



## Morocco pre-Safari Information

### PASSPORT

Your passport must be valid for at least six months after the end of your tour with us, and have at least two blank pages available. Children travelling on their parents' passports must have a recent photograph affixed to the passport - if this isn't done, the whole family is at risk of being denied entry. It is always best to carry around your passport - or at least a copy of the most relevant pages - while in Morocco. Police checks are numerous throughout the country, although usually the only thing they want to do is look at your passport, ask you where you're from, and welcome you to Morocco.

### VISAS, IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS

Most visitors to Morocco do not require a pre-arranged visa, including citizens of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States, and the European Union (including Ireland). Currently, the most notable exceptions are citizens of Israel, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, who need to apply at a Moroccan embassy or consulate for a 90-day single-entry visa (around AUD34/USD30/GBP15). See the Moroccan Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation website ([www.maec.gov.ma](http://www.maec.gov.ma)) for their current list of visa-exempt countries, and a visa application form (in French).

Moroccan embassies around the world include:

**In Australia**, at 17 Terrigal Crescent, O'Malley, Canberra (tel. 02/62-900755 or 62-900766).

**In Canada**, at 38 Range Road, Ottawa, KIN 8J4 (tel. 613/236-7391, [www.ambamaroc.ca](http://www.ambamaroc.ca)). There's also a consulate at 2192 Blvd. René-Lévesque West, Montreal H3H 1R6 (tel. 514/288-8750 or 288-6951, [www.consulatdumaroc.ca](http://www.consulatdumaroc.ca)).

**In Ireland**, at 39 Raglan Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin, 4 (tel. 31/66-09449 or 66-09319).

**In South Africa**, at 799 Schoemann Street (cnr of Farenden), Arcadia, Pretoria (tel. 012/343-0230).

**In the UK**, at 49 Queen's Gate Gardens, London SW75NE (tel. 020/7581-5001), and a consulate at Diamond House, 97-99 Praed Street, Paddington, W21NT (tel. 020/7724-0719 or 7724-0624).

**In the US**, at 1601, 21st Street NW, Washington, DC, 20009 (tel. 202/462-7979 or 457-0012; [www.themoroccanembassy.com](http://www.themoroccanembassy.com)). There's also a consulate at 10 East 40th Street, 24th floor, New York, NY, 10016 (tel. 212/758-2625, [www.moroccanconsulate.com](http://www.moroccanconsulate.com)).

There's no Moroccan embassy or consulate in New Zealand.

Whether your international flight arrives in Casablanca or Marrakech, the immigration officers at both airports are usually very courteous, if at times a bit rigid but sometimes there are not enough of them on duty and long queues ensue. An arrival form needs to be completed for immigration. This form asks for your name, date of birth, passport details, occupation, your hotel address in Morocco and the amount of money you have with you. State how much cash you are carrying, along with any credit/debit cards you have. We will email your Morocco hotel details before you depart home.

You may also be requested to complete a customs declaration and/or present your luggage for inspection. The Customs officers are not concerned with the usual duty-free purchases but are just making sure that you have not brought in any huge amounts of money, alcohol or cigarettes because it may then appear that you are going to sell them whilst in Morocco.

*What You Can Bring Into Morocco:* tobacco (200 cigarettes/100 cigarillos/25 cigars); alcohol (1 litre); perfume (150ml); eau de toilette (250ml); electrical & photographic goods.

*What You Can Take From Morocco:* all locally-made crafts & souvenirs including a reasonable amount (not in the dozens) of fossilized, ornamental and semi-precious stones. *Objets d'Art* and antiques theoretically require signed authorization from the Ministry of Culture, though this is only required for expensive or large items and will be taken care of if purchased from any reputable shop owner.

## VACCINATIONS

No compulsory immunisation is required for entering South Africa, unless you are arriving within six days of leaving a country deemed to be infected with Yellow Fever. Visitors who travel through or disembark in infected countries are advised to be vaccinated against the disease before visiting South Africa. Yellow Fever is a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes, and approximately 200,000 cases occur each year worldwide, with the majority of these occurring mainly in the western part of sub-Saharan Africa, such as Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Mali etc. The World Health Organisation states that Yellow Fever is not present within Morocco.

