

Introduction	2	Roads.....	9
How Morocco “Discovered” Us	2	Buses	10
Things to Arrange Before You Go	2	Taxis	10
Credit	2	Walking	10
Insurance	3	Health & Hygiene	11
Getting Packed	3	Diseases (according to the CDC)	11
What to Pack	3	Vaccines	12
Official Documents.....	3	To stay healthy, do...	12
Luggage.....	3	To stay healthy, don’t	12
Clothing.....	3	After you return home:.....	12
Clothing Accessories	3	Food	13
Travel Accessories	3	Prevention of Dehydration and Heat Stroke ..	13
Optional Accessories	4	Water	13
What not to Pack	4	Toilets	13
A Few Things to Pack AND Not Pack	4	Safety	13
Re-supply or items left behind	5	How to Avoid Legal Difficulties	14
Procedures at airports	5	Drug Violations.....	14
Before the Airport.....	5	Photography	14
At the Airport.....	5	Purchasing Antiques.....	14
Moroccan Passport Control & Customs	5	Terrorism	14
Entry Requirements	5	Specific to Morocco	15
Entering Morocco	5	A woman or child.....	15
Exiting Morocco	6	The foreign woman	15
Outside the Airport	6	Other common crimes	15
Currency	7	ASSISTANCE ABROAD	16
The Dirham	7	Culture, Clothing, & Language	16
Travelers’ Checks	7	People and Religion	16
ATM’s	7	Culture	16
Credit Cards	7	Clothing & Shoes	17
Dollars and Euros	7	Language	17
Getting Around, Moroccan Style	8	Beggars & Alms giving	17
Distances	8	Children	18
Ferries	8	Typical Moroccan foods	18
Planes	8	Shopping	18
Trains	8	Gifts & Tips	18
Driving	8		
Cars	8		
Gas	9		
Road Signs	9		
Scooter Guides.....	9		

Introduction

There is a place in the world where the modern and medieval meet each morning to embrace like old friends and stroll the ancient streets with one foot striding into the future while keeping one firmly planted in the past. To the locals, it's Al Magreb, to the rest of the world, it's known as Morocco.

To help you make the most of your experience, we've put some helpful hints and hard won advice into one more or less accurate guide, [SaharaTrek's Practical Guide to Morocco](#). We call it our practical guide because we've skipped a lot of the extraneous information, minor sites filled with more adjectives than they're worth, and the usual Chamber of Commerce propaganda. What we've strived to produce is an honest look at Morocco from an outsiders perspective, because lets face it, if you can leave anytime you want, you're really just a tourist no matter how long you're there. In this pamphlet we've laid-out some of the hard-won pearls of wisdom about Morocco, the good, the bad, and the unusual. We've arranged this guide in the order which you'll probably encounter Morocco on one of our tours, but it is also a great reference if you're going it on your own.

How Morocco "Discovered" Us

Our adventures in Morocco started in 1999 when we were standing on the southern most point of Gibraltar looking south at what seemed to be an unusually low formation of clouds. "That's Africa", said Ted. "They're clouds," said Luiza. So faster then you can say seasick we drove onto a ferry in Algeciras, Spain, and arrived in Ceuta (Spanish Morocco). For the next three weeks we experienced the best and worst of Morocco. We were chased by two black Mercedes outside of Chefchaouen (drug runners), had to bribe cops at the ever present check-points, and had our share of faux guides and kamikaze scooter guides to deal with. But we also experienced what real Moroccan hospitality was. Along the way we saw ancient cities built with exquisite artistry, and breathtaking sites of nature. Everyone that goes to Morocco and is open to the experience will find something that will linger in their memory, a

perfect moment as it were. That moment discovered us while we were sitting on a sand dune in the Sahara desert, watching the wind move the sand and the colors change with each minute as the sun crossed the sky. It was an epiphany, a moment of realization that no matter how big your problems are to you, they are just another grain of sand, carried along by the wind just as it has for thousands of years before, and will for a thousand years after. It was a calming moment, a happy place to go in your mind when life gets tougher then usual. We figured that there's a lot of people in the world that needed a moment like that, and if something is worth doing, well, it's usually worth doing for money. So started SaharaTrek.

The first and foremost lesson to learn from this guide is to approach Morocco as an adventure. After all, if everything went perfectly all the time, it wouldn't be called Morocco. Bring with you a sense of wonder, a sense of humor, and always expect the unexpected along with an occasional flat tire. The rewards will be worth it. As you travel realize that you are walking in the footprints of history. Before you came camel caravans crossing the Sahara carrying salt and slaves. The French Foreign Legion built their reputation here as a motley band of thieves, rogues, cutthroats, and adventurers, living on the edge of the world in constant danger of attack by enemies and the elements. Every movie or book ever written about this exotic location comes rushing to life each morning with the call to prayer. To really enjoy it, you've got to be ready for it and never be afraid to ask questions.

Things to Arrange Before You Go

Credit

Make a note of the credit limit on each credit card that you bring. Make certain not to charge over that amount on your trip. In some countries, Americans have been arrested for innocently exceeding their credit limit. Ask your credit card company how to report the loss of your card from abroad. 800 numbers do not work from abroad, but your company should have a number that you can call while you are overseas.

Insurance

Find out if your personal property insurance covers you for loss or theft abroad. More importantly, check on whether your health insurance covers you abroad. Medicare and Medicaid do not provide payment for medical care outside the U.S. Even if your health insurance will reimburse you for medical care that you pay for abroad, normal health insurance does not pay for medical evacuation from a remote area or from a country where medical facilities are inadequate. Consider purchasing one of the short-term health and emergency assistance policies designed for travelers. Also, make sure that the plan you purchase includes medical evacuation in the event of an accident or serious illness.

Getting Packed

A basic rule of thumb that we always try to live by is never pack more than you can run with.

What to Pack

Official Documents

- Valid passport
- Airline tickets
- If you're driving yourself, you'll need your state drivers license and an international drivers license (available from AAA)
- Pack an extra set of passport photos along with a photocopy of your passport information page to make replacement of your passport easier in the event it is lost or stolen.

Luggage

- Duffel bag (wheels and retractable handle are fine), sturdy and large enough to hold clothing and gear
- Small daypack to carry gear and water while hiking, touring, or camping
- Passport security pouch or belt. One of the safest places to carry valuables is in a pouch or money belt worn under your clothing. We always recommend the neck pouch, since with a belt you have to get almost undressed to get at your money.
- Put your name, address and telephone numbers inside and outside of each piece of luggage. Use covered luggage tags to avoid casual observation of your identity

or nationality. Use locks approved by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to lock your luggage.

