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ACCOMMODATION

In this book, we have defined budget as up to Dh400 for doubles, midrange as Dh400 to Dh800 for doubles and top end above Dh800. The exceptions to this are the pricier towns of Casablanca, Essaouira, Fez, Rabat and Tangier. For these towns, we have defined budget as up to Dh600, midrange as Dh600 to Dh1200 and top end as more than Dh1200.

Accommodation in Morocco ranges from friendly budget homestays or hostels to expensive, top-of-the-market luxury riads (traditional courtyard houses), country estates and grand converted palaces. In

between are charming midrange *maisons d'hôtes* (small hotels) and riads that predominate in the larger cities such as Fez and Marrakesh. Like anywhere that caters to a European summer-holiday crowd, the Moroccan coast also has its fair share of oversized tourist complexes, while budget travellers may also come across individuals' houses converted in the dead of night without the appropriate licenses.

In this book the official, government-assigned rates (including taxes) are quoted, although these are intended as a guide only. Many hotels will offer significant 'promotional discounts' from their advertised rates, especially in large resorts like Agadir or during the low season (May to October). It is always worth asking when you book.

Accommodation is often scarce during Easter week and August, when half of Spain and the whole of France seem to be on holiday in Morocco. Another very busy time in the south, particularly in Marrakesh, is Christmas and New Year. Finding a room in Fez at short notice in June can also be a challenge due to the increasingly popular World Sacred Music Festival.

To make a reservation, hotels usually require confirmation by fax or email plus a credit-card number.

Apartments

If travelling in a small group or as a family, consider self-catering options, particularly in low season, when prices can drop substantially. Agadir, El-Jadida, Assilah and the bigger tourist centres along the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts have a fair number of apartments with self-catering facilities. The riad agencies (p453) also rent apartments.

Camping

You can camp anywhere in Morocco if you have permission from the site's owner. There are also many official camp sites. Most of the bigger cities have camp sites although they're often some way from the main attractions. Some are worth the extra effort to get to, while others – usually consisting of a barren and stony area offering little shade – are often the domain of

PRACTICALITIES

- **Newspapers & Magazines** Although censorship has decreased, newspapers still practise a degree of self-censorship. Among the French-language papers, *L'Opinion* (www.lopinion.ma, in French), which is attached to the opposition Istiqlal Party, airs some of the points of contention in Moroccan society. *Libération* (www.liberation.press.ma, in French), the Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires' daily, is similar if less punchy. *Al-Bayane* (www.albayane.ma), another opposition French-language daily, isn't too bad for foreign news. For a full list of Moroccan newspapers online, go to www.onlinenewspapers.com/morocco.htm. A selection of European newspapers (including some British dailies) and the *International Herald Tribune* are available in most of the main cities. *Le Monde* is the most common. The British *Guardian Weekly* is also usually available, as occasionally is *USA Today* and more commonly, *Time*, *Newsweek* and the *Economist*.
- **Radio** Moroccan radio encompasses only a handful of local AM and FM stations, the bulk of which broadcast in either Arabic or French. Midi 1 at 97.5FM covers northern Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, and plays reasonable contemporary music.
- **TV** Satellite dishes are everywhere in Morocco and pick up dozens of foreign stations. There are two government-owned stations, TVM and 2M, which broadcast in Arabic and French. TV5 is a European satellite import from the Francophone world, while 2M is the primary household station.
- **Video & DVD Systems** Morocco and France use the Secam video system, which is incompatible with both the PAL system used in Australia and most of Western Europe, and the NTSC system used in North America and Japan. Like Western Europe (but not the NTSC system of the Americas), Morocco runs on the PAL DVD system, but Moroccan DVDs share region 5 with Eastern Europe (Western Europe is region 2 while Australia is region 4), which means Moroccan DVDs may not play on all machines elsewhere.
- **Electricity** Moroccan sockets accept the European round two-pin plugs so bring an international adaptor if your device comes from elsewhere. The electric current is 220V/50Hz but older buildings may still use 110V. Electricity is generally reliable and available nearly everywhere travellers go.
- **Weights & Measures** Use the metric system for weights and measures; conversion charts are on the inside front cover of this book.

enormous campervans, to whom the basic facilities make no difference. If you're really lucky, you may have a swimming pool.

Most sites have water, electricity and, in summer, a small restaurant and grocery store. At official sites you'll pay around Dh10 to Dh20 per person, plus Dh10 to Dh20 to pitch a tent and about Dh10 to Dh15 for small vehicles (parking your campervan or caravan costs around Dh20 to Dh30, although this can go as high as Dh45). Electricity generally costs another Dh10 to Dh15 and a hot shower is about Dh5 to Dh10. As with most things, prices rise the closer you are to Marrakesh.

Gîtes d'Étape, Homestays & Refuges

Gîtes d'étape are homes or hostels, often belonging to mountain guides, which offer

accommodation (often just a mattress on the floor) around popular trekking routes in the Atlas. They have basic bathrooms and sometimes hot showers. Official rates begin at Dh30 but prices do vary according to the season and location. You may also pay extra for meals (Dh30 to Dh50) and hot showers (Dh10 to Dh15) depending on the availability of facilities, such as hot-water showers and meals. You may also come across more comfortable privately owned *gîtes* that charge as much as Dh100 for accommodation and the same for meals.

Larger than *gîtes*, mountain refuges (mostly run by the Club Alpin Français, CAF) offer Swiss chalet-style accommodation. Sleeping is in dormitories with communal showers and there is usually a lively communal dining/living room.

BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out lonelyplanet.com/hotels. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

Similarly, if you are trekking in the High Atlas or travelling off the beaten track elsewhere, you may be offered accommodation in village homes. Many won't have running water or electricity, but you'll find them big on warmth and hospitality. You should be prepared to pay what you would in *gites d'étape* or mountain refuges.

Hostels

The Federation Royale Marocaine des Auberges de Jeunes (☎ 022 470952; fax 022 227677; frmaj@iam.net.ma) runs eight reliable youth hostels at Casablanca, Fez, Goulmima, Marrakesh, Meknès, Plage Mehdiya, Rabat and Tangier. Some hostels have kitchens and family rooms. If you're travelling alone, they are among the cheapest places to stay (between Dh20 and Dh45 a night) but many are inconveniently located.

Hotels

You'll find cheap, unclassified (without a star rating) or one-star hotels clustered in the medinas of the bigger cities. Some are bright and spotless, others haven't seen a mop for years. Cheaper prices usually mean communal washing facilities and squat toilets. Occasionally there is a gas-heated shower, for which you'll pay an extra Dh5 to Dh10. Where there is no hot water at all, head for the local hammam (see opposite).

Many cheap hotels in the south offer a mattress on the roof terrace for Dh25 to Dh30, while others also have traditional Moroccan salons, lined with banks of seats and cushions, where budget travellers can sleep for a similar price.

Midrange hotels in Morocco are generally of a high standard, and range from imitation Western-style rooms, which are modern if a little soulless, to *maisons d'hôtes*, which capture the essence of Moroccan style with both comfort and character. In

this price range, you should expect an en-suite room with shower. Top-end hotels are similar to midrange places but with more luxurious levels of comfort and design. Some hotels in more isolated regions offer half-board (*demi-pension*) options, which means breakfast and dinner is included, and can be a good deal.

You'll need your passport number (and entry-stamp number) when filling in a hotel register. For registered hotels, there's a government tax (included in quoted prices throughout the book). This floats around Dh25 per head, the exact amount depending on the hotel's rating.

If you're a resident in Morocco, you're entitled to a 25% discount on classified hotel rates on your third night in some establishments.

Riads, Dars & Kasbahs

For many guests, the chance to stay in a converted traditional house is a major drawcard for a trip to Morocco. They're the type of accommodation that the term 'boutique hotel' could have been invented for, and no two are alike. Service tends to be personal, with many places noted for their food as much as their lodgings. Room rates are comparable to four- or five-star hotels. Marrakesh is the most famous destination for riad aficionados (there are several hundred), with Fez coming a close second. Essaouira, Rabat, Tangier and Assilah are also popular. With their popularity seemingly unassailable you can increasingly find riads in the most unexpected corners of the country.

Although the term riad is often used generically for such places, a riad proper is a house built around a garden with trees. You'll also come across plenty of *dars* (traditional houses with internal courtyards). Kasbahs (old citadels), which often function as hotels, are found throughout the major tourist centres of the south. Rooms in kasbahs are small and dark, due to the nature of the building, but are lovely and cool in summer.

Most riads operate on advance bookings, and it's worth planning ahead, as most only have a handful of rooms and can fill quickly. Advance booking often means that someone from the riad will be sent to meet you outside the medina when you arrive: labyrinthine streets often conspire

against finding the front door on your first attempt.

Many riads list their online rates in euros, rather than dirhams, at exchange rates favourable to themselves, so always double check the prices when booking.

For an idea of properties and prices, visit the websites of these agencies:

Fez Riads (☎ 072 513357; www.fez-riads.com) A percentage of profits are donated towards restoration projects in the Fez medina.

Marrakech Riads (☎ 024 391609; www.marrakech-riads.com) Well-established and respected agency.

ACTIVITIES

Morocco is a magnificent trekking destination offering an array of landscapes and treks to suit all abilities. Trekking is not the only activity on offer, however, with birdwatching enthusiasts, golfers, cyclists, climbers, riders and spa devotees all catered for in a bewildering selection of activity holidays. See also the courses section (p458) for more ideas.

Birdwatching

Morocco is a birdwatcher's paradise. A startling array of species inhabits the country's diverse ecosystems and varied environments, especially the coastal wetlands. Around 460 species have been recorded in the country, many of them migrants passing through in spring and autumn when Morocco becomes a way station between sub-Saharan Africa and breeding grounds in Scandinavia, Greenland and northern Russia, while others fly to Morocco to avoid the harsh northern-European winters. Early winter months at the wetlands are particularly active, but the most pleasant time of year is March through May, when the weather is comfortable and the widest variety of species is usually present. For more information on Morocco's birdlife, see p94.

In Merdja Zerga National Park, a well-regarded local birding guide is Hassan Dalil (see p134). Tour companies (all UK-based) that offer birding tours to Morocco include the following:

Birdfinders (☎ 01258 839066; www.birdfinders.co.uk)

Birdwatching Breaks (☎ 01381 610495; www.birdwatchingbreaks.com)

Naturetrek (☎ 0196 273 3051; www.naturetrek.co.uk)

Wildwings (☎ 0117 965 8333; www.wildwings.co.uk)

Camel Treks & Desert Safaris

Exploring the Moroccan Sahara by camel is one of the country's signature activities and is one of the most rewarding wilderness experiences in the country, whether on an overnight excursion or a two-week trek. The most evocative stretches of Saharan sand include Zagora (p347) and Tinfou (p350) in the Drâa Valley; M'Hamid and the dunes of Erg Chigaga (p350), 95km further south; and the dunes of Erg Chebbi (p370) near Merzouga, southeast of Rissani.

Autumn (September and October) and winter (November to early March) are the only seasons worth considering. Prices start at around Dh300 per person per day (or Dh350 for an overnight excursion), but vary depending on the number of people, the length of the trek and your negotiating skills. The agency will organise the bivouac (temporary camp), which may be a permanent camp for shorter trips, and may offer Berber music and *mechoui* (barbecued lamb).

Many places offer camel treks. Travellers with lots of time can arrive in places such as Zagora, M'Hamid and Merzouga and organise a local guide and provisions while there; this benefits the local community and counters the trend towards young guides leaving home to look for work in the more popular tourist cities. If you do this, try to get recommendations from other travellers and count on spending Dh300 to Dh350 for an overnight excursion. M'Hamid is probably the most hassle-free of the three towns, although the choice is wider at Zagora (which has three professional operators) and Merzouga.

If you've neither the time nor the inclination to spend time cooling your heels while you wait for negotiations to be completed, you could also organise it in advance, either through an international tour company or a local company based in Ouarzazate or Marrakesh. For more information on tour companies, see p488, and the Zagora (p347) and Ouarzazate (p342) sections of the book.

Hammams

Visiting a hammam (traditional bathhouse) is infinitely preferable to cursing under a cold shower in a cheap hotel. They're busy, social places where you'll find gallons of hot water and staff available to scrub you squeaky clean. They're good places to meet

HAMMAM KNOW-HOW

For affluent Western travellers, the communal bathhouse can be a cultural shock. Where do you look, where do you sit, are you sitting too close, what do you wear? All that naked flesh appears a minefield of social disaster and embarrassment.

For Muslims however, there is nothing shameful or embarrassing about the body among your own gender, and attitudes to nakedness are a lot less prudish than those of their Western counterparts. It may seem surprising in a society where modesty on the street is so important that women will think nothing of enquiring curiously after why you don't shave your pubic hair! On a more practical level, in houses where there is often no water, the hammam is the only place to get clean.

Most 'good' public hammams in cities tend to be modern, white-tiled and spacious affairs. Moroccans come prepared with an *el-kis* (coarse glove), black soap made from the resin of olives (which stings if you get it in your eyes), henna (which is used by women) and *ghassoul*.

After undressing to your underwear, head straight for the hot room and stake out your area with your mat and toiletries. If in doubt, follow what everyone else is doing, which usually means covering yourself with black soap and sweating a while to soften up your skin for the pummelling it will later take. After about five minutes get a friend, or masseur/masseuse from the hammam, to scrub you down. It's by no means a tender process as rolls of dead skin peel away with the black soap. Nor is it for the modestly inclined, as arms are raised, breasts and inner thighs scrubbed and ears rinsed out with as much ceremony as a childhood bathtime.

Once all the dirt has been rinsed away most people move to the tepid room to apply the reddish-brown henna (in the women's hammam only) and then *ghassoul*, which is also used to wash your hair. These products soften and smooth the skin, and no self-respecting Moroccan would swap them for any fancy commercial product.

Once your inhibitions have been stripped away, the hammam is a thoroughly relaxing and enjoyable experience, and it's easy to see why it is so beloved. It is intimate and friendly, a place to relax and talk about your problems and, for Moroccan women especially, a welcome break from tedious chores and difficult spouses. Afterwards you feel thoroughly wrung out and totally relaxed. You'll probably never be so clean again.

the locals and, especially for women, somewhere to relax away from the street hassle.

Every town has at least one hammam. Often there are separate hammams for men and women, while others are open to either sex at different hours or on alternate days. They can be difficult to find; some are unmarked and others simply have a picture of a man or woman stencilled on the wall outside. Local people will be happy to direct you to one. Most hammams are very welcoming, but a few (often those close to a mosque) are unwilling to accept foreign visitors.

Bring your own towels (in a waterproof bag), a plastic mat or something to sit on, and flip-flops (thongs). You'll be given a bucket and scoop – remember to use the communal bucket when filling yours with water. Toiletries can be bought at some hammams, as can *ghassoul* (handfuls of clay mixed with herbs, dried roses and lavender).

A visit to a hammam usually costs around Dh10, with a massage costing at least an

extra Dh15. Most hammams also have showers. A few midrange or top-end hotels have hammams, which normally require advance notice (up to 24 hours) to heat up, and which cost up to Dh100 per person for a minimum of four or five people.

Horse Riding

The south of Morocco is popular for horse riding, be it along the southern beaches of Diabat (p160) and Agadir, through the lush valleys of the Souss and Ouirgane, in the Middle and High Atlas, or exploring the dramatic Todra Gorge and the desert landscapes of the south.

A couple of specialist travel companies offer guided horse-riding trips in Morocco.

Club Farah (☎ 035 548844; www.clubfarah.com) Has excellent horse-riding tour operator based outside Meknès, running individual and group trips in the Middle Atlas.

Unicorn Trails (☎ 01767 600606; www.unicorntrails.com) UK-based operator with a selection of riding trips in the High Atlas and Atlantic Coast.

Motorbiking, Quads & Karts

The wide, open spaces and stunning scenery of south-central Morocco are attracting a growing number of roadsters. The only Moroccan-based off-road biking agency is **Wilderness Wheels** (☎ 024 888128; www.wildernesswheels.com; 44 Hay al-Qods, Ouarzazateh; half-/1-1/2-day expedition Dh800/1400/3500). Itineraries cover the Dadès and Drâa Valleys and even the desert as far south as Merzouga.

Quad biking and karting are also becoming popular in adventure bases such as Ouarzazate, Merzouga, Zagora and Erfoud.

Mountain Biking

Ordinary cycling is possible in Morocco, but mountain biking opens up the options considerably. Roads are well maintained, although often very narrow. For the very fit, the vast networks of *pistes* (dirt tracks) and even the footpaths of the High Atlas offer the most rewarding biking, although the Anti Atlas, Jebel Sarhro plateau and the Drâa Valley offer some excellent trails. There are also possibilities at Oualidia (p149). A few travel agencies and midrange hotels hire out mountain bikes for around Dh100 but the quality isn't really high enough for an extended trip. Serious cyclists can contact one of the adventure tour companies listed on p488.

Rock Climbing

Rock climbing is increasingly a feature of the Moroccan activities scene and there are some sublime opportunities for the vertically inclined. Anyone contemplating routes should have plenty of experience under their belt and be prepared to bring all their own equipment.

Areas in the Anti Atlas and High Atlas offer everything from bouldering to very severe mountaineering routes that shouldn't be attempted unless you have a great deal of experience. The Dadès (p357) and Todra (p360) Gorges are both prime climbing territory.

It's worth contacting the following if you're keen to hook up with other climbers:

Nicolo Berzi (☎ +39 0335-6535349; nicolobe@tiscalinet.it) Italian climbing guide organising trips to Todra Gorge.

Royal Moroccan Ski & Mountaineering Federation (☎ 022 474979; www.frmsm.ma; Casablanca) This group runs climbing competitions in the Todra Gorge.

Serac Outdoors Sports (www.seracoutdoorsports.co.uk) UK operator that runs climbing trips in the Anti Atlas.

Skiing

Although Morocco's ski stations are somewhat ramshackle in comparison with Europe's alpine offerings, skiing is a viable option from November to April.

Ski trekking (*ski randonné*) is increasingly popular, especially from late December to February when the Ait Bougomez Valley (p329) promises Morocco's prime ski-trekking routes.

Oukaïmeden (p333), about 70km south of Marrakesh, is a popular downhill ski resort that boasts the highest ski lift in North Africa. You can hire equipment here. There are a few other spots dotted around the Middle Atlas, including Mischliften, but the last few years have seen barely enough snow for a proper season.

Surfing

Morocco has thousands of kilometres of ocean coast making it a fine, if underrated, surfing destination. Plage Mehdiya (p133) has reliable year-round breaks, and there are a few other places further up the coast towards Larache.

Anchor Point in Agadir has been recommended, although it can be very inconsistent. Taghazout (p385), close by, is a laid-back spot popular with surfers. **Surf Maroc** (www.surfmaroc.co.uk) runs a great surf camp here for all levels.

Essaouira has been singled out by some surfers, though it's a far better windsurfing destination.

Perhaps the best breaks in the country are just north of Safi. The Lalla Fatna beach (p153) is the point of access and has drawn some of the biggest names in surfing for some of the longest tubular right-handers in the world. Other beaches in the vicinity of Safi are also worth checking out. For reliable information contact **Surfland** (☎ 023 366110; ☎ Apr-mid-Nov) in Oualidia or **Dream Surf Oualidia** (☎ 061 817817, 041 291838; ☎ year-round) on the beach in town. Surfland is also a great place for beginners' lessons, which take place in the sheltered bay. For further details see p149. There's also good surf to be found around Rabat (p132) and El-Jadida (p147).

Trekking

For the definitive guide to Morocco's world-class trekking possibilities, see above.

TREKKING THE WAY ALLAH INTENDED

Morocco, beloved for its casual 'God-willing, now-pass-another-cup-of-tea' charm, does not provide its trekking guests with much in the way of resources for safe and responsible exploration, or protection of the Moroccan environment. The following suggestions should lend a hand.

- Dress appropriately according to custom (p51).
- Use current topographical maps and run them by a local if you can: someone who lives in the area can verify water sources and indicate rivers that are now dry.
- Camp only in designated camp sites; fields are a private source of business for local families.
- Buy or collect firewood (do not chop) and use it sparingly to respect its scarcity.
- Scorpions hide under rocks and potentially in shoes and sleeping bags, so you'll want to shake these out occasionally. They will not sting unless provoked.
- Understand that laundering and bathing in rivers and streams pollutes a village's primary water source.
- Carry out rubbish to the nearest town or city.
- Be aware that some villages consider photography blasphemous and in others a camera makes you the Pied Piper. It is always inappropriate to photograph someone without permission and cameras can cause particular offence when pointed at women.
- Refrain from feeding or handling animals - even Barbary macaques, who will tease you with their charisma!
- Hitchhike at your own risk and remember: if you flag down a grand taxi then you're no longer hitchhiking - expect to pay the fare to the next town.
- Consider the impact of 4WDs before embarking on any off-*piste* adventures (see the boxed text, p91)
- Give a warm smile and some kind words to the friendly children who live in rural areas. Handing out money, candy and other gifts to kids teaches them to beg and harass tourists. If you wish to give something to children in a local community, it's better to give a donation to a local charity or school.
- Don't drink alcohol in remote villages where the practice is considered offensive.

White-Water Rafting

White-water rafting is very underdeveloped in Morocco, although the rivers in the High Atlas near Bin el-Ouidane Dam in the area around Azilal and Afourer have stunning scenery.

Only a few specialist adventure companies organise rafting trips to Morocco. Try the reputable **Water by Nature** (www.waterbynature.com), which has outlets in the UK and the USA. They cater for all levels of experience, and run family rafting trips.

Windsurfing & Kitesurfing

The conditions at self-styled 'Windy City' Essaouira (p160) and even more so at Sidi Kaouki (p166) make them fantastic spots for windsurfers and kitesurfers. You can hire boards on these beaches (Dh170 per

hour for windsurfing equipment). You'll also be able to tap into a reasonable windsurfing community here year-round. The area around El-Jadida (p147) is also good while Surfland in Oualidia (see p149) runs kitesurfing classes.

BUSINESS HOURS

Although a Muslim country, for business purposes Morocco follows the Monday to Friday working week. Friday is the main prayer day, however, so many businesses take an extended lunch break on Friday afternoon. During Ramadan the rhythm of the country changes and office hours shift to around 8am to 3pm or 4pm.

For details of opening hours for shops, banks, post offices and restaurants, see the Quick Reference inside the front cover.

Banking hours can vary a little, with some banks closing at 11.30pm on weekdays. In the main tourist cities, *bureaux de change* (foreign-exchange bureaux) keep longer hours (often until 8pm) and open over the weekend.

Medina souqs and produce markets in the *villes nouvelles* (new towns) of the bigger cities tend to wind down on Thursday afternoon and are usually empty on Friday, so plan your shopping trips accordingly. Souqs in small villages start early and usually wind down before the onset of the afternoon heat.

Government offices open from 8.30am to noon and 2pm to 6.30pm, Monday to Thursday. On Friday, the midday break lasts from about 11.30am to 3pm.

Tourist offices are generally open from 8.30am to noon and 2.30pm to 6.30pm from Monday to Thursday, and from 8.30am to 11.30am and 3pm to 6.30pm on Friday.

Téléboutiques (private telephone offices) and internet cafés often stay open late into the night, especially in cities.

CHILDREN

Your children have a decided advantage – having yet to acquire the stereotypes about Africa or the Middle East to which many of us are exposed, their first impression of the continent is likely to be the warmth and friendliness of the people. Indeed, many Moroccans have grown up in large families and children will help break the ice and open doors to closer contact with local people who are generally very friendly, helpful and protective towards children (conversely, couples travelling alone may frequently be asked why they don't have any kids). The result is that travelling with children in Morocco adds a whole new dimension to your journey. Or, as one of our authors wrote: 'Travelling in Morocco with kids is a great thing to do. Done it often and loved it all.'

For more information and hints on travelling with children, Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* by Cathy Lanigan is highly recommended.

PRACTICALITIES

Most hotels will not charge children under two years of age. For those between two and 12 years sharing the same room as their par-

ents, it's usually 50% off the adult rate. If you want reasonable toilet and bathroom facilities, you'll need to stay in midrange hotels.

If you look hard enough, you can buy just about anything you need for young children, although you should bring any special foods required and high-factor sunscreen. Disposable nappies are a practical solution when travelling despite the environmental drawbacks. International brands are readily available and cost about Dh25 for 10.

To avoid stomach upsets, stick to purified or bottled water. UHT, pasteurised and powdered milk are also widely available. Be extra careful about choosing restaurants; steer clear of salads and stick to piping-hot tajines, couscous, soups and omelettes. Moroccan markets are full of delicious fruit and vegies, but be sure to wash or peel them.

Avoid travelling in the interior during midsummer, when temperatures rise to 40°C plus. Beware of dehydration and sunburn, even on cloudy days.

Morocco has a great rail infrastructure and travel by train may be the easiest, most enjoyable option – children can stretch their legs and the tables are handy for drawing and games. Kids under four travel free, while those aged between four and 12 years get a reduction of 10% to 50%, depending on the service.

Grands taxis and buses can be a real squeeze with young children who count not as passengers in their own right but as wriggling luggage – kids have to sit on your lap. The safety record of buses and shared taxis is poor, and many roads are potholed. Hire-car companies rarely have child seats, so bring your own, and check that they clip into the seat belts.

There are few formal babysitting services but it can usually be arranged through top-end hotels or by tapping into the expat network, which is particularly active in Marrakesh. If you want an English-speaking babysitter, be sure to request that specifically as it's not a given.

One reader has reported that letting your kids run amok in carpet shops proved to be an excellent bargaining technique!

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Successful travel with children can require a special effort. Above all, don't try

to overdo things. Make sure activities include the kids (older children could help in the planning of these) and try to think of things that will capture their imagination – the latter shouldn't be difficult in Morocco. The sensory explosion and barely controlled chaos of the souqs in Fez and Marrakesh are endlessly fascinating and will supply many exciting (and possibly exasperating) moments. A night around a campfire with Berber music is unforgettable, although at the end of a hot day, a hotel pool may be all you need for hours of contented fun.

Camel or horse rides along the beaches of Essaouira (p160) and Agadir or among the sand dunes at M'Hamid (p350) or Merzouga (p370) are sure to be a big hit, as is quad biking or karting with older children in Ouarzazate (p342).