Moroccan authorities officially deny the existence of malaria, but other sources report very occasional summer-time cases in a few of the more northern reaches of the country. Our Compass Odyssey Morocco tour doesn't visit this region, and we are travelling in the cool of early-spring when mosquitoes are rarely encountered. Rabies cases are very uncommon, but do still occur. Vaccination against rabies doesn't provide absolute immunity however, so it's worth seeking medical advice before you leave, should you be concerned.

## HEALTH

We recommend that you bring along a small personal medical kit containing elastoplasts or Band-aids, antiseptic cream, anti-histamine cream or tablets, soluble aspirin or Paracetamol, rehydration salts (e.g. Gastrolyte), anti-diarrhoea remedy, and insect repellent. Please advise us at the beginning of our safari of any personal health-related matters that we should be aware of.

'Traveller's diarrhoea' is the most common ailment suffered by westerners while travelling in Morocco. As with similar 'belly' destinations around the world, there's only so much that can be done to try to avoid an upset stomach. Some people religiously stay away from street food, others never order a salad and only drink bottled water, while others only eat peeled or cooked food. All of these are good ideas, however even the most cautious travellers can still 'go down'. It can happen simply because your body is not used to the unfamiliar cuisine or perhaps from a little bout of travel fatigue. For many however, traveller's diarrhoea is a direct result of dehydration. Some days during our tour may be considerably hot especially for those arriving from more temperate climes and can be too much for the body to cope with. Once you arrive, increasing your daily intake of water is the most effective way to stay healthy. We always recommend two large bottles per day (3 litres). This takes a bit of effort for those not used to drinking so much water, and is best achieved through drinking constantly throughout the day, rather than in one or two big gulps. Don't worry about drinking too much water as we have plenty of toilet stops during the day!

Most tap water in Morocco is drinkable, but we recommend drinking only bottled water, which is available everywhere, and is inexpensive. Moroccan pharmacists are very well trained, and regularly act as the village doctor. They dispense a far wider range of drugs than their colleagues in the West, and can usually assist with most traveller's ailments. If you need the attention of a doctor, they can usually recommend one for us, or some even have a doctor on-site.

Moroccan doctors, both private and public are generally very professional, with most having studied in France. The level of hospital care in Morocco tends to be dictated by the location. Privately-run *polycliniques* generally offer first-world facilities, and can be found in most larger towns and cities. State hospitals are notoriously under-funded and are best visited only for minor injuries, but may be the only option if we are out in the rural regions.

Darren and the Compass Odyssey crew are always at your service, and will attentively assist you should you fall ill during our tour. We have contacts all over Morocco, and will be able to get you to medical assistance should you require.

## INSURANCE

Compass Odyssey possesses adequate operator insurance to industry standards including public liability insurance and passenger liability insurance.

It is a condition of our insurance policy that all passengers possess personal travel insurance. Your travel insurance must cover accidents, medical expenses including any related pre-existing medical conditions, emergency repatriation including helicopter rescue and air ambulance, and personal liability. We also recommend that you include cover for loss of luggage and personal effects as well as cancellation and curtailment.

## SAFETY

Morocco is a relatively safe country in which to travel, with the overwhelming majority of Moroccans hospitable, friendly, and law-abiding. Basic personal safety precautions apply as they would anywhere, however you should be particularly conscious of petty theft. Leave as many valuables and jewellery as you can at home especially those most sentimental and make sure you

have photocopies of your important documents (passport, air tickets, insurance) and keep them separate from the originals. Be particularly alert when withdrawing money from ATMs, and be aware of some of the common tactics used by petty criminals, such as distracting you with questions and small talk while an accomplice is deftly emptying your pockets or backpack. Some of our accommodation offers a safe-keeping area, otherwise take away the temptation that might present itself, by locking valuables in your bag or suitcase.

Morocco is infamous amongst many travellers for the prevalence of hustlers and unofficial guides. Hustlers or 'touts' tend to pounce on travellers who are looking lost or newly arrived and will proceed to tell all sorts of horror stories such as the buses aren't operating, the hotel is closed, your desired destination isn't safe, or that you are walking in the wrong direction. These men are tricksters, con-men, thieves, even drug dealers. Their sole mission is to glean you of your money, and they are a very unfortunate part of many traveller's tales. Leading you to particular hotels, shops, and sometimes even restaurants, usually results in some commission for them.

