

# Morocco

## PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION



Morocco is an ancient country molded by three thousand years of history. As a result of its unique geographical position, it has been exposed to the religious, artistic, and economic cross currents of the East, Europe and the depths of Africa. From earliest historical times, Morocco's population has been essentially Berber - nomads, semi-nomads, and settled farmers. Morocco is an amazing and fascinating country to explore. You will be enveloped by the astounding history, the unique natural environment, and the rich culture.

# GETTING READY FOR YOUR TRIP

## Passports

- ❖ Passports are required of U.S. Citizens to enter
- ❖ Must be valid for at least 6 months after your trip – if not, apply or renew immediately
- ❖ Keep a copy of the picture page of your passport in a separate place while traveling
- ❖ Carry an extra passport photo in case you need to apply for a quick replacement

## Visas

- ❖ Visas are not required for US citizens or most other visitors traveling to Morocco
- ❖ Nationalities of other countries please inquire regarding visas

## Health & Immunizations

- ❖ Some immunizations are highly recommended, but none are required for entry
- ❖ Recommended immunizations include: tetanus, typhoid, MMR, hepatitis A & B, polio
- ❖ SEEK INDEPENDENT MEDICAL ADVICE from your physician or local travelers health service
- ❖ For the latest recommendations for immunizations or malaria prevention contact the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia: 800-311-3435, or visit their website: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>
- ❖ Many universities have immunization clinics that can assist you

## Time Difference

- ❖ Morocco is the same as Greenwich Mean Time (0 GMT) all year round
- ❖ It is five hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time
- ❖ When it is 5 PM in Casablanca, it will be 12 Noon in New York and 9 AM in Los Angeles, on the same day

## Electricity

- ❖ Where available, electricity is 220 V/ 50 Hz (some areas may still be converting from 127 V/ 50 Hz)
- ❖ You can most commonly find the European two round prong plugs. You will need an adaptor/converter for American appliances.



## ARRIVAL

- ❖ We use local operators (private contractors) in each of the African countries where we offer trips. They all have extensive experience organizing safaris in their respective areas. All of our guides in Morocco are knowledgeable and speak English.
- ❖ Upon arrival at the airport, you will be welcomed by our local operator in Morocco, and be taken to a local hotel for your overnight.
- ❖ Contact information will be sent with your Last Minute Information Package a couple weeks before your departure.

## GETTING ALONG AS A VISITOR

### Food & Water

- ❖ Eat only foods that are thoroughly cooked, and raw fruits and vegetables that you have peeled yourself
- ❖ Drink only bottled drinks, and avoid tap water, fountain drinks and ice cubes
- ❖ Don't buy food from street vendors or stalls
- ❖ Avoid fresh salads unless the vegetables are washed with purified water, and avoid dairy products that are unpasteurized or may not have been refrigerated properly
- ❖ Special diet or meal requests cannot be guaranteed, but our operators will do their best to accommodate

you. Please advise us at least 30 days in advance if you have any special dietary requirements.

- ❖ Look for a restaurant where lots of locals are eating - chances are the food will be delicious and reasonable
- ❖ Moroccan Food is widely considered to be among the most exciting in the world and several dishes are unique to the country. The following will help you familiarize yourself with some of these tasty dishes.
- ❖ **Harira:** A thick soup made from lamb stock, lentils, chick peas, onion, garlic, chopped tomatoes, fresh herbs and spices
- ❖ **Tajine:** A slow-cooked stew consisting of meat and vegetables flavored with meat and spices. There are innumerable varieties of tajines, including those with the addition of olives, eggs, prunes or almonds.
- ❖ **M'choui:** A Berber specialty, M'choui is a whole lamb roasted in the open air, seasoned with saffron and hot red pepper. It is often served with brochettes of lamb's heart and liver.
- ❖ **Pastilla:** A delicious mixture of pigeon meat, lemon-flavored eggs, almonds, cinnamon, saffron and sugar, enclosed in layers of fine ouraka pastry.