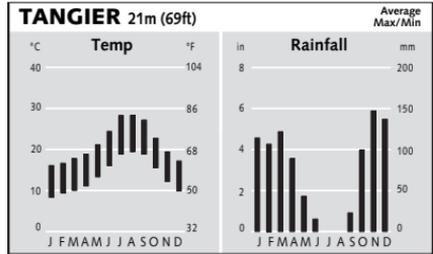
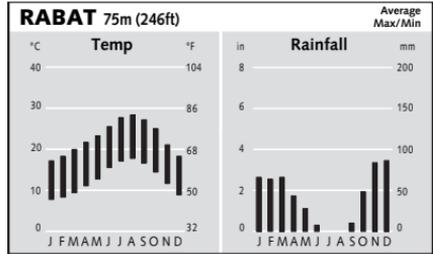
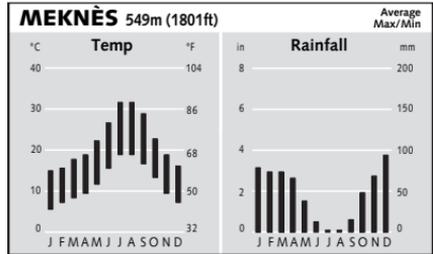
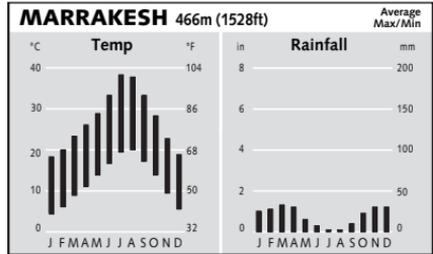
Another popular activity is the calèche (horse-drawn carriage) ride around the ramparts of cities like Marrakesh (p324) and Taroudannt (p391).

Other organised attractions of particular interest to younger kids include Yasmina Amusement Park in Casablanca (p108); Surfland (p149) in Oualidia; Parque Marítimo del Mediterráneo (p191) in Ceuta; Vallée des Oiseaux (p378) in Agadir; and the Atlas Film Corporation Studios (p342) in Ouarzazate.

Sights appropriate for children are covered throughout this book, with dedicated sections in Marrakesh (p307), Casablanca (p108) and Rabat (p123).

CLIMATE

Morocco's weather reflects its distinct geographical zones. Coastal Morocco is generally mild, but can become cool and wet in the north. Rainfall is highest in the Rif and northern Middle Atlas, where only the summer months are dry. As you go higher into the Middle and High Atlas mountains, expect bitterly cold, snowy winters and cool, fresh summers. Elsewhere, rain falls mostly between November and March but is unpredictable, and drought remains a perennial problem. Blustery winds are common along the Atlantic seaboard. The Moroccan interior can become stiflingly hot in summer, easily exceeding 40°C. Fronting the desert, these plains are also subject to particularly uncomfortable



springtime sandstorms (which are known as the *sirocco*, *chergui* or *irifi*) and usually occur around April.

For information on when to go to Morocco, see p21.

COURSES

There are some great short and long courses on offer if you want to learn to write, cook like a Moroccan, or just talk like one.

Cooking

Marrakesh has the widest selection of courses in Moroccan cooking. Souq Cuisine (p307) is among the best. Fez also has a handful of courses (p241) worth investigating.

Language

There are courses in modern standard Arabic in most of the major towns in Morocco, with an especially high concentration in Rabat (p123) and Casablanca (p107) offering both long- and short-term programs.

The most romantic choice however is Fez. The **Arabic Language Institute** (www.alif-fes.com; 3-/6-week course Dh5200/9400) is the possibly the most renowned language institute in Morocco. As well as longer courses aimed at foreigners (assistance is given in finding accommodation with local families), it can offer individual private study. Another excellent choice in Fez is **DMG Arabophon** (www.arabicstudy.com; courses Dh2100-8400) which offers a variety of courses, as well as classes in Tamazight Berber.

Writing

Morocco is just the place to get the creative juices flowing. If you fancy marshalling your ideas into something more coherent, **Traveller's Tales** (www.travellerstales.org) runs a travel-writing course in Marrakesh, led by Anthony Sattin, one of the authors of this guide.

CUSTOMS

Duty-free allowances are up to 200 cigarettes, or 50 cigars, or 400g of tobacco, plus 1L of spirits and one bottle of wine.

There are no restrictions on bringing foreign currency into the country, but importing or exporting dirhams is forbidden.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Morocco is a relatively safe place to travel and the great majority of people are friendly and honest. Nevertheless, the country does have a few traps for the unwary.

In the large cities there are some desperate people, and while physical attacks on foreigners are rare, they are not unheard of. Treat the medinas with particular caution at night.

Drugs

Morocco's era as a hippie paradise, riding the Marrakesh Express and all that, was long ago consigned to history. Plenty of fine dope (known as kif) may be grown in the Rif Mountains, but drug busts are common and Morocco is not a place where you'd want to investigate local prison conditions from the inside.

The vast majority of all Moroccan stories of extortion and rip-offs are drug related. A common ploy is to get you stoned, force you to buy a piece of hash the size of a house brick and then turn you over to the police (or at least threaten to). Of course, once you've been tainted with a little hash, you're unlikely to call the cops, and the hustlers know it.

Associating with Tangier's lowlife is for the initiated only. New arrivals should ignore late-night offers of hashish and grass – these dealers have a sixth sense for greenness, and won't miss an opportunity to squeeze ridiculous amounts of money out of frightened people. Tetouan is another popular venue, and watch out for similar scams in Assilah, Casablanca and Marrakesh. Hashish is sometimes referred to as 'chocolate', the Spanish slang, or more often just as 'something special' or 'shit', which you will definitely be in if you get caught.

You may occasionally find someone offering you *majoun*, a kind of sticky, pasty mass (not unlike molasses) made of crushed seeds of the marijuana plant. A small ball of this can send you reeling (see Paul Bowles' *Their Heads Are Green* or *Let It Come Down* for descriptions). Anyone with a slight tendency to paranoia when smoking dope should be aware that this is a common reaction among first-time *majoun*-munchers.

Issaguen and the Rif Mountains are Morocco's kif-growing heartland. Issaguen in particular can be a bag-load of trouble and is best avoided unless you're accompanied by a reliable guide.

Recent legislation and a hard government line may have forced dealers to give up their more aggressive tactics, but the hassle has by no means disappeared and although locals continue to smoke as a recreational pastime, as a tourist you're rather more vulnerable. Always bear in mind that

it's illegal to sell or consume hashish in Morocco. If caught, you may be looking at a fine and, in the worst case, a prison sentence of up to five years. See p468 for more information.

Although the police attitude in Spain is relaxed in respect to small amounts of cannabis for private use, Spanish customs will come down hard on people entering the country from Morocco if they find any, and you may be done for trafficking. If you're taking a car across, the chances that it will be searched are high. *Never* carry parcels or drive vehicles across borders for other people.

Getting Lost

A minor irritation is the ever-changing street names in Moroccan cities. For years, there's been a slow process of replacing old French, Spanish and Berber names with Arabic ones. The result so far is that, depending on whom you talk to, what map you use or which part of the street you are on, you're likely to see up to three different names.

The general Arabic word for street is *sharia*, or *derb* in medinas (*zankat* for smaller ones). In the north you'll still find the Spanish *calle* and *avenida*, and more commonly, the French *avenue*, *boulevard* or *rue*.

In some cases the Arabic seems to have gained the upper hand. This is reflected in this guidebook, in which some streets appear as *sharia* or *zankat* if local usage seems to justify it.

Street names won't help much in the labyrinthine medinas, although a compass might. If you feel you're getting lost, stick to the main paths (which generally have a fair flow of people going either way) and you'll soon reach a landmark or exit.

Plumbing

Patience is required when it comes to Moroccan plumbing. In the cheap, unclassified hotels that don't have star ratings, trickling cold water and squat toilets are often the norm.

Sometimes hot water is enthusiastically promised, but before you start dreaming of that powerful, steaming hot shower, remember that it may be tepid at best and is often only available at certain times of the

day. In country areas, water is sometimes heated by a wood fire, but this comes at an environmental cost – wood is expensive, water is often in short supply and deforestation is a major problem in Morocco. In small towns and rural areas the hammam may be a better bet.

Smoking

Smoking is a national pastime in Morocco and nonsmoking restaurants and hotels are almost unheard of.

However, this generally affects popular places rather than top-end or exclusive restaurants and hotels, where you may find nonsmoking areas. Most of the popular eateries are cafés with outdoor seating, so the problem is somewhat reduced.

Only the very top-end hotels (mainly Sofitel) have a nonsmoking policy.

In Muslim countries, it is generally considered unacceptable for women to smoke, and outside the big cities (and even within most of these) you'll seldom see women smokers. This is a cultural rather than religious dictate, although most religious leaders have condemned smoking, like drinking, as *haram* (forbidden). In practice, the only time the habit is seriously eschewed is during daylight hours of the holy month of Ramadan.

This shouldn't affect foreigners too much, although women may wish to refrain from smoking within local homes and be discreet elsewhere.

Theft

On the whole, theft is not a huge problem in Morocco. Travellers can minimise any risk however by being particularly vigilant in the major cities and by following a few basic precautions.

When wandering around the streets, keep the valuables you carry to a minimum and keep what you must carry around with you well hidden. Be particularly careful when withdrawing money from ATMs. External money pouches attract attention, but neck pouches or moneybelts worn under your clothes do not; that's where you should keep your money, passport and other important documents.

In some of the medinas – such as those in Marrakesh, Casablanca and Tangier, which have a particular reputation for petty theft –

a common tactic is for one person to distract you while another cleans out your pockets. There's no point walking around in a state of permanent alert, but keep your eyes open.

Other valuables such as cameras can be left with the hotel reception when you don't need them. If you prefer to keep things in your room (preferably locked inside your suitcase), nine times out of 10 you'll have no trouble. Leaving anything in a car, even out of sight, is asking for trouble.

Touts, Guides & Hustlers

The legendary hustlers of Morocco remain an unavoidable part of the Moroccan experience.

A few years ago special *brigades touristiques* (tourist police) were set up in the principal tourist centres to clamp down on Morocco's notorious *faux guides* and hustlers. Any person suspected of trying to operate as an unofficial guide could face jail and/or a huge fine.

This has greatly reduced, but not eliminated, the problem of *faux guides*. These people are often desperate to make a living, and they can be persistent and some-

times unpleasant. You'll generally find them hanging around the entrances to the big cities' medinas, and outside bus and train stations. Those disembarking (and embarking) the ferry in Tangier should expect at least some hassle from touts and hustlers (see p173). However, there's no point having a siege mentality. When arriving in a place for the first time, you might even benefit from the services of a guide, official or otherwise. Although high unemployment rates drive the numbers of *faux guides*, not all are necessarily complete imposters. Many are very experienced and speak half a dozen languages, and sometimes their main interest is the commission gained from certain hotels or on articles sold to you in the souqs. Be sure to agree on a price before setting off and set some parameters on what you expect to see and the number of shops you're taken to. Unofficial guides charge around Dh50 to Dh100 per day (rates should always be per guide not per person); a few dirham will suffice if you want to be guided to a specific location (like a medina exit). Whatever you give, you'll often get the you-can't-possibly-be-serious look. The best reply is

GAUCHE, GREEN & GULLIBLE

Many Moroccans genuinely believe that Westerners, though perhaps more sophisticated than themselves, are infinitely more naive, gullible and even plain stupid. Some, including the notorious *faux guides* (unofficial guides), may try to exploit this.

Very early on in your encounter with these guides, you'll be sized up for what you're worth. Apart from the physical indications such as your watch, shoes and clothes, you'll be assessed from a series of questions: how long you've been in Morocco, whether you've visited the country before, what your job is, whether you have a family (an indication of wealth) etc. Always be suspicious of these unsolicited enquiries and pretend that you know the city or country well. A few words of Arabic will convince them of this.

Considered to be the most lucrative nationalities, in descending order, are the Japanese, Americans, Canadians, Australians, the British, northern Europeans, southern Europeans, and Middle-Eastern Arabs. Considered the least lucrative are sub-Saharan Africans and Arabs from other North African countries.

Apart from the more obvious starting point of claiming to want nothing more than friendship (such as showing you around town, taking you to a cheap shop and helping you find a hotel), other classic approaches include wanting to practise English or help with the reading or deciphering of official documents and letters from friends. If you turn them down, some will try to play on your conscience by suggesting you are racist for not liking Moroccans or Muslims.

If you feel you're being categorised, you can always cause confusion by pretending you're from some very obscure land. Sometimes it's useful just to play plain stupid and control the situation that way. Be warned, though: Moroccans have a real aptitude for languages and it could be you who looks stupid as your new friend starts spouting away in the fluent Ukrainian you claim to speak, or just happens to be the brain surgeon you've claimed to be.

THANKS BUT NO THANKS

To avoid being hounded to within an inch of your life, and to help prevent nervous breakdowns and embarrassing incidents of 'medina rage', the following tips may come in handy:

- Politely decline all offers of help, and exchange a few good-humoured remarks (preferably in Arabic), but don't shake hands or get involved in lengthy conversation.
- Give the impression that you know exactly where you're going or explain that you employed a guide on your first day and now you'd like to explore the town on your own.
- Wear dark sunglasses and retreat to a café, restaurant or taxi if you're beginning to lose your cool. In extreme situations, use the word 'police' and look like you mean it.

the I've-just-paid-you-well-over-the-odds look. Maintain your good humour and after a couple of days in a place, the hassle tends to lessen considerably.

Official guides can be engaged through tourist offices and some hotels at the fixed price of around Dh250 to Dh300 per day (plus tip) for a local/national guide. It's well worth taking a guide when exploring the medinas of Fez and Marrakesh. Their local knowledge is extensive and they'll save you from being hassled by other would-be guides. If you don't want a shopping expedition included in your tour, make this clear beforehand.

Drivers should note that motorised hustlers operate on the approach roads to Fez and Marrakesh. These motorcycle nuisances are keen to find you a hotel, camp site and so on, and can be just as persistent as their colleagues on foot. Arriving by train in cities like Fez and Marrakesh you may also run into 'students' or similar, with the uncanny knowledge that your preferred hotel is closed or full, but they just happen to know this great little place...

DISCOUNT CARDS

You can stay at most Hostelling International (HI) hostels without a membership card (usually for a few dirham extra), so it's hardly worth getting a card especially for your trip.

International student cards don't open many magic doors, but they do entitle those under 30 to discounts of up to 60% on internal travel (plus on some flights *out* of the country) with Royal Air Maroc (RAM). If you plan on doing a lot of train travel, there are a variety of discount cards available including ones for (but not exclusively) students and senior travellers. Over-60s can

also usually get reductions on ferry tickets to/from Spain.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

For details of Moroccan embassies abroad, go to the Moroccan Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation website at www.maec.gov.ma.

Embassies & Consulates in Morocco

Most embassies and diplomatic representations are in Rabat. Unless otherwise noted, all of the embassies are open Monday to Friday, from 9am until noon.

Algeria Rabat (Map p118; ☎ 037 661574; algerabat@iam.net.ma; 46-48 Ave Tariq ibn Zayid; 🕒 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri); Oujda (Map p283; ☎ 056 710452; Blvd Bir Anzarane)

Australia The Australian embassy in Paris has consular responsibility for Morocco. Consular services to Australian citizens in Morocco are provided by the Canadian embassy.

Belgium Rabat (Map p118; ☎ 037 268060; info@ambabel-rabat.org.ma; 6 Ave de Marrakesh); Consulate in Casablanca (Map p102; ☎ 022 223049; 9 Rue al-Farabi); Tangier (☎ /fax 039 941130; 2nd fl, 41 Blvd Mohammed V)

Canada (Map p118; ☎ 037 687400; www.rabat.gc.ca; 13 Rue Jaafar as-Sadiq, Agdal, Rabat; 🕒 8am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Thu, 8am-1.30pm Fri)

France (Map p118; ☎ 037 689700; www.ambafrance-ma.org; 3 Rue Sahnoun, Agdal, Rabat); Consulate-general (Map p122 ☎ 037 268181; Rue Alla Ben Abdallah, Rabat; 🕒 8.30-11.30am Mon-Fri visa applications, 1.30-3pm Mon-Fri visa pick-up). Consulates-general are also in Agadir (off Map p376); Casablanca (Map p110); Rabat (Map p118); Tangier (Map p178); Marrakesh (Map p300); and Fez.

Germany (Map p122; ☎ 037 709662; www.amballemagne-rabat.ma; 7 Rue Madnine, Rabat)

Ireland The nearest Irish embassy is in Lisbon. Consular services to Irish citizens in Morocco are provided by the Canadian embassy.

Italy Rabat (Map p118; ☎ 037 706598; ambciata@iambitalia.ma; 2 Rue Idriss el-Azhar); Consulate-general in Casablanca (☎ 022 277558; fax 022 277139; cnr Rue Jean Jaures & Ave Hassan Soukiani)

Japan (off Map p118; ☎ 037 631782; fax 037 750078; 39 Ave Ahmed Balafrej Souissi, Rabat; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri)

Mali (off Map p118; ☎ 037 759125; fax 037 754742; 7 Rue Thami Lamdaouar, Soussi I, Rabat; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

Mauritania (off Map p118; ☎ 037 656678; ambassadeur@mauritanie.org.ma; 7 Rue Thami Lamdaouar, Soussi I, Rabat; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Mon-Thu, 8.30am-noon Fri)

New Zealand The closest embassy is in Madrid, Spain. The UK embassy provides consular support in Morocco.

Netherlands (Map p118; ☎ 037 219600; nlgovrab@mtds.com; 40 Rue de Tunis, Rabat)

Spain (Map p118; ☎ 037 633900; emb.rabat@mae.es; Rue Ain Khalouiya, Route.des Zaers, Km 5.300 Souissi, Rabat) Consulates also located in Agadir, Casablanca (Map p102); Nador, Rabat (Map p118); Tangier and Tetouan.

Switzerland (☎ 037 268030; fax 037 268040; Place Berkane, Rabat)

Tunisia (Map p118; ☎ 037 730636; fax 037 730637; 6 Ave de Fès, Rabat; ☎ 9am-noon & 2pm-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

UK Rabat (Map p118; ☎ 037 633333; www.britain.org.ma; 28 Ave SAR Sidi Mohammed; ☎ 8am-4.15pm Mon-Thu, 8am-1pm Fri); Consulate-general in Casablanca (Map p102; ☎ 022 857400; british.consulate2@menara.ma); Consulate in Tangier (☎ 039 936939; uktanger2@menara.ma)

USA Rabat (Map p118; ☎ 037 762265; http://rabat.us embassy.gov; 2 Ave de Marrakesh, Rabat; ☎ 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri); Consulate in Casablanca (Map p102; ☎ 022 264550; acccasablanca@state.gov; 8 Blvd Moulay Youssef; ☎ 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Moussems (festivals) that honour *marabouts* (local saints) pepper the Moroccan calendar. Although some are no more than an unusually lively market day, others have taken on regional and even national importance. These festivals are common among the Berbers and are usually held during the summer months.

Moussems exist on the frontier where Islamic orthodoxy and local custom have met and compromised. Although the veneration of saints is frowned upon by more orthodox Sunni Muslims, these festivals take their inspiration from a mix of pre-Islamic Berber tradition and Sufi mystic thought. Some of the more excessive manifestations, such as self-mutilation while in an ecstatic trance, were once a common sight at such gatherings. Today they have all but disappeared in the face of official disapproval of such 'barbarism'.

It's worth making enquiries at tourist offices to determine when *moussems* and other such festivals are due to happen. Some of the most important festivals and events, in chronological order, are as follows.

February

Almond Blossom Festival A very pretty festival held in late February to early March in the Ameln Valley near Tafraoute when the valley is awash with blossom (p402).

March/April

Marathon des Sables (www.saharamarathon.co.uk) A six-day foot race 243km across the desert, held in March or April. It starts and finishes in Ouarzazate (p58).

YOUR OWN EMBASSY

It's important to realise what your own embassy can and (more often) can't do to help if you get into trouble. Generally, it won't be much help in emergencies if the trouble you're in is remotely your own fault. Remember that you're bound by the laws of the country you are in. Your embassy will not be sympathetic if you end up in jail after committing a crime locally, even if such actions are legal in your own country.

In emergencies you might get some assistance, but only if all other channels have been exhausted. For example, if you need to get home urgently, getting a free ticket home is exceedingly unlikely – the embassy would expect you to have insurance. If all your money and documents are stolen, it may assist with getting a new passport, but a loan for onward travel is out of the question.

Some embassies used to keep letters for travellers or have a small reading room with home newspapers, but these days the mail-holding service has usually been stopped and even newspapers tend to be out of date.

Nomad Festival A celebration of nomadic culture in M'Hamid every March or April, with street performances, food, crafts and camel trips.

Moussem of Sidi Abdallah ibn Hassoun A procession of huge wax candle lanterns, carried by local brotherhoods to the Grand Mosque amid music and dancing. Held on the eve of Mouloud, the Prophet's birthday.

Festival of Sufi Culture A spin-off from the Sacred Music Festival, this new Fez outing has concerts, workshops and cultural exchanges (p242).

May/June

Rose Festival A colourful local festival celebrating the huge harvest of Persian roses in the valley around Kelaâ M'Gouna, close to Ouarzazate. Dancers are showered with rose petals and children sell fragrant garlands at the roadside. Usually held in May (p355).

Festival du Desert (www.festivaldudesert.ma) A celebration of music and dance held in May between Er-Rachidia, Merzouga and Rissani, with musicians from all across the Sahara.

Gnaoua and World Music Festival (www.festival-gnaoua.co.ma) A passionate celebration held in Essaouira on the third weekend of June, with concerts featuring international, national and local performers, and art exhibitions (p161).

Moussem of Sidi Mohammed Ma al-Ainin Held at Tan Tan, in late May or early June, this is an occasion where you may see Tuareg nomads from the Sahara; it also acts as a commercial gathering for tribes people.

Moussem of Ben Aïssa Held at Meknès' Koubba of Sidi ben Aïssa; one of the country's largest *moussems*, full of medieval pageantry with illusionists and daredevil horsemen (p260).

Festival of World Sacred Music A huge nine-day festival in Fez with great (and deserved) international attention. Concerts are held at the Dar Batha Museum, Grand Mechouar and Volubilis (p242).

Cherry Festival Sefrou's annual festival held in early June lasting three days with lots of folk music and dancing. Culminates in the picturesque crowning of the Cherry Queen (p254).

July

Festival International de Rabat Features musicians from all over Africa as well as some traditional theatre. The festival is also the venue for an annual film festival (p123).

Moussem of Sidi Bousselham Held in Moulay Bous-selham near Larache, this is another large-scale *moussem* commemorating the local saint, in a beautiful location overlooking the sea.

Festival of Casablanca City festival focusing on street theatre, music and cinema.

Marrakesh Popular Arts Festival (www.maghrebarts.ma, in French) A hugely colourful festival held in Marr-

akesh, celebrating Berber music and dance, and attracting performers from all over the country.

Moussem & Camel Market A large camel-traders fair that brings Goulmime to life; it is as much a trade event as a religious get-together.

International Cultural Festival An arts festival held in Assilah celebrating contemporary art with public art demonstrations and workshops (some for children), and other theatrical and musical performances (p141).

Timitar Agadir's annual day in the musical sun, with Moroccan and international performers.

August

Moussem of Moulay Abdallah Held south of El-Jadida in the small village of Sidi Bouzid, this huge festival is a full-on fantasia with people gathering from all the surrounding villages.

Moussem of Sidi Ahmed Held in Tiznit, this largely religious celebration sees devotees dedicating themselves to pilgrimage and prayer.

September/October

Marriage Festival A famous three-day festival held in late September at Imilchil, where thousands of people gather for the serious business of wedlock: women at this festival get to choose prospective husbands (p332).

Moussem of Moulay Idriss II The largest city *moussem* in holy Fez, held in late September or early October, when thousands gather to watch the processions to the saint's tomb (p242).

International Film Festival (www.festival-marrakech.com) A weeklong festival held in September or October that showcases Arab and African cinema, as well as films from elsewhere (p308).

Date Festival Held in Erfoud late in October to celebrate the date harvest, the lifeblood of the oases villages. Lots of music and dancing bring this corner of the desert to life (p365).

FOOD

In this book, restaurants have been organised according to location first and then categorised into the different price ranges. In general, most midrange and top-end restaurants can be found within the ville nouvelle of large cities, with a few notable exceptions in Fez and Marrakesh. Within each section, restaurants are listed in order of budget.

Eating together and communally from the same bowl has important social connotations in Morocco. Most families will rush home for the shared midday meal, which reinforces strong family relationships. Thus it is that the culture of eating

out in restaurants is still alien for many working-class Moroccans, explaining the epic divide between the cheap popular café (frequented by Moroccans for drinks and on-the-hoof sandwiches) and the expensive fancy restaurant (usually the domain of French expatriates, wealthy Moroccans and tourists).

Sandwich bars and popular cafés can serve up sandwiches and brochettes for around Dh20 to Dh40, whereas the cheapest menus in budget restaurants and outside major cities tend to hover between Dh70 to Dh150. Sit-down meals in a midrange restaurant within a major city will cost between Dh150 and Dh250 per person (depending on if you have wine). At the top end of the spectrum, possibilities range from palace and riad restaurants to some very fancy French establishments. Meals in one of these places will set you back around Dh400 to Dh600 per person including wine, more in Marrakesh. Wine is comparatively expensive in Morocco and will usually add an extra Dh100 to Dh250 to the bill.

A service charge may automatically be added to your bill in better restaurants; in addition to this, a TVA tax (similar to value-added tax), usually around 10%, may be charged, but generally this is built into the price of your meal.

For detailed information about Moroccan cuisine and local customs pertaining to food, see p79.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Homosexual acts (including kissing) are officially illegal in Morocco – in theory you can go to jail and/or be fined. In practice, although not openly admitted or shown, sex between men remains relatively common, even if few people engaging would actively identify themselves as gay. Platonic affection is freely shown, more so among men than women. In most places, discretion is the key and public displays of affection should be avoided (aggression towards gay male travellers is not unheard of), advice which applies equally to homosexual and heterosexual couples as a means of showing sensitivity to local feelings.