Unofficial guides called *faux guides* are generally less intimidating, if not slightly more annoying. For most, guiding is the only profession they know, and the only reason they are not officially qualified is due to socio-economic reasons. Some can be very entertaining and knowledgeable, but most can also be very persistent to get any business from you, sometimes resorting to the hustler's tactics.

In recent years, the presence of hustlers and *faux guides* has greatly decreased in the major tourism centres thanks largely to the establishment of the *Brigade Touristique* (Tourist Police). To be rid of hustlers and faux guides can become a difficult and frustrating task. Some confrontations can become ugly, with the hustler becoming abusive, even accusing the traveller of racism towards Muslims. The best approach is to keep your sense of humour and initially ignore the unwanted attention entirely, followed by continuous polite, but direct, rebukes if necessary.

Compass Odyssey uses the services of numerous specialist local guides. All of our guides are officially registered and personally chosen by Crusty - indeed they are our personal friends. Each guide speaks fluent English, and will inspire you with their infectious passion and individual personality - only serving to strengthen the essence of a Compass Odyssey journey.

## ETIQUETTE & CUSTOMS

**APPROPRIATE ATTIRE:** although wholeheartedly Muslim and conservative by nature, Moroccans are also understanding of and many have been exposed to western culture. This is not Iraq and no-one is 'forced' to dress in a particular way. Unfortunately many westerners, especially some European cultures take this tolerance to the extreme, and dress as if they would back home. Travellers will be treated with undoubtedly higher respect by all Moroccans if dressed conservatively, as opposed to revealing.

For men, it's worth looking around and seeing the type of dress generally worn by all Moroccan men: collared shirt or t-shirt covering the shoulders, long pants or jeans and sandals or shoes. Sports shorts, singlets and surf wear are only worn when playing sport, and if worn at other times is almost tantamount to wearing only your underwear.

For women, dressing conservatively can range from loose, long pants, shoulder-covering short-sleeved shirts and shoes or sandals, through to wearing a full-length Moroccan robe, called a *jellabah*. Again, it's up to you, as there are no actual laws to control dress.

A handy item to bring along is a sarong or wrap to temporarily cover your shoulders or legs which is small enough to keep in your daypack for whenever you feel the need to cover up.

**AVOIDING OFFENSE:** in Morocco, taboo conversation subjects include the royal family, the political situation in the Western Sahara and Algeria, and drugs. It is also wise to be prudent when talking about Islam and Al'lah (God). Always show respect in both dress and demeanour if you are near a mosque. Photographing a mosque is usually acceptable, so long as you are not too close or aren't photographing the interior. You may be invited to come closer, but it is best to wait for this. Photographing border checkpoints, military, police, or airport installations is not a good idea.

**EATING & DRINKING:** in Islamic (and Arabic) cultures the left hand is considered unclean, as this is the hand with which a person performs sanitary tasks. Moroccans rarely eat with their left hand, perhaps only using it to drink from, or maybe to pass bread. If you are eating from a 'communal' tagine, then eat with your right hand only.

The respectful procedure when offered food is to politely decline, and if offered again, to accept a small portion. Reciprocating the offer is also considered polite, and will afford respect. To decline an offer of food, simply pat your stomach and shake your head, followed by "La, shukrran" ("No, thank you).

**GREETINGS:** Moroccans are more formal in social relations than most westerners. Queries about one's marital status and children are considered polite, and greetings should always include queries as to the health and well-being of one's family. Always greet with your right hand, as your left is traditionally considered unclean. Kissing cheeks is practiced between members of the same sex, especially if good friends but should not be performed between opposite sexes unless each is well known to the other. When entering someone's home, it is considered polite to remove your shoes, especially before entering the living/dining area. If your host doesn't require such politeness, they will quickly inform you.

**GESTURES:** using your index finger to motion a person to approach you as practiced in the West is considered impolite. Moroccans as with most non-Western cultures beckon someone by placing the palm downward and sweeping the hand towards themselves.

**PUNCTUALITY:** punctuality is not one of the trademarks of Moroccans. Tasks are often achieved in "Moroccan time", which can be anything from a half-hour late for personal appointments to even arriving the next day. The exception to this rule are the country's guides who are usually most professional and always on time.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Naturally, there are many opportunities for still and video photography on our tour. Print film is available everywhere but the quality, speed and cost can vary. Memory cards and video tapes are becoming more available but you would be best served to bring all of your digital and video supplies with you. Batteries can be recharged each night but remember to bring along an adaptor plus a spare or two for those times you can't get to a power point. It is also a good idea to bring a re-sealable polythene bag to keep dust from infiltrating your equipment and to store any film or tapes.

