

MOROCCO

PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE



You will visit ancient sites, explore hidden treasures, discover magnificent cities, engage with the local people and experience it all on your Travel Talk tour to Morocco. Before you leave for your adventure, it is important that you read this pre-departure information to ensure that your trip begins and continues to run as smoothly as possible. While we appreciate that you are embarking on an "adventure holiday" that will produce its own share of surprises, it is also true that forewarned is forearmed. This information is not written with the intention of being anything other than general information that we hope will help you become more prepared for your holiday. The philosophy of Travel Talk is simple: to provide excellent value for money for budget conscious and adventurous travellers without compromising their experiences. We do this by providing quality transportation, accommodation, sightseeing and information services. We hope that our philosophy will exceed your expectations and the following information will help to ensure you have a memorable time in Morocco.

VISAS

Some visitors to Morocco are required to have a visa. Nationals of the following do not require a visa for stays of up to 3 months and can obtain a stamp at the airport upon arrival: Britain, Australia, Canada, USA, New Zealand, South Korea, and EU. It is your responsibility to ensure you are aware of your requirements and have the relevant documents as Travel Talk will accept no responsibility of refusal upon entry.

ESSENTIALS

Before you leave your country, we recommend you make sure you have the following:

- ➔ Passport
- ➔ Airline or transportation ticket
- ➔ Tour voucher
- ➔ Insurance policy
- ➔ Visas (if necessary)
- ➔ Label on your travel bag
- ➔ Pre-departure information
- ➔ Money (cash and/or travellers cheques)
- ➔ Credit card

HEALTH AND SAFETY

It is recommended to all passengers travelling on Travel Talk tours to have insurance cover to assist with any unforeseen costs, especially medical expenses. It is advised to take a copy of your insurance policy with you. While there are no mandatory vaccinations for travellers to Morocco it is advisable to ensure typhoid, polio and tetanus inoculations are up to date. Some travellers feel more confident with hepatitis and meningitis vaccines as well. Rabies exists only in rural areas of Morocco and it is very unlikely that you will come in contact with a rabid animal.

Immunisation is available in a series of three injections over a period of one month (lasts 3 to 5 years) or a single visit booster dose (lasts only 6 to 12 months). Please consult a medical practitioner for advice. Bottled water is readily available throughout your tour and we recommend that you purchase this rather than drink the local tap water. While the local water is usually heavily chlorinated and safe many people find they get upset stomachs as a result of consumption.

WHAT TO WEAR...

As a general guideline, clothing should be lightweight, loose fitting and easily washed. In Summer, cotton clothing is much more comfortable than other materials like nylon. Clothing and accessories that will protect you from the sun is also necessary. Its a good idea to pack a white or light coloured, long sleeve cotton shirt. In Winter (December-March) you will need warmer clothing. In general, the weather is warmer along the sea coasts and cooler at higher altitudes. Please also keep in mind that when visiting religious sites, appropriate attire is required. It is recommended for females to pack a scarf.

Important: If your Adventure Morocco or Exotic Morocco tour runs in the months from November to March we recommend you bring a sleeping bag with you as the weather can be cold at night time (especially in the desert).

MONEY

The local currency is the Moroccan Dirham, 1 GBP is around 15 dirham. There are 20, 50, 100 and 200 DH notes and 1/2, 1, 2, 5 and 10 DH coins. You can withdraw money with a credit or debit card directly from cash points in large towns. Credit cards are generally accepted in major hotels, shops and restaurants and sometimes even in Souks (marketplaces)! It is a good idea, however, to always carry some coins

on you for the unexpected small purchase or toilet stop tip. The Moroccan Dirham is a closed currency, meaning it can only be traded withing Morocco (although it can be found at some other major airports). The import and export of the currency is tolerated up to a limit of 1000DH.