Some towns are certainly more gay-friendly than others, with Marrakesh winning the prize, followed by Tangier. That said, gay travellers generally follow the

same itineraries as everyone else and although 'gay' bars can be found here and there, Moroccan nightlife tends to include something for everybody.

Lesbians shouldn't encounter any problems, though it's commonly believed by Moroccans that there are no lesbians in their country. Announcing that you're gay probably won't make would-be Romeos magically disappear. For Moroccan men it may simply confirm their belief that Western men don't measure up in the sexual department.

It is also worth bearing in mind that the pressures of poverty mean that many young men will consider having sex for money or gifts. Needless to say, exploitative relationships form an unpleasant but real dimension of the Moroccan gay scene.

Useful websites that give the lowdown on local laws and attitudes to homosexuality include the following:

Behind the Mask (www.mask.org.za/) Detailed information and related news stories for every African country.

Gay & Lesbian Arab Society (www.glas.org) Resources on homosexuality in the Arab world.

Global Gayz (www.globalgayz.com) A useful resource with good links on Morocco.

Spartacus International Gay Guide (www.spartacusworld.com) Renowned guide to gay travel around the world with information on Morocco.

HOLIDAYS

All banks, post offices and most shops shut on the main public holidays, although transport is rarely affected. Of more significance to the majority of people are the principal religious holidays, which mean interruptions and changes of time for many local bus services.

As in Europe, the summer holiday period can be intensely busy along the Atlantic Coast as many Moroccan families flock to the sea, especially the resorts around Assilah, El-Jadida, Oualidia, Safi and Essaouira. Over Easter and Christmas the influx of European holiday-makers also has a big impact on hotel availability – booking ahead is essential.

Public Holidays

New Year's Day 1 January

Independence Manifesto 11 January – commemorates the publication in Fez of the Moroccan nationalist manifesto for independence.

Labour Day 1 May

Feast of the Throne 30 July – commemorates the accession to the throne of King Mohammed VI.

Allegiance of Oued Eddahab 14 August – celebrates the 'return to the fatherland' of the Oued Eddahab region in the far south, a territory once claimed by Mauritania.

Anniversary of the King's and People's Revolution 20 August – commemorates the exile of Mohammed V by the French in 1953.

Young People's Day 21 August – celebrates the King's birthday.

Anniversary of the Green March 6 November – commemorates the Green March 'reclaiming' the Western Sahara on November 1975.

Independence Day 18 November – commemorates independence from France.

Islamic Holidays

Although most business hours and aspects of daily Moroccan life are organised around the Gregorian calendar, the religious rhythms of society are firmly tied to the lunar Hejira calendar. The word *hejira* refers to the Prophet Mohammed's flight from Mecca to Medina in AD 622 – the first year of the Muslim calendar. The lunar calendar is slightly shorter than its Gregorian equivalent, so the Muslim calendar begins around 11 days earlier each year.

Dates run from sunset to the next sunset, with each month beginning with the sighting of the new moon. The religious authorities in Fez declare the sighting, so while future holy days can be estimated, the precise dates are in doubt until a few days before the start of that month. Ask an anxious Moroccan what date the Ramadan fast is going to end and you'll understand the frustrations. For this reason, the dates given here are only approximate. Offices and businesses all shut on these days, except for the first day of Ramadan.

The following Islamic holidays are celebrated countrywide.

RAS AS-SANA

The Muslim New Year's Day is celebrated on the first day of the Hejira calendar year, 1 Moharram, the first month of the Muslim lunar calendar.

MOULID AN-NABI

Sometimes also spelled Mouloud an-Nabi, this is a lesser feast celebrating the birth of the Prophet Mohammed on 12 Rabi

al-Awal, the third month of the Muslim calendar. Children are often given presents on this day.

RAMADAN

Ramadan is the auspicious holy month of sunrise-to-sunset fasting, marking the period when the Prophet Mohammed received the revelations that form the Quran. No eating, drinking or smoking is permitted during daylight hours, although children, pregnant women, the sick and the elderly are exempt. Fasting during this month (one of the five pillars of Islam) is only one aspect of Ramadan, which is a time for renewing one's relationship with God. Ramadan is also traditionally a time for *zakat* (the giving of alms, another pillar of Islam), and reading the Quran.

The Arabic for fasting is *sawm*. You may find yourself being asked '*Inta sa'im?*' ('Are you fasting?') and encouraged to do so if your answer is '*La, ana faatir*' ('No, I am breaking the fast'). Non-Muslims are not expected to participate, even if more pious Muslims suggest you do, but in practice you end up adapting to some degree.

The implications of travelling during Ramadan are many. The most obvious is that many restaurants close during daylight hours. For more information on eating during Ramadan, see p86. Equally importantly, the entire rhythm of the country changes as most offices and many shops shift to open around 8am to 3pm or 4pm, and don't reopen for the evening. Public transport runs, although often on a much-reduced timetable, which is product of both supply (fewer drivers keen to work) and demand (with many Moroccan travellers inclined to delay travel until Ramadan ends). Most tour and trekking companies continue tours during Ramadan, but if it's a pre-booked tour, contact them in advance to make sure. If you arrive in a small village during Ramadan, you may find guides less than enthusiastic about taking to the trails, even though travellers are exempt from the dictates of the fast. Normally polite Moroccans can also become decidedly sullen during the fast and everything seems to take longer than it should; this is especially the case when Ramadan falls during the interminable daylight hours of summer (as it will during the lifetime of this edition

ISLAMIC HOLIDAYS

Holiday	2009	2010	2011	2012
Ramadan begins	22 Aug	11 Aug	1 Aug	20 Jul
Eid al-Fitr	20 Sep	9 Sep	30 Aug	19 Aug
Moulid an-Nabi	9 Mar	27 Feb	16 Feb	5 Feb
New Year begins (year)	31 Dec (1430)	20 Dec (1431)	7 Dec (1432)	27 Nov (1433)
Eid al-Adha	30 Nov	19 Nov	6 Nov	26 Oct

of the guidebook). The closer you get to sunset, the itchier people become. Traffic can be particularly terrible, with everyone clamouring to get home – hungry taxi drivers don't appreciate being flagged down at this time.

That said, the celebratory aspects of Ramadan can almost compensate for the hardships of the day just passed. *Iftar* (the breaking of the fast), is a time of great activity, when people come together to eat, drink and pray. If you're fortunate enough to be invited into the home of a local family for the nightly feast, you'll be embarking on a night that you'll never forget. Take a gift of dates – traditionally the first food to be eaten after the fast.

EID AL-FITR

The end of Ramadan – or more accurately the first days of the following month of Shawwal – mark Eid al-Fitr (the Feast of the Breaking of the Fast), also known as Eid as-Sagheer (the Small Feast). The fast is traditionally ended with a meal of *harira* (lentil soup), dates and honey cakes known as *griwash*. The Eid generally lasts four or five days, during which everything grinds to a halt. This is not a good time to travel, as whole families jam the transport network to visit relatives, but it can be a great experience if you are invited to share in some of the festivities with a family. It is a very family-oriented feast, much in the way Christmas is for Christians.

THE HAJ & EID AL-ADHA

The fifth pillar of Islam, the sacred duty of all who can afford it, is to make the pilgrimage to Mecca (the haj). It can be done at any time, but at least once it should be accomplished in Zuul-Hijja, the 12th month of the Muslim year. The haj culminates in the ritual slaughter of a lamb, in commemoration of Ibrahim's sacrifice, and marks the begin-

ning of Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice), also known as the Eid al-Kabeer (Grand Feast). Throughout the Muslim world the act of sacrifice is repeated and the streets of towns and cities seem to run with the blood of slaughtered sheep, with the meat often distributed to the less fortunate. The holiday runs from 10 to 13 Zuul-Hijja (the 12th month of the Muslim calendar).

INSURANCE

A travel-insurance policy to cover theft, loss and medical problems is strongly recommended – the national health service in Morocco isn't always great and the few good private hospitals are expensive. Some policies offer lower and higher medical-expense options; the higher ones are chiefly for countries such as the USA, which have extremely high medical costs. Check that the policy covers ambulance or an emergency flight home, and carry proof of your insurance with you; this can be vital in avoiding any delays to treatment in emergency situations.

Buy travel insurance as early as possible. Buying just before you leave home may mean that you're not covered for delays to your flight caused by strike action that began, or was threatened, before you took out the insurance. If you need to extend your cover on the road, do so before it expires or a more expensive premium may apply.

Paying for your airline ticket with a credit card often provides some travel-accident insurance and you may be able to reclaim the payment if the operator doesn't deliver.

Some policies specifically exclude 'dangerous activities', which can include scuba diving, motorcycling, and even trekking, so discuss this with your broker. A locally acquired motorcycle licence is not valid under some policies.

You may prefer a policy that pays the medical facility directly rather than you having

to pay on the spot and claim later, although in practice many Moroccan doctors and hospitals insist on payment upfront. If you have to claim later, make sure you keep all documentation. Some policies ask you to call back (reverse charge) to a centre in your home country where an immediate assessment of your problem is made, so bring your insurer's emergency telephone number and keep a copy separate from your main baggage. Find out also which private medical service your insurer uses in Morocco so that you can call them direct in the event of an emergency.

Make sure that you have adequate health insurance and any relevant car insurance if you're driving (see p494). Worldwide travel insurance is available at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services. You can buy, extend and claim online anytime – even if you're already on the road.

INTERNET ACCESS

It's not difficult to get online in Morocco. Internet access is widely available, efficient and cheap (Dh4 to Dh10 per hour) in internet cafés, usually with pretty impressive connections speeds – witness the many teenagers talking with their friends by webcam. One irritant for travellers is the widespread use of French or Arabic (non-qwerty) keyboards, which will reduce most travellers to one-finger typing and fumbled (and mumbled) searches for hidden punctuation marks.

Wi-fi is increasingly available in hotels, as indicated throughout the review sections of the guide. Most top-end and many mid-range hotels offer wi-fi, and it's more or less standard in most riads and *maisons d'hôtes*. If you're bringing your laptop, check the power-supply voltage and bring a universal adaptor.

For useful internet resources see p25.

LEGAL MATTERS

Moroccan law prohibits the possession, offer, sale, purchase, distribution and transportation of cannabis and the penalty will most likely include a prison sentence ranging from three months to five years and/or a fine from Dh2400 up to Dh240,000. Acquittals in drugs cases are extremely rare. The UK-based **Fair Trials Abroad** (FTA; ☎ 020-8332 2800; www.fairtrialsabroad.org; London, UK) provides

assistance and legal advice to nationals of EU countries imprisoned abroad.

If you get into trouble, your first call should always be to your consulate; remember that it's not unknown for the local police to be in on the scam. If you find yourself arrested by the Moroccan police, you won't have much of a legal leg to stand on and it's unlikely that any interpreter on hand will be of sufficient standard to translate an accurate statement that will, nonetheless, play a vital part in subsequent judicial proceedings. According to some human-rights groups (Human Rights Watch and L'Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture), physical abuse while in custody is not unknown.

MAPS

Few decent maps of Morocco are available in the country itself, so get one before leaving home.

Michelin's No 742 (formerly No 959) map of Morocco is arguably the best. In addition to the 1:4,000,000 scale map of the whole of Morocco, including the disputed territory of the Western Sahara, there is a 1:1,000,000 enlargement of Morocco and 1:600,000 enlargements of Marrakesh and the High Atlas, Middle Atlas and Meknès areas. Sites of weekly markets, kasbahs and *marabouts* (holy mausolea of local saints) are also shown, and particularly scenic roads are also noted. You can buy this in major Moroccan cities.

Preferred by many and with similar, often clearer, detail (and occasionally available in Morocco) is the GeoCenter World Map *Morocco*, which shows the country at a handy 1:800,000 scale. Hildebrand's *Morocco* covers the entire country at a scale of 1:900,000, includes seven small city maps and is good for the Western Sahara.

Regionally, several maps include Morocco as part of northwestern Africa. The Michelin map No 741 (formerly Nos 953 and 153) covers all of west Africa and most of the Sahara, has a scale of 1:4,000,000 and is something of an overland classic. Also on the same scale is Kümmerley & Frey's *Africa, North and West*.

It's also possible to get hold of 1:200,000 Russian survey maps and air charts of Morocco from good map shops worldwide, although these usually have to be ordered and

can take up to six weeks to arrive. For advice on tracking down more detailed topographical maps for trekking, see p417.

Most of these maps are available online from **Stanfords** (☎ 0044 20 7836 1321; www.stanfords.co.uk), the world's largest map shop.

MONEY

The Moroccan currency is the dirham (Dh), which is divided into 100 centimes. You will find notes in denominations up to Dh200 and coins of Dh1, Dh2, Dh5 and Dh10, as well as, less frequently, 10, 20 and 50 centimes.

The dirham is a restricted currency, meaning that it cannot be taken out of the country and is not available abroad. That said, the currency is fairly stable and there are no wild fluctuations in exchange rates. Euros, US dollars and British pounds are the most easily exchanged currencies.

Exchange rates are given on the inside front cover of this book and a guide to costs can be found on p22.

ATMs

ATMs (*guichets automatiques*) are a common sight even in the smallest towns. Virtually all accept Visa, MasterCard, Electron, Cirrus, Maestro and InterBank systems, making them by far the easiest way to access your money in Morocco. BMCE (Banque Marocaine du Commerce Extérieur), Crédit du Maroc, Banque Populaire, Banque Marocaine pour le Commerce et l'Industrie (BMCI), Société Générale and Attajariwafa Bank also offer reliable service. Some banks charge you every time you make a withdrawal from a foreign cash machine, others don't. Ask your bank back home. The amount of money you can withdraw from an ATM generally depends on the conditions attached to your particular card, although the daily ATM limit on most cards is around Dh2000. ATMs sometimes run dry on weekends.

Black Market

The easy convertibility of the dirham leaves little room for a black market, but you'll find people in the streets asking if you want to exchange money, especially in Tangier, Casablanca and on the borders of (and just inside) the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. Avoid these characters; there's no monetary

benefit to be had from such transactions and scams are common.

Cash

Nothing beats cash for convenience...or risk. If you lose it, it's gone forever and very few travel insurers will come to the rescue. Nonetheless, you'll certainly need to carry some cash with you. Keep a handful of notes of small denomination in your wallet (never in a back pocket) for day-to-day transactions and put the rest in a money belt or another safe place. If you're travelling in out-of-the-way places, make sure you have enough cash to last until you get to a decent-sized town. Having a secret stash of euros in small denominations is also a good idea.

The endless supply of small coins may be annoying but they're handy for the payment of taxis, tips, guides and beggars.

Credit Cards

Major credit cards are widely accepted in the main tourist centres, although their use often attracts a surcharge of around 5% from Moroccan businesses.

The main credit cards are MasterCard and Visa, and if you plan to rely on plastic cards, the best bet is to take one of each. Better still is a combination of credit and debit cards, and travellers cheques so that you have something to fall back on if an ATM swallows your card or the banks in the area are closed.

Most large bank branches will allow you to get cash advances on Visa and MasterCard. See the list of banks in the ATM section, left.

Money Changers

The importation or exportation of Moroccan currency is prohibited, but any amount of foreign currency may be brought into the country. In the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla the currency is the euro. Most currencies are readily exchanged in banks, but Australian, Canadian and New Zealand dollars are not recognised.

If you're arriving from, or heading for, the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, the Moroccan banks on the borders will exchange cash only. The banks in Melilla and Ceuta deal in dirham, but at rates inferior to those in Morocco.

Banking services inside Morocco are reasonably quick and efficient. Rates vary little from bank to bank, but it doesn't hurt to look around. Branches of BMCE and Cr dit du Maroc are generally the most convenient, and often have separate *bureau de change* sections that are open on weekends. Major branches of the main banks open on Saturday morning.

You'll need your passport to change travellers cheques (plus the travellers cheque receipt in some places) and to get cash advances; some banks want to see it when you change cash, too.

As exporting Moroccan currency is illegal, wind down to nothing as you approach the end of your trip and hang on to all exchange receipts – you'll need them to convert leftover dirham at most Moroccan banks.

Tippling

Tippling is an integral part of Moroccan life. Almost any service can warrant a tip, but don't be railroaded. The judicious distribution of a few dirham for a service willingly rendered can, however, make your life a lot easier.

A tip of 10% of a restaurant bill is about right (unless the service has been poor, of course), and a couple of dirham suffices at a caf . Museum guides, *gardiens de voitures* (car-park attendants), porters, baggage handlers and petrol-pump attendants expect to be tipped (between Dh3 and Dh5, or Dh10 for overnight parking). It's worth bearing in mind that unskilled workers in Morocco earn somewhat less than Dh80 per day.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques are so old news, and more travellers opt simply to withdraw money from ATMs or get cash advances on credit cards as they go. They do, however, offer some protection against theft.

Amex, Visa and Thomas Cook cheques are widely accepted and have efficient replacement policies. Keeping a record of the cheque numbers and those you have used is vital when it comes to replacing lost travellers cheques. Make sure you keep this record separate from the cheques themselves.

Almost all banks charge commission on travellers cheques (around Dh10 to Dh20 per cheque), though some banks charge

Dh10 per transaction, so ask around before changing. Smaller banks may refuse to change travellers cheques,

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Morocco is a photographer's dream, but never point your camera at anything that's vaguely military or could be construed as 'strategic'. This includes airports, bridges, government buildings and members of the police or armed forces. This becomes more of an issue further south, in the Western Sahara, or near the Algerian border

It is common courtesy to ask permission before taking photographs of people. Urban Moroccans are generally easygoing about it, but in the countryside locals are not so willing to have cameras pointed at them. In particular, women and older people very often don't want to be photographed. Respect their right to privacy and don't take photos.

Memory cards and batteries for digital cameras are quite easy to find in photography shops in major cities (especially Casablanca and Marrakesh), although for a short visit there's no reason not to bring your own. A USB memory stick is useful for backing up photos, but most Moroccan internet caf s will burn you a CD if needed.

For nondigital shooters, Kodak and Fuji colour negative film (35mm and APS), as well as video tapes, are readily available in bigger cities and towns, but are marginally more expensive than in Europe. Slide film is more difficult to come by. If you buy film in Morocco, be sure to check expiry dates. Professional photo labs also offer the most professional processing services.

For comprehensive advice on taking terrific photos, Lonely Planet's *Travel Photography*, *Landscape Photography* and *People Photography* have been designed to take with you on the road.

POST

Post offices are distinguished by a yellow 'PTT' sign or the 'La Poste' logo. You can sometimes buy stamps at *tabacs*, the small tobacco and newspaper kiosks you see scattered about the main city centres.

The postal system is fairly reliable, if not terribly fast. It takes at least a week for letters to get to their European destinations,

and two weeks to get to Australia and North America. Sending post from a city normally gives mail a head start. Worldwide postcards cost around Dh13 to send, and letters around Dh18.

Express Mail & Couriers

There is usually an Express Mail Service (EMS), also known as Poste Rapide, in the same office as parcel post. In Morocco the service is run by **Chronopost** (☎ 022 202121; www.chronopost.com). A 500g package will cost around Dh320 to send to the UK and Europe, Dh420 to North America and Dh575 to Australia.

Private courier companies have offices in the major cities that are both faster and more expensive. These include **DHL** (☎ 022 972020; www.dhl-ma.com) and **TNT** (☎ 022 272724; www.tnt.com).

Receiving Mail

Having mail addressed to 'Poste Restante, La Poste Principale' of any big town should not be a problem. Generally reliable, some offices only hang on to parcels for a couple of weeks before returning them. You'll need your passport to claim mail and there may be a small charge on collection.

An alternative way to receive mail is through Amex, which is represented by the travel agency Voyages Schwartz and has branches in Casablanca, Tangier and Marrakesh. To qualify for the client mail service, you're supposed to have Amex travellers cheques or an Amex card. In practice, you're usually asked only to produce a passport for identification and there's no charge.

Sending Mail

The parcel office, which is indicated by the sign 'colis postaux', is generally in a separate part of the post-office building.

To ship your goods home, buy a box and a shipping form at the post office and take them to the shop where you bought your wares; they know the product and can wrap and pack the pieces well with newsprint and cardboard. If you've purchased carpets, the vendor should have rolled and bound them in plastic sacks; if not, return and ask them to do so. There is a 20kg limit and parcels should not be wider, longer or higher than 1.5m. Label the outside of the boxes or carpets in several places with a waterproof

pen and be very clear about the destination country. Indicate the value of the contents if you like, but you may be charged taxes at the receiving end. Don't seal the box! Customs offices at the post office need to review the contents. Your packages will be weighed and you will be charged the Par Avion (air) freight rates unless you specify that that you prefer the items shipped by land (considerably less expensive but can take three months).

Valuable speciality items such as large furniture may involve customs clearance. The shopkeeper should arrange this, plus shipping, for you but at your own cost; just make sure you keep copies of all documentation.

SHOPPING

To come to Morocco as a tourist is to shop, and the shop owners in the souqs know this only too well. An enthusiastic souvenir hunter could spend weeks trawling through the souqs of Morocco. From silver jewellery to copper and brassware, and myriad rugs and carpets, there is an enormous range. Obviously, items of inferior quality are produced in addition to higher-quality objects – it pays to take your time before buying. Many cities have a government-run Ensemble Artisanal, where crafts are sold at fixed prices. They're often good places to get an idea of prices and quality. For more information on the myriad things to browse and buy, see the Arts & Architecture chapter, p65.

Other popular items include herbs and spices, old-fashioned French-style tourism posters and Moroccan clothes. Many die-hard shoppers buy a large woven shopping basket as a souvenir and also use it to pack and transport souvenirs.

Always get a receipt for larger purchases, especially carpets, as you may be required to show this to customs on your departure from Morocco; otherwise you may have to pay an export tax, especially if you have more than one carpet. You may also have to pay a duty on taking carpets into your home country.

Markets

Moroccan towns and villages have weekly or twice-weekly markets (*souq hebdomadaire*) where people from the surrounding area

RULES TO REMEMBER

There are three rules for shopping in Morocco's souqs: patience, patience and patience. Bargaining is an essential element in Morocco's commercial culture and, through a mix of guile, persistence and silky sales techniques, Moroccan shop owners are a world-class act. For them, bargaining is entertainment and social interaction, a game seasoned with performance and rhetoric. You'd do well to see it in the same way.

Preparation

Visiting the Ensemble Artisanal, a government-run craft shop found in most cities and where they sell quality goods with fixed prices, is ideal for discovering what constitutes a fair price. Hotel receptionists or local friends can also give you an idea of what a local would pay. Armed with this information, set yourself an upper limit and stick to it.

Foreplay

Learn the art of wandering through the souqs and scanning your surrounds – sunglasses are the perfect aid in this devious pursuit. Once you've spotted your prey, engage the shop owner and score points with a *salam ou alekum* (peace be with you). His questions will follow: Where are you from? He will doubtless discover (what a coincidence!) that he has a brother/cousin/friend who lives in your home town. How long have you been in Morocco? Far be it for us to advocate lying, but the less time you've been here, the more the shop owner will be licking his lips. Then you can start to browse uninterestedly – a spark of interest means the bargaining begins (though not if you're with a guide, as a commission will have to factored in).

come to sell their wares and buy goods they don't produce themselves. These markets are different from the permanent covered markets you'll find in most towns, and usually provide a lively opportunity to observe the distinctive customs and clothing of local people.

All types of markets are called souqs. These are some of the more interesting ones:

Location	Market days
Agadir	Sat, Sun
Azrou	Tue
Chefchaouen	Mon, Thu
Figuig	Wed
Larache	Sun
M'Hamid	Mon
Midelt	Sun
Moulay Idriss	Sat
Ouarzazate	Sun
Ouezzane	Thu
Oujda	Wed, Sun
Sefrou	Thu
Tafraoute	Wed
Taroudannt	Sun
Tinerhir	Mon
Tinzouline	Mon
Tiznit	Wed
Zagora	Wed, Sun

SOLO TRAVELLERS

Morocco is a great destination for solo travellers. Popular with independent travellers and backpackers, Morocco has plenty of budget accommodation where it's easy to find a travel buddy should you be in need of one (Fez and Marrakesh are particularly good centres for this). Moroccans are also open, inquisitive and friendly, which means you will seldom be lonely, although locals may be baffled (to the verge of pitying) as to why you'd choose to travel alone, rather than with friends or (especially) family. Outside the cities, the rates in many places are per person rather than per room and single occupancy of rooms is rarely a problem. However in riads, the limited accommodation means that discounts on single occupancy are fairly minimal.

Lone female travellers to Morocco will find it more tiresome than solo male travellers, although the overwhelming consensus from readers is that the rewards far outweigh the hassles. Be cautious but don't be paranoid because if you close off all contact with local people you could end up missing one of Morocco's greatest rewards.

For more information on women travellers, see p475.

The Main Event

Whatever the vendor quotes you, offer one-third. If that's insultingly low (and even if it isn't), he'll laugh, shake his head then look pained. If you truly have insulted him, or he figures that a tour bus (filled with tourists with loads of money) is headed his way, the bargaining will end. More likely, he'll tell you that he can drop the price by a few dirhams because (a) you are his friend; (b) he likes British/American/Insert-country-here people; (c) business has been bad and what else can he do; or (d) because you are the first/last customer of the day. Play hard to get and counter with your own sob story, tell him you've seen the same item down the road for a fraction of the price or make him laugh and he will lower again. Perhaps give a little ground, even walk away, and if you are with someone, try the 'good cop, bad cop' routine (eg husband wants the souvenir, cautious wife controls the purse strings). Whatever you do, don't let on how much you *really* want the piece. If it means enough to him, he won't let you leave; if not, swallow your pride and try again. But never, ever lose your temper – Dh10 probably means more to a Moroccan trader than it does to you. If you end up paying 60% of the opening price, you've done well.

The Aftermath

After the purchase is sealed, other travellers will surely tell you that you paid too much, but bargaining depends on a wonderfully simple concept: the price is one that both parties have accepted as fair. It doesn't matter what anybody else thinks.