Whilst on tour with us, it is generally NOT a good idea to photograph police, military personnel or any government official unless they have made it obvious that they are ok with it. This applies especially at borders. If in doubt, ask. It is becoming more regular and indeed compulsory on Jemaa el Fna square for Moroccans to ask for a small payment (5-10dh) when being photographed.

## MOBILE PHONE & INTERNET

Morocco's mobile phone network called GSM is generally excellent, bar the more inaccessible regions in the mountains and within the country's desert *ergs*. It is one area of technology that definitely hasn't bypassed Africa. Organise international roaming with your local network and most days you shouldn't have any problems keeping in touch with home. Another option is to purchase a Moroccan SIM card once you arrive, and then using a pay-as-you-go system. A SIM card currently costs 200dh (AUD29/USD25/GBP13), and can be purchased along with set-amount top-ups from general stores country-wide. The SIM card is valid for six months upon the first call. VoIP calls - such as Skype - can also usually be made in any Internet cafe.

Morocco has well and truly joined the internet-era. While there is a growing number of home users, socio-economic reasons dictate the majority of Moroccan users are found in Internet centres called *cyber cafes* found in virtually every village that has electricity and telephones. The users are generally teenage Moroccans, who sit for hours during the evening participating in internet chat rooms. Interestingly, according to recent UNESCO findings, Morocco has the largest percentage of women internet users anywhere in the world.

In Morocco, by far the easiest way to check your e-mail and surf the Web is in one of these cyber cafes. Connection speed varies, but is usually pretty fast as the Moroccan users themselves demand it from their 'local', or surf elsewhere. The cost for half an hour is around 5dh (AUD0.70/USD0.65/GBP0.30), double for an hour. Cyber cafes usually open between 9am-10am and close between 10pm-11pm most days, although some will close for a few hours at midday Friday. Very few establishments currently offer wi-fi for users with their own laptop.

## CLIMATE

Our tours coincide with early Spring in Morocco, and is a very pleasant time between the hot and cold seasons. Spring is considered the best season overall to experience Morocco. From late March to the end of May, most of the regions we are visiting will hopefully be bathed in gloriously warm sunshine. This is when the coast is beginning to warm up, while both the desert-edged regions, and the mountains - some still hopefully snow-topped - come into their own, with crisp, fresh air and none of the haze experienced in the coming months. Be aware however, that we may still experience some chilly weather, especially once the sun sets.

### Weather Chart for Morocco

<b>Casablanca</b>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temp. (°F)	46/63	50/64	52/66	54/68	57/70	61/75	64/77	66/79	63/77	57/73	54/70	50/64
Temp. (°C)	8/17	10/18	11/19	12/20	14/21	16/24	18/25	19/26	17/25	14/23	12/21	10/18
Rainfall (in./mm)	2.7/69	2.3/58	2.0/51	1.7/43	1.0/25	0.3/8	0	0.1/3	0.4/10	1.8/46	3.0/76	3.2/81

<b>Erfoud</b>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temp. (°F)	34/63	37/66	43/72	46/77	57/86	61/93	68/100	66/100	63/90	54/81	45/70	36/61
Temp. (°C)	1/17	3/19	6/22	8/25	14/30	16/34	20/38	19/37	17/32	12/27	7/21	2/16
Rainfall (in./mm)	0.7/18	0.5/13	0.2/5	0.1/3	0.1/3	0	0	0.2/5	0.8/20	1.0/25	1.3/33	0.9/23

<b>Fes</b>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temp. (°F)	39/61	41/63	43/66	46/72	52/77	57/84	63/95	63/95	57/86	54/77	46/68	41/61
Temp. (°C)	4/16	5/17	6/19	8/22	11/25	14/29	17/35	17/35	14/30	12/25	8/20	5/16
Rainfall (in./mm)	3.2/81	3.8/97	3.8/97	3.5/89	2.0/51	1.0/25	0.3/8	0.2/5	0.8/20	2.2/56	3.5/89	3.6/91