Clothing

- T-shirts of moisture wicking material
- Long-sleeved shirt of cotton or natural fibers, *avoid moisture wicking materials*. We recommend long clothing for 3 reasons:
 - Keeping your skin covered helps you to avoid a sunburn
 - You want to keep as much of your body's moisture from evaporating as possible
 - Wearing shorts or tank-tops (uncovered by a long-sleeved shirt) is frowned on by the Moroccan culture.
- Long hiking pants, for the same reasons as listed above, *leave your shorts at home*
- Mid-weight fleece or synthetic top, it can get cool in the desert at night
- Fast drying underwear
- Hiking socks. We prefer Cool-Max socks with our shoes or boots. They wick away moisture, keeping your feet dryer and cooler while preventing blisters.

Clothing Accessories

- Wide-brimmed hat with a chinstrap to keep it on when it gets windy. Be sure that the hat shades your face, ears and neck. Of all the gear we recommend, a hat is the most important tool in keeping yourself well under the Moroccan sun.
- Bandana or scarf
- Footwear
- Hiking boots, lightweight, broken in for desert or mountain use
- Closed toe walking shoes for city touring

Travel Accessories

- Electrical plug adapter (Morocco runs on 220v)
- Flashlight with extra batteries/bulb
- Pocket knife or pocket tool (remember to pack it in your checked luggage)
- Sports bottle or hydration system
- Towel
- Wrap-around sunglasses or desert goggles to keep the sun and sand out.
- Oil-Free Sunscreen and lip balm of SPF 30 or greater. Oil-free is a better choice,

especially when the wind starts to blow, because with the oily sunscreen the sand sticks to you.

- Insect repellent containing DEET
- Personal first-aid kit
- Toiletry kit
- Hand sanitizer gel (Purell, Germ-X, etc.)
- Toilet Paper to carry with you
- Favorite energy snacks and drink mixes. Gatorade powder that you can get from the grocery store and/or Oral Re-hydration Salts (ORS's), available at drug stores are especially useful. A little preventative effort to keep yourself well in the Sahara goes a long way.
- Bottle of Aspirin, a great way to help beat the heat and the headache
- Dramamine or generic motion-sickness pills. They'll come in very handy on the drive over the mountain passes.
- Over-the-counter anti-diarrhea medicine
- Eye drops if you have sensitive eyes or they dry out easily
- If you wear glasses, pack an extra pair in your carry-on luggage
- Bring any medicines you need in your carry-on luggage. To avoid problems when passing through customs, keep medicines in their original, labeled containers.
- Bring copies of your prescriptions and the generic names for the drugs that you're carrying. If a medication is unusual or contains narcotics, carry a letter from your doctor attesting to your need to take the drug. If you have any doubt about the legality of carrying a certain drug into a country, consult the embassy or consulate of that country first.
- For the ladies: feminine hygiene products

Optional Accessories

- Telephone calling card is a convenient way of keeping in touch. If you have one, verify that you can use it from your overseas location(s). Find out your access number before you go.
- Camera, film, and batteries
- Reading and writing materials
([Recommendations](#))
- Several Ziploc plastic bags
- Laundry powder for hand washing

- Watch with alarm or travel clock with alarm feature for early morning flights or tours
- Baby Wipes/Moist towelettes to freshen-up when washing water is hard to come by or you're on the go.

What not to Pack

Don't bring anything you would hate to lose.

Leave at home:

- Valuable or expensive-looking jewelry.
- Irreplaceable family objects.
- All unnecessary credit cards.
- Social Security card, library cards, and similar items you may routinely carry in your wallet.
- A copy of your itinerary with family or friends at home in case they need to contact you in an emergency.

A Few Things to Pack AND Not Pack

Make two photocopies of your passport identification page, airline tickets, driver's license and the credit cards that you plan to bring with you. Leave one photocopy of this data with family or friends at home; pack the other in a place separate from where you carry your valuables.

Leave a copy of the serial numbers of your travelers' checks with a friend or relative at home. Carry your copy with you in a separate place and, as you cash the checks, cross them off the list.

Safety Hint: *To avoid being a target, dress conservatively. Don't wear expensive looking jewelry. A flashy wardrobe or one that is too casual can mark you as a tourist. As much as possible, avoid the appearance of affluence. Always try to travel light, never more than you can run with. You can move more quickly and will be more likely to have a free hand. You will also be less tired and less likely to set your luggage down, leaving it unattended. Carry the minimum amount of valuables necessary for your trip and plan a place or places to conceal them. When you carry your passport, cash and credit cards on your person, you may wish to conceal them in several places rather than putting them all in one wallet or pouch. Avoid handbags, fanny packs and outside pockets that*

are easy targets for thieves. Inside pockets and a sturdy shoulder bag with the strap worn across your chest are somewhat safer.

Re-supply or items left behind

Morocco is getting a little easier each day, especially if you've forgotten to pack something. Every major city (Casablanca, Fez, Marrakech, Agadir, etc.) now has a super market filled with products that you won't find in the souk or local corner store in Morocco. But once you're in rural areas forget about finding any more than the basics of Moroccan life.

Procedures at airports

If you're coming to Morocco from the USA, chances are good that you're flying Royal Air Maroc, and if you are, then you're leaving from JFK, New York. Currently Royal Air Maroc recommends that you check in at least 3 hours prior to departure. It may seem excessive, but don't forget that both you and your luggage have to go through [security](#). When you check your bags in New York, make sure they are tagged all the way to your final destination (Casablanca = CMN, Marrakech = RAK, Ouarzazate = OZZ, Fez = FEZ, Agadir = AGA). From JFK to Casablanca is about 7 hours, enjoy the flight. You might want to bring along some snacks and bottled water for the flight. A nice new addition to Royal Air Maroc international flights is complementary alcohol but the meals and service are still not fully up to Euro/American standards.

Before the Airport

- Do NOT pack or bring prohibited items to the airport. Read the [Permitted and Prohibited Items list](#) provided by TSA.
- Place valuables such as jewelry, cash, and electronics in carry-on baggage only. Tape your business card to the bottom of your laptop.
- Avoid wearing thick-soled [shoes](#), clothing, jewelry, and accessories that contain metal. Metal items may set off the alarm on the metal detector.
- Do not pack wrapped gifts and do not bring wrapped gifts to the checkpoint. TSA may have to unwrap packages for security reasons.

- Put all undeveloped [film and cameras](#) with film *in your carry-on baggage*. Checked baggage screening equipment will damage undeveloped film.
- If you wish to lock your baggage, use a [TSA recognized lock](#).
- Do not bring [lighters or prohibited matches](#) to the airport.

At the Airport

- Keep your airline-boarding pass and government-issued photo ID for each adult traveler available until you exit the security checkpoint.
- Place the following items **IN** your carry-on baggage prior to entering the screening checkpoint:
 - Mobile phones
 - Keys
 - Loose change
 - Money clips
 - PDA's
 - Large amounts of jewelry
 - Metal hair decorations
 - Large belt buckles
- Take your laptop and video cameras with cassettes **OUT** of their cases
- Take **OFF** your outer coat, suit coat, jacket, or blazer.