And one final thing: unless you're leaving on the next bus out of town, pass by the shop on the days that follow, stopping even for a mint tea. Freed from the pressure of a looming transaction, you might even get to know the man behind the salesman, which may be worth more than money can buy.

TELEPHONE & FAX

Morocco has a good telephone network and Moroccans are as obsessed with mobile (cell) phones as the rest of the world.

There are three GSM mobile-phone networks: **Meditel** (www.meditelcom.ma), **Maroc Telecom** (www.iam.ma) and **Wana** (www.marocnnect.ma). Countrywide coverage is generally excellent, although much of the Atlas and Sahara remain, unsurprisingly, mobile-free zones. Your home mobile operator is likely to have a local agreement with one of the Moroccan operators, although roaming services tend to attract hefty charges. It may be cheaper to buy a prepaid Moroccan mobile or SIM card at a *téléboutique* (private telephone kiosk/office). A local SIM card should cost around Dh30. *Téléboutiques*, news-stands and grocery stores all sell top-up scratch cards to buy more credit. Moroccan mobile numbers start with 01, 06 or 07. Calls cost around Dh2 per minute for domestic calls, and Dh10 per minute for international calls, depending on the network.

To make a call within Morocco, you must dial the local three-digit area code even if you are dialling from the same town or code area. For local-directory enquiries

dial ☎ 160. To make an international call, you must add the prefix ☎ 00 to all numbers, then the country code (it's important to remember this if dialling the Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta – the country code for Spain is ☎ 34.

If you're not using a mobile, you can make a call at a *téléboutique* or a public payphone. The former will usually change small notes into coins to make your call. Most payphones are card-operated, and you'll need to buy a *télécarte* (phonecard) from a *tabac* or *téléboutique*. Payphones have easy-to-follow instructions for use. Calling from a hotel normally doubles the cost of your call.

Most *téléboutiques* offer fax services, but they're often expensive – between Dh20 and Dh50 per sheet for international faxes, depending on the destination, and around Dh12 to Moroccan numbers. It normally costs Dh5 to receive a fax.

TIME

Morocco is on GMT/UTC, with the clock moved forward one hour for daylight saving between 1 June and 27 September. If you're travelling via Spain (or the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla) take particular care

with the clock, as in the summer, spring and autumn Spain is two (not one) hours ahead, which can affect plans for catching ferries and the like. For a comprehensive guide to time zones, see p534.

Time is something that most Moroccans seem to have plenty of and they're not in nearly as much of a hurry to get things done as most Westerners. Rather than getting frustrated by this, learn to go with the flow a little. It may even lengthen your life, a sentiment reflected in the Moroccan saying, 'He who hurries has one foot in the grave.'

TOILETS

Outside the major cities, public toilets are rare. If you do find one, you'll need to bring paper (*papier hygiénique*), a tip for the attendant (Dh2 to Dh3), stout-soled shoes, and very often a nose clip. Flush toilets are a luxury in a country struggling with water shortages.

Toilets are mostly of the squat variety (referred to by Moroccans as 'Turkish toilets') with a tap, hose or container of water for sluicing – the idea being to wash yourself (with your left hand) after performing. There's seldom any toilet paper so keep a supply with you. Don't throw the paper into the toilet as the plumbing is often dodgy; instead discard it in the bin provided. Women who have their period will need to take along a plastic bag for disposing of used tampons and pads.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Morocco has few facilities for the disabled, and the awkward nature of narrow medina streets and rutted pavements makes mobility even for the able-bodied something of a challenge. But that doesn't necessarily make it out of bounds for those who do have a physical disability and a sense of adventure. Not all hotels (and certainly very few of the cheaper ones) have lifts, so booking ground-floor hotel rooms ahead of time is one essential. Only a handful of the very top-end hotels have rooms designed for the disabled. Travelling by car is probably the best transport, though you'll be able to get assistance in bus and train stations (a tip will be required). Many tour operators can tailor trips to suit your requirements.

Vision- or hearing-impaired travellers are also poorly catered, for with hearing

loops, Braille signs and talking pedestrian crossings nonexistent.

Organisations that disseminate information, advice and assistance on world travel for the mobility impaired include the following:

Access-able Travel Source (☎ 303-232 2979; www.access-able.com) A US-based information provider for travellers with mobility problems.

Disabled Travelers Guide (www.disabledtravelersguide.com) Comprehensive information and general guide for travellers with disabilities.

Mobility International USA (☎ 541-343 1284; www.miusa.org)

Royal Association for Disability & Rehabilitation (Radar; ☎ 020-7250 3222) This UK organisation publishes a useful guide called *Holidays & Travel Abroad: A Guide for Disabled People*.

VISAS

Most visitors to Morocco do not require visas and are allowed to remain in the country for 90 days on entry. Exceptions to this include nationals of Israel and many sub-Saharan African countries (including South Africa). These people must apply in advance for a three-month, single-entry visa (about US\$30). They also have the option of applying for a three-month, double-entry visa (about US\$50). In all cases, your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond your date of entry. Applications are normally processed in 48 hours.

In Spain, visas are available at Moroccan consulates in Madrid, Barcelona, Algeciras, and Las Palmas in the Canary Islands. In Mauritania, you can get a visa at the Moroccan embassy in Nouakchott within 48 hours.

As visa requirements change, it's a good idea to check with the Moroccan embassy in your country or a reputable travel agency before travelling.

Visa Extensions

Should the standard 90-day stay be insufficient, you can apply for an extension or even for residence (a *Carte de Séjour*), but the latter is difficult to get and usually requires proof of employment. Go to the nearest police headquarters (*Préfecture de Police*) with your passport, three photos and a letter from your embassy requesting a visa extension on your behalf. Applications can take hours or days, and different police

VISAS FOR NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

Embassies for the following countries are in Rabat - see p462 for address details.

- **Algeria** The Morocco–Algeria border remains closed, and Algeria prefers visa applicants to apply in their country of residence.
- **Mali** Visas are required for everyone except French nationals and are valid for one month (Dh250), but are renewable inside Mali. Two photographs and a yellow-fever vaccination certificate are required and the visa is usually issued on the spot. Malian visas are available at Malian border posts but by no means count on that if you're crossing at a remote desert crossing.
- **Mauritania** Everyone, except nationals of Arab League countries, needs a visa, which is valid for a one-month stay. Get these at the Mauritanian Embassy in Rabat – apply in the morning and pick up in the afternoon the following day. Visas cost Dh200 and you need two photos. It's currently quick and easy to obtain three-day transit visas (extendable in Nouakchott) at the border for €10. Good up-to-date information is available online at www.sahara-overland.com.
- **Tunisia** Citizens of EU countries, the USA and Japan can stay up to three months in Tunisia without a visa. Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans can get a three-month visa upon arrival at the airport.

headquarters use slightly different red tape to hold up proceedings.

In practice, most travellers requiring an extension find it easier to head to mainland Spain or even one of the Spanish enclaves in Morocco, and re-enter after a few days. Although this generally presents few problems other than cost, it can leave you to the mercies of individual immigration officers on re-entry, and some travellers have occasionally come unstuck this way.

Visas for Ceuta & Melilla

These two Spanish enclaves have the same visa requirements as mainland Spain. Under the 1995 Schengen agreement, one visa now covers all EU-member countries except the UK, the Republic of Ireland and Denmark, and replaces those previously issued by individual nations. Australian citizens travelling to Spain as tourists, for a maximum period of three months per calendar year, do not require a Schengen visa prior to arrival in Spain. On arrival their passports will be stamped with a Schengen Stamp (valid for three months) at the first port of entry.

South Africans and Israelis still need to obtain a visa before they travel to Europe.

For those who must apply for a visa, you'll need three photos, and you may also be asked for photocopies of passport details, credit cards and/or bank statements.

The Spanish prefer you to apply for a visa in your country of residence – this is only rarely waived.

International Health Certificate

If you're coming to Morocco from certain parts of Asia, Africa or South America where yellow fever is endemic, you'll need to show you've been vaccinated by producing either a international health certificate or separate yellow-fever certificate. In practice this is usually only required if you've travelled overland up through Mauritania, or arrived on one of Royal Air Maroc's extensive connections through Africa. See p498 for general information on immunisations.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Prior to marriage, Moroccan men have little opportunity to meet and get to know women, which is a major reason why Western women receive so much attention. Not bound by the Moroccan social structure and Islamic law, these women are seen as excitingly independent and generally available.

Around 70% of Morocco's population is under the age of 30, and by the end of their trip most Western women may think they've met every male in this group. The constant attention soon becomes wearing and, no matter what tactic is employed, impossible to shake off.

If it's your first time in Morocco, the first few days may be something of a shock, although you'll quickly develop a thick skin to deal with the comments and unwanted looks of men. The key to not spending the rest of your trip feeling hassled is remain wary but not paranoid – it's extremely rare for any of this low-level harassment to go any further. If it does all get too much, look for the ever-increasing number of places accustomed to having the business of single Moroccan women. The upper floor of a *salon de thé* (tea house), a café, restaurant or a hotel terrace are good bets. Hammams are good male-free zones for a relaxing reprieve.

The common attitude that a Westerner is a walking visa out of a country where unemployment is rife can also impact upon the experience of women travellers. Bored youngsters (and the not so young) may have little to lose by wooing someone who can offer them an opportunity in another country or, failing that, a sexual liaison unavailable from Moroccan women. In fairness, we should point out that it isn't uncommon for Western women to come to Morocco and pick up local guys for holiday romances. That's not to say this is the basis for all relationships of mixed nationality (of which there are many success stories), but be aware that some locals could be juggling several relationships at any one time.

Women travelling with male companions are unlikely to experience much of the hassle that solo women will inevitably encounter, although it may be better to claim to be a married couple rather than just friends (the latter concept is usually greeted with disbelief).

If you are a Moroccan woman (or Moroccan in appearance) and you're travelling with your non-Moroccan spouse, it may be advisable to carry a copy of your marriage certificate. This is because premarital sex for Muslims is forbidden and Morocco has a real problem with prostitution. If your partner is thought to be Muslim you may meet with some uncomfortable situations at hotel reception desks, though it has to be said that in larger cities this is not really an issue.

For all the problems, there is one huge benefit of travelling as a woman in Morocco: unlike men, you'll have plenty of

opportunities to meet local women and thereby enjoy a fascinating window into one of the least-known aspects of Moroccan society. For more information on women in Morocco see p56.

Safety Precautions

Moroccans would have to be among the most hospitable people in the world. Genuinely welcoming, they are eager to help any traveller and there are times when being a woman is a distinct advantage, especially when lost or in some form of distress. Moroccans tend to be genuinely concerned for the 'weaker sex' and will offer protection and support if you feel you're in a potentially dodgy situation.

Crimes against women remain extremely rare. More common is verbal abuse from both men and women. However, in places that have seen a large influx of tourists in recent years, problems can occur, and we've received reports of physical harassment at music festivals in Essaouira.

Women travellers should always take a few sensible precautions:

- Don't hitchhike.
- Be aware that some budget hotels double as brothels; any cheap hotel above a popular locals' bar is a likely contender. Don't compromise your safety for the sake of economy.
- On public transport try to sit next to a woman, especially in grands taxis where you're squeezed in far too closely for comfort, and trains where you could potentially be trapped inside a compartment. In grands taxis consider paying for two seats and get a ride by yourself in the front. It must be said however, that many women travel in grands taxis without the slightest problem, regardless of where they sit.
- Don't wander about alone at night as there's an attitude that all 'good women' should be at home after dark – take a taxi.
- Avoid walking alone in remote areas such as isolated beaches, forests and sand dunes.
- If you need a drink, head for a large hotel rather than a 'bunker-style', all-male preserve – any woman here is without doubt a prostitute. Then again, so are many of those in the posher places.

- Wearing dark glasses is good for avoiding eye contact, but don't spend your entire Moroccan journey hiding behind them.
- Don't react with aggression - it could be returned in kind. A good-humoured *non merci* or *la shukran* ('no thank you') is much more effective than abuse.

A wedding ring may be useful and a photo of your 'husband' and 'child' could help, although the fact that you're travelling without them will attract suspicion. Counter this by saying you'll be meeting them at your next destination. It has to be said, however, that many Moroccan men aren't too concerned whether you're married or not and may still invite you're just being friendly and could even invite you home to meet their mother.

One traveller reported that the key word to use is 'respect', a concept that most Moroccans hold dear. It's worth a try, but remember the advice of one female Lonely Planet author: 'Asking men to respect me did a fat lot of good in ending any unwanted attention I was getting.'

Always dress modestly and be aware that hotel and public swimming pools usually attract groups of men, whether they be swimming themselves or drinking at a poolside bar. Bikinis will always attract attention. The push to increase tourism numbers increasingly brings visitors unprepared (or simply unaware) that cultural mores in Muslim countries are different from the West. Although you might see tourists so-dressed, hot pants and cleavage in the Marrakesh medina is never appropriate, and we were as shocked as the locals to see a tourist sunbathing topless on a recent trip to Essaouira.

At the other end of the scale, sporting a head scarf or even a *jellaba* (Moroccan-style flowing cloak) will earn you respect, particularly in the countryside, as well as a million questions as to why you're wearing it: Are you Muslim? Are you Moroccan? Are you married to a Moroccan?

For further suggestions about what to wear (and what not to wear) while in Morocco, see p51.

WORK

With huge unemployment and a largely out-of-work youthful population, Morocco isn't the most fertile ground for digging up

work opportunities. A good command of French is a prerequisite and some Arabic would certainly help. If you secure a position, your employer will have to help you get a work permit and arrange residency, which can be a long and involved process. There are some limited opportunities for doing volunteer work or teaching English, although this is not terribly well paid. Try the websites: www.workingabroad.com and www.idea.list.org.

Teaching English

There are a few possibilities for teaching English as a foreign language in Morocco, and Rabat is one of the best places to start looking. First, you could approach the **British Council** (www.britishcouncil.org.ma), but you need a Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and openings are not all that frequent. Another possibility is the **American Language Center** (www.aca.org.ma), which has offices around the country.

The time to try is around September and October (which is the beginning of the academic year) and, to a lesser extent, early January.

Volunteering

There are many international and local organisations that arrange voluntary work on regional development projects in Morocco. They generally pay nothing, sometimes not even providing lodging, and are aimed at young people looking for something different to do for a few weeks over the summer period. Some of these organisations are really summer camps and international exchange programs.

Baraka Community Partnerships (www.barakacommunity.com), near Telouet, organises volunteers to build schools, plant trees, supply basic medical care and work on initiatives to improve local food security between partnerships.

Volunteer Abroad (www.volunteerabroad.com/Morocco.cfm) is a good place to start looking for volunteer places, as it provides links to NGOs with Morocco-specific programs. Also worth getting hold of is Lonely Planet's *The Gap Year Book*, which lists hundreds of NGOs that organise volunteer and other work and study programs around the world. Your embassy may also be able to put you onto other projects and NGOs, but

unless you have a working knowledge of Arabic or Berber, or have specific specialist skills, many will not be interested.

International or local NGOs that sometimes have Morocco placements or camps include:

Chantiers Sociaux Marocains (☎ 037 262400; csm@wanadoo.net.ma; Rabat) Local NGO engaged in health, education and development projects, with international volunteers aged 18 to 30.

Jeunesse des Chantiers Marocains (<http://perso.menara.ma/youthcamps>) A nonprofit group open to 18 to

30 year olds, promoting cultural exchange through three-to four-week courses in Moroccan Arabic, during which you stay with local families and take part in cultural events.

International Cultural Youth Exchange (www.icye.org) Allows you to search for upcoming Moroccan volunteer opportunities.

Peace Corps (www.peacecorps.gov) Long-established US volunteer scheme with deep roots in Morocco; volunteer programs lasting two years.

United Planet (www.unitedplanet.org) Mainly long-term volunteering placements that sometimes include Morocco.

Transport

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GETTING THERE & AWAY

Transport reform has been central to the recent explosion of visitor numbers to Morocco. The government's 'open skies' policy has allowed the European budget airlines into the country, improving access. At the same time, overland options shouldn't be ignored – there are numerous ferry services from southern Spain and France that also link Morocco to the European rail network – a more low-carbon way of arriving in the country.

Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

ENTERING THE COUNTRY

When entering the country through an airport, formalities are fairly quick and straightforward, but you'll have to fill in an entry form stating the purpose of your visit and your profession.

If you're entering Morocco with a vehicle, you'll need a Green Card as proof of insurance (a requirement of Moroccan law that also applies to rental vehicles). These are obtainable from your insurer at home or at the border – see p492 for more information.

THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

Passport

To enter Morocco, your passport must be valid for six months from the date of entry. If you need to renew your passport, allow plenty of time, as it can take up to several months.

If you lose your passport, notify the police immediately (make sure you get a statement for insurance purposes) and contact your nearest consulate.

AIR Airports

Morocco's main international entry point is the **Mohammed V International Airport** (☎ 022 539040), 30km southeast of Casablanca. It's conveniently linked by regular shuttle trains to Casablanca and Rabat.

Marrakesh's **Ménara Airport** (☎ 044 447865) is also well served with direct flights from most European capitals with both scheduled and budget airlines. Fez's **Saïss Airport** (☎ 035674712) has flights to France, but flights to the UK ceased while this guide was being researched, and it's unknown when they'll restart.

Other important international airports in Morocco are **Rabat-Salé Airport** (☎ 037 808090), Tangier's **Ibn Batouta Airport** (☎ in Ibn Batouta 039 393720) and Agadir's **Al-Massira Airport** (☎ 048 839112). There are also occasional international flights from Ouarzazate to Paris; Nador to Amsterdam, Brussels, Düsseldorf and Frankfurt; Al-Hoceima to Amsterdam and Brussels; and Oujda to Paris, Marseille, Amsterdam and Brussels.

For comprehensive information about all airports in Morocco, their facilities and

customs regulations and procedures, log on to the website of **Office National des Aéroports** (www.ona.org.ma, in French).

Airlines

For flights to Morocco, the high seasons are from July through to the end of August, and from mid-December to the end of December. The lowest seasons are November to mid-December, and January to mid-February.

Direct flights are possible to arrange from cities across Europe, the Middle East, West Africa and North America, and they mostly arrive in Casablanca and Marrakesh. Morocco's national carrier, Royal Air Maroc (RAM) and Air France take the lion's share of flights, with there being increasing competition from the budget airlines (including RAM's own subsidiary Atlas Blue).

INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES IN MOROCCO

Air Algérie (☎ 022 314181; www.airalgerie.dz)

Air Europa (www.air-europa.com)

Air France (☎ 022 294040; www.airfrance.com)

Alitalia (☎ 022 314181; www.alitalia.it)

Atlas Blue (☎ 082 009090; www.atlas-blue.com)

British Airways (☎ 022 229464; www.ba.com)

CorsairFly (www.corsairfly.com)

EasyJet (www.easyjet.com)

Edelweiss Air (☎ in Switzerland 044 277 4100; www.edelweissair.ch)

EgyptAir (☎ 022 315564; www.egyptair.com)

Gulf Air (☎ 022 491212; www.gulfairco.com)

Jet4You (www.jet4you.com)

Iberia (☎ 022 279600; www.iberia.com)

KLM-Royal Dutch Airlines (☎ 022 203222; www.klm.com)

Lufthansa Airlines (☎ 022 312371; www.lufthansa.com)

Regional Airlines (☎ 022 536940; www.regionalmaroc.com)

Royal Air Maroc (☎ 022 311122; www.royalairmaroc.com)

Royal Jordanian (☎ 022 305975; www.rja.com.jo)

Ryanair (www.ryanair.com)

Thomsonfly (www.thomsonfly.com)

Tunis Air (☎ 022 293452; www.tunisair.com.tn)

Tickets

Your plane ticket is traditionally the most expensive item in your budget, but prices have tumbled if you travel with any of the European budget airlines – book as far in advance as possible to get the cheapest deals. Reputable online agencies for scheduled carriers include www.travelocity.co.uk,

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & climate change

Pretty much every form of motorised travel generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon offset schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travellers to offset the level of greenhouse gases they are responsible for with financial contributions to sustainable travel schemes that reduce global warming – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, support the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: www.lonelyplanet.com.

DEPARTURE TAX

There is no departure tax upon leaving Morocco. Departure formalities are quite straightforward – you just fill in an exit card and have your passport stamped before exiting.

www.cheaptickets.com, www.expedia.com, www.travelcuts.com (in Canada) and www.travel.com.au (in Australia).

Morocco is a small market for flights, so little or no discounting takes place. This means prices offered by travel agencies will be much the same as the airlines. Oddly, the cheapest fares are not one-way tickets, but one-month returns. In either direction the bulk of traffic is with Royal Air Maroc.

Direct flights will cost you the most. Many airlines have code-share agreements and the cheapest deals can often entail a change of plane (and carrier) in a European city. As a rule, the cheapest fares are for flights into Casablanca. Cheaper student and under-26 tickets are sometimes available.

INTERCONTINENTAL (RTW) TICKETS

With its uncompetitive airline industry, Morocco is not an easy destination to work into a round-the-world ticket. Journeying east from Morocco, you will probably need to stop over in the UAE to get a connecting flight to Asia or Australia. Heading west to the USA, you will probably need to re-route through a European city or London. Most round-the-world tickets allow a maximum of 10 stopovers, although you can buy extras. It may be better and cheaper to buy your flights in and out of Morocco separately.

Africa

RAM has an extensive network of flights throughout North and West Africa from Casablanca, and is one of the better African carriers. North African destinations are Algiers and Oran (Algeria), Tunis (Tunisia), Tripoli (Libya) and Cairo (Egypt). Direct flights to West Africa include Bamako and Ouagadougou (Mali), Nouakchott (Mauritania), Dakar (Senegal), Douala and Yaoundé (Cameroon), Niamey (Niger),

Abidjan (Ivory Coast), Libreville (Gabon), Cotonou (Benin), Kinshasa (DR Congo) and Monrovia (Liberia).

Australasia

There are no direct flights between Australia or New Zealand and Morocco. All flights go via the Middle East (eg Bahrain on Gulf Air) or Europe. It can make more sense to fly to London, Paris or Madrid and then make your own way down to Morocco.

Continental Europe

The picture with flights between Europe and Morocco is constantly changing, with the budget airlines ever adding, amending and sometimes cancelling routes. Further to listings below, RAM flies to most European capitals from Casablanca.

FRANCE

France is comprehensively connected by air to Morocco.

RAM has several daily flights from Paris to Casablanca. There are further Paris connections to Tangier, Marrakesh, Fez, Oujda, Rabat, Agadir and Ouarzazate. RAM also flies from Casablanca to Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon, Marseille, Nantes, Nice, Strasbourg and Toulouse.

Air France flies to Casablanca from Paris, Lyon, Bordeaux, Nantes, Nancy, Nice and Marseilles. Air France has flights to Casablanca from Paris, Lyon, Marseilles, Nantes, Nice, Toulouse and Bordeaux, as well as a Paris–Rabat connection. At times, Air France has also operated direct flights from Paris to Ouarzazate and Oujda.

Atlas Blue flies between Marrakesh and Paris, Lyon, Bordeaux, Marseille, Nice and Nantes. French budget airlines Jet4You and Corsairfly have flights from both Paris and Lyon to Marrakesh and Fez. Corsairfly also has a Paris–Agadir connection.

Easyjet flies from Marrakesh to Paris and Lyon, and from Casablanca to Lyon. Ryanair links Marseilles to Marrakesh, Fez, Nador, Tangier and Agadir. An Oujda flight is planned.

GERMANY

RAM offers flights from Casablanca to Frankfurt. Ryanair has better connections with flights from Marrakesh to Frankfurt,

Bremen and Dusseldorf, as well as Fez to Frankfurt. Lufthansa flies Frankfurt–Casablanca. **Air Berlin** (www.airberlin.com) flies to Agadir from most major German cities. Ryanair flies between Frankfurt and both Fez and Marrakesh.

SPAIN

Iberia has excellent connections from Madrid to Morocco, with flights to Casablanca, Fez, Marrakesh, Tangier, Oujda, Ouarzazate, Agadir and Laâyoune. To Tangier, there are flights from Malaga and Barcelona. Melilla is part of Iberia's domestic network, with 12 daily flights to Malaga, as well as two daily flights to Almeria, Barcelona and Madrid, and a daily flight to Granada.

RAM flies from Casablanca to Madrid, Malaga, Barcelona, Valencia and Gran Canaria, and from Marrakesh to Madrid and Barcelona.

Easyjet flies from Madrid to Marrakesh, Casablanca and Tangier. Air Europa also flies Marrakesh to Madrid. Regional Airlines flies Valencia to Casablanca and Malaga to Tangier. Ryanair flies from Nador to Barcelona.

Middle East

The Middle East is the connecting hub for travellers from Australia, New Zealand and the Far East. RAM has direct flights to Dubai and Beirut while Gulf Air offers similar prices from Abu Dhabi. Sharjah-based budget airline **Air Arabia** (www.airarabia.com) is reportedly planning a new service to Morocco, tying the country in to its extensive Middle Eastern and South Asian network.

UK

There is a good choice of flights from the UK to Morocco. Of the scheduled airlines, RAM flies direct from London Heathrow to Casablanca (with onward connections from here), and from London Gatwick to Marrakesh. British Airways flies direct from Heathrow to Casablanca, Marrakesh and Tangier. There are currently no direct flights from the UK to Fez.

Budget airlines are well represented. Both Easyjet and Atlas Blue fly from London Gatwick to Marrakesh. Ryanair has Marrakesh flights from Bristol and Luton. Thomsonfly have a Manchester to Mar-

rakesh connection, as well as Bristol and London Gatwick to Agadir.

For more connections, it's possible to build an itinerary with the budget airlines flying through other European hubs – see above for ideas.

USA & Canada

RAM flies direct from Casablanca to New York, and code-shares onward flights in the US with **Delta Airlines** (www.delta.com). From Canada, RAM fly from Montreal to Casablanca direct.

A cheaper alternative is often a return flight from North America to Continental Europe, and an onward ticket from there, possibly with a budget airline.

LAND

Border Crossings

Despite its lengthy border with Algeria, the only open land crossing into Morocco is the Morocco–Mauritania border between Dakhla and Nouâdhibou. Once a complicated game of permits and military convoys, this crossing is now fairly straightforward and remains the most popular overland route to West Africa. For further details of this route, see p484.