<b>Marrakech</b>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temp. (°F)	39/64	46/68	48/72	52/77	55/81	61/90	66/100	66/100	64/90	57/82	50/73	45/66
Temp. (°C)	4/18	8/20	9/22	11/25	13/27	16/32	19/37	19/36	18/32	14/28	10/23	7/19
Rainfall (in./mm)	0.9/23	1.0/25	1.2/30	1.1/28	0.6/15	0.3/8	0.1/3	0.1/3	0.3/8	0.8/20	1.1/28	1.0/25

<b>Tangier</b>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temp. (°F)	48/61	50/63	52/64	54/68	57/72	61/77	66/82	66/84	64/81	59/73	55/68	50/64
Temp. (°C)	9/16	10/17	11/18	12/20	14/22	16/25	19/28	19/29	18/27	15/23	13/20	10/18
Rainfall (in./mm)	4.3/109	4.0/102	3.8/97	2.5/64	1.8/46	0.8/20	0.3/8	0.2/5	1.0/25	3.7/94	5.6/142	5.1/130

## LUGGAGE AND WHAT TO BRING

As a guide we recommend you keep to your airline's luggage restriction of 15-20 kilograms, in a **medium sized** suitcase. Our crew will take care of the loading and unloading of your luggage from our vehicle, and we employ the services of local porters when our accommodation can only be reached on foot. However for your own comfort we strongly suggest your luggage be as light as possible.

It is often inconvenient to access your main luggage during the day, so we also suggest you bring a day bag/backpack that can be kept with you. Most people make the mistake of bringing too much clothing. We may experience some chilly mornings and evenings on our tour, so although your clothes should be easy to wash, dry and pack they should also be warm and comfortable. Bedding is provided with all of our accommodation but there may be occasion when you require a bit more warmth, hence our suggestion for thermal sleepwear. While most accommodations should be able to supply extra blankets, if you wish to be totally self-sufficient then feel free to bring a sleeping bag, which can be stored separately on the vehicle until you require it. Mattresses and blankets/rugs are provided for our overnight desert camel trek, though some travellers prefer to also bring along a sleeping bag or sleeping bag inner/liner.

A suggested list of clothing and accessories:

2 long sleeved shirts/blouses	Money and traveller's cheques
3-4 short sleeved shirts or t-shirts	Vaccination certificates (plus photocopy)
2 pairs trousers or 1 pair and 1 skirt	Passport (plus photocopy)
1-2 pairs shorts	Camera, and film or digital needs
Tracksuit pants	Binoculars
Light &/or heavy sweater	Water bottle
Sarong (see "Etiquette & Customs")	Watch or alarm clock
Water/windproof jacket	Sunscreen, hat and lip balm
Boots or trainers	Torch (a head-torch is especially handy)
Sandals or thongs/flip-flops	Washing soap or powder
Set of smart clothes and shoes	Pegless clothes line
Swimsuit	Personal toiletries
<b>International power plug adaptor</b>	Personal medical kit

If you wear glasses or contact lens, it is advisable to bring a spare pair. Contact lens solution is available but only in the cities and major towns.

Most supermarket items that you can buy at home are available in Morocco. Therefore you don't have to stock up prior to your departure on items like batteries, clothes washing powder, or personal toiletries unless you so desire. Ask your Compass Odyssey crew at any time for advice on what and when to purchase along the way.

## MONEY

On the whole, Morocco is inexpensive by western standards. Moroccans tend to haggle over prices and accept that others haggle also, especially in the country's markets or *souks*. However in businesses such as grocery, hardware, electrical, and fashion stores and restaurants, prices are generally fixed.

Morocco's official currency is the *dirham* (MAD abbreviated to dh within Morocco), divided into 100 centimes. Coins are issued in denominations of 1dh, 2dh, 5dh, and 10dh, as well as 10, 20, and 50 centimes. Banknotes are issued in denominations of 20, 50, 100, and 200. The dirham is a restricted currency, and can not be taken out of the country or traded, nor is it theoretically available abroad. Besides this, the currency is stable and hasn't fluctuated too much over recent times.