Moroccan Passport Control & Customs

Entry Requirements

Travelers to Morocco must have a valid passport. Visas are not required for American tourists traveling within Morocco for fewer than 90 days. For visits of more than 90 days, Americans are required to apply for an extension (with a valid reason for the extension of stay.) There are no required vaccines to enter Morocco

Entering Morocco

About 1 hour before landing in Casablanca on the flight from JFK, you'll be given a Moroccan Embarkation / Disembarkation form that must be filled out (passport number, name, address, locations visited, etc.) and presented to Moroccan passport control. Before you depart Morocco, you'll have to fill out the form again and present it to passport control before you're allowed to approach the departure gate. It is

simple to fill out: Last Name, Maiden Name, First Name, Place of Birth, Nationality, Occupation, Passport Number, and date the passport was issued on. "In" refers to where it was issued. If you have a newer passport there won't be an issuing office listed. "Going To" can be the city where the ground portion of your tour begins and "Coming From" New York. In the occupation field, avoid "journalist."

بطاقة ركوب / نزول	
CARTE EMBARQUEMENT / DEBARQUEMENT	
المخطوط الملكية المغربية	
royal air maroc	
EMBARKATION / DISEMBARKATION CARD	
M. / Mr	
1 Mme / Mrs	1 الإسم العائلي
Miss / Miss	Nom / Surname
	الإسم قبل الزواج
	Nom du jeune fille / Maiden name
	الإسم الخاص
	Prénom / Given name
2 Date de naissance	2 تاريخ الميلاد
Date of birth	J / D M / M A / Y
3 Lieu de naissance	3 محل الميلاد
Place of birth	
4 Nationalité	4 الجنسية
Nationality	
5 N° Passeport	5 رقم الجواز
Passport n°	
6 Délivré le	6 تاريخ تسليمه
On	
7 A	7 محل تسليمه
in	
8 Profession	8 المهنة
Occupation	
9 Domicile Habituel	9 العنوان الرسمي
Permanent address	
10 Destination / Provenance	10 متوجه إلى / قادم من
Going to / Coming from	
Reservé à l'administration / For Official use / مخصص للإدارة	
Réf. Imp. 302.211.050	

Upon stepping off the plane in Casablanca from JFK you'll either go through passport control, get your bag and then through customs to exit to the city or you'll get off the plane and connect to your next flight. If Casablanca is the start of your tour, then your first stop will be passport control where you'll present your Morocco entry form along with your passport. Don't expect many smiling faces at passport control or

lighting fast processing. Do make sure the entry stamp in your passport is clear and you know what page it's on. If it's not clearly legible then there can be a delay and a "fine" to help fix things up quickly when exiting Morocco. You'll then get your luggage and head to customs. Keep your passport handy still, they'll probably check it again. The faster you get to customs line the better, every Moroccan coming of the flight will have 6 or 7 bags loaded with everything from stereos to Nikes, all of which will be inspected and taxed accordingly by DUWAN (Moroccan Customs).

If you've got a connecting flight you should already have received your boarding pass when you checked in at New York, so head to your gate (the gate calls are very difficult to hear) and make sure you're at the right gate. Some gates also have an A, B, and C designation. The airport isn't that big, but there are a few options for food and shopping and they accept credit cards. When checking in at the airport for your trip home your bags will be tagged for JFK.

Exiting Morocco

Every carry-on bag is hand searched, so don't wrap anything, a good idea is to keep your stuff in Space Bags, this will make inspections go faster and keep your gear from being strewn about the checkpoint.

If you're coming from Fez or Ouarzazate, passport control may or may not stamp your passport with a Moroccan Sortie (exit) stamp. You'll still need one to get out of the country, so when you arrive at Casablanca, just head to the passport control booths (located inside the secure area of the airport), and they'll stamp it there.

Outside the Airport

You're now firmly attached to terra firma, so now what? Regardless of the city you've arrived at, the scene outside is exactly the same. As soon as you clear customs, and enter the terminal, you'll be mixed in with Moroccan families, tour bus groups, chauffeurs, and hustlers looking to give you a ride (or take you for a ride as it may be). If you're traveling with SaharaTrek, just look for our logo and/or your name and everything is taken care of from then on. If

you're going it on your own, this is a perfect time for the next lesson.

Currency

You can't make the scene if you don't have the green, which is more like a kaleidoscope when you're talking about money in Morocco. Right outside of the international arrivals gate at Casablanca is a money exchange desk. They don't currently have an ATM there, but the exchange windows are usually open and the rates are published. If you want to buy anything in Casablanca, it's strictly Dirhams and credit cards, they don't get enough tourism that shopkeepers will convert from other currencies. At other cities you'll have to get out of the airport and into the city to find an exchange desk which are at most banks.



The Dirham

The national currency of Morocco is the dirham (dh), which is divided into 100 centimes. It is illegal to export the dirham from Morocco and no banks outside of Morocco will exchange it. Exchange rates are fixed by the Moroccan



government based on the Euro and can vary between 8.2dh to 11.5dh per \$1 US, usually averaging around 10dh ([current exchange rate indications](#)). When changing money, always try to get small bills and coins. They are very useful as many vendors have difficulty making change for even the equivalent of \$10 or \$20. You may also want to have small change for tipping, taxi rides, alms giving, etc. After all our time in Morocco we've never come across any black market exchange, so don't go looking for one.

Travelers' Checks

Travelers' checks are safe but difficult and time consuming to exchange. Banks or large hotels will exchange them and some require the bearer to present both the check and the receipt along with passport.

ATM's

Available in nearly every city with a bank and most American bankcards on the Cirrus, Novus, and MasterCard or Visa system may be used to withdraw local currency on an account in the United States. ATM fees vary per transaction depending on your bank and the Moroccan bank used. Check with your bank about fees for international transactions before you go and also let them know that you'll be using your card in Morocco.

Credit Cards

Aren't common in rural areas and are accepted mostly by urban shopkeepers, restaurants and hotels. The rules are different in Morocco, so expect the shopkeeper to pass the credit card processing fee on to you and require a minimum purchase. Depending on the card you use, you will also pay an additional fee to your credit card company for foreign purchases. Be sure to let your credit card company know you'll be using your card in Morocco.

Dollars and Euros

Hard currency is a great thing to carry. They are easy to use, convenient to exchange, and can often be used instead of the Dirham. However, they're also the favorite targets for pickpockets.

Safety Hint: To avoid carrying large amounts of cash, change your travelers' checks or use your ATM card only as you need currency. Countersign travelers' checks only in front of the person who will cash them. Do not flash large amounts of money when paying a bill. Make sure your credit card is returned to you after each transaction. Deal only with authorized agents when you exchange money, buy airline tickets or purchase souvenirs. Do not change money on the black market. If your possessions are lost or stolen, report the loss immediately to the local police. Keep a copy of the police report for insurance claims and as an explanation of

your plight. After reporting missing items to the police, report the loss or theft of: travelers' checks to the nearest agent of the issuing company, credit cards to the issuing company, airline tickets to the airline or travel agent, passport to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Getting Around, Moroccan Style

So far you've managed to get on the plane, off the plane, through customs and into a city. You've got a fist full of dirham and someplace to go so lets hit the road! If only it were that easy.