Extensive ferry links between northern Morocco and southern Europe (mainly, but not exclusively, Spain) make entering the country 'overland' a popular option, either by bus, train or your own vehicle. For information on specific ferry connections, see p485.

Bus

The main point of entry for buses into Morocco is via the ferries from Spain. All passengers have to disembark for customs and immigration. Ad hoc public-transport links exist between Dakhla and Nouâdhibou for crossing the Mauritania border.

Car & Motorcycle

Drivers will need the vehicle's registration papers, liability insurance and an international driver's permit in addition to their domestic licence. All vehicles travelling across international borders should display the nationality plate of the country of registration. A warning triangle to use in event of breakdown is also useful, and is compulsory in Europe.

Your local automobile association can provide specific details about all documentation, in particular the Green Card for insurance. For more information on paperwork, see p492.

Pre-booking a rental car before leaving home will enable you to find the cheapest deals (multinational agencies are listed on p493). No matter where you hire your car, make sure you understand what is included in the price and what your liabilities are (this is particularly important if you are planning any off-piste driving, which probably won't be covered). Note the European hire companies do not usually permit their vehicles to be driven to Morocco.

Morocco is a country made for touring, and you'll see plenty of campervans on the road, and pouring off the ferries in Tangier. Motorcycle touring is also becoming popular, but many bikes are unfamiliar in Morocco (particularly those with larger capacity engines), so repairs can be tricky. Some basic maintenance knowledge is essential and you should carry all necessary spares, including cables and levers, inner tubes, puncture repair kit, tyre levers, pump, fuses, chain, washable air filter, cable ties – and a good tool kit. As with a car, double-check insurance liabilities before setting off.

Morocco is well served with petrol stations, although these become few and far between south of Tan Tan towards the border of Mauritania (for more information, see Mauritania p484). Diesel is considerably cheaper than leaded fuel. If you're entering Morocco via Ceuta or Melilla, take the opportunity to fill up on duty-free fuel.

Algeria

Morocco closed its border with Algeria in the early 1990s, and despite the end of the civil war there, it shows no sign of being in a hurry to reopen it – Algeria has refused overtures to open the border until a resolution of the status of Western Sahara. Keep an eye on possible developments at **Sahara Overland** (www.sahara-overland.com), the essential online resource for Saharan travel.

Continental Europe

BUS

It's possible to get a bus ticket to destinations in Morocco from as far away as Lon-

don, but journeys are long and not much cheaper than scheduled airfares. **Eurolines** (www.eurolines.com) is a consortium of European coach companies that operates across Europe and to Morocco. It has offices in all major European cities. You can contact them in your own country or via the website, which gives details of prices, passes and travel agencies where you can book tickets. In Morocco, services are run in conjunction with the Compagnie de Transports Marocains (CTM), Morocco's national line.

CTM (☎ in Casablanca 022 458080; www.ctm.ma) operates buses from Casablanca and most other main cities to France, Belgium, Spain, Germany and Italy. Most leave from or go via Casablanca and cross to Europe at Tangier, but a few cross from Nador to Almería.

Buses to Spain leave Casablanca daily except Sunday. Book a week in advance, or further ahead if your plans clash with major holidays in Spain or France, as the buses fill up quickly with Moroccans working abroad.

Another reliable bus service with good links from Morocco to Spain is **Tramesa** (☎ 022 245274; <http://perso.menara.ma/tramesa07>, in French).

TRAIN

Despite the popularity of the budget airlines, getting to Morocco by train from Europe is a viable and civilised way to travel. The granddaddy of planners for rail travel is *Thomas Cook European Timetable*, published monthly with updated schedules since 1883 (see www.thomascookpublishing.com for more information). Probably the best online resource for continent-wide train travel is **Seat 61** (www.seat61.com), which has comprehensively and regularly updated information on getting to Morocco by train.

Morocco is no longer part of the Inter Rail train-pass system, so if you are adding Morocco onto a longer European trip you will have to buy tickets locally. However, train travel in Morocco is inexpensive and good value, and if you are planning a lot of travel you can get discount rail cards on arrival (see p497 for more information).

Taking a direct train from France is one option. The most comfortable and popular alternative is to take the Francisco de Goya

TUNNEL VISION

Mythology states that it was Hercules who first prised apart the European and African continents but his labour is now, it seems, under threat. Plans are on the table to dig a 24km-long, and 300m-deep underwater tunnel from Cap Malabata, east of Tangier, to Punta Paloma, 40km west of Gibraltar, creating a passage that backers say will reconnect Europe and Africa. The estimated €10 billion rail tunnel opens up the possibility of a train ride from London to Marrakesh.

The idea has been around since the 1970s, but it wasn't until 2004 that the two countries took serious steps towards making it a reality. A feasibility study was launched in 2007 that involved digging a 300m shaft into bedrock near Tangier. Assuming the project goes ahead, the EU is expected to be asked to put its hands in its pockets for much of the funding, with the backing of public companies.

The challenges are daunting. The tunnels (one running in each direction, linked by a service tunnel) would have to be around six times deeper than the Channel Tunnel linking France and England, which was in itself one of the biggest and most expensive civil-engineering projects of the 20th century. Even more challenging is the movement of the Earth's crust, with the slow movements between the separate African and European tectonic plates. While both countries stand firm behind the project for now, even the Greek heroes themselves might have balked at such a Herculean project.

Trainhotel from Paris (Austerlitz) to Madrid, run by a consortium of the French and Spanish railways called **Elipsos** (www.elipsos.com). The train departs Paris early evening and arrives in Madrid at 9am in the morning. You can book a four-berth tourist-class sleeper (one way €165) or one- and two-berth 1st-class sleepers, and there is a restaurant and a café-bar. ISIC card holders can get a 15% discount, and all tickets can be booked online.

Alternatively, you can take the TGV from La Gare Montparnasse to Algeciras or Málaga via Madrid (around €172 one way with couchette, 25 hours), which can be booked through the **SNCF website** (www.voyage-sncf.com) or **RailEurope** (www.raileurope.co.uk). From North America and Australia, you can also order tickets online through **RailEurope** (www.raileurope.com in North America, www.raileurope.com.au in Australia).

The onward trip to Algeciras can be done on the **Renfe** (www.renfe.es) 'Estrella del Estrecho', which leaves from Madrid Chamartin (€37 one way, five hours). The train station is about 10 minutes' walk from the ferry terminals – if you arrive during the day you should be able to hop almost straight onto a boat (see p486).

Mauritania

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The trans-Saharan route via Mauritania is now the most popular route from North Af-

rica into sub-Saharan Africa, and hundreds of adventurous souls do it every year. While this route is generally regarded as safe, check safety advice before travelling: the murder of a family of French tourists near Nouakchott in 2007 and related Al-Qaeda threats led to the cancelling of the 2008 Paris–Dakar rally through Mauritania.

The route into Mauritania from Dakhla runs south along the coast for 460km, across the border to Nouadhibou and then south along the coast to the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott. At the close of 2005 this route became entirely paved, making it the only sealed road across the Sahara (baring a short stretch in the no-man's-land between the two border posts). While this makes things vastly easier for drivers, you should still respect the desert, and it makes sense to travel with other vehicles and set off early in order to reach the border before dusk (particularly advisable if you are travelling in a 2WD). It's also advisable to fill up with petrol at every available station. Some stations south of Dakhla may be out of fuel, in particular the last station 50km before the border.

Moroccan border formalities are processed in the basic settlement of Guergarat. The border, about 15km from the settlement, is heavily mined, so stay on the road.

Mauritanian visas can be bought without hassle at the border for €20. Currency

declaration forms are no longer required. Alcohol is illegal in Mauritania and vehicle searches are common. As well as getting stamped in, you need to buy a 30-day temporary-vehicle-import form (€10) and register with the police. Mauritanian currency (ouguiya, UM) is available at the border. From the border it's a short drive to the first major Mauritanian town of Nouâdhibou, 50km away.

MINIBUS & JEEP

There are ad hoc transport links from Dakhla to the Mauritania border and beyond. Minibuses and 4WDs leave from the military checkpoint on the road out of Dakhla (the Hotel Sahara has also been reported by travellers as a good place to arrange transport from). Expect to pay between Dh200 and Dh400 for a seat in a vehicle going to Nouâdhibou. A few grands taxis also run to the border, but you'll still need to hitch to get to the Mauritanian checkpoint, as walking across the border is forbidden.

From Nouâdhibou, bush taxis cost around UM1750 to the border, although it's also worth asking around the hotels and camp sites (Camping Abba is popular with overlanders) for places in departing vehicles.

For information about trans-Saharan travel, see Chris Scott's *Sahara Overland*, both a book and website (www.sahara-overland.com). **Horizons Unlimited's Sahara Travel Forum** (www.horizonsunlimited.com) has a useful bulletin board with regularly updated information on travel between Morocco and Mauritania.

SEA

Catching a ferry is a perennially popular way of getting to Morocco. In the summer the most popular route from Algeciras to Tangier is packed with both day-trippers and holidaymakers with campervans. Alternative crossings are Tarifa to Tangier, Algeciras to the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, and even a longer voyage from Sète in France. All the port cities (and most cities in Morocco) have numerous travel agencies and ticket offices, or you can literally turn up and buy one at the dock.

There are plenty of ferry options, but it's worth noting that Acciona, Transmediterranea, Euroferry and Ferrimaroc are all in

fact the same company, operating slightly different services and timetables.

If you're sailing from Europe to Morocco, discounts for students (with ISIC cards), Inter Rail or Eurail pass-holders and EU pensioners are frequently advertised. They're less commonly available in Morocco, but it's still worth asking. All ferry tickets purchased in Morocco are subject to Dh20 tax.

High season for ferries is generally the European summer (June to August), Christmas and New Year. More ferries run to cope with demand – foot passengers are often safe to buy a ticket on arrival at the port, but it's worth booking in advance if you're driving a vehicle.

France

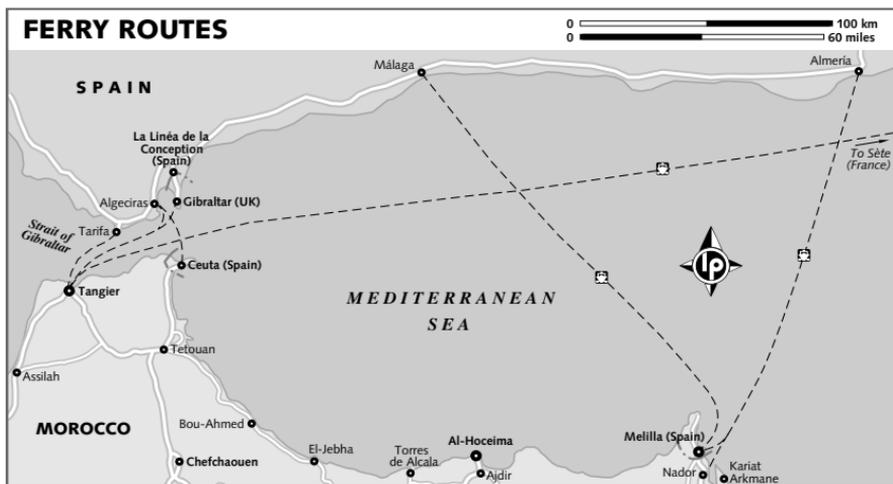
France is linked to Morocco by the Sète–Tangier ferry route. It's more luxurious than those linking Spain and Morocco and it needs to be, as the voyage takes 36 hours (over two nights). You may be thankful for the onboard swimming pool and 'disco bar'. Sète is two hours by train from Marseilles.

Two companies are operating on this route, **Comarit** (www.comarit.com, in French & Spanish) and **Comanav** (www.comanav.ma, in French). Both sail around every fourth or fifth day, leaving port between 6pm and 7pm in both directions. Advance booking is strongly recommended. Comanav also operate a weekly Sète–Nador route for similar prices. Advance reservations are recommended.

Fares cost from €165 per person in a four-bed cabin in high season (mid-July to mid-September), plus €5 port tax (payable twice on return journeys). Meals are included. Children aged between two and 12 travel for half-price. Low-season (November to February) fares start from €120. A car costs €265/205 in high/low season. Comarit also offers chair seats for around €72, but they might be a bit of an endurance test by the end of the voyage.

Discounts of up to 20% can be had for students and those under 26 years of age, Moroccan residents abroad and groups of four travelling together with a car.

In Tangier, **Comanav** (☎ 039 940504; 43 Ave Abou al-Alâa el-Maâri) and **Comarit** (☎ 039 320032; Ave des FAR) sell tickets and have detailed timetables, as do their booths at Tangier dock.



Gibraltar

The catamaran ferry company **FRS** (www.frs.es) is meant to sail weekly between Tangier and Gibraltar (or more specifically La Línea across the border in Spain). Should it resume, prices should be around €32/99 per passenger/car. The trip takes 75 minutes.

Spain

Ferries from Spain to Morocco are plentiful. The Spanish government-run company **Trasmediterránea** runs regular sailings, as do **Buquebus**, **Comanav**, **Comarit**, **Euro-Ferries** and **FRS**. Hydrofoils and catamarans (also referred to as fast ferries) are used extensively, but are more expensive and can be disrupted by rough seas.

The most popular and frequent service is the Algeciras to Tangier route. It's traditionally been known for its hassle and hustlers, but these have largely been cleared out of the port, and entering Morocco here should no longer fill the traveller with dread (see p173). Car owners may find the Algeciras to Ceuta route to be more worthwhile because of the availability of tax-free petrol in the Spanish enclave. The other routes are Tarifa to Tangier, Almería to Melilla or Nador, and Málaga to Melilla. Heading into Morocco via Melilla (and then Nador) is easily the most hassle-free way to arrive from the Spanish mainland, though crossings can take eight hours, cost twice as much as crossing from Algeciras to Ceuta or Tangier and are much less frequent.

On most routes, more boats are scheduled in the high season (mid-June to mid-September). During August and Easter, when demand is highest, those with vehicles should book well in advance. At other times you're unlikely to have problems getting a convenient passage.

As well as in Madrid, **Trasmediterránea** (☎ in Spain 902 45 46 45; www.trasmediterranea.es) has offices at many Spanish ports, including Almería, Algeciras, Ceuta, Melilla and Málaga.

Tickets for most companies can be reserved online (see specific route details). Alternatively **Direct Ferries** (www.directferries.co.uk) is a useful European-wide booking site, with mirror sites in most European languages.

Surcharges are exacted on cars not conforming to the standard 6m length and 1.8m height. Charges for campervans also vary. Rates for motorbikes depend on engine capacity, while bicycles are normally charged the minimum motorbike rate.

Spanish passport control is quite uncomplicated, but non-EU citizens should make sure they get an exit stamp before boarding the ferry. Once on board you need to fill in an embarkation form and get your passport stamped before disembarking. Customs can be slow on the Spanish side if you're coming from Morocco.

ALGECIRAS TO TANGIER

This is by some stretch the busiest sea crossing between Spain and Morocco, with

ferries at least every 90 minutes between these ports, and hourly in the summer. Services typically run from 7am (or 6am in summer) until 10pm, but during peak demand in August some 24-hour services aren't unknown. The crossing takes 80 minutes to 2½ hours, depending on the ship.

All the ferry companies operate this route: Trasmediterránea, Buquebus, Comanav, Comarit, EuroFerry, FRS and Limadet. Competition keeps the prices uniform between them. You can expect to pay around €31 one way, standard class. Children up to four years old travel free, while children aged from four to 12 pay 50%. Cars cost between €60 and €80, and campervans are €105. Some ferry companies offer 1st class for an extra 20%, but it's barely worth it for the short trip.

Ticket offices line up outside the ferry terminal in Tangier, so it's easy to walk between them and pick the best sailing for you. There are more ticket offices inside the terminal building itself. In Tangier itself, touts will try and guide you towards their favourite travel agency for their bit of commission, but can be safely disregarded. In Algeciras, try the **Trasmediterránea office** (☎ 956 58 34 07; Recinto del Puerto) or any of the ferry offices port-side.

ALGECIRAS TO CEUTA

Trasmediterránea, EuroFerry, Buquebus and Balearia offer over 20 high-speed ferry crossings (35 minutes) from Ceuta between 7am and 10pm, and the same number from Algeciras between 6am and 10pm. Extra services are added on demand on Sunday evening and during August.

At the time of writing, fares were €25 per person without a car (local residents pay about 50% less), and €30 per car. Children aged between two and 12 travel for half the fare, and those aged under two travel free.

In Ceuta, there are dozens of private ticket offices close to and inside the ferry terminal (Estación Marítima). The ferry companies have offices in the main building – this is often the best place to get tickets (from specific companies only) at the last minute.

ALMERÍA TO AL-HOCEIMA

This is probably the quietest route from Spain to Morocco, and is highly seasonal.

Comarit serves Al-Hoceima from Almería (along with Redouene and Malaga) daily from late June to the end of September. The voyage takes seven or eight hours, with deck-class tickets costing around €45 one way.

There are no ferries outside this season, so travellers take the ferry to Nador. A new ferry service called Reduan has been threatening to start a route between Al-Hoceima and Málaga, but has yet to announce dates.

ALMERÍA TO MELILLA

Melilla is a less popular destination than Tangier or Ceuta, but Acciona (Trasmediterránea) offers a service, with daily departures. The trip takes six to eight hours. The base fare is €35 each way. You can also get beds in two- or four-person cabins, some with toilets, for around €100 per person. Higher-class (*preferente*) berths cost around €110 per person. Children aged from two to 12 travel for half-price (infants go free).

A normal-sized car costs €160, campervans range from €230 depending on their length, and motorbikes from €55. Bicycles are free.

Buy your tickets at the Estación Marítima (a 10- to 15-minute walk from the train and bus stations), from travel agencies or from the **Trasmediterránea office** (☎ 956 690902; Plaza de España), in the centre of town.

Services are added on demand during the high season. Fares rise by up to 25% and fast ferries also operate at this time.

ALMERÍA TO NADOR

An alternative to sailing to Tangier is at Nador, further east along the coast. It's much quieter, although it has poorer transport links to the rest of the country. On top of that, it's next door to Melilla, where you can fill up on duty-free fuel if you're driving (and booze if you're not).

Several companies sail from Nador's Beni Enzar port to Almería, taking up to six hours depending on the vessel. Acciona has a fast-ferry service running every Tuesday to Saturday at night. Comarit has a daily slow ferry, while Comanav sails four times a week. Further services are added in the summer. Deck fare costs €28.50, with other prices similar to the Melilla crossing. Fares rise by roughly 15% in high season.

MÁLAGA TO MELILLA

Acciona (Trasmediterránea) runs a daily service from Málaga to Melilla, which takes around seven hours. In the high season (June to September), there is also a high-speed service, which takes four hours. Prices are around €35/160 per passenger/car.

As in Almería, you can purchase tickets most easily at the Estación Marítima, which is more or less directly south of the town centre. In Melilla, buy tickets from **Trasmediterránea** (☎ 956 690902; Plaza de España) or at the Estación Marítima.

TARIFA TO TANGIER

Tarifa is now a regular destination for ferry crossings, with a catamaran making the trip in a nippy 35 minutes (making it both the fastest and most practical way to get across the strait). **FRS** (www.frs.es; ☎ Tarifa port 956 681830, ☎ Tangier port 039 942612) operates the service, with two to five sailings a day according to the season. If you're travelling by foot, the ticket includes a free bus transfer from Tarifa to Algeciras (15 minutes) – making it the fastest way to get across the strait.

Fares are €39 per passenger (children aged from three to 12 travel for half-price), €99 per car, €180 per caravan and €15 per bike/motorbike.

Italy

If you really want to enjoy the ocean blue, the longest sea route to Morocco is from Genoa to Tangier.

Grandi Navi Veloci (GNV; www.gnv.it) has a weekly sailing every Saturday, returning from Tangier every Monday throughout the year. The voyage takes 45 hours and stops briefly at Barcelona. Costs start from €45 for a berth in a four-person cabin, and €183 for a car.

Comanav (www.comanav.ma) has four sailings a week in July, August and September only. Prices are comparable to GNV.

TOURS

There is no shortage of tour operators running organised trips to Morocco. Perusing the adverts of travel pages in weekend newspapers or travel magazines like **Wanderlust** (www.wanderlust.co.uk) can quickly overwhelm you for choice.

Organised trips can be especially good if you have a particular interest – see also Ac-

tivities on left for specialist operators from horse riding to rafting.

Atlas Sahara Trek (☎ 044 393901; www.atlas-sahara-trek.com; 6 bis rue Houdoud, Marrakesh) Winter camel-treks to Erg Chigaga and summer hikes into the remote M'Goun valley.

Best of Morocco (☎ in UK 01380-828533; www.morocco-travel.com) Over 30 years' experience with UK-based tailor-made tours and holidays including everything from camel trekking and skiing to cultural tours and beach holidays.

Bike Morocco (☎ in UK 07940 296711; www.bike-morocco.com) Popular and nimble UK mountain-biking operator, running vehicle-supported tours in the Atlas Mountains, from weekend breaks to longer trips.

Equatorial Travel (☎ in UK 0133 534 8770; www.equatorialtravel.co.uk; Ashbourne, Derbyshire, UK) Trekking, 4WD and camel trips off the beaten track run by a small agency based on a fair-trade concept.

Heritage Tours (☎ in USA 800-378 4555; www.heritagetoursonline.com) US-based customised travel with a real emphasis on culture and the arts. Good city tours and classic itineraries.

Ibertours Travel (☎ in Australia 03-9670 8388; www.ibertours.com.au) Australian Moroccan specialist, running camel treks, city tours and the like, highlighting Morocco's Andalusian links with cross-border trips to Spain.

Journeys Elite (☎ in UK 01983-853064; www.journeyselite.com) Excellent UK-based newcomer on the block, offering tailor-made trips including riad-based city tours, desert safaris and dedicated photography tours, with fine attention to individual needs.

KE Adventure Travel (☎ in UK 0176 877 3966; www.keadventure.com; Keswick, Cumbria, UK) Trekking, climbing and mountain-bike specialists with treks to Toubkal, an Atlas traverse and Jebel Sarhro.

Marrakesh Voyage (☎ in USA 1-888-990 2999; www.morocco-travel-agency.com) US-based company with extensive list of itineraries covering all bases, as well as special tours aimed at Morocco's various music festivals.

Mountain Voyage (☎ 024 421996; www.mountain-voyage.com; Marrakesh) The Moroccan arm of UK-operator Discover, owner of the Kasbah du Toubkal. Mountain Voyage use reliable guides and equipment on tailor-made treks.

Naturally Morocco (☎ in UK 0709-2343879; www.naturallymorocco.co.uk) Sustainable, ecotourism deeply involved in local communities, especially in and around Taroudannt. Special-interest tours include trekking, biking, wildlife and even geology.

Nature Trekking Maroc (☎ 024 432477; www.maroc trekking.com; Marrakesh) Very well-organised treks by an experienced team of mountain guides.

Sahara Expedition (☎ 044 427977; www.saharaexpe.ma; Marrakesh) Camel treks in the Drâa Valley and beyond, and trekking in the High Atlas.

Sherpa Expeditions (☎ 020 8577 2717; www.sherpa-walking-holidays.co.uk; Hounslow, UK) A well-respected trekking company that organises escorted and self-guided treks in the High Atlas and Jebel Sarhro.

Wilderness Travel (☎ 01-800 368 2794; www.wildernesstravel.com; Berkeley, USA) Well-established specialists offering three top-notch trekking or camel itineraries in Morocco.

Yallah (☎ 044 431338; www.yallahmorocco.com) Reliable Moroccan operator running desert safaris, city tours and trekking, either for groups or tailor-made.

Other local tour operators specialising in trekking or desert safaris can be found in Ouarzazate (p342) or Marrakesh (p308).

GETTING AROUND

Getting around Morocco is pretty straightforward – transport networks between towns are good, and even off the beaten track there's often something going your way. Internal flights operate out of Casablanca, the rail network is excellent in linking the major cities, while large bus companies like CTM are comfortable and efficient. Local networks are cheaper and more cheerful but do the job. Good sealed roads are generally the order of the day, with much investment being poured into areas like the Rif to improve their connectivity. Roads in remote mountain and desert areas are often just *piste*. Car hire is comparatively expensive, but gives you the most freedom, although navigating the big cities can be stressful.

AIR

Royal Air Maroc (RAM; ☎ head office 022 912000; www.royalairmaroc.com) dominates the Moroccan air industry, with mild competition from one other domestic airline, **Regional Airlines** (☎ in Casablanca 022 536940; www.regionalmaroc.com). Both airlines use Casablanca as a hub so internal flights are routed through Mohammed V. The country is crying out for a direct Fez–Marrakesh flight. RAM's safety record is good, with tight security at airports.

Internal airports serviced by RAM are Agadir, Al-Hoceima, Casablanca, Dakhla, Essaouira, Fez, Laâyoune, Marrakesh, Nador, Ouarzazate, Oujda, Rabat and Tangier. Popular routes such as Marrakesh, Tangier and Agadir all have several flights per day. You

can pick up a free timetable at most RAM offices; timetables are also online.

Domestic flights can be booked online or through any travel agency as well as Royal Air Maroc offices. Remember that you should always confirm flights 72 hours before departure. Student and under-26 youth discounts of 25% are available on all RAM domestic flights, but only if the ticket is bought in advance from one of its offices. Children aged from two to 12 travel at half-price.

In general, flying isn't really worthwhile, except for long-distance routes such as to Laâyoune or Dakhla in the Western Sahara, when it can save you a lot of time. A flight from Casablanca to Laâyoune would set you back around Dh2300 and take just over an hour and a half, compared to 19 hours by bus.

BICYCLE

If you've the energy, mountain biking can be a great way of travelling in Morocco. There are no special road rules pertaining to cyclists and they are afforded little consideration by drivers. Although surfaced roads are generally well maintained, they tend to be narrow and dusty, which can be hairy given the kamikaze drivers.

However, there's plenty of opportunity for getting off the beaten track if you choose, with thousands of kilometres of remote *pistes* to be explored. You do need to be pretty fit, though. Distances are great and you'll need to carry all supplies with you, and plenty of drinking water. Useful spares to bring include spokes, brake blocks and inner tubes.