WEATHER

The Moroccan climate varies according to season and region. The Atlantic coast experiences minor temperature variations and has a warm, Mediterranean climate tempered by southwest trade winds. Inland areas have a hotter, drier and more continental climate. In the south of the country the weather is very hot and dry throughout most of the year, though temperatures can drop dramatically at night, especially in the months of December and January. November through to March sees the most rain fall in the coastal areas. Overall the country is mostly dry with high temperatures in summer and a cooler climate in the mountains.

The eastern slopes of the Atlas Mountains, which divert the moisture-laden Atlantic winds, have a rigorous pre-Saharan climate, while the western slopes are relatively cool and well watered.

Month Casablanca Midelt Marrakech Zagora

	C	F	C	F	C	F	C	F
Jan	16	62	11	53	17	64	26	79
Feb	17	63	13	56	19	67	31	88
March	17	64	16	62	22	72	35	95
April	18	66	20	68	23	74	39	103
May	20	69	23	74	26	80	41	106
June	22	73	28	83	30	87	45	114
July	25	77	33	93	36	97	49	121
Aug	25	78	33	92	36	97	50	122
Sept	25	77	27	82	32	90	47	117
Oct	22	72	21	70	26	80	33	92
Nov	20	68	16	62	22	72	30	87
Dec	17	64	12	55	18	66	28	83



EATING & DRINKING

Morocco's traditional haute cuisine dishes are excellent and good value for money. The typical Moroccan diet is quite healthy and incorporates a lot of local vegetables which are varied and flavoursome.

National Specialties

- Harira is a thick soup based on tomatoes and beans, lentils etc. can be added.
- Pastilla is a pigeon meat pastry made from dozens of different layers of thick flaky pastry.
- Cous cous is a staple Moroccan dish and is based on a savoury semolina that can be combined with egg, chicken, lamb or vegetables.
- Tajine dishes are similar to a stew but require specific preparation and are often rich and fragrant, using marinated lamb or chicken.
- Ferakh Maamer is a dish of spring chicken stuffed with sweetened couscous and enhanced with raisins, orange-flower water, almonds, and sugar. The ingredients are then placed in a large casserole and simmered slowly in a sauce made of honey, onion, garlic, ginger, cinnamon, and saffron.

As well as the traditional dishes there are also a lot of western style foods available in the larger cities. Kebabs can also often be found in many souks or stalls and are generally served with a spicy sauce.

Part of the Moroccan social courtesy is to drink the national drink which is a refreshing mint tea; made with green tea, fresh mint and sugar. Many say drinking hot tea on a hot day can actually help you cool down! Coffee is also made very strong in Morocco, except at breakfast. Bars generally have counter and waiter service and laws on alcohol are fairly liberal (for non-Muslim visitors). Bars in most tourist areas stay open late and wines, beers and spirits are widely available although sometimes within restricted times. Locally produced beers (Flag and Casablana) and wines are worth a try and good value. Be aware that imported drinks tend to be on the more expensive side.

SHOPPING

Lying at the crossroads of Africa and Europe, Morocco has served for centuries as a place to buy and sell goods; ranging from magic potions and carpets to brass goods and exotic spices.

When first shopping the souks of Morocco; whether it be Marrakech, Fes or other major cities, your senses will first be taken by the incredible colours, textures, aromas and seeming chaos and buzz of the markets.

But don't let this fool you, there is actually order among the chaos. There are specialty souks within the souks devoted to their particular wares, from fabrics and spices to brass and ironworks, and everything in between. The heart of Marrakech's shopping experience is behind Jemaa el-Fnaa. In this sprawling square you will find an array of performers that gather from the late afternoon and stay into the evening, entertaining the crowds of people that come through every night.

If you have the energy, bartering is expected and good buys generally work out at around a third of the asking price! The shops of Moroccan craftsmen operate under state control selling local handicrafts at fixed prices and issue an authenticity receipt or certificate of origin for customs when exporting. Special buys in Morocco are leather that has been tanned and dyed in Fes, copperware, silver, silk or cotton garments and wool rugs, carpets and blankets. In the south there are Berber carpet auctions, mainly in Marrakech.