Distances

The distances are deceiving when looking at a road map of Morocco. Although the country is about the size of California, you'll need to plan on traveling at least a full day between major destinations whether it's by car, train, or plane. The transportation options between major cities are plentiful and the roads are in good condition. The second you go off the main routes, the condition of the roads are the same you'll find in most developing nations, indeed, if they can even be called roads at all.

Ferries

The ferries run from Europe to either Spanish Ceuta or Tangier. Currently there is no ferry service between Morocco and the Canaries. Tickets can be bought at the ferry terminal on either side of the Straights of Gibraltar and there are many trips each day, but the weather can turn bad in a hurry and they're not shy about canceling a run. Going into Europe from Morocco is always fun as European authorities hassle everyone looking for illegals trying to sneak in and Euro-Hippies trying to bring back Moroccan hashish.

Planes

[Royal Air Maroc](#) has a pretty tight hold on all air travel between Moroccan cities. Although flight times between the cities are short, take a few more factors into consideration before planning on hoping around Morocco by plane. First, it'll be expensive, over \$100 between each city. Second thing to consider is that all flights hub in and out of Casablanca (just like the trains), so

you won't be able to get a direct flight between other cities. Finally, by the time you check in early, fly, wait for you next flight, fly, and arrive, you would have spent the time same amount of time as you would have on a transfer by car or train.

Trains

The Moroccan train system ([ONCF](#)) is limited in destinations, but easily the same quality as any in Europe and has a good safety record. Inexpensive (even for first class), clean, plentiful, and though sometimes crowded, are comfortable and generally on time which make them a great way to get between major cities in Morocco. The options are being cramped in a car, bored on a bus, or paying through the nose for a flight. Just like the planes, all the railroads in Morocco hub in and out of Casablanca. If you only want to see the major cities (Casablanca, Marrakech, Fez, Meknes, Tangier, and Rabat) then the train will get you there easily. If you want to get off the beaten path or south of the Atlas, then the train just won't do it.

Safety Hint: *Trains in Morocco are generally crime-free and have good safety records; buses are not.*

Driving

Cars

Almost every rental car in Morocco will have a manual transmission and the most common and most affordable is the Peugeot Junior (similar to a Geo Metro). The cars are treated roughly and it's not uncommon to have a rental car break down. Unless you rent from a major chain, rental cars usually need to be returned to the place they were rented. It's always best to make your rental car reservations well in advance outside of Morocco. Making arrangements for a rental car once inside Morocco will usually result in double the normal rates. You'll be given a document packet, make sure you know where it is, you'll have to present it to the police at every roadblock and checkpoint.

Safety Hint: *When you rent a car, don't go for the exotic; choose a type commonly available locally. Where possible, ask that markings that identify it as a rental car be removed. Make certain it is in good repair. If available, choose a car with universal door locks and power*

windows, features that give the driver better control of access to the car. An air conditioner, when available, is also a safety feature, allowing you to drive with windows closed. Thieves can and do snatch purses through open windows of moving cars

Gas

The cost of gas is usually the same as in Europe (about \$4 a gallon). As a rule, never let your car run under 1/4 of a tank in rural areas because gas stations are few and far apart in rural areas. Many gas stations take credit cards, but you will still encounter ones that do not. So have lots of Dirham set aside just for gas. Those gas stations don't usually take dollars either. Also, self-serve gas stations in Morocco are still pretty much unheard of, so keep a couple dirham to tip the attendant.

Road Signs

There are three kinds of road signs. The freestanding ones at major road intersections will point you in the direction of the next city. So find out which cities are along the route you're taking and head for them. The second are white painted little brick pillars along the side of the road with the name of a large city and the distance to it in kilometers. Known as "little white lies" the distances marked on them are iffy, but they at least tell you you're on the right track. The third kind, pictogram signs, follows the European standards, which we have yet to figure out. The speed limit is 100kph in rural areas and 40 in the cities, unless there's a red line through it, which means it isn't and is indeed something else. In which case, good luck! Either way, there's usually a policeman hiding in the bushes nearby who will, for a small fee, be happy to tell you how fast you were going and how fast you were supposed to be going, at least if you understood Arabic.

Maps

The best map to get you from point to point is the Michelin Map of Morocco #959. Once you're in the city, good luck! There are no real street signs or directional signs to help you out. Regardless of how good your French is, asking someone for directions rarely yields any results.

Police

Moroccan police officers often pull over drivers for "inspection" within the city and on highways. If you're not stopped while driving, you'll get to stop for police checkpoints, which you'll

encounter every couple of hours. Slow for all of them. If they want you to stop, the police will signal you to do so. Have your car's papers, passport, international drivers license, and state drivers license ready for inspection if you are stopped. A new game the cops are playing is stopping people using "radar." It must be a specially designed radar that only works on rental cars or cars with foreign plates. Every tourist seems to be going 115kph in the unmarked 90kph zone and the penalty is 400dh. In the good 'ol days you could bribe your way out with 20dh, but the cops are now working in larger teams and using camera equipped radar guns that make it impossible to "by them a cup of coffee" and go about your way.

Scooter Guides

Not as much of a problem as they were a few years ago, a few still exist outside of every tourist destination (Fez, Marrakech, Ouarzazate, etc.). They sit there on their scooters waiting for a rental car or one with foreign plates to drive by and then they hit the road in hot pursuit. While they're making Kamikaze runs at your car they'll tell you about the wonderful hotel they know, and how the one you have reservations at burned down, has rats, or has rats that burned the hotel down. They do have their uses though, if you are really lost, offer 10 dh to take you to the hotel you want, but only pay when you arrive.

Hitchhikers

Don't ever pick them up. It's a scam where they'll either be so grateful that you stopped that they'll invite you home (where they try to sell you a rug), or they won't get out of your car until you give them money. The new spin on the game is to stand next to a "broken-down" car and wait for someone to stop and offer assistance. When you do, it's the same scam, where they'll ask for a lift home and then try to sell you a rug once there. The good thing about hitchhikers is that if you have one in the car, the scooter guides will leave you alone (as a professional courtesy).

Roads

Modern freeways link the cities of Tangier, Rabat, Fez and Casablanca. Two-lane highways link other major cities. Secondary routes in rural areas are often narrow and poorly paved. Roads through the Rif and Atlas mountains are steep, narrow, windy, and dangerous. Maximum caution should be exercised when driving in the

mountains. Pedestrians, scooters, and animal-drawn conveyances are common on all roadways, including the freeways, and driving at night should be avoided, if possible. During the rainy season (November - March) flash flooding is frequent and sometimes severe, washing away roads and vehicles in rural areas.