Unfortunately, cyclists in remote areas have reported being besieged by gangs of stone-throwing children, so be sure to watch your back.

Bus companies are generally happy to carry bikes as luggage for an extra Dh10 or so, although it's generally only possible to transport your bike on trains if they travel in the goods wagon. Prices depend on the distance and are about 40% of the passenger fare. Most camp sites charge around Dh10 for bicycles.

There are a few external tour operators that offer organised mountain-biking trips (see opposite). The UK-based **Cyclists' Touring Club** (☎ 0870 873 0060; www.ctc.org.uk) is a

mine of information and has a comprehensive members' library of routes, including Morocco, written up by cyclists.

Hire

Moroccan cities and towns are better explored on foot, though you will find bicycles for hire in cities like Marrakesh (from around Dh60 to Dh100 per day), and cycle parks where your bike can be parked and watched over for the day. Don't expect the latest model of mountain bike, as you will be sorely disappointed.

BUS

Anyone in Morocco for any length of time will undoubtedly make considerable use of the local bus networks. The cheapest and most efficient way to travel around the country, buses are generally safe, although the same can't necessarily be said for the driving. On some older buses, legroom is extremely limited and long journeys can be rather an endurance test for taller travellers.

Most bus trips longer than three hours will incorporate a scheduled stop to stretch your legs and refuel your body. When travelling during the day, pay attention to where you're sitting, to avoid melting in the sun. Heading from north to south, this means sitting on the right in the morning, on the left in the afternoon. Travelling east to west, sit on the right, or on the left if going from west to east. Many buses also have rather meagre curtains. Night buses operate on many intercity routes, which can be both quicker and cooler, although not necessarily more sleep-inducing.

There's no state bus company, but this role is fulfilled by the effective national carrier, Compagnie de Transports Marocains (CTM; see right), which operates throughout the country. After CTM, a host of smaller local companies fight it out for custom, although outfits like Supratours and Satas are well respected nationally.

Some Moroccan bus stations are like madhouses, with touts running around screaming out any number of destinations for buses about to depart. In most cities or towns there's a single central bus station (*gare routière*), but in some places CTM maintains a separate terminal. Occasionally, there are other stations for a limited number of fairly local destinations. Touts can hap-

pily guide you to the ticket booth (and take a small commission from the company), but always double-check that their recommended service really is the most comfortable, direct and convenient option.

Bus stations in the main cities have left-luggage depots (*consigne*), sometimes open 24 hours. Bags must be padlocked. You can transport bikes on buses, but they'll be charged as freight (around Dh10 per bike for an average journey).

Bus Operators

COMPAGNIE DE TRANSPORTS MAROCAINS

CTM (☎ in Casablanca 022 458080) is the best and most reliable bus company in Morocco, and serves most destinations of interest to travellers. Established in 1919, it's Morocco's oldest bus company.

On CTM buses, children aged four years and over pay full fares, which tend to be 15% to 30% more expensive than other lines, and are comparable to 2nd-class fares on normal trains. Tickets can be purchased in advance. Intercity timetables often seem to have a penchant for late-night departures.

Many CTM buses are modern and comfortable, and some 1st-class buses have videos (a mixed blessing), air-conditioning and heating (they sometimes overdo both).

There is an official baggage charge on CTM buses (Dh5 per pack). Once you have bought your ticket, you get a baggage tag, which you should hang on to, as you'll need it when you arrive.

CTM also operates international buses (in conjunction with Eurolines) from all the main Moroccan cities to Spain, France, Italy and northern Europe (see p483).

SUPRATOURS

The ONCF train company runs buses through **Supratours** (☎ 037 686297; www.supratourstravel.com) to complement its train network. Thus Nador, near Melilla on the Mediterranean coast, is linked to the Oujda-Casablanca rail line by a special bus to Taourirt station.

Tetouan is linked to the main line from Tangier by bus to Tnine Sidi Lyamani. Train passengers heading further south than Marrakesh link up at Marrakesh station with buses for Essaouira, Agadir, Laâyoune and Dakhla. It's possible to buy a ticket to cover

the complete trip (including the bus journey) at the railway ticket office.

Supratours services are more expensive than regular buses, but are comparable to CTM fares. They do not use the main bus stations, but depart from outside their own town-centre offices (explained in individual town sections throughout this book). Through tickets to and from connecting train stations are available (Nador through to Fez, for example), and travellers with rail tickets for connecting services have priority.

OTHER COMPANIES

Morocco's other bus companies are all privately owned and only operate regionally.

The biggest of them is Satas, which covers Casablanca and everywhere further south, and is just as good as CTM. In the north, Trans Ghazala is equally reliable. Both have modern, comfortable buses.

At the cheaper end of the scale, and on the shorter or local routes, there are a fair number of two-bit operations with one or two well-worn buses, so don't expect comfortable seats or any air-conditioning. Unlike CTM buses, these services tend to stop an awful lot and only depart when the driver considers them sufficiently full. They're dirt cheap and good fun for shorter trips. The cheaper buses rarely have heating in winter, even when crossing the mountains, so make sure that you have plenty of warm clothing



with you. If traffic is held up by snowdrifts in the mountain passes, then you'll really feel the cold. The Marrakesh to Ouarzazate road is particularly prone to this.

Classes

Some companies offer 1st- and 2nd-class, although the difference in fare and comfort is rarely great. On the secondary runs (ie if you're not getting on the bus at the start of the route) you can often buy your tickets on the bus, but if you do, you might end up standing.

Costs

Bus travel is cheap considering the distances that have to be covered. Typical fares from Casablanca to Agadir, Marrakesh, Fez and Tangier are Dh170, Dh80, Dh110 and Dh140 respectively.

More often than not you'll be charged for baggage handling by someone, especially if your gear is going on top of the bus – Dh5 is common.

Reservations

Where possible, and especially if services are infrequent or do not originate in the place you want to leave, it's best to book ahead for CTM buses.

Likewise, it is always advisable to book travel on Supratours buses in advance as services are fairly infrequent (ie one bus per day) and popular. Particularly busy routes are Marrakesh to Essaouira, and Casablanca to Marrakesh, where you may need to reserve seats two days in advance in high season.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Having a car gives you the most freedom to explore Morocco's more unusual routes in your own time. This particularly holds true in the south and the Rif Mountains, where travelling by local buses can be quite time-consuming.

The roads connecting the main centres of Morocco are generally very good, and there's an expanding motorway network. Accident rates are high, so look out for pedestrians and cyclists who will invariably cross or swerve in front of you. Your fellow motorists may also be haphazard with their driving skills, particularly in towns, which can make negotiating city streets a hair-raising experience.

Bring Your Own Vehicle

Taking your own vehicle to Morocco is comparatively easy. In addition to your vehicle registration document (*carte grise* in Morocco) and International Driving Permit, a Green Card (*carte verte*) is required from the car's insurer (you may be covered in your current car insurance policy, especially if you live in Continental Europe, so check with your insurance company). These are relatively inexpensive, though often only provide third-party, fire and theft protection. Not all insurers cover Morocco.

If you cannot get a Green Card in advance, temporary insurance must be arranged at Spanish or Moroccan ferry ports; you can do this through **Assurance Frontière** (☎ head office in Casablanca 022 470810; 28 Blvd Moulay Youssef) for around Dh20 per day. It also has offices at Tangier port, Nador port and at the land frontiers at Ceuta and Melilla. However, it is strongly recommended that you arrange comprehensive and reliable cover before you enter Morocco.

On entering Morocco you will get a temporary vehicle admission (*Déclaration d'admission temporaire de moyens de transport*), which will be stamped into your passport and is valid for six months. You must present this when you (and your vehicle) leave the country. You can download the necessary form (D16TER) to import your vehicle from the website of **Morocco Customs** (www.douane.gov.ma/mre/, in French). There is no need for a *carnet de passage en douane* (guarantee bond for temporarily importing your vehicle) when taking your car to Morocco, but you'll need one if you're continuing to Mauritania and points further south.

Driving Licence

The minimum age for driving in Morocco is 18, but most car-rental companies require drivers to be at least 21. You must carry your driving licence and passport at all times. International Driving Licences are technically mandatory – many foreign, including EU, licences are acceptable provided they bear your photograph.

Fuel & Spare Parts

Petrol is readily available in all the main centres. If you're travelling off the beaten

you're organised, however, it usually works out cheaper to arrange car rental in advance through the travel agent who arranges your flight. International firms such as **Hertz** (www.hertz.com), **Budget** (www.budget.com), **Europcar** (www.europcar.com), **National** (www.nationalcar.com) and **Avis** (www.avis.com) have facilities for booking from home on toll-free or cheap-rate numbers or via the internet. Rates can vary substantially between them and there is little room for bargaining. Ordering your car over the internet can get you discounts of up to 30%.

There are also numerous local agencies and many have booths beside each other at airports – this is an excellent place to haggle. Details for these are given in regional chapters.

International agencies do not necessarily offer better vehicles than local companies, but usually provide better service in the event of a breakdown or accident, as they have a network of offices around the country. Often a replacement car can be sent out to you from the nearest depot. Always check your car's condition before signing up, and make sure that the car comes with a spare tyre, tool kit and full documentation – including insurance cover, which is compulsory for all rentals.

With larger agencies you can hire the car in one place and leave it elsewhere, although this usually involves a fee if you want to leave it in a city where the company has no branch.

Note that your rental agreement will probably not cover you for off-road (*piste*) driving, so if you damage the car or break down on a *piste* you will not be covered for damages. It might be worthwhile to OK your route with the rental company before setting off.

All companies charge per hour (Dh35 to Dh100 is common) for every hour that you go over time on the return date. If you intend to drive from Morocco to the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta or Melilla, you must have a letter from the car-hire company authorising you to take the car out of the country. Europe-based companies do not normally permit cars to be taken to Morocco. Keep receipts for oil changes and any mechanical repairs, as these costs should be reimbursed.

Some companies offer motorcycle (Dh300 per day for a DT 125cc Yamaha)

and scooter (Dh200 per day) hire. Agadir is a good place to look – you'll find a number of rental booths near the big hotels.

Insurance

Insurance must, by law, be sold along with all rental agreements. You should take out Collision Damage Waiver insurance (between Dh80 and Dh110 a day). Even with this there is often an excess of between Dh3000 and Dh5000 (depending on the company), meaning that if you have an accident that's your fault, then you are liable to pay damages up to this amount. You can opt to take out a Super Collision Damage Waiver for an extra Dh50 or so a day to get rid of this excess. It's also a good idea to take out personal insurance (around Dh30 a day). When bargaining, make sure that prices include collision damage, insurance and tax (20%).

Parking

In many towns, parking zones are watched by *gardiens de voitures* (car-park attendants) in characteristic blue coats. The going rate is Dh3 for a few hours and Dh10 overnight. The parking attendants are not a guarantee of safety, but they do provide some peace of mind and will no doubt offer to wash your car for you.

In an increasing number of big city centres, parking tickets are issued from blue kerbside machines (Dh2 per hour for a maximum stay of 2½ hours). Parking is free on Sundays.

Parking is not allowed on kerbsides painted in red and white stripes. Stopping is not allowed on green and white stripes. Fines for illegally parked cars can reach Dh1500.

Roadblocks

Police control points manned by the *Gendarmerie Royale* are common on main roads in and out of most sizable towns, although as a foreigner driving you're unlikely to be stopped. It's still a good idea to slow down and put on your best smile – you'll probably get a smile in return and be waved through. Roadblocks are more common in sensitive areas like the Western Sahara, in the Rif mountains around the cannabis-producing region of Ketama and the road to Figuig near the Algerian border. At most, you may be asked to show your passport and driving

licence, the purpose of your visit and where you're heading.

Intercity buses are usually delayed at checkpoints more than grands taxis, whose local drivers usually know the police.

Road Hazards

Driving at night is particularly hazardous: it's legal for vehicles travelling under 20km/h to drive without lights, and roads are often very busy with pedestrians (including large groups of schoolchildren), bicycles, horse and carts, donkeys and so on. Treat all as vehicles ready to veer out at inopportune moments.

Many minor roads are too narrow for normal vehicles to pass without going onto the shoulder. You'll find yourself hitting the dirt a lot in this way. Stones thrown up by oncoming vehicles present a danger for windcreens. In the *hammada* (stony desert), tar roads frequently disappear without warning, replaced suddenly by stretches of sand, gravel and potholes. Take care with your speed on such roads. If a strong *chergui* (dry, easterly desert wind) is blowing and carrying a lot of dust, you'll have to wait until it eases off if you don't want to do your car considerable damage.

In contrast, driving across the mountain ranges in winter can easily involve driving through snow and ice. The High Atlas passes can often be closed altogether due to snow in the winter. Check the road signs along the routes out of Marrakesh or call the **Service des Travaux Publiques** (☎ in Rabat 037 711717) before travelling.

Some of the *pistes* in Morocco can be negotiated by ordinary car, many are passable in a Renault 4 with its high suspension, but some are 4WD territory only. Whatever vehicle you have, the going will be slow. Many stretches of mountain *piste* will be impassable in bad weather: the Michelin No 742 map (formerly No 959) generally has these sections marked.

Whatever the season, enquire about road conditions with locals before setting off on a journey, check your tyres, take a usable spare and carry an adequate supply of water and petrol.

Road Rules

In Morocco you drive on the right hand side of the road, as in Continental Europe.

Daylight driving is generally no problem and not too stressful, though in the bigger cities getting constantly cut off is par for the course.

In the event of a traffic accident, especially accidents involving injuries, drivers are officially required to remain at the scene and vehicles cannot be moved until the police have arrived – this may take hours.

In towns, give way to traffic entering a roundabout from the right when you're already on one. No one seems to pay much attention to striped (zebra) crossings. The speed limit in built-up areas is 40km/h.

Outside the towns there is a national speed limit of 100km/h, rising to 120km/h on the motorways. There are two main sections, from Tangier along the Atlantic coast to Casablanca, and from Rabat to Fez via Meknès. The motorway has also been extended along the Mediterranean coast from Tangier to Nador, and plans are underway to extend the network to Marrakesh, Agadir and Oujda. Tolls apply on the motorways – for example from Rabat to Tangier is Dh60 and Rabat to Casablanca is Dh20. You take a ticket upon entering the motorway and then pay at the end.

Yellow road signs implore drivers to follow the law and wear seatbelts, but in practice few people do, preferring instead to put their trust in Allah to reach their destination safely. Not doing so leaves you open to fines however, so we'd advise belting up.

LOCAL TRANSPORT Bus

The bigger cities, such as Casablanca, Rabat, Marrakesh, Fez and Meknès, have public bus services. They're often handy for crossing from the *ville nouvelle* (new town) of a city to the *medina* (old town), but can be ludicrously overcrowded, and routes often hard to discern. Tickets are typically Dh2 to Dh3.

Grand Taxi

The elderly Mercedes vehicles you'll see belting along Moroccan roads and gathered in great flocks near bus stations are shared taxis (*grands taxis* in French or *taxiat kebira* in Arabic). They're a big feature of Morocco's public transport system and link towns to their nearest neighbours in a kind of leapfrogging system. Taxis sometimes

ply longer routes when there's demand, but these services are few and usually leave first thing in the morning. Grands taxis take six extremely cramped passengers (two in the front, four in the back) and leave when full. It can often be to your advantage to pay for two seats to get the taxi going earlier (and give yourself more space). This is particularly useful for lone women as you should get the front seat to yourself.

The fixed-rate fares (listed in individual city entries) are generally a little higher than bus fares, but are still very reasonable. When asking about fares, make it clear you want to pay for *une place* (one spot) in a *taxi collectif* (shared taxi). Another expression that helps explain that you don't want to hire a taxi for yourself is that you wish to travel *ma'a an-nas* (with other people).

Touts and taxi drivers sometimes try to bounce tourists into hiring the whole taxi (*complet*). Smile and stand your ground if you're not interested, but for some routes hiring an entire grand taxi can actually be a great way to travel, especially if you're travelling with a small group – you can take your time on the road and stop whenever you want.

Before setting off, negotiate patiently for a reasonable fare (if you're hiring the whole taxi, aim for six times the fare for one place) and make sure plans for stopping en route are clear. The Ziz and Drâa Valleys, the Tizi n'Test and the Rif Mountains are particularly good to visit in a shared taxi.

Grand-taxi drivers often have something of the boy-racer about them. Overtaking on blind corners can be a badge of honour, and speed limits only adhered to when there's a police roadblock in sight. Many accidents in-

volve overworked grand-taxi drivers falling asleep at the wheel, so night-time journeys are best avoided. Seatbelts are a rarity – and suggesting otherwise may be taken as a slur on your driver's road skills.

Petit Taxi

Cities and bigger towns have local petits taxis, which are a different colour in every city. Petits taxis are not permitted to go beyond the city limits. They are licensed to carry up to three passengers and are usually, but not always, metered. To ask in French for the meter to be switched on say '*tourne le compteur, si'l vous plait*'. Where they are not metered, agree to a price beforehand. If the driver refuses to use the meter or won't give you a price, ask to stop and get out. Most petit-taxi drivers are perfectly honest, although those in Marrakesh are notoriously greedy with tourists.

Multiple hire is the rule rather than the exception, so you can get half-full cabs if they are going your way (for the same price). From 8pm (often 9pm in summer) there is normally a 50% surcharge.

Pick-up Truck & 4WD

In more remote parts of the country, especially in the Atlas Mountains, locals get from village to village by Berber *camionettes* (pick-up trucks), old vans or in the back of trucks. This is a bumpy but adventurous way to get to know the country and people a little better, but can mean waiting a considerable time (even days) for the next lift. When travelling between remote towns and villages, the best time to travel is early on market days (generally once or twice a week). It's common for 4WD taxis to oper-

TRAVELLERS' CODE OF ETIQUETTE

When travelling on public transport, it's considered both selfish and bad manners to eat while those around you go without. Always buy a little extra that can be offered to your neighbours. A bag of fruit makes a great choice.

Next comes the ritual. If you have offered food, etiquette dictates that your fellow passengers should decline it. It should be offered a second time, this time a little more persuasively, but again it will be turned down. On a third more insistent offer, your neighbours are free to accept the gift if they wish to.

If, conversely, you are offered food, but you don't want it, it's good manners to accept a small piece anyway. At the same time, you should pat your stomach contentedly to indicate that you are full. In return for participating in this elaborate ritual, you should be accorded great respect, offered protection and cared for like a friend.

ate on the more remote *pistes* that would destroy normal taxis.

TRAIN

Morocco's excellent train network (see Map p491) is one of Africa's best, linking most of the main centres. It is run by the **Office National des Chemins de Fer** (ONCF; www.oncf.ma, in French). There are basically two lines that carry passengers: from Tangier in the north down to Marrakesh, and from Oujda in the north-east, also to Marrakesh, joining with the Tangier line at Sidi Kacem. Plans to extend the railway south to Agadir and on to the Western Sahara seem perennially doomed never to leave the drawing board, although as we went to press work on a high-speed TGV line from Tangier to Casablanca was due to commence. Supratours runs buses linking many destinations to the rail network south and east of Marrakesh (including Essaouira and Laâyoune), and along the Mediterranean coast (including Tetouan and Nador).

Trains are comfortable, fast and run closely to their timetables. Reasonably priced, they're far preferable to buses where available. Drinks and snacks are available on the train. Smoking is not allowed in compartments. Stations aren't usually well signposted and announcements (in both French and Arabic) are frequently inaudible so keep an eye out for your station.

Most of the stations are located in the ville nouvelle. They usually have left-luggage depots, though these only accept luggage that can be locked.

Timetables for the whole system are posted in French at most stations, and ticket offices can print out mini-timetables to individual destinations. ONCF's website (in French) also has full timetables and prices.

Classes

There are two types of train, *ordinaire* (Train Navette Rapide, TNR) and *rapide* (Train Rapide Climatisé, TCR). *Rapide* trains are standard for intercity services, with *ordinaire* trains now reduced to a handful of late-night and local services. The main difference between the two is comfort and air-conditioning, rather than speed. Prices given in the guide are for *rapide* trains (*ordinaire* trains are around 30% cheaper).

There are different 1st- and 2nd-class fares on all these trains, though there's not

much difference in actual comfort – 1st-class compartments have six seats, 2nd-class have eight. Second-class is more than adequate on any journey.

Shuttle services operate regularly between Kenitra, Rabat, Casablanca and Mohammed V International Airport, and supplement the *rapide* services on this line. There are hourly services between Casablanca and the airport (35 minutes) running roughly between 5am and 10pm, making them a convenient way to catch most flights. For more details, see the Getting Around sections under Casablanca (p116) and Rabat (p129).

Costs

Couchettes are available on the overnight *ordinaire* trains between Marrakesh and Tangier, and Oujda and Casablanca. The compartments fold up into six bunks (*couchettes*) and they're well worth the extra Dh90. There's also a more expensive overnight *rapide* train from Oujda.

Sample 2nd-class fares include Casablanca to Marrakesh (Dh84, three hours), Rabat to Fez (Dh76, 3½ hours) and Tangier to Marrakesh (Dh190, eight hours).

Children aged under four travel free. Those aged between four and 12 years get a reduction of 10% to 50%, depending on the service.

Reservations

You are advised to buy tickets at the station, as a supplement is charged for buying tickets on the train. Tickets can be bought up to a month before travel, and are worth getting in advance for *couchettes* on overnight services (particularly Tangier–Marrakesh), or if you're travelling around the Eid holidays.

Always hang on to tickets, as inspectors check them on the trains and they are collected at the station on arrival.

Train Passes

Two types of rail discount cards are available. The Carte Fidelité (Dh149) is for those aged over 26 and gives you 50% reductions on eight return or 16 one-way journeys in a 12-month period. If you're under 26, the Carte Jaune (Dh99) will give you the same discounts. Those aged over 60 can buy a Carte Retraités (Dh50), giving a 40% discount on tickets. To apply you need one passport-sized photo and a photocopy of your passport.

Health

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Prevention is the key to staying healthy while travelling in Morocco, and a little planning before departure will save you trouble later. With luck, the worst complaint you might come down with on your trip is a bad stomach; while infectious diseases can and do occur in Morocco, these are usually associated with poor living conditions and poverty, and can be avoided with a few precautions. A more common reason for travellers needing medical help is as a result of accidents – cars are not always well maintained and poorly lit roads are littered with potholes. Medical facilities can be excellent in large cities, but in remoter areas may be more basic.

BEFORE YOU GO

Health matters often get left to the last minute before travelling. A little planning is advisable, however – some vaccines don't ensure immunity for two weeks, so visit a doctor four to eight weeks before departure.

Travellers can register with the **International Association for Medical Advice to Travellers** (IAMAT; www.iamat.org). The website can help

travellers find a doctor with recognised training. Those heading off to very remote areas may like to do a first-aid course (Red Cross and St John's Ambulance can help), or attend a remote-medicine first-aid course such as that offered by the **Royal Geographical Society** (www.rgs.org) – a particularly good idea if you're going trekking.

Bring medications in their original, clearly labelled, containers. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity. See your dentist before a long trip; carry a spare pair of contact lenses and glasses (and take your optical prescription with you).

INSURANCE

Adequate health insurance is vital when travelling to Morocco. Check in advance that your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures – in Morocco, doctors usually expect payment on the spot. Your policy should ideally also cover emergency air evacuation home or to a hospital in a major city, which may be essential for serious problems.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

Although no specific vaccinations are required for Morocco, the World Health Organization nevertheless recommends that all travellers should be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio, as well as hepatitis B. When making preparations to travel, en-

TRAVEL HEALTH WEBSITES

The following government travel health websites are useful resources to consult prior to departure.

Australia (www.smarttraveller.gov.au)

Canada (www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/index.html)

UK (www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice/)

United States (www.cdc.gov/travel/)

sure that all of your routine vaccination cover is complete. Ask your doctor for an International Certificate of Vaccination, which will list all the vaccinations you've received.

MEDICAL CHECKLIST

Following is a list of other items you should consider packing in your medical kit when you are travelling.

- antibiotics (if travelling off the beaten track)
- antibacterial hand gel
- anti-diarrhoeal drugs (eg loperamide)
- paracetamol (eg Tylenol) or aspirin
- anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- antihistamines (for hay fever and allergic reactions)
- antibacterial ointment (eg Bactroban) for cuts and abrasions
- steroid cream or cortisone (for allergic rashes)
- bandages, gauze, gauze rolls
- adhesive or paper tape
- scissors, safety pins, tweezers
- thermometer
- pocket knife
- DEET-containing insect repellent for the skin
- permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents, and bed nets
- sun block
- oral rehydration salts
- iodine tablets (for water purification)
- syringes and sterile needles (if travelling to remote areas)

INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of travel-health advice on the internet. For further information, **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com) is a good place to start. **The World Health Organization** (www.who.int/ith/) is an excellent resource for travel health information, along with **MD Travel Health** (www.mdtravelhealth.com), which provides complete travel-health recommendations for every country.

FURTHER READING

Lonely Planet's *Healthy Travel* is packed with useful information including pretrip planning, emergency first aid, immunisation and disease information and what to do if you get sick on the road. Other recommended references include *Travellers'*

Health by Dr Richard Dawood (Oxford University Press) and *The Travellers' Good Health Guide* by Ted Lankester (Sheldon Press), an especially useful health guide for volunteers and long-term expatriates working in the region.

IN TRANSIT

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Deep vein thrombosis occurs when blood clots form in the legs during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. Though most clots are reabsorbed uneventfully, some may break off and travel through the blood vessels to the lungs, where they may cause life-threatening complications.

The chief symptom of DVT is swelling or pain in the lower leg, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and difficulty breathing. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent the development of DVT on long flights you should walk about the cabin, regularly contract your leg muscles while sitting and ensure that you drink plenty of fluids. Recent research also indicates that wearing flight socks, which gently compress the leg from the knee down, encourages blood to flow properly in the legs and reduces the risk of DVT occurring by up to 90%.

JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

Jet lag is common when crossing more than five time zones; it results in insomnia, fatigue or nausea. To avoid jet lag, set your watch to your destination's time zone when you board your plane, drink plenty of (non-alcoholic) fluids and eat lightly. Upon arrival, seek exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your eating and sleeping schedule as soon as possible.

Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate (Dramamine) and meclizine (Antivert, Bonine) are usually the first choice for treating motion sickness. Their main side-effect is drowsiness. A herbal alternative is ginger, which works like a charm for some people.

IN MOROCCO

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Primary medical care is not always readily available outside major cities and large towns. Pharmacies are generally well stocked, however, and pharmacists can provide valuable advice (usually in French) covering common travellers' complaints, and sell over-the-counter medication, often including some drugs only available on prescription at home. They can also advise when more specialised help is needed.

If you are being treated by a doctor or at a clinic – particularly outside the major cities – you will often be expected to purchase medical supplies on the spot. This can even include sterile dressings or intravenous fluids. Your hotel may be able to locate the nearest source of medical help. In an emergency, contact your embassy or consulate.

Standards of dental care are variable. Keep in mind that your travel insurance will not usually cover you for anything other than emergency dental treatment. The pliers of the street dentists around the Djemaa el-Fna in Marrakesh aren't recommended!

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is spread through contaminated food (particularly shellfish) and water. It causes jaundice, and although it is rarely fatal, can cause prolonged lethargy and delayed recovery. Symptoms include dark urine, a yellow colour to the whites of the eyes, fever and abdominal pain. Vaccination against Hepatitis A is recommended for travel to Morocco. The vaccine (Avaxim, VAQTA, Havrix) is given as an injection: a single dose will give protection for up to a year, while a booster 12 months later will provide a subsequent 10 years of protection. Hepatitis A and typhoid vaccines can also be given as a single dose vaccine (Hepatyrix or Viatim).

Hepatitis B

Infected blood, contaminated needles and sexual intercourse can all transmit hepatitis B. It can cause jaundice, and affects

the liver, occasionally causing liver failure. All travellers should make this a routine vaccination (Morocco gives hepatitis B vaccination as part of routine childhood vaccination). The vaccine is given singly, or at the same time as the hepatitis A vaccine (Hepatyrix). A course will give protection for at least five years. It can be given over four weeks, or six months.

HIV

Morocco has an HIV infection rate of around 0.1%, primarily found in the main urban centres. Although recent education efforts have improved, AIDS awareness (SIDA in French) is relatively poor, in part due to Muslim taboos on openly discussing sexual matters.

HIV is spread via infected blood and blood products and through sexual intercourse with an infected partner, so practising safe sex is essential. There is a small risk of infection through medical procedures, such as blood transfusion, and improperly sterilised medical instruments.

Leishmaniasis

Spread through the bite of an infected sandfly, leishmaniasis can cause slowly growing skin lumps or sores. It may develop into a serious life-threatening fever usually accompanied with anaemia and weight loss. There is no vaccine, but treatment with the antimonial drugs Glucantime or Pentostam is straightforward. Infected dogs are also carriers of the infection. Sandfly bites should be avoided whenever possible. In Morocco, leishmaniasis may be found in rural areas in the Atlas Mountains, with sandflies more prevalent between June and October.

Rabies

Spread through bites or licks on broken skin from an infected animal, rabies is fatal and endemic to Morocco. Animal handlers should be vaccinated, as should those travelling to remote areas where a reliable source of post-bite vaccine is not available within 24 hours. Three injections are needed over a month. If you have not been vaccinated you will need a course of five injections starting within 24 hours or as soon as possible after the injury. Vaccination does not provide you with immunity, it merely buys you more time to seek appropriate medical help.

Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is spread through close respiratory contact and occasionally through infected milk or milk products, and is guarded against by the BCG vaccine. This is more important for those visiting family or planning on a long stay, and those employed as teachers and health-care workers. TB can be asymptomatic, although symptoms can include cough, weight loss or fever months or even years after exposure. An X-ray is the best way to confirm if you have TB. BCG gives a moderate degree of protection against TB. It causes a small permanent scar at the site of injection, and is usually only given in specialised chest clinics. As it's a live vaccine, it shouldn't be given to pregnant women or immunocompromised individuals.

Typhoid

Typhoid is spread through food or water that has been contaminated by infected human faeces. Local outbreaks are unusual but well publicised by the local media. The first symptom is usually fever or a pink rash on the abdomen. Septicaemia (blood poisoning) may also occur. Typhoid vaccine (Typhim Vi, Typherix) will give protection for three years. In some countries, the oral vaccine Vivotif is also available.

Yellow Fever

There is a small risk of yellow fever, borne by mosquitos, in rural Chefchaouen province, but this is so small that the World Health Organization does not recommend vaccination.

Travellers arriving in Morocco from a yellow-fever-endemic area will need to show proof of vaccination before entry. This normally means if arriving directly from an infected country or if the traveller has been in an infected country during the last 10 days. We would recommend, however, that travellers carry a certificate if they have been in an infected country during the previous month to avoid any possible difficulties with immigration. Note that yellow fever is endemic to Mauritania, so your documentation must be in order if entering Morocco overland from here (although anecdotal evidence disputes how rigorously the order is enforced at the land border). For

a full list of these countries visit the websites of the **World Health Organization** (www.who.int/ith/en/) or the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (www.cdc.gov/travel/). There is always the possibility that a traveller without a legally required, up-to-date certificate will be vaccinated and detained in isolation at the port of arrival for up to 10 days, or possibly repatriated. The yellow-fever vaccination must be given at a designated clinic and is valid for 10 years. It is a live vaccine and must not be given to immunocompromised or pregnant travellers.

TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA

The strains of travel – unfamiliar food, heat, long days and erratic sleeping patterns – can all make your body more susceptible to upset stomachs.

To prevent diarrhoea, eat only fresh fruits or vegetables if they are cooked or if you have washed or peeled them yourself. Water is generally safe to drink in cities but elsewhere you should only drink treated water (see p503). Buffet meals, which may have been kept sitting warm for some time, can be risky – food should be piping hot. Meals freshly cooked in front of you (like much street food) or served in a busy restaurant are more likely to be safe. Be sensible, but not paranoid – the food is one of the treats of visiting Morocco, and you shouldn't miss out for fears of an upset stomach.

It's also very important to pay close attention to personal hygiene while on the road. Many Moroccan meals are eaten with the hand, so always wash before eating (even the smallest restaurant will have a sink and soap) and after using the toilet. Antibacterial hand gel, which cleans without needing water is a real travellers' friend.

If you develop diarrhoea, drink plenty of fluids, preferably an oral rehydration solution – all pharmacies stock these inexpensive *sels de réhydratation orale*. Avoid fatty food and dairy products. A few loose stools don't require treatment, but if you start having more than four or five stools a day, you should start taking an antibiotic (usually a quinolone drug) and an anti-diarrhoeal agent (such as loperamide). If diarrhoea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours, is accompanied by fever, shaking chills or severe abdominal pain, you should seek medical attention.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Altitude Sickness

Lack of oxygen at high altitudes (over 2500m) affects most people to some extent. The effect may be mild or severe and occurs because less oxygen reaches the muscles and the brain at high altitudes, requiring the heart and lungs to compensate by working harder. Symptoms of Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) usually (but not always) develop during the first 24 hours at altitude. Mild symptoms include headache, lethargy, dizziness, difficulty sleeping and loss of appetite. AMS may become more severe without warning and can be fatal. Severe symptoms include breathlessness, a dry, irritative cough (which may progress to the production of pink, frothy sputum), severe headache, lack of coordination, confusion, irrational behaviour, vomiting, drowsiness and unconsciousness. There is no hard-and-fast rule as to what is too high: AMS has been fatal at 3000m, although 3500m to 4500m is the usual range.

If you're trekking, build time into your schedule to acclimatise and ensure that your guide knows how to recognise and deal with altitude sickness. Morocco's most popular trek, to Jebel Toubkal, reaches the 4167m summit relatively quickly, so many people may suffer even mildly. The longer treks in the M'Goun Massif also reach heights of around 4000m. Treks in the Rif Mountains and Jebel Sarhro are considerably lower, so don't carry the same risks. See the trekking chapter (p416) for more specific information.

Treat mild symptoms by resting at the same altitude until recovery, or preferably descend – even 500m can help. Paracetamol or aspirin can be taken for headaches. If symptoms persist or become worse, however, immediate descent is necessary. Drug treatments should never be used to avoid descent or to enable further ascent.

Diamox (acetazolamide) reduces the headache of AMS and helps the body acclimatise to the lack of oxygen. It is only available on prescription, and those who are allergic to the sulfonamide antibiotics may also be allergic to Diamox.

The **British Mountaineering Council** (www.thebmc.co.uk) has an excellent series of downloadable fact sheets with information on altitude sickness.

Heat Illness

Morocco's sun can be fierce, so bring a hat. Heat exhaustion occurs following heavy sweating and excessive fluid loss with inadequate replacement of fluids and salt. This is particularly common when taking unaccustomed exercise before full acclimatisation. Symptoms include headache, dizziness and tiredness. Dehydration is already happening by the time you feel thirsty – aim to drink sufficient water such that you produce pale, diluted urine. The treatment of heat exhaustion involves fluid replacement with water or fruit juice or both, and cooling by cold water and fans. The treatment of the salt-loss component involves consuming salty fluids such as soup or broth, and adding a little more table salt to foods than usual.

Heat stroke is much more serious. This occurs when the body's heat-regulating mechanism breaks down. Excessive rise in body temperature leads to sweating ceasing, irrational and hyperactive behaviour and eventually loss of consciousness and death. Rapid cooling by spraying the body with water and fanning is an ideal treatment. Emergency fluid and electrolyte replacement by intravenous drip is usually also required.

Insect Bites & Stings

Bites from mosquitoes and other insects are more likely to be an irritant rather than a health risk. DEET-based insect repellents will prevent bites. Bees and wasps only cause real problems to those with a severe allergy (anaphylaxis). If you have a severe allergy to bee or wasp stings, you should carry an adrenaline injection or similar. Sandflies are found around the Mediterranean beaches. They usually cause only a nasty, itchy bite but can carry a rare skin disorder called cutaneous leishmaniasis.

Scorpions are common in southern Morocco. They can cause a painful sting that is rarely life threatening.

Bedbugs are sometimes found in the cheaper hotels. They lead to very itchy lumpy bites. Spraying the mattress with an appropriate insect killer will do a good job of getting rid of them.

Scabies are also frequently found in cheap accommodation. These tiny mites live in the skin, particularly between the fingers.

They cause an intensely itchy rash. Scabies is easily treated with lotion available from pharmacies; people with whom you come into contact with also need treating to avoid spreading scabies between asymptomatic carriers.

Snake Bites

The chances of seeing a snake in Morocco, let alone being bitten by one, are slim. Nevertheless, there are a few venomous species found in the southern desert areas, such as the horned viper. Snakes like to bask on rocks and sand, retreating during the heat of the day. Avoid walking barefoot, and the temptation to stick your hand into holes or cracks. Half of those bitten by venomous snakes are not actually injected with poison (envenomed). If bitten by a snake, do not panic. Immobilise the bitten limb with a splint (eg a stick) and apply a bandage over the site, using firm pressure, similar to a bandage over a sprain. Do not apply a tourniquet, or cut or suck the bite. Get the victim to medical help as soon as possible so that antivenin can be given if necessary.

Water

Tap water is chlorinated in Morocco's cities and generally safe to drink (and clean your teeth with). Elsewhere, stick to treated water – either filter it or use water-purification tablets. Bottled water is available everywhere as an alternative, although there is a high environmental cost through the mountains of discarded (and unrecycled) plastic bottles. Off the beaten track, water drawn from wells or pumped from boreholes should be safe, but never drink water from rivers or lakes, as this may contain bacteria or viruses that can cause diarrhoea or vomiting.

TRAVELLING WITH CHILDREN

All travellers with children should know how to treat minor ailments and when to seek medical treatment. Make sure the children are up to date with routine vaccinations, and discuss possible travel vaccines well before departure as some vaccines are not suitable for children aged under a year.

Upset stomachs are always a risk for children when travelling, so take particular care with diet. If your child is vomiting or experiencing diarrhoea, lost fluid and salts must be replaced. It may be helpful to take re-

hydration powders for reconstituting with sterile water. Ask your doctor about this. In Morocco's often-searing heat, sunburn, heat exhaustion and dehydration should all be guarded against.

Children should be encouraged to avoid dogs or other mammals because of the risk of rabies and other diseases – although there isn't likely to be a risk on camel rides in the desert, or with donkeys and mules working in places like Fez medina. Any bite, scratch or lick from a warm blooded, furry animal should immediately be thoroughly cleaned. If there is any possibility that the animal is infected with rabies, immediate medical assistance should be sought.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Emotional stress, exhaustion and travelling through different time zones can all contribute to an upset in the menstrual pattern. If using oral contraceptives, remember some antibiotics, diarrhoea and vomiting can stop the pill from working and lead to the risk of pregnancy, so remember to take condoms with you just in case. Condoms should be kept in a cool dry place or they may crack and perish.

Emergency contraception is most effective if taken within 24 hours after unprotected sex. Condoms, tampons and sanitary towels are all widely available in Morocco.

Travelling during pregnancy is usually possible but there are important things to consider. Have a medical check-up before embarking on your trip. The most risky times for travel are during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, when miscarriage is most likely, and after 30 weeks, when complications such as high blood pressure and premature delivery can occur. Most airlines will not accept a traveller after 28 to 32 weeks of pregnancy, and long-haul flights in the later stages can be very uncomfortable. Antenatal facilities vary greatly between countries in the region and you should think carefully if you're planning on getting off the beaten track. Taking written records of the pregnancy including details of your blood group, is likely to be helpful if you need medical attention while away. Ensure your insurance policy covers pregnancy, delivery and postnatal care, but remember insurance policies are only as good as the facilities available.

Language

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LANGUAGES IN MOROCCO

The official language in Morocco is Arabic, although French, the legacy of the protectorate, is still widely used in the cities (much less so among rural Berbers). Morocco's close ties to France help to explain the continued importance of French in education, business and the press.

Berber is spoken in the Rif and Atlas Mountains. Modern means of communication have left only a minority of Berbers monolingual – most speak at least some Arabic. See p512 for some Berber basics.

To a lesser extent than French, Spanish has maintained some hold in northern parts of the country, where Spain exercised administrative control until 1956. You may also come across Spanish in the territory of the former Spanish Sahara – over which Madrid relinquished control in 1975 – and the former enclave of Sidi Ifni. In towns like Tetouan, for instance, Spanish is more likely to be understood than French.

Reforms to Morocco's education system include the introduction of English into the curriculum for younger students, so it may become more widely spoken. However, English speakers will find that a smattering of French (and a little Spanish) can be a great asset; we've included some French basics in this language guide (p510). In the main cities and towns you'll find plenty of people (many of them touts that you may not necessarily want to hang around with), who speak various languages, including English, German and Italian.

MOROCCAN ARABIC

Written and spoken Arabic are often two very different languages. Moroccan Arabic (Darija) is a dialect of the standard language,

but is so different in many respects as to be virtually like another tongue. It is also the dialect that differs most from those of other Arabic-speaking peoples. More specialised or educated language tends to be much the same across the Arab world, although pronunciation varies considerably. An Arab from Jordan or Iraq will have little trouble discussing politics or literature with an educated Moroccan, but might have difficulty ordering lunch.

Written Arabic in Morocco uses what is known as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). MSA, which has grown from the classical Arabic of the Quran and poetry. It is the written and spoken lingua franca (common language) of the Arab world, and in fact not so far removed from the daily language of the Arab countries of the Levant. It's the language of modern Arabic literature and most media – there are no Darija newspapers or television programs in Morocco.

Foreign students of Arabic constantly face the dilemma of whether first to learn MSA (which could mean waiting some time before being able to talk with shopkeepers) and then a chosen dialect, or simply to acquire spoken competence in the latter.

If you learn even a few words and phrases, you'll discover and experience much more while travelling through the country. Just making the attempt implies a respect for local culture that Moroccans all too infrequently sense in visitors to their country.

There are many courses in both Darija and MSA available throughout Morocco (see p459), and these can be an excellent way to connect with the local people and gain a greater insight into their history and culture.

If you'd like a more comprehensive guide to the Arabic spoken in the Maghreb, get a copy of Lonely Planet's compact and comprehensive *Moroccan Arabic Phrasebook*.

PRONUNCIATION

Pronunciation of Arabic can be daunting for someone unfamiliar with the intonation and combination of sounds. This language guide should help, but bear in mind that the myriad rules governing pronunciation

THE STANDARD ARABIC ALPHABET

Final	Medial	Initial	Alone	Transliteration	Pronunciation
ا			ا	aa	as in 'father'
ب	ب	ب	ب	b	as in 'bet'
ت	ت	ت	ت	t	as in 'ten'
ث	ث	ث	ث	th	as in 'thin'
ج	ج	ج	ج	j	as in 'jet'
ح	ح	ح	ح	H	a strongly whispered 'h', like a sigh of relief
خ	خ	خ	خ	kh	as the 'ch' in Scottish <i>loch</i>
د			د	d	as in 'dim'
ذ			ذ	dh	as the 'th' in 'this'; also as d or z
ر			ر	r	a rolled 'r', as in the Spanish word <i>caro</i>
ز			ز	z	as in 'zip'
س	س	س	س	s	as in 'so', never as in 'wisdom'
ش	ش	ش	ش	sh	as in 'ship'
ص	ص	ص	ص		emphatic 's' (see below)
ض	ض	ض	ض		emphatic 'd' (see below)
ط	ط	ط	ط		emphatic 't' (see below)
ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ		emphatic 'z' (see below)
ع	ع	ع	ع	'	the Arabic letter <i>ayn</i> ; pronounce as a glottal stop – like the closing of the throat before saying 'Oh-oh!' (see Other Sounds on p506)
غ	غ	غ	غ	gh	a guttural sound like Parisian 'r'
ف	ف	ف	ف	f	as in 'far'
ق	ق	ق	ق	q	a strongly guttural 'k' sound; also often pronounced as a glottal stop
ك	ك	ك	ك	k	as in 'king'
ل	ل	ل	ل	l	as in 'lamb'
م	م	م	م	m	as in 'me'
ن	ن	ن	ن	n	as in 'name'
ه	ه	ه	ه	h	as in 'ham'
و			و	w	as in 'wet'; or
				oo	long, as in 'food'; or
				ow	as in 'how'
ي	ي	ي	ي	y	as in 'yes'; or
				ee	as in 'beer', only softer; or
				ai/ay	as in 'aisle'/as the 'ay' in 'day'

Vowels Not all Arabic vowel sounds are represented in the alphabet. For more information on the vowel sounds used in this language guide, see Pronunciation on p504.

Emphatic Consonants To simplify the transliteration system used in this book, the emphatic consonants have not been differentiated from their non-emphatic counterparts.

and vowel use are too extensive to be fully covered here.

Vowels

a	as in 'had'
e	as in 'bet'
i	as in 'hit'
o	as in 'note'
u	as in 'put'
aa	as the 'a' in 'father'
ee	as the 'e' in 'ear', only softer
oo	as the 'oo' in 'food'

Consonants

Pronunciation for all Arabic consonants is covered in the alphabet table on the preceding page. Note that when double consonants occur in transliterations, both are pronounced. For example, hammam (bath), is pronounced 'ham-mam'.

For those who can already read some Arabic, it's worth noting that written Moroccan Arabic has an extra letter. This letter is the *kaf* with three dots above it and transliterated as **g**, which represents a hard 'g' (as in *Agadir*).

Other Sounds

Arabic has two sounds that are very tricky for non-Arabs to produce, the 'ayn and the glottal stop. The letter 'ayn represents a sound with no English equivalent that comes even close. It is similar to the glottal stop (which is not actually represented in the alphabet) but the muscles at the back of the throat are gagged more forcefully – it has been described as the sound of someone being strangled. In many transliteration systems 'ayn is represented by an opening quotation mark, and the glottal stop by a closing quotation mark.

To make the transliterations in this language guide easier to use, we haven't distinguished between the glottal stop and the 'ayn, using the closing quotation mark to represent both sounds. You should find that Arabic speakers will still understand you.

ACCOMMODATION

Where is a ...?	<i>feen kayn ...?</i>
campground	<i>shee mukheyym</i>
hotel	<i>shee ootayl</i>
youth hostel	<i>daar shshabab</i>
I'm looking for a cheap hotel.	<i>kanqelleb 'ala shee ootayl rkhas</i>

What is the address?	<i>ashnoo hoowa l'unwan?</i>
Please write down the address.	<i>kteb l'unwan 'afek</i>
Is there a room available?	<i>wash kayn shee beet khaweeya?</i>
I'd like a room ... for one person for two people with a bathroom	<i>bgheet shee beet ... dyal wahed dyal jooj belhammam</i>
Can I see the room?	<i>wash yemkenlee nshoof lbeet?</i>
Where is the toilet?	<i>fin kayn lbeet lma?</i>
How much is a room for one day?	<i>bash hal kayn gbayt l wahed nhar?</i>
This room is too expensive.	<i>had lbeet bezzaf ghalee</i>
This room is good.	<i>had lbeet mezyana</i>
We'd like to check out now.	<i>bgheena nemshee daba</i>

air-conditioning	<i>kleemateezaseeyun</i>
bed	<i>namooseeya</i>
blanket	<i>bttaneeya</i>
full	<i>'amer</i>
hot water	<i>lma skhoon</i>
key	<i>saroot</i>
room	<i>beet</i>
sheet	<i>eezar</i>
shower	<i>doosh</i>
toilet	<i>beet lma</i>

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

When Arabic speakers meet, they often exchange more extensive and formalised greetings than Westerners are used to. Any attempt to use a couple (whether correctly or not) won't go astray.

When addressing a man the polite term more or less equivalent to 'Mr' is *aseedee* (shortened to *see* before a name); for women the polite form of address is *lalla*, followed by the first name. You may be addressed as 'Mr John' or 'Mrs Anne'. To attract the attention of someone on the street or a waiter in a café, the expression *shreef* is used.

The abbreviations 'm/f/pl' refer to 'male/female/plural'.

Hi.	<i>la bes</i> (informal greeting)
(response)	<i>bekheer</i>
Hello.	<i>es salaam alaykum</i> ('peace upon you')
(response)	<i>wa alaykum salaam</i> ('and peace upon you')

Goodbye.	<i>bessalama</i>
Goodbye.	<i>m'a ssalama</i> ('with peace')
Good morning.	<i>sbah lkheer</i>
Good evening.	<i>mselkheer</i>
Please.	<i>'afak/'afik/'afakum</i> (to m/f/pl)
Thank you (very much).	<i>shukran</i> (bezzef)
You're welcome.	<i>la shukran 'la wejb</i>
Yes.	<i>eeyeh/na'am</i> (<i>na'am</i> can also mean 'I'm sorry, could you repeat that, please')
Yes, OK.	<i>wakha</i>
No.	<i>la</i>
No, thank you.	<i>la shukran</i>
Excuse me.	<i>smeh leeya</i>
How are you?	<i>keef halek?</i>
Fine, thank you.	<i>bekheer, lhamdoo llaah</i>
If God wills.	<i>ensha'llaah</i>
Go ahead/Come on!	<i>zid!</i>
What's your name?	<i>asmeetek?</i>
My name is ...	<i>esmee ...</i>
How old are you?	<i>shhal f'merek?</i>
I'm (20).	<i>'andee ('ashreen) 'am</i>
Where are you from?	<i>mneen nta/nti/ntooma? (m/f/pl)</i>
I'm/We're from ...	<i>ana/hna men ...</i>

SIGNS

Entrance	مدخل
Exit	خروج
Open	مفتوح
Closed	مغلق
Prohibited	منوع
Information	معلومات
Hospital	مستشفى
Police	شرطة
Men's Toilet	حمام للرجال
Women's Toilet	حمام للنساء

DIRECTIONS

Where is (the) ...?	<i>feen kayn ...?</i>
beach	<i>laplaj</i>
mosque	<i>jame'</i>
museum	<i>al-matHaf</i>
old city	<i>lmdeena lqdeema</i>
palace	<i>al-qasr</i>
park	<i>'arsa</i>
How do I get to ...?	<i>keefesh ghaadeenuwsul l ...?</i>
How far?	<i>bshhal b'ayd?</i>
Go straight ahead.	<i>seer neeshan.</i>
Turn ...	<i>dor ...</i>
left/right	<i>'al leeser/'al leemen</i>

EMERGENCIES – ARABIC

Help!	<i>'teqnee!</i>
Help me please!	<i>'awennee 'afak!</i>
Call the police!	<i>'ayyet 'la lbùlees!</i>
Call a doctor!	<i>'ayyet 'la shee tbeeb!</i>
Thief!	<i>sheffar!</i>
I've been robbed.	<i>tsreqt</i>
Where's the toilet?	<i>feen kayn lbeet lma?</i>
Go away!	<i>seer fhalek!</i>
I'm lost.	<i>tweddert</i>
There's been an accident!	<i>uq'at kseeda!</i>

at the corner	<i>felqent</i>
at the traffic lights	<i>fedo elhmer</i>

here	<i>hna</i>
there	<i>hunak</i>
next to	<i>hedda</i>
opposite	<i>'eks</i>
behind	<i>men luy</i>
north	<i>shamel</i>
south	<i>janoob</i>
east	<i>sherq</i>
west	<i>gherb</i>

HEALTH

I'm sick.	<i>ana mreed</i>
It hurts here.	<i>kaydernee henna</i>
I'm ...	<i>ana ...</i>
diabetic	<i>feeya merd ssukkar</i>
asthmatic	<i>feeya ddeega</i>
I am allergic to ...	<i>'andee lhasaseeya m'a ...</i>
penicillin	<i>lbeenseleen</i>
bees	<i>nhel</i>
dairy products	<i>makla llee feeha lhleeb</i>

antibiotics	<i>'anteebeeyoteek</i>
aspirin	<i>aspereen</i>
condoms	<i>kapoot</i>
contraceptives	<i>dwa dyal lhmel</i>
diarrhoea	<i>sshah</i>
headache	<i>rras</i>
medicine	<i>ddawa</i>
sunblock cream	<i>lomber</i>
tampons	<i>fota dyal dem lheed</i>

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

Do you speak (English)?	<i>wash kat'ref (negleezeeya)?</i>
Does anyone here speak English?	<i>wash kayn shee hedd henna lee kay'ref negleezeeya?</i>

How do you say ... in Arabic?*keefash katgooloo ... bel'arabeeya?***What does this mean?***ash kat'anee hadhee?***I understand.***fhemt***I don't understand.***mafhemtsh***Please write it down for me.***ktebha leeya***Please show me on the map.***werri liya men l kharita 'afak***NUMBERS**

Arabic numerals are simple enough to learn and, unlike the written language, run from left to right across the page.