## Money and Currency Exchange

- ❖ Morocco's national currency is the Dirham (Dr). Find the current exchange rate at [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com)
- ❖ Traveler's checks are the safest way to take your money, although it is advisable to carry a small amount of American cash with you.
- ❖ Money can be exchanged at banks throughout the nation and the process of doing so is usually quick. Remember to have your passport available when you go to exchange money.
- ❖ Basic additional trip expenses may include meals not provided (usually in larger towns or cities), snacks, liquor, laundry, gratuities for your guides, airport departure tax, taxis and souvenirs. Generally a budget of \$25-30 per day should be enough.
- ❖ Credit cards are accepted in the major cities, but expect substantial surcharges both at the point of sale and from the credit card companies for currency conversion and non-dollar transaction penalties.
- ❖ The export and import of Moroccan currency is illegal, so try to spend your money before the trip ends. If you have some left over, you can change it back into dollars on your way out of the country provided you saved your exchange receipts.

## Tipping

- ❖ In Morocco, tipping and bargaining are a major part of their way of life. Recommendations for good service are:
- ❖ Service providers (museum guides, parking attendants, baggage handlers, etc.) generally expect to be tipped between Dr3 and Dr5.
- ❖ Restaurant staff should be tipped about 10% of the total meal.
- ❖ Guide: \$5 per person, per day
- ❖ Driver: \$2 per person, per day
- ❖ You may consider tipping a little more if you are in a small group.
- ❖ Anytime you especially appreciate someone particularly informative or helpful, an extra tip is always gratefully accepted.

## Shopping

- ❖ Most Moroccan towns and villages will have a weekly market day. The Souqs (markets) sell a myriad of items.
- ❖ Morocco is known for its silver, copper and brass jewelry and its beautifully decorated rugs and carpets.
- ❖ Keep in mind that bargaining is an integral part of Morocco's commercial culture and the merchants will actively engage you in their banter. A good guideline is to negotiate about 50 to 70% of the asking price. You may ask your guide privately how much you could expect to pay for an item, but do not ask him in front of a salesperson. It is not appropriate for your guide to bargain for you. Your guide will also be happy to assist you in translation when the people you encounter do not speak English.

# SPECIAL REMARKS

## Language

- ❖ The official language of Morocco is Arabic, although French is widely used in the larger cities.
- ❖ Moroccan Arabic (darija) is a dialect that differs greatly from Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), so even if you have studied the language, you may not be able to converse with the local people.
- ❖ It is always nice to learn a few words of the local language, as the local people will fully appreciate any attempt to communicate in their language. As-salaam 'alaykum, meaning hello ("peace upon you"), is a good place to start.

## Interacting with Local People

- ❖ If you want to take pictures of an individual person, always ask permission.
- ❖ Never take pictures of military objects, airports, or even close to a police station or customs stop on the road. You risk your camera being taken, your film confiscated and a fine.
- ❖ Dress in Morocco is informal, but it is recommended that you dress conservatively as Morocco has a significant Muslim population.
- ❖ Western fashions are acceptable in major tourist centers, but in rural areas, conservative dress is more important.

## Safety

- ❖ Observe the same precautions taken at home
- ❖ Do not flaunt a bulging wallet, lock unattended vehicles, do not leave baggage unattended in public
- ❖ In towns, the best place to carry your passport and money is in a pouch worn around the neck inside of the shirt or in a money belt around the waist
- ❖ It is highly recommended that you buy travel insurance that covers your baggage before you leave
- ❖ Don't take anything you can't afford to lose or can't replace
- ❖ Do not discuss political affairs with persons you do not know well.
- ❖ For the latest security information, please consult the US State Department website <http://www.state.gov/travel/>.

## Accommodations

- ❖ Your trip cost generally includes accommodations at three and four star hotels, unless you upgrade to a higher standard.
- ❖ Hotels will be clean, comfortable, and usually quite centrally located. We try, when possible, to utilize hotels in a unique setting or with a local flavor.

