bureaux de Change or banks. Most of the major city centres have at least one or two ATMs. The Dirham is only available in Morocco, and the import and export of the currency is illegal. All currency purchased during a visit to Morocco must be converted back before departing the country.

Credit Cards: Credit cards (Visa card more readily than others) are easily used in the larger cities and in the hotels although beware of the credit card fee of up to 4%. Small shops, restaurants and of course markets and stalls only take cash. Traveler's cheques are not easily exchanged and likely the commission rate will be very high. NB: Don't plan to buy drinks or small souvenirs with credit.

Religion and Culture

Morocco is a moderate Sunni Muslim country and respect must be given to this. You will see few women in the streets by themselves, usually escorted by a male and/or a female relative. Young women in Casablanca are quite westernized and often wear tight jeans and t-shirts. However we discourage tight and revealing clothing for both men and women. Experience shows that paying due respect to the culture you are in equates to a more friendly and hospitable experience and amiable conversation and engagement with the locals which more often than not is the most rewarding aspect of our travel. We suggest that ladies avoid clingy, tight or suggestive attire.

We suggest loose cotton clothing, longer sleeved shirts and pants (also useful to keep the sun out) and for men short sleeves, T-shirts and longer pants are acceptable.

Electrical

Electricity supply is 220v and sockets are mostly of the European two pronged variety.



Alcohol

Although alcohol is forbidden by Islam, it is widely available and many Moroccans partake. In fact, Morocco itself produces two brands of beer and a number of excellent wines, and imports just about every kind of alcohol that you could want. It is available in many stores and supermarkets and widely available in the bars, restaurants and hotels.

Cuisine

Moroccan cuisine is at once seductive and sensual with each region having a favoured dish. B'sara (bean and garlic soup), cous cous with seven vegetables, chicken with prunes, slow roasted lamb, bessara (slow cooked fava beans) and the national dish of bastilla, a savoury sweet pie made of the thinnest multi layers of pastry, but the famous Tagines are the culinary masterpieces and takes many delicious forms here, sweet, savoury, vegetarian and everything in between. Desserts and sweets made with fresh and dried fruits along with pastries will satisfy the most fastidious sweet tooth. Fresh orange juice and litres of sweet Moroccan mint tea will be offered as you enter souqs, shops and hotels. This is an important part of the culture and is used to express hospitality and generosity. Moroccans are exceptionally hospitable and often you will be invited to share a meal at home,

What To Bring

Important Items to Include:

- Euros or US\$ for exchange – remember you will need some small notes for tips
- Your passport
- Travel Insurance Policy
- Copies of your documentation e.g. passport, credit cards etc
- Sunscreen
- Camera (a large zoom can be valuable addition)
- Wide brim hat
- Torch/Pen light
- Waterproof jacket
- Binoculars
- Insect repellent
- Waterproof shoes/sandals
- Hiking boots or comfortable well worn sturdy shoes
- Luggage locks
- Medicines and prescriptions
- Glasses, sunglasses and items of a personal nature
- Swimmers
- First aid kit



Things to Consider

- Pack light - Leave empty space in your suitcase to buy souvenirs
- Consider a small backpack to carry water and personal items so your hands are free
- Ensure you have mobile telephone global roaming agreement
- Some email devices may not work. Check with your provider

Notes

- Check your airline's policy on luggage allowance and what is allowable in the cabin and what must go into your hold baggage. Many airlines will not allow duty free over the amount of 100 ml on board so check this before stocking up.
- Ladies should be aware that not all feminine hygiene products may be available and are advised to bring a supply with them.
- Travelling with a group will provide you with the pleasure of new friendships and perhaps some frustrations. Your fellow travellers may be from around the world, differing cultures and likely a range of age groups. We ask you to be understanding and patient with your fellow travellers for the benefit of everyone's travel experience. Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting.