So if the rural road does exist, the first thing you will wonder when driving on it is: does the driver of the on coming vehicle not see me or is he playing a game of chicken? He does see you and he's not playing chicken. Most of the roads you will travel on in rural areas are only one and a half lanes wide, forcing the vehicles to drive onto the shoulder when passing an oncoming vehicle. The bigger vehicle always has the right of way. This is no cause for concern. The drivers are professionals with many years of experience and are also locals who know the roads better than anyone. Passing requires a lot of skill in general as well as cooperation from the driver in front. On mountain roads especially, the preceding vehicle acts as a look out and signals the driver behind him if the road is clear and it is OK to pass. When ready to pass, the driver behind will "tailgate" to prevent rocks kicked-up by the car in front from hitting and cracking his windshield. Driving at night can be a cause for concern since vehicles that do not go faster than 30 miles an hour (donkeys, carts, bicycles, slow moving cars, goats, camels etc.) are not required to have headlights or taillights. When was the last time you tried pinning a taillight on a donkey or put a headlight on a goat?

Safety Hint: *Traffic accidents are a significant hazard in Morocco. Driving practices are poor, and they have resulted in serious injuries and fatalities to U.S. citizens. This is particularly true at dusk during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, when adherence to traffic regulations is lax, and from July to September when Moroccans resident abroad return from Europe by car in large numbers. Congested streets are characteristic of urban driving. Traffic signals do not always function, and they are sometimes difficult to see.*

Buses

Taking a bus is the least expensive way to get between destinations in Morocco, but by far the

slowest and most uncomfortable. What would be an 8-hour train ride or a 9-hour drive by car becomes a 24-hour expedition by bus. If you have all the time in the world but none of the money in it, then a bus is fine. If you're like a majority of the traveling public which only as so many vacation days a year, then you might want to consider faster means of travel.

Safety Hint: *While public buses are inexpensive, drivers typically exhibit poor driving habits, and the buses are frequently overcrowded and are known for petty crimes.*

Taxis

Where the trains end, the taxis take over and are the best way to navigate in a city, at least in theory. There are two kinds of Taxis: Grand Taxis (that mostly go between cities) and Petite Taxis (which run within city limits only). Each city's official Petite Taxis are all painted the same color and seat three, while all the Grand Taxis are beige and seat up to 8. All Petite Taxis have a working meter, make sure they use it. The Grand Taxis don't, so negotiate price and destination before hoping in.

Safety Hint: *Stay away from unmarked/uncolored taxis; it's just a bad decision on so many levels.*

Walking

Morocco has implemented crosswalks in most major cities and has accompanied their arrival by people with megaphones reminding you to use them. Will it work? The jury is still out, but for people from Europe and North America it gives us a familiar feeling of safety and direction (however misplaced it might be). You'll still have to be on your toes, even in the crosswalk for bikes, scooters, donkey carts, and cars. Simplest rule is be consistent, once in motion stay in motion, pick a course and stick to it and traffic will flow around you. That is unless they won't, in which case all bets are off and the process becomes Darwinian in a hurry.

Safety Hint: *Use the same common sense traveling overseas that you would at home. Be especially cautious in or avoid areas where you are likely to be victimized. These include crowded subways, train stations, elevators, tourist sites, market places, festivals and*

marginal areas of cities. Don't use short cuts, narrow alleys or poorly-lit streets. Try not to travel alone at night. Avoid public demonstrations and other civil disturbances. Keep a low profile and avoid loud conversations or arguments. Do not discuss travel plans or other personal matters with strangers. Avoid scam artists. Beware of strangers who approach you, offering bargains or to be your guide. Beware of pickpockets. They often have an accomplice who will: jostle you, ask you for directions or the time, point to something spilled on your clothing, or distract you by creating a disturbance. A child or even a woman carrying a baby can be a pickpocket. Beware of groups of vagrant children who create a distraction while picking your pocket. Wear the shoulder strap of your bag across your chest and walk with the bag away from the curb to avoid drive-by purse-snatchers. Try to seem purposeful when you move about. Even if you are lost, act as if you know where you are going. When possible, ask directions only from individuals in authority. Know how to use a pay telephone and have the proper change or token on hand. Learn a few phrases in the local language so you can signal your need for help, the police, or a doctor. Make a note of emergency telephone numbers you may need: police, fire, your hotel, and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. If you are confronted, don't fight back. Give up your valuables. Your money and passport can be replaced, but you cannot.

Health & Hygiene

Adequate medical care is available in Morocco's largest cities, particularly in Rabat and Casablanca, although not all facilities meet high-quality standards. Specialized care or treatment may not be available. Medical facilities are adequate for non-emergency matters, particularly in the urban areas, but most medical staff will have limited or no English skills. Most ordinary prescription and over the counter medicines are widely available. However, specialized prescriptions may be difficult to fill and availability of all medicines in rural areas is unreliable. The medicine also may be presented under a different brand name and may contain a different dosage than in the U.S. Please be aware that some newer medications may not yet

be available in Morocco. Emergency and specialized care outside the major cities is far below U.S. standards, and in many instances may not be available at all. Travelers planning to drive in the mountains and other remote areas may wish to carry a medical kit and a Moroccan phone card for emergencies. In the event of car accidents involving injuries, immediate ambulance service usually is not available. The police emergency services telephone number is 190.

Diseases (according to the CDC)

Food and waterborne diseases are the number one cause of illness in travelers. [Travelers' diarrhea](#) can be caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites, which are found throughout the region and can contaminate food or water. Infections may cause diarrhea and vomiting (*E. coli*, *Salmonella*, [cholera](#), and parasites), fever ([typhoid fever](#) and toxoplasmosis), or liver damage (hepatitis). Make sure your food and drinking water are safe.

[Malaria](#) is always a serious disease and may be a deadly illness. A limited risk of malaria exists in parts of Algeria, Egypt, and Morocco. Taking an antimalarial drug is not recommended as the risk for travelers is considered to be extremely low. However, travelers should use insect repellent to prevent mosquito bites. For detailed information on malaria-risk areas and precautions, see the CDC's [Malaria Information for Travelers to North Africa](#).

[Dengue](#), [filariasis](#), [leishmaniasis](#), and [onchocerciasis](#) are diseases carried by insects that also occur in this region. Protecting yourself against insect bites will help to prevent these diseases.

[Schistosomiasis](#), a parasitic infection, is found in fresh water in the region, including the Nile River. Do not swim in fresh water (except in well-chlorinated swimming pools) in these countries. (For more information, please see [Swimming and Recreational Water Precautions](#).)

There is **no risk** for yellow fever in North Africa. A certificate of [yellow fever](#) vaccination may be required for entry into certain of these countries

if you are coming from countries in South America or sub-Saharan Africa. For detailed information, see [Comprehensive Yellow Fever Vaccination Requirements](#). Also, find the nearest [authorized U.S. yellow fever vaccine center](#).

Vaccines

See your doctor at least 4–6 weeks before your trip to allow time for shots to take effect.

[Hepatitis A](#) or immune globulin (IG).