The souks are a crazy yet alluring chaos, and even if you do not purchase anything, simply the experience of visiting one is what you will take away with you.

OPENING HOURS

Normally the shops are open from Monday to Saturday from 0830-1300 & 1430-1930. The souks (traditional markets) are open 7 days a week. Post offices are open from Monday to Friday between 0830-1200 & 1430-1830

ELECTRICITY

All appliances require a double round pin type plug for 220 volts AC, 50- hertz.

TIPPING

Tips are a common reward for service staff in Morocco. Your tour guide and crew will be especially appreciative and honoured with this kind of traditional gratitude at the end of your tour. Tipping is expected in the fancier eateries and around 10-15% of your bill is normal practice.

DISTANCES

The following information will give you a better idea of the times travelled to help you plan your day:

- ➔ Marrakech - Ait Ben Haddou 180 kms 2.5 hrs
- ➔ Ait Ben Haddou - Quarzazate 30 kms 30 min.
- ➔ Quarzazate - Merzauqa 370 kms 5 hrs
- ➔ Merzauqa - Fes 535 kms 7 hrs
- ➔ Fes - Rabat 200 kms 2.5 hrs
- ➔ Rabat - Casablanca 85 kms 1 hrs
- ➔ Casablanca - Marrakech 250 kms 3 hrs

ARRIVAL

ZALAGH KASBAH HOTEL Marrakech
Address: Zone Touristique Agdal Avenue Mohammed VI 40000 Marrakech - Morocco
Phone: +212 (0) 5 24 38 20 63



AIRPORT TRANSFER

Your arrival airport transfer is included if; You fly into the city in which your tour starts

- You arrive on the first day of your tour OR you have booked pre-accommodation through us
- You forward your flight details to us, at least 10 days in advance, including:
 - Date of flight
 - Flight number
 - Arrival time
 - Name of traveller/s to be picked up

If you do not want an airport transfer to the hotel, please let us know by either phoning the office (0208 099 95 96) or sending us an email (info@traveltalktours.com). Please note the hotel check-in time is from 13:00.

ACCOMMODATION

The hotels used on Travel Talk Morocco tours are rated 4 and 5 star. The main criteria in the hotel selection process is cleanliness, private bathroom facilities and location (usually central). If you are travelling on your own, you'll be allocated a twin or triple room with other group member/s of the same gender. Travellers who have paid a single supplement will stay in single rooms. Unfortunately, we can not guarantee the availability of double beds for couples. Your tour leader will organise the rooming arrangements at check-in according to the rooming lists. We can therefore not guarantee any last minute changes.

PRE&POST TOUR ACCOMMODATION

Should you require pre or post tour accommodation, please notify us (or your agent) at the time of booking and we can make the arrangements for you. This information will be clearly stated on your voucher. Pre and post tour rates are as follows (per person per night including breakfast):
Double, twin or triple room - GBP40
Single room - GBP 60

TRANSPORTATION

You can expect comfort and reliability on our modern coaches and mini buses. Most vehicles feature air-conditioning, safe and secure luggage storage, comfortable seats, and a sound system.

TOUR LEADER

Your tour leader's role is to ensure that all aspects of the trip run smoothly. He/she will share their local knowledge, advise you on ways to spend your free time and coordinate the day-to-day running of the tour. From time to time situations can arise and things may not always go according to plan. If this occurs your tour leader may require your cooperation and understanding. Furthermore, should you have any problems on tour please let your leader know so that the correct steps can be taken. Please bear in mind that when you travel on a combined tour, you will have different groups and a different leader for each leg.