Due to the fact that it was colonised by France, Morocco uses standard Western numerical systems rather than those normally associated with Arab countries.

0	<i>sifr</i>
1	<i>wahed</i>
2	<i>jooj</i>
3	<i>tlata</i>
4	<i>reb'a</i>
5	<i>khamasa</i>
6	<i>setta</i>
7	<i>seb'a</i>
8	<i>tmenya</i>
9	<i>tes'ood</i>
10	<i>'ashra</i>
11	<i>hdaash</i>
12	<i>tnaash</i>
13	<i>teltaash</i>
14	<i>rba'taash</i>
15	<i>khamstaash</i>
16	<i>settaash</i>
17	<i>sbe'taash</i>
18	<i>tmentaash</i>
19	<i>tse'taash</i>
20	<i>'ashreen</i>
21	<i>wahed oo'ashreen</i>
22	<i>tnayn oo'ashreen</i>
30	<i>tlateen</i>
40	<i>reb'een</i>
50	<i>khamseen</i>
60	<i>setteen</i>
70	<i>seb'een</i>
80	<i>tmaneen</i>
90	<i>tes'een</i>
100	<i>mya</i>
200	<i>myatayn</i>

300	<i>teltmya</i>
400	<i>rba'mya</i>
1000	<i>alf</i>
2000	<i>alfayn</i>
3000	<i>telt alaf</i>

first	<i>loowel</i>
second	<i>tanee</i>
third	<i>talet</i>
fourth	<i>rabe'</i>
fifth	<i>khames</i>

PAPERWORK

address	<i>'unwaan'</i>
name	<i>smeeya</i>
nationality	<i>jenseeya</i>
passport	<i>pasbor</i>
visa	<i>t'sheera</i>

I'm here on ...	<i>jeet l Imaghreeb fe ...</i>
business	<i>felkhedma</i>
holiday	<i>fel'otla</i>

QUESTION WORDS

Who?	<i>shkoon?</i>
Why?	<i>'lash?</i>
How?	<i>keefash?</i>
Which?	<i>ashmen?</i>
Where?	<i>feen?</i>
Is there ...?	<i>wash kayn ...?</i>
What's that?	<i>ash dak shee?</i>

SHOPPING & SERVICES

Where is (the) ...?	<i>feen kayn ...?</i>
bank	<i>shee baanka</i>
bookshop	<i>shee mektaba</i>
barber	<i>shee hellaaq</i>
... embassy	<i>ssifaara dyal ...</i>
market	<i>souk</i>
pharmacy	<i>farmasyan</i>
police station	<i>lkoormeesareeya</i>
post office	<i>lboostaa</i>
restaurant	<i>ristura/mat'am</i>
souvenir shop	<i>baazaar</i>
travel agency	<i>wekaalet el aasfaar</i>

I want to change ...	<i>bgheet nserref ...</i>
some money	<i>shee floos</i>
travellers cheques	<i>shek seeyahee</i>

Can I pay by credit card?	<i>wash nkder nkhelles bel kart kredee?</i>
How much is it?	<i>bshhal?</i>
That's very expensive.	<i>ghalee bezzaf</i>

**I'm only looking.
I don't like it.
Can I look at it?**

*gheer kanshoof
ma'jebatneesh
wakhkha nshoofha?*

**I'd like to buy ...
Do you have ...?
stamps
a newspaper**

*bgheet nshree ...
wash 'andkom ...?
tnaber
jaarida*

**big
small
open
closed
enough**

*kabeer
sagheer
mehlood
masdood
kafee*

TIME & DATES

What time is it?

*shal fessa'a?
fuqash/eemta?*

When?

lyoom

today

tomorrow

ghedda

yesterday

lbareh

morning

fessbah

afternoon

fel'sheeya

evening

'sheeya

day

nhar

night

felleel

week/month/year

l'usbu'/shshhar/l'am

after

men b'd

on time

felweqt

early

bekree

late

m'ettel

quickly

bizerba/dgheeya

slowly

beshweeya

Monday

nhar letneen

Tuesday

nhar tlat

Wednesday

nhar larb'

Thursday

nhar lekhomees

Friday

nhar jjem'a

Saturday

nhar ssebt

Sunday

nhar lhedd

January

yanaayir

February

fibraayir

March

maaris

April

abreeel

May

maayu

June

yunyū

July

yulyū

August

aghustus/ghusht

September

sibtimbir/shebtenber

October

uktoobir

November

nufimbir/nu'enbir

December

disimbir/dijenbir

TRANSPORT Public Transport

**When does the ...
leave/arrive?** *wufuqash kaykhrej/kaywsul ...?*

boat

lbaboer

bus

ttubees

intercity bus

lkar

train

tran

plane

ttayyaara

**I'd like a ... ticket to
(Casablanca).**

*'afak bgheet wahed lwarka l
ddar lbayda (kasablanca)*

return

bash nemshee oo njee

1st class

ddaraja lloola

2nd class

ddaraja ttaneeya

Where is (the) ...?

feen kayn ...?

airport

mataar

bus station

mhetta dyal ttobeesat

ticket office

maktab lwerqa

train station

lagaar

What's the fare?

shhal taman lwarka?

**Which bus goes
to ...?**

ashmen kar ghaadee til ...?

**Is this bus going
to ...?**

wash had lkar ghaadee l ...?

**Please tell me when
we arrive at ...**

'afak eela wselna l ...

**I want to pay for one
place only.**

*goolhaleeya
bgheet nkhelles blaasaawaheda*

Stop here please.

wqef henna 'afak

Please wait for me.

tsennanee 'afak

Is this seat free?

wash had lblaasaa khaweeya?

street

zenqa

city

medeena

village

qerya

bus stop

blasa dyal ttobeesat

station

mhetta

number

raqem

ticket

werqa

Private Transport

Where can I hire a ...? *feen yimkin li nkri ...?*

bicycle

bshklit

camel

jmel

car

tumubeel

donkey

hmar

horse

'awd

How do I get to ...?

keefesh ghaadee nuwsul l ...?

Where's the next petrol station?

fin kayna shi bumba dyal lisans griba?

I'd like ... litres.*bgheet ... itru 'afak*

Please check the ...	<i>'afak shuf ...</i>
oil	<i>zzit</i>
water	<i>lma</i>

Can I park here? *wash naqder nwakel hna?***How long can I park here?** *sh-hal men wakel neqder nstatiun hna?***We need a mechanic.** *khesna wahed lmikanisyan***The car broke down at ...** *tumubeel khasra f ...***I have a flat tyre.** *'ndi pyasa fruida***TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN****I need a car with a child seat.***bgheet wahed ttomobeel belkorsee dyal draree sghar?***Are there facilities for babies?***wesh kayn tsheelat dyal draree sghar?***I'm travelling with my family.***ana msafer m'a l'alla dyalee***Is it suitable for children?***wesh mnaseb l draree sghar?***Are there any activities for children?***wesh kayn shee tansheet dyal draree sghar?***Are children allowed?***wesh mesmuh l draree?***Is there a playground nearby?***wesh kayn shee ssaha dyal ll'eb qreeba?***FRENCH****PRONUNCIATION**

The pronunciation guides included with each French phrase should help you in getting your message across.

ACCOMMODATION**Do you have any rooms available?***Est-ce que vous avez des chambres libres?**e-sker voo-za-vay day shom-brer lee-brer***I'd like (a) ...** *Je voudrais ...* *zher voo-dray ...***single room** *une chambre à un lit* *ewn shom-brer a un lee***double-bed room** *une chambre avec un grand lit* *ewn shom-brer a-vek un gron lee***twin room** *une chambre (with two beds) avec des lits jumeaux* *ewn shom-brer a-vek day lee zhe-w-mo***room with a bathroom** *une chambre avec une salle de bains* *ewn shom-brer a-vek ewn sal der bun***EMERGENCIES – FRENCH****Help!***Au secours!* *o skoor***I'm ill.***Je suis malade.* *zher swee ma-lad***I'm lost.***Je me suis égaré/e. (m/f)* *zhe me swee-zay-ga-raj***Leave me alone!***Fichez-moi la paix!* *fee-shay-mwa la pay***Call ...!***a doctor* *Appelez ...!* *a-play ...**un médecin* *un mayd-sun**the police* *la police* *la po-lees***How much is it ...?** *Quel est le prix ...?* *kel e ler pree ...***per night** *par nuit***per person** *par personne* *par nwee***CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS****Hello.** *Bonjour.* *bon-zhoor***Goodbye.** *Au revoir.* *o-rer-vwa***Yes.** *Oui.* *wee***No.** *Non.* *no***Please.** *S'il vous plaît.* *seel voo play***Thank you.** *Merci.* *mair-see***You're welcome.***Je vous en prie. (pol)* *zher voo-zon pree**De rien. (inf)* *der ree-en***Excuse me.***Excusez-moi.* *ek-skew-zay-mwa***Sorry. (forgive me)***Pardon.* *par-don***Do you speak English?***Parlez-vous anglais?* *par-lay-voo ong-lay***I don't understand.***Je ne comprends pas.* *zher ner kom-pron pa***What's your name?***Comment vous appelez-vous? (pol)* *ko-mon voo-za-pay-lay voo**Comment tu t'appelles? (inf)* *ko-mon tew ta-pel***My name is ...***Je m'appelle ...* *zher ma-pel ...***Where are you from?***De quel pays êtes-vous? (pol)* *der kel pay-ee et-voo**De quel pays es-tu? (inf)* *der kel pay-ee e-tew***I'm from ...** *Je viens de ...* *zher vyen der ...***I like ...** *J'aime ...* *zhem ...***I don't like ...** *Je n'aime pas ...* *zher nem pa ...***Just a minute.** *Une minute.* *ewn mee-newt*

DIRECTIONS**Where is ...?***Où est ...?* oo e ...**Can you show me (on the map)?***Pouvez-vous m'indiquer (sur la carte)?* poo-vay-voe mun-dee-kay (sewr la kart)**Go straight ahead.***Continuez tout droit.* kon-teen-way too drwa**Turn left.***Tournez à gauche.* toor-nay a gosh**Turn right.***Tournez à droite.* toor-nay a drwat**near (to)/far (from)***près (de)/loin (de)* pray (der)/lwun (der)**NUMBERS**

0	zero	zay-ro
1	un	un
2	deux	der
3	trois	trwa
4	quatre	ka-trer
5	cinq	sungk
6	six	sees
7	sept	set
8	huit	weet
9	neuf	nerf
10	dix	dees
11	onze	onz
12	douze	dooz
13	treize	trez
14	quatorze	ka-torz
15	quinze	kunz
16	seize	sez
17	dix-sept	dee-set
18	dix-huit	dee-zweet
19	dix-neuf	deez-nerf
20	vingt	vung
21	vingt et un	vung tay un
22	vingt-deux	vung-der
30	trente	tront
40	quarante	ka-ront
50	cinquante	sung-kont
60	soixante	swa-son
70	soixante-dix	swa-son-dees
80	quatre-vingts	ka-trer-vung
90	quatre-vingt-dix	ka-trer-vung-dees
100	cent	son
1000	mille	meel

SHOPPING & SERVICES**I'd like to buy ...***Je voudrais acheter ...* zher voo-dray ash-tay ...**How much is it?***C'est combien?* say kom-byun**It's too expensive.***C'est trop cher.* say tro shair**Can I pay by credit card?***Est-ce que je peux payer avec ma carte de crédit?* es-ker zher per pay-yay a-vek ma kart der kray-dee**I'm looking***Je cherche ...* zhe shersh ...**for ...**

a bank	<i>une banque</i>	ewn bonk
the hospital	<i>l'hôpital</i>	lo-pee-tal
an internet café	<i>un cybercafé du coin</i>	un see-bair-ka-fay
the market	<i>le marché</i>	ler mar-shay
the post office	<i>le bureau de poste</i>	ler bew-ro der post
a public toilet	<i>les toilettes</i>	lay twa-let

TIME & DATES**What time is it?***Quelle heure est-il?* kel er e til**It's (8) o'clock.***Il est (huit) heures.* il e (weet) er**It's half past ...***Il est (...) heures et demie.* il e (...) er e day-mee**in the morning***du matin* dew ma-tun**in the afternoon***de l'après-midi* der la-pray-mee-dee**in the evening***du soir* dew swar**Monday***lundi* lun-dee**Tuesday***mardi* mar-dee**Wednesday***mercredi* mair-krer-dee**Thursday***jeudi* zher-dee**Friday***vendredi* von-drer-dee**Saturday***samedi* sam-dee**Sunday***dimanche* dee-monsh**TRANSPORT****What time does***À quelle heure* a kel er**... leave/arrive?***part/arrive ...?* par/a-reev ...**boat***le bateau* ler ba-to**bus***le bus* ler bews**train***le train* ler trun**I want to go to ...***Je voudrais aller à ...* zher voo-dray a-lay a ...**the first***le premier (m)* ler prer-myay*la première (f)* la prer-myair**the last***le dernier (m)* ler dair-nyay*la dernière (f)* la dair-nyair**I'd like to hire***Je voudrais* zher voo-dray**a/an...***louer ...* loo-way ...**car***une voiture* ewn vwa-tewr**motorbike***une moto* ewn mo-to**bicycle***un vélo* un vay-lo

BERBER

There are three main dialects commonly delineated among the speakers of Berber, which in a certain sense also serve as loose lines of ethnic demarcation.

In the north, in the area centred on the Rif, the locals speak a dialect that has been called Riffian and is spoken as far south as Figuig on the Algerian frontier. The dialect that predominates in the Middle and High Atlas and the valleys leading into the Sahara goes by various names, including Braber or Amazigh.

More settled tribes of the High Atlas, Anti Atlas, Souss Valley and southwestern oases generally speak Tashelhit or Chleuh. The following phrases are a selection from the Tashelhit dialect, the one visitors are likely to find most useful.

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

Hello.	<i>la bes darik (m)</i>
	<i>la bes darim (f)</i>
Hello. (response)	<i>la bes</i>
Goodbye.	<i>akayoon arbee</i>
Please.	<i>barakalaufik</i>
Thank you.	<i>barakalaufik</i>
Yes.	<i>yah</i>
No.	<i>oho</i>
Excuse me.	<i>samhiy</i>
How are you?	<i>meneek antgeet?</i>
Fine, thank you.	<i>la bes, lhamdulah</i>
Good.	<i>eefulkee/eeshwa</i>
Bad.	<i>(khaib) eeghshne</i>
See you later.	<i>akanwes daghr</i>
Is there ...?	<i>ees eela ...?</i>
big	<i>mqorn</i>
small	<i>eemzee</i>
today	<i>(zig sbah) rass</i>
tomorrow	<i>(ghasad) aska</i>

yesterday	<i>eedgam</i>
Do you have ...?	<i>ees daroon ...?</i>
a lot	<i>bfef</i>
a little	<i>eemeek</i>
food	<i>teeremt</i>
mule	<i>aserdon</i>
somewhere to sleep	<i>kra lblast mahengane</i>
water	<i>arman</i>
How much is it?	<i>minshk aysker?</i>
no good	<i>oor eefulkee</i>
too expensive	<i>eeghla</i>
Give me ...	<i>fkyy ...</i>
I want ...	<i>reegh ...</i>

NUMBERS

1	<i>yen</i>
2	<i>seen</i>
3	<i>krad</i>
4	<i>koz</i>
5	<i>smoos</i>
6	<i>sddes</i>
7	<i>sa</i>
8	<i>tem</i>
9	<i>tza</i>
10	<i>mrawet</i>
11	<i>yen d mrawet</i>
12	<i>seen d mrawet</i>
20	<i>ashreent</i>
21	<i>ashreent d yen d mrawet</i>
22	<i>ashreent d seen d mrawet</i>
30	<i>ashreent d mrawet</i>
40	<i>snet id ashreent</i>
50	<i>snet id ashreent d mrawet</i>
100	<i>smoost id ashreent/meeya</i>

TRANSPORT & DIRECTIONS

I want to go to ...	<i>addowghs ...</i>
Where is (the) ...?	<i>mani gheela ...?</i>
village	<i>doorwar</i>
river	<i>aseef</i>
mountain	<i>adrar</i>
the pass	<i>tizee</i>
Is it near/far?	<i>ees eequareb/yagoog?</i>
straight	<i>neeshan</i>
to the right	<i>fofasee</i>
to the left	<i>fozelmad</i>



Also available from Lonely Planet:
Moroccan Arabic Phrasebook

Glossary

This glossary is a list of Arabic (A), Berber (B), French (F) and Spanish (S) terms that are used throughout this guide. For a list of trekking terms, see *Words To Trek By*, p422. For food-related terms see *Eat Your Words*, p88.

agadir (B) – fortified communal granary

'ain (A) – water source, spring

ait (B) – family (of), often precedes tribal and town names

Al-Andalus – Muslim Spain and Portugal

Alawite – hereditary dynasty that has ruled Morocco since the late 17th century

Allah (A) – God

Almohads – puritanical Muslim group (1147–1269), originally Berber, that arose in response to the corrupt Almoravid dynasty

Almoravids – Muslim group (1054–1147) that ruled Spain and the Maghreb

assif (A) – watercourse, river

bab (A) – gate

babouches (F) – traditional leather slippers

banu (A) – see *beni*

baraka (A) – divine blessing or favour

Barbary – European term used to describe the North African coast from the 16th to the 19th centuries

ben (A) – (or *ibn*) son of

bendir (B) – single-headed Berber drum

beni (A) – 'sons of', often precedes tribal name (also *banu*)

Berbers – indigenous inhabitants of North Africa

bidonville (F) – slum area, especially in Casablanca

borj (A) – fort (literally, 'tower')

brigade touristique (F) – tourist police

bureau de guide (F) – guides' office

burnous (A) – warm woollen cloak with hood

caliph – successor of Mohammed; ruler of the Islamic world

calle (S) – street

camarade (F) – West-African migrant

camionette (F) – minivan or pick-up truck

capitol – main temple of Roman town, usually situated in the forum

caravanserai – large merchants' inn enclosing a courtyard, providing accommodation and a marketplace (see also *funduq*)

casa de huéspedes (S) – guest house

chergui (A) – dry, easterly desert wind

Compagnie de Transports Marocaine – CTM; national bus company

corniche (F) – coastal road

corsair – 18th-century pirate based at Salé

dar (A) – traditional town house with internal courtyard

Délégation Régionale du Tourisme – tourist office

derb (A) – lane or narrow street

douar (A) – generally used for 'village' in the High Atlas

douche (F) – public showers (see *hammam*)

Eaux et Forêts – government ministry responsible for national parks

eid (A) – feast

Ensemble Artisanal – government handicraft shop

erg (A) – sand dunes

fantasia (S) – military exercise featuring a cavalry charge, now performed for tourists

Fatimids – Muslim dynasty that rose to prominence in the 10th century

faux guides (F) – unofficial or informal guides

foum (A) – usually mouth of a river or valley (from Arabic for 'mouth')

frontera (S) – border

funduq (A) – caravanserai (often used to mean 'hotel')

gîte, gîte d'étape (F) – trekkers' hostel, sometimes a home stay

gardiens de voitures (F) – car-park attendants

gare routière (F) – bus station

ghassoul (A) – type of clay mixed with herbs, dried roses and lavender used in hammams for removing grease and washing hair

glaoua (A) – rug with combination of flat weave and deep fluffy pile (also *zanafi*)

Gnaoua – bluesy Moroccan musical form that began with freed slaves in Marrakesh and Essaouira

grand taxi (F) – (long-distance) shared taxi

haj (A) – pilgrimage to Mecca, hence 'haji' or 'hajja', a male or female who has made the pilgrimage

halqa (A) – street theatre

hammada (A) – stony desert

hammam (A) – Turkish-style bathhouse with sauna and massage, also known by the French word *bain* (bath) or *bain maure* (Moorish bath)

hanbel (A) – see *kilim*

haram (A) – literally ‘forbidden’, the word is sometimes used to denote a sacred or forbidden area, such as the prayer room of a mosque

Hejira – flight of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina in AD 622; the first year of the Islamic calendar

ibn (A) – son of (see also *ben*)

Idrissids – Moroccan dynasty that established a stable state in northern Morocco in the 9th century

iftar (A) – breaking of the fast at sundown during Ramadan; breakfast (also ‘*ftur*’)

imam (A) – Muslim cleric

Interzone – name coined by author William Burroughs for the period 1923–56, when Tangier was controlled by nine countries

irifi (A) – dry, desert wind, also called *chergui*

jami’ (A) – Friday mosque (also *djema, jema, and jamaa*)

jebel (A) – hill, mountain (sometimes *djebel* in former French possessions)

jedid (A) – new (sometimes spelled *jidid*)

jellaba (A) – popular flowing garment; men’s jellabas are usually made from cotton or wool, while women’s come in light synthetic fabrics

kasbah (A) – fort, citadel; often also the administrative centre (also *qasba*)

khutba – Friday sermon preached by the imam of a mosque

kif (A) – marijuana

kilim (A) – flat-woven blankets or floor coverings (also *hanbel*)

koubba (A) – sanctuary or shrine (see also *marabout*)

ksar (A) – fort or fortified stronghold (plural *ksour*)

Maghreb (A) – (literally ‘west’) area covered by Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya

maison d’hôtes (F) – guest house, often a restored traditional Moroccan house

majoun (A) – sticky paste made of crushed seeds of the marijuana plant

marabout – holy man or saint; also often used to describe the mausoleums of these men

masjid (A) – another name for a mosque, particularly in a *medersa* (see also *jami’*)

mechouar (A) – royal assembly place

medersa (A) – college for teaching theology, law, Arabic literature and grammar (also called *madrasa*)

medina (A) – old city; used to describe the old Arab parts of modern towns and cities

mellah (A) – Jewish quarter of the medina

mendeel (A) – brightly coloured striped cloth

Merenids (A) – Moroccan dynasty (1269–1465), responsible for the construction of many of Morocco’s *medersas*

mihrab (A) – prayer niche in the wall of a mosque indicating the direction of Mecca (the *qibla*)

minbar (A) – pulpit in mosque; the imam delivers the sermon from one of the lower steps because the Prophet preached from the top step

moulay (A) – ruler

Mouloud – Islamic festival period celebrating the birth of the Prophet

mousslem (A) – pilgrimage to *marabout* tomb; festival in honour of a *marabout*

muezzin (A) – mosque official who sings the call to prayer from the minaret

muqarna (A) – decorative plasterwork

musée (F) – museum

ONMT – Office National Marocain du Tourisme, national tourist body, sometimes called Délégation Régionale du Tourisme

ordinaire (F) – less comfortable train, slightly slower than a *rapide*

oued (A) – riverbed, often dry (sometimes *wad* or *wadi*)

oulad (A) – sons (of), often precedes tribal or town name

palais de justice (F) – law court

palmeraie (F) – palm grove

pastilla – a rich, savoury-sweet chicken or pigeon pie made with fine pastry; a dish of layered pastry with cinnamon and almonds served as dessert at banquets

pasha – high official in Ottoman Empire (also *pacha*)

pensiónes (S) – guest house

petit taxi (F) – local taxi

pisé (F) – building material made of sun-dried clay or mud

piste (F) – unsealed tracks, often requiring 4WD vehicles

place (F) – square, plaza

plage (F) – beach

plazas de soberanía (S) – ‘Places of sovereignty’, the name given to the Spanish possessions in North Africa.

Polisariou – Western Sahara rebel group

pressing (F) – laundry

Prophet (Mohammed), the – founder of Islam, who lived between AD 570 and AD 632

qaïd (A) – local chief, loose equivalent of mayor in some parts of Morocco (also *caïd*)

qibla (A) – the direction of Mecca, indicated by a *mihrab*

qissaria (A) – covered market sometimes forming the commercial centre of a medina

Quran – sacred book of Islam

Ramadan (A) – ninth month of the Muslim year, a period of fasting

rapide (F) – type of train more comfortable and slightly faster than an *ordinaire*

Reconquista (S) – the Christian reconquest of the Iberian peninsula from the Moors

refuge (F) – mountain hut, basic hikers' shelter

riad (A) – traditional town house set around an internal garden

ribat (A) – combined monastery and fort

Saadians – Moroccan dynasty that ruled in the 16th century

sharia (A) – street

sharia'a (A) – Islamic law

shedwi (A) – flat-woven rug of black and white bands

sherif (A) – descendant of the Prophet

Shiites – one of two main Islamic sects, formed by those who believed the true imams were descended from the Prophet's son-in-law Ali (see also Sunnis)

sidi (A) – honorific (equivalent to 'Mr'; also *si*)

skala (A) – fortress

ski randonnée (F) – ski trekking

souq hebdomadaire (F/A) – weekly market

souq (A) – market

Sufism – mystical strand of Islam that emphasises communion with God through inner attitude

Sunnis – one of two main Islamic sects, derived from followers of the Umayyad caliphate (see also Shiites)

Syndicat d'Initiative (F) – government-run tourist office

tabac (F) – tobacconist and newsagency

tadelakt (A) – waterproof lime plaster mixed with pigments and polished with a stone to give it a smooth, lustrous finish, originally used for the walls of hammams but now a favourite of interior designers

tariq (A) – road, avenue

téléboutique (F) – privately operated telephone service

télécarte (F) – phonocard

terz Fezzi (A) – intricate geometric embroidery originating in Fès

tizi (B) – mountain pass

Tuareg – nomadic Berbers of the Sahara, also known as the Blue Men because of their indigo-dyed robes

ville nouvelle (F) – new city; town built by the French alongside existing towns

vizier – another term for a provincial governor in Ottoman Empire, or adviser to the sultan in Morocco

wali (A) – Islamic holy man or saint

Wattasids – Moroccan dynasty (mid-15th to mid-16th centuries)

zawiya (A) – religious fraternity based around a *marabout*; location of the fraternity (also *zaouia*)

zellij (A) – ceramic tilework used to decorate buildings

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