[Hepatitis B](#) if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay longer than 6 months in the region, or be exposed through medical treatment.

[Rabies](#), if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.

[Typhoid](#), particularly if you are visiting developing countries in this region.

As needed, booster doses for [tetanus-diphtheria](#), [measles](#), and a one-time dose of [polio](#) vaccine for adults. [Hepatitis B](#) vaccine is now recommended for all infants and for children ages 11–12 years who did not complete the series as infants.

To stay healthy, do...

Wash hands often with soap and water.

Pay special attention to mosquito protection between dusk and dawn. This is when the type of mosquito whose bite transmits malaria is active.

- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats.
- Use insect repellents that contain [DEET \(diethylmethyloamide\)](#).
- Read and follow the directions and precautions on the product label.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin.
- Do not put repellent on wounds or broken skin.
- Do not breathe in, swallow, or get into the eyes (DEET is toxic if swallowed). If using a spray product, apply DEET to your face by spraying your hands and rubbing the product carefully over the face, avoiding eyes and mouth.

- Unless you are staying in air-conditioned or well-screened housing, purchase a [bed net impregnated with the insecticide permethrin or deltamethrin](#). Or, spray the bed net with one of these insecticides if you are unable to find a pretreated bed net.

DEET may be used on adults, children, and infants older than 2 months of age. Protect infants by using a carrier draped with mosquito netting with an elastic edge for a tight fit.

Children under 10 years old should not apply insect repellent themselves. Do not apply to young children's hands or around eyes and mouth.

For details on how to protect yourself from insects and how to use repellents, see [Protection against Mosquitoes and Other Arthropods](#).

If you are visiting friends and relatives in your home country in areas where malaria occurs, please read the [malaria prevention recommendations for recent immigrants](#) on the CDC malaria site.

To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot.

Always use latex condoms to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

To stay healthy, don't...

- Don't drink beverages with ice.
- Don't eat dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized.
- Don't share needles with anyone.
- Don't handle animals (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats), to avoid bites and serious diseases (including [rabies](#) and [plague](#)). (For more information, please see [Animal-Associated Hazards](#).)
- Don't swim in fresh water, including the Nile. Salt water is usually safer. (For more information, please see [Swimming and Recreational Water Precautions](#).)

After you return home:

Although the risk of malaria in North Africa is limited, travelers who become ill with fever or flu-like illness while traveling in North Africa and up to 1 year after returning home should seek **immediate** medical attention and should tell their health care provider their travel history.

Food

When it comes to food: *boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.* Don't be afraid to eat at open-air markets or corner shops where the food is cooked right in front of you. That way you know the quality of the ingredients, the manner in which it was prepared, how long and how well it was cooked.

Prevention of Dehydration and Heat Stroke

The best way to avoid problems is to prevent them. Listed below are some guidelines that will help keep you well.

- Make sure you tell someone where you are going and when you will return.
- Watch for signs of heat injury. Early symptoms are headache, mental confusion, irritability, excessive sweating, weakness, dizziness, cramps, and pale, moist, cold (clammy) skin. Advanced symptoms include the lack of sweat, hot and dry skin, headache, dizziness, fast pulse, nausea and vomiting, and mental confusion leading to unconsciousness.
- Drink water at least once an hour.
- Get in the shade when resting. Lie on a blanket and not directly on the ground.
- Do not take off your long sleeved shirt during the day.
- Check the color of your urine. A light color means you are drinking enough water, a dark color means you need to drink more.

Water

Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes. If this is not possible, make water safer by BOTH filtering through an "absolute 1-micron or less" filter AND adding iodine tablets to the filtered water. "Absolute 1-micron filters" are found in camping/outdoor supply stores.

Drink only bottled water, soda, boiled water (tea and coffee). Bottled water is sold under four common brand names: Sidi Ali, Sidi Harazem, Hyat, and Ciel. Tea and coffee are usually safe, but have dehydrating caffeine in them. Best way to really quench a thirst and avoid dehydration is mixing in some Gatorade or ORS's (which you'll

need to bring from the States) with the bottled water. In rural areas and small towns, showering in local water is safe and minor ingestion of some is no problem, but brushing your teeth in bottled water is always a good idea. And even though you'll be tempted to freshen up or soak your feet in an oasis, don't. The water probably contains schistosomiasis (bilharziasis), a parasitic larvae that can penetrate the unbroken skin of the human host. Water in major cities is safe enough to brush your teeth with.

Toilets

You will encounter squat toilets in Morocco. Be prepared to use them. The basic squat toilet is a porcelain-covered hole in the ground with two raised footpads in a stall with a door. There is usually a water tap at or below knee level and some kind of a water vessel (cup or bucket). Fill the bucket and use the water for two functions. The first is to clean yourself instead of using toilet paper and the second is to flush the toilet. Instructions for use of the squat toilet: take all valuables and loose items out of your pockets (they will fall out and you will not want them back). Roll up or pull up the pants legs as high as possible and lower your pants below your knees. Put your feet on the footpads, lean forward and then lower your rear into a squatting position. After doing your business, you can try to use the provided water to clean yourself or toilet paper (which you brought). Unless you have experience with the water cleansing method, we would recommend the toilet paper. Most public toilets use the "manual" flushing, which is filling the water bucket full of water and pouring it into the hole to "flush." In some places, however, you may encounter a flushing squat toilet. This is where you press a button or lever and then get out as fast as possible so the water engulfing most of the stall to flush the toilet doesn't soak your shoes and pants.

Safety

When you travel abroad, the odds are in your favor that you will have a safe and incident-free trip. However, crime and violence, as well as unexpected difficulties, do happen to U.S. citizens in all parts of the world. No one is better

able to tell you this than the U.S. consular officers who work in more than 250 U.S. embassies and consulates around the globe. Every day of the year, U.S. embassies and consulates receive calls from American citizens in distress.

Happily, most problems can be solved over the telephone or by a visit of the U.S. citizen to the Consular Section of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. But, there are less fortunate occasions when U.S. diplomats are called on to meet U.S. citizens at foreign police stations, hospitals, prisons, and even at morgues. In these cases, the assistance that diplomats can offer is specific but limited.

In the hope of helping you avoid serious difficulties during your abroad, we have prepared the following travel tips.

Thank you for taking the time to become an informed traveler. We wish you a safe and wonderful journey!

Local Laws and Customs

When you leave the United States, you are subject to the laws of the country where you are. Therefore, before you go, learn as much as you can about the local laws and customs of the places you plan to visit. Good resources are your library, your travel agent, and the embassies, consulates or tourist bureaus of the countries you will visit. In addition, keep track of what is being reported in the media about recent developments in those countries.

How to Avoid Legal Difficulties

When you are in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws and are under its jurisdiction **NOT** the protection of the U.S. Constitution.

You can be arrested overseas for actions that may be either legal or considered minor infractions in the United States. Be aware of what is considered criminal in the country where you are. Consular Information Sheets include information on unusual patterns of arrests in various countries when appropriate.