Morocco is still very much a cash society. Throughout the country it is very difficult to cash traveller's cheques or use credit cards. It is best not to rely on your credit card in Morocco. Though some large, tourist-friendly shops, especially the carpet emporiums will have the necessary equipment for payment by credit card, cash will be the only form of payment accepted when paying for smaller purchases. ATMs are prevalent throughout the country, and cards bearing the cirrus, Plus, and maestro symbols are generally accepted. When it is possible to pay by credit card for goods and services, MasterCard and Visa are accepted, but rarely American Express. Diner's Club cards are not accepted in Morocco.

Bring some foreign currency with you for your Moroccan tour, as it's always best not to rely solely on being able to use an ATM when and where you want. Crusty will inform you as to when and where you can access or exchange your money, and will advise you as to how much dirham you should plan to have in your wallet at any given time. Euros are by far the easiest foreign currency to exchange and is often accepted as payment if you do not have any dirham on hand. US dollars and British pounds can be exchanged at banks and bureaux de change, but will rarely be accepted as payment. Frustratingly, most banks and bureaux de change **do not exchange** pre-2000 US notes, or the new series-F British pound notes that began circulation in early 2007. Scottish pounds, South African rand, and both Australian and New Zealand dollars are **not exchangeable** in Morocco.

As the dirham is not traded internationally, there is no money changing black market and exchange rates vary only marginally between banks, bureaux de change and even most hotels. Changing money at bureaux de change is quicker than at banks although some banks do have dedicated booths just for money exchange. You can usually exchange dirhams back into hard currency at Marrakech airport but do not totally rely on this. They may ask for an exchange receipt, so keep a few handy along your travels. Duty free shops past the immigration counters do not accept dirham.

There is always a problem making change in Morocco, and it is often difficult to pay with large banknotes. Always be on the lookout for smaller denomination bank notes (10 and 20) and dirham coins as this will make your life easier during the daily trials of gratuities, expected for any service including taking photos of people and paying for inexpensive everyday goods such as bottled water. Crusty will always have a ready supply of change on hand, should you require.

How much spending money to bring? Our spending habits all vary ie. whether you smoke or drink, what souvenirs you want to buy or any extra activities you may want to do. Whilst you are on tour with us most of your meals are included, so keeping this in mind we recommend you allow up to AUD50/USD45/GBP25 per day.

#### LOCAL COSTS (in Moroccan dirham)

Bottle of water (small):	3	Bottle of water (large):	7
Cup of tea/coffee:	5	Local beer:	10
750ml bottle of wine:	50-150	Snacks (crisps, nuts, chocolates):	10-30
Local taxi ride	10-20	Evening restaurant meal w/out alcohol:	40-250+
Berber carpet (small-medium)	1000-5000+	Spices (per 100g/1/4 pound)	20

## LANGUAGE

Although most westerners presume Moroccans simply speak 'Arabic', the situation on the ground is definitely more complicated. Morocco's indigenous Berbers had already been speaking their native tongue - nowadays collectively called *Amazight* - for thousands of years, before the Islamic-fuelled Arab invaders of the 8th century imposed on the region the language of their holy Koran. Over time, this Koranic language has become known as **Classical Arabic** - the language of religion and scholarship. Its relation to the spoken varieties of today can be compared with that of Latin to the modern Romance languages. It is still learnt formally in most Arabic schools, and has changed little since the days of Mohammed.

However Classical Arabic is not used in the everyday lives of Arabic speakers. **Modern Standard Arabic** (MSA) evolved from Classical Arabic into the *lingua franca* of the Arabic world, and is the official language of many nations, including Morocco. There are no native speakers of MSA, and it is rarely the mother tongue of the majority of Arabic-speaking people. The vast majority of educated Arabs learn it through formal schooling, while others without formal schooling in MSA can understand it with varying degrees of proficiency. In Morocco, MSA is mainly used in formal situations such as religious sermons, news broadcasts and newspapers and governmental literature and speeches but rarely in conversation.

Moroccans, both Arab and Berber generally converse in what is called **Moroccan Arabic**, also sometimes referred to as *Darija*. Moroccan Arabic contains fewer vowel sounds, sounds more guttural, and appears to be spoken twice as quickly than MSA, and is at times very similar in pronunciation to Amazight. Influences from Morocco's most recent occupiers, the **French** and **Spanish** are also audible in many words, resulting in a distinctly local dialect that other than for some Algerians and Tunisians, is difficult to understand for other Arabic-speaking peoples. Having evolved somewhat haphazardly from MSA, Moroccan Arabic is mainly a spoken language. This has caused unique