ENTRANCE FEES

The entry fees to museums and sights are not included in the tour price. Below are the approximate prices given in Pound(GBP) and Moroccan Dinnar(MAD):

- Menara Palace: GBP1 (10 MAD)
- Saadian Tumbs: GBP1 (10 MAD)
- Bahai Palace: GBP1 (10 MAD)
- Dar Si Said Mausoleum: GBP1 (10 MAD)
- Hassan II Mosque: GBP10 (120 MAD)
- Chellah Ruins: GBP1 (10 MAD)
- Bou Inania Medersa: GBP1 (10 MAD)
- Attarine Medersa: GBP1 (10 MAD)
- Taourirt Kasbah: GBP1.50 (20 MAD)

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

There are different optional activities available depending on your tour. Some of these include:

- Jeep safari to Merzouga is a very popular activity in Morocco (from Erfoud to Merzouga by crossing the desert in West Sahara). The average price per person is £25 (300 MAD).
- Joining a traditional evening of entertainment with typical Moroccan cuisine in Marrakech (Fantasia Show) it will cost you around £29 (350 MAD)
- If you join an optional dinner with folklore show in Fes that will cost you £25 (300 MAD)

MISSED YOUR WELCOME MEETING?

Being avid travellers ourselves, we know that unforeseen circumstances arise. If you are late and miss the welcome meeting, don't stress, just check the information board in the hotel lobby for the next day's programme.

• For Adventure Morocco and Exotic Morocco, the bus will depart the hotel at 8am on Day 2. If you will arrive later than that please contact your tour leader to join your group.

• For Essential Morocco, there is a short visit to Casablanca city in the morning before departure to Rabat. Please contact your tour leader to join your group.

THE TOUR PRICE AND LOCAL PAYMENT

We ease your cash needs by dividing the tour cost into two payments: tour price and local payment. You only need to pay the tour price in advance to be able to book on tour and the compulsory local payment needs to be paid when your trip commences. The local payment is part of the tour cost and does not cover any extra costs like meals, entrance fees, drinks, tips, personal expenses or other type of travel costs.

LANGUAGE

The two official languages of Morocco are Arabic and Berber. Moroccan Arabic (Darija) is the spoken language and french is the unofficial third language. Below you will find some important phrases (in Darija) that will make your stay a little easier:

Hello	Salam Alaykom
Goodbye	Beslamah
Yes	Iyeh/Walha
No	La
Welcome	Marhaba
Please	Afak/Minfadlik
Thank you	Shokran
Excuse me	Esmah Li
Sorry	A'sif
Perhaps	Imken
How are you ?	Kif Halek?
Good morning	Sbah Ikhir
Good evening	Msa Ikhir
Good night	Tusbih ala khir
Today	Lyoum
Tomorrow	Ghedda
Yesterday	Lbareh
I'm well, thank you	Ana bikhir, shokran
Money	Flous
How much is it ?	Bsh hal?
Too much !	Bzzaf
I don't understand	Ma f hamt
Leave me alone	Khallini afak
Where is ...?	Fin kayn ... ?
Here	Hna
Water	Lma
Coffee	Qahwa
Tea	Atay
The bill	Lahswab
Pharmacy	Farmasian
Doctor	Tbib



RAMADAN IN MOROCCO

Ramadan is the Holy Month of the Islamic calendar and a time when Muslims fast from sun rise until sunset. Fasting means 'nil by mouth' including food, water and cigarettes. The day's fast is broken at sunset, often with soup and dates.

Many local cafes and restaurants remain closed during the day however tourists are not expected to fast, and there are cafes and restaurants that stay open to cater for you.

During Ramadan you are encouraged to show your respect by not walking around in public eating, chewing gum, smoking or drinking. It is fine to do so in your hotel or in a cafe/restaurant recommended by your tour leader. Your tour leader will organise lunches and dinners for you which will make Ramadan easier for you. During the month you will find that tourist sites often close early to allow staff to return home in time to break their fast and shops often open late and close early.

Following Ramadan there is an Eid, a three-day celebration which is called Eid ul-Fitr. There is also another Eid, four-day celebration later in the year which is called Eid Ul-Adha. During these holidays it is more likely that shops (including the souks, but not restaurants) will be closed and other services may also be interrupted.

Calender for Ramadan	Ramadan	Eid ul-Fitr	Eid ul-Adha
2017	27 May - 25 June	26 - 28 July	2 - 4 September