Some of the offenses for which U.S. citizens have been arrested abroad are:

Drug Violations

More than 1/3 of U.S. citizens incarcerated abroad are held on drug charges. Some countries do not distinguish between possession and trafficking. Many countries have mandatory sentences - even for possession of a small amount of marijuana or cocaine. A number of Americans have been arrested for possessing prescription drugs, particularly tranquilizers and amphetamines, that they purchased legally in certain Asian countries and then brought to some countries in the Middle East where they are illegal. Other U.S. citizens have been arrested for purchasing prescription drugs abroad in quantities that local authorities suspected were for commercial use. If in doubt about foreign drug laws, ask local authorities or the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Photography

In many countries you can be harassed or detained for photographing such things as police and military installations, government buildings, border areas and transportation facilities. If you are in doubt, ask permission before taking photographs.

Purchasing Antiques

Americans have been arrested for purchasing souvenirs that were, or looked like, antiques and which local customs authorities believed were national treasures. This is especially true in Turkey, Egypt and Mexico. In countries where antiques are important, document your purchases as reproductions if that is the case, or if they are authentic, secure the necessary export permit (usually from the national museum.)

Terrorism

Terrorist acts occur at random and unpredictably, making it impossible to protect yourself absolutely. The first and best protection is to avoid travel to unsafe areas where there has been a persistent record of terrorist attacks or kidnapping. The vast majority of foreign states have good records of maintaining public order and protecting residents and visitors within their borders from terrorism.

Most terrorist attacks are the result of long and careful planning. Just as a car thief will first be attracted to an unlocked car with the key in the ignition, terrorists are looking for defenseless, easily accessible targets who follow predictable patterns. The chances that a tourist, traveling with an unpublished program or itinerary, would be the victim of terrorism are slight. In addition, many terrorist groups, seeking publicity for political causes within their own country or region, may not be looking for American targets.

Nevertheless, the following pointers may help you avoid becoming a target of opportunity. They should be considered as adjuncts to the tips listed in the previous sections on how to protect yourself against the far greater likelihood of being a victim of crime. These precautions may provide some degree of protection, and can serve as practical and psychological deterrents to would-be terrorists.

- Schedule direct flights if possible and avoid stops in high-risk airports or areas. Consider other options for travel, such as trains.
- Be aware of what you discuss with strangers or what others may overhear.
- Try to minimize the time spent in the public area of an airport, which is a less protected area. Move quickly from the check-in counter to the secured areas. On arrival, leave the airport as soon as possible.
- As much as possible, avoid luggage tags, dress and behavior that may identify you as an American.
- Keep an eye out for suspicious abandoned packages or briefcases. Report them to airport security or other authorities and leave the area promptly.
- Avoid obvious terrorist targets such as places where Americans and Westerners are known to congregate.

Specific to Morocco

Common sense is the best defense anywhere you travel. Be as alert as you would be in any large American city and you'll do just fine. An aware tourist on the streets is much more difficult a target than someone too amazed by

his surroundings to pay attention to his wallet. Morocco has made some very positive steps in securing the safety of tourists, even creating a "Tourist Police" in the major tourist centers. But Morocco still offers some special cons and problems that you should be aware of:

"Faux Guides" (False Guides) are one of the biggest problems confronting the tourist to Morocco. You'll be approached on the street with offers to show you the sights, good hotels, restaurants, etc. Your tour will supply you with a government-licensed guide, so you won't have any need for the faux guide. When you're exploring the cities on your own, you'll probably get lost in the Medina at some point. There will be no shortage of "guides" ready to show you the way out and 10dh usually covers their time once you're delivered back to where you started. Also, at the tanneries, anyone standing by the door can show you around for a dollar or two. You won't have to look hard to find them, they aren't shy.

A woman or child

If on approaches you trying to sell you something that you do not want and then they give it to you as a gift anyway, give it back to them IMMEDIATELY! Their big brother or husband is usually not too far away ready to accuse you of stealing the item and applying appropriate pressure for payment.

The foreign woman

Walking with a man or a group of women will have little to no trouble, but a woman alone will get some unwelcome attention. Wearing conservative clothing, long sleeves and a headscarf or sunglasses and hat best prevent this. Eat inside the restaurants and cafes, never outside on the sidewalk or street because prostitutes sit outside unaccompanied. Politely refuse or just ignore any unwelcome advances. If you respond harshly, the situation will just escalate. Forget about nightlife. Women out on their own after 8:00 PM are thought to be prostitutes and are addressed as such.

Other common crimes

Reported crimes include falsifying credit-card vouchers, and shipping inferior rugs as a substitute for the rugs purchased by the traveler. SaharaTrek and its guides make every effort to use only reputable dealers, but the only way to be 100% sure is to ask that the rug be wrapped

up (to about the size of a soccer ball), and carry it home with you.

The U.S. Embassy and Consulate have received reports of thefts occurring in the vicinity of ATM machines. Some travelers have been befriended by persons of various nationalities who have offered them drugged food, drink, or cigarettes. For current updates and announcements, visit the US Department of State, Traveler's Information site at www.travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html.

Assistance Abroad

If you plan to stay more than two weeks in one place, if you are in an area experiencing civil unrest or a natural disaster, or, if you are planning travel to a remote area, it is advisable to register at the Consular Section of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. This will make it easier if someone at home needs to locate you urgently or in the unlikely event that you need to be evacuated in an emergency. It will also facilitate the issuance of a new passport should yours be lost or stolen.

The Consular Section can provide updated information on the security situation in a country. If you are ill or injured, contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for a list of local physicians and medical facilities. If the illness is serious, consular officers can help you find medical assistance from this list and, at your request, will inform your family or friends. If necessary, a consul can assist in the transfer of funds from family or friends in the United States. Payment of hospital and other medical expenses is your responsibility.

If you run out of money overseas and have no other options, consular officers can help you get in touch with your family, friends, bank or employer and inform them how to wire funds to you.

Should you find yourself in legal difficulty, contact a consular officer immediately. Consular officers cannot serve as attorneys, give legal advice, or get you out of jail. What they can do is provide a list of local attorneys who speak English and who may have had experience in representing U.S. citizens. If you are arrested, consular officials will visit you, advise you of

your rights under local laws and ensure that you are held under humane conditions and are treated fairly under local law. A consular officer will contact your family or friends if you desire. When necessary, consuls can transfer money from home for you and will try to get relief for you, including food and clothing in countries where this is a problem. If you are detained, remember that under international treaties and customary international law, you have the right to talk to the U.S. consul. If you are denied this right, be persistent. Try to have someone get in touch for you.