## Seasons & Weather Conditions

- ❖ Morocco experiences great variations in weather, ranging from snow in the mountains to 104°F (40°C) in warmer regions affected by hot desert winds.
- ❖ Rainy season: generally November through January, but can continue through April

## Equipment

- ❖ A good goal is to fit everything into a single piece of checked luggage and a carry-on daypack
- ❖ We recommend a durable, water-resistant, soft duffel bag (for treks) or lightweight soft-sided suitcase as your checked luggage. Hard suitcases are not practical due to space limitations.
- ❖ A small backpack or hip-pack is ideal for carrying bottled water, camera, extra sunblock, etc, while on excursions where the terrain requires your hands to be free.
- ❖ Choose a distinctive, easily identified bag, and use a JOURNEYS luggage tag for bag identification by staff, and your name and address should be also indelibly affixed inside the luggage.
- ❖ For regional flights, most air carriers allow about 45 lbs. per person, total.
- ❖ You may want to bring an extra smaller, collapsible (lockable) duffel, to leave items in a city hotel while you are on an excursion or to use on your return for souvenirs



## Packing

- ❖ Casual clothing is appropriate at all times
- ❖ Lightweight & light colored clothes will help keep you cooler. Also keep in mind that synthetic fabrics dry faster than natural fibers like cotton, especially in humid areas, so you can pack less if you are able to wash and dry your clothes easily.
- ❖ We recommend versatile clothing that is comfortable in warm climates, but which can be layered to provide warmth during the cooler evenings.
- ❖ In late spring, summer and fall, garments of cotton and other cool washable materials are suggested.
- ❖ Take warm clothes in winter.
- ❖ Spring and fall trips should bring sweaters and sweatshirts.
- ❖ Summer trips should bring cool cotton clothing, but long sleeves, hats and scarves are recommended to protect your skin against the hot sun.
- ❖ It is recommended that you dress conservatively. Casual clothing is acceptable for traveling and visiting monuments. Western fashions are acceptable in the major tourist centers, but in rural areas, conservative dress is more important.
- ❖ Some hotels may have laundry services, but you will probably need to wash out some clothes en route

## CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT SUGGESTIONS CHECKLIST

### Pre-Departure Tasks

- Obtain or renew passport
- Buy travelers checks in low denominations
- Evaluate and obtain trip cancellation, baggage and medical insurance
- Consult with physician for immunizations and prescription medicine recommendations
- Break-in primary footwear
- Make final payment to JOURNEYS at least 60 days before trip departure

### Clothing

- Lightweight hiking boots or comfortable athletic or walking shoes
- Sport sandals with Velcro strap
- Extra shoes, flip-flops or sandals
- Shorts
- Comfortable, lightweight pants
- Nicer pants or skirt (optional)
- Lightweight long-sleeve shirt
- T-shirts, short sleeve shirts
- Lightweight jacket
- Sun hat or cap with wide brim
- Bandana
- Swim suit
- Socks
- Sleepwear
- Under clothes

### Personal Items

- Sunblock (waterproof, high SPF)
- Lipbalm with SPF
- Insect repellent with DEET content
- 2 spare passport photos (in case of lost passport)
- Wrist watch and/or travel clock
- Sunglasses (with strap, case)



- Extra eyeglasses/contacts
- Money belt or pouch for valuables
- Small flashlight with extra batteries
- Copies of all important documents
- Day pack (can also serve as an airline carry-on bag)
- Camera, memory cards, film, batteries, charger
- Lead bag/containers to protect film in X-ray machines
- Lightweight binoculars
- Plug adapter (if needed)
- Soft duffel with shoulder strap or durable suitcase
- Luggage tags
- Ziploc-type bags for packing shampoo or other liquids
- Stuff sacks or plastic bags for organizing inside luggage (also useful for dirty laundry)
- Thread, needles, safety pins for minor repairs
- Small packable umbrella

### Personal First Aid Kit

- Aspirin or other pain killer
- Cold relief tablets, antihistamine, cough drops
- Band-aids, gauze pads
- Antibiotics
- Prescription medicines
- Aloe gel or lotion in case of sunburn
- Anti-diarrhea medicine
- Antibiotic cream/ointment
- Supply of feminine hygiene items
- Motion sickness tablets
- Earplugs

### Essential Items For Your Carry-On Bag

- Passport
- Domestic and international air tickets
- Travelers checks, money and credit cards
- Insurance certificates
- Address and telephone number of emergency contact
- Prescription medicines
- Extra set of underclothes
- Toiletries in small leak-proof bottles
- Camera gear, film and other valuables

### Optional Items

- Binoculars
- Address book, writing paper, or journal, pen/pencil
- Small washcloth
- Wet wipes/moist towelettes and Kleenex
- Favorite snack foods (pre-packaged)
- Pictures of your house and family
- Map
- Silica bags for moisture (protect camera equipment)
- Video camera
- Phrase book