Culture, Clothing, & Language

People and Religion

The population in Morocco is divided among Arabs (along the coast), Berbers (in the mountains), and Nomads (in the desert). In the 7th and 11th centuries the Arabs invaded Morocco and established their culture and religion there. Today the official state religion of Morocco is Islam (98.7% of the population) and the government pays for the building of Mosques and holy men receive a small government salary. The devout Muslims (a small percentage of the total population) will pray 5 times a day, with Friday as their holy day (the equivalent to a Christian Sunday) when some shops will close for the afternoon. Morocco has long been the cultural crossroads between the Middle East and the West with economic realities and outside cultural influence creating a softer, much more tolerant version of Islam. Morocco's Jewish minority numbers about 7,000 and most of the 100,000 foreign residents are French or Spanish; many are teachers or technicians.

Culture

- After shaking hands with someone, touch your right hand to your heart as a sign of respect.
- Use your right hand for shaking hands, eating out of common plates and handling merchandise or money. The left hand is traditionally used to clean oneself after using the toilet and is considered insulting when used for any right hand activity.

- Before taking pictures of people, ask their permission (your guide will help you with that). In rural areas women will almost never agree, and men only occasionally. In the cities, taking someone's picture often costs about 10dh. As general rule donkeys, landscapes and buildings don't mind having their pictures taken.

Clothing & Shoes

- Long pants and long sleeved shirts are appropriate public attire throughout Morocco for men (they also keep the sun off you).
- The same is true for women with the addition of a headscarf or hat. Although you'll see traditional women covered from head to toe with only their eyes peering out, tourists are not expected to go to such extremes.
- Good walking shoes or hiking boots will get you everywhere you want to go. Sandals and open toed shoes aren't very practical in Morocco because in the desert or off-road your sandals will load up with pebbles and bog down, and in the cities you'll be picking up all manner of street crud.
- Cotton is a good fabric for both slacks and shirts. Stay away from fabrics that are light and airy (nylon, cool-max, etc) for outerwear. They contribute to losing body moisture and dehydration. The difference between American tourists and European tourists is obvious to every street vender and guide. Americans will tend to dress casually and practically with attention paid to cultural norms. The Europeans will pay more attention to style, wearing shorts, miniskirts, tight fitting clothing, etc. and pay less attention to the culture. You'll never really look like a Moroccan during a short visit there, but keeping a low profile goes along way to getting up close to the people and the culture.

Language

The "classical" Arabic of the Qur'an is Morocco's official language and is used widely in literature and the news media. The distinctive Moroccan

dialect of Arabic is the most common and widely spoken language in Morocco. Approximately 10 million Moroccans, mostly in rural areas, speak the unwritten Berber language either as a first language or bilingually with the spoken Arabic dialect. French, which remains Morocco's unofficial third language, is taught universally and still serves as Morocco's primary language of commerce and economics; it also is widely used in education and government. Many Moroccans in the northern part of the country speak Spanish. English, while still far behind French and Spanish in terms of number of speakers, is rapidly becoming the foreign language of choice among educated youth. As a result of national education reforms entering into force in late 2002, English will be taught in all public schools from the fourth year on.

While in Morocco you might want to try learning some Arabic. Although French is the second language in Morocco, a foreigner speaking French is often thought to be French (with a long history of colonial occupation and oppression attached to it). Keeping that in mind, if the Arabic is too challenging, you would be better off speaking English. Below are a few useful Moroccan phrases.

Hello	<i>Salam</i> <i>Walaykoom</i>	Please	<i>Minfadlik</i>
Hello (response)	<i>Walaykoom</i> <i>Salam</i>	Thank you	<i>Shokran</i>
Yes	<i>Naam</i>	I don't want any	<i>Mabgheetsh</i>
No	<i>La</i>	Go away!	<i>Seer!</i>
Okay	<i>Wakha</i>	God willing	<i>Inshallah</i>

Beggars & Alms giving

Beggars are common in Morocco (as they are throughout Islam because giving alms is a religious duty). Most real beggars are single mothers or the handicapped that you'll see waiting on the street for passers-by. If you're moved to give, give only small change (less than a dirham) and don't make eye contact. If you don't give money and are confronted, a blessing *allah isehhal* (God make things easy for you) will suffice. Young men and boys begging are just out to make sport of, or profit from tourists.

Children

The second you stop anywhere in Morocco, you'll have a welcoming committee of children repeating their favorite chant "bonjour Dirham, bonjour stilo" (hello money, hello pen). They'll be pesky, everywhere, and are mostly harmless (be sure to watch your pockets and bags if they start tugging at you). Although you may want to give them money or a pen, DON'T!, successful begging only encourages children to beg more.

Typical Moroccan foods

Harira: soup with chickpeas, lentils, vegetable and some meat

Bissara: pea soup

Briouat: Filo pastry with filling

Kebabs/Brochettes: grilled pieces of beef, lamb and fat served on a skewer

Kefta: Mincemeat brochettes

Harissa: a salsa-like condiment, "Berber Ketchup", has a bit of kick to it

Babouche: escargot, snails in garlic

Couscous: steamed granules of semolina; it has the tendency to expand in the stomach, so leave a little room

Tangine: both the two-part terra cotta dish and the meal slow cooked in it, Moroccan stew

Pastilla: layers of filo pastry, pigeon, eggs and pounded almonds

Shopping

Shopping in Morocco is an adventure in itself! One of the last parts of the world where negotiating for most things isn't just expected, it's mandatory. The old rule of "offer half of the asking price" isn't such a good move anymore. The vendors can see you coming from a mile away and will quote you a sufficiently high "stupid tourist" price. As a rule, decide first if you really want it and then decide what you really want to pay. Offer the vendor a little less than what you're willing to pay as your opening counter-offer. Once you enter into negotiations, you can walk away at any time, but if you agree on a price, then you'll have to buy (walking away after accepting a price is against the rules). The vendor will shout, fuss, even seem to get mad and terribly offended, but it's all just part of the game. If the vendor looks miserable after you've bought the item you got a good deal. If the vendor is smiling and you walk away thinking

how easy that was, then you've just been taken to the Moroccan cleaners.

Recently, the vendors have been observed grabbing for the arms of potential customers who are walking away from their shops. This is becoming more common, though the guides are making an effort to educate the shopkeepers not to do that. If grabbed or confronted, resolutely say "No." Do not become combative but do stand your ground, if you take off running they'll run after you, but if they get the point early on, it ends right then and there.

A good first shopping stop is an Ensemble Artisanal (a government run artist cooperative) with its higher, non-negotiable prices. This will help you to get an idea of the generally available quality and prices before you venture into the souks (markets) and try your hand at bargaining. It also makes for a hassle free shopping experience when the action in the souks becomes to much of an adventure.

Gifts & Tips

If you wish to bring gifts for the locals, please bring school supplies (pens, pencils, erasers, paper, chalk, notebooks, etc.). The staff at the Hotel Sahara will gladly collect and deliver them directly to the local school of 1350 children in M'hamid.

Tips and gratuities to your guides and other service workers are entirely discretionary and are greatly appreciated. A good guideline for tipping is \$10 per day per for a guide. All city guides make a small commission on whatever you buy, so the more you buy, the less you need to tip to still leave your guide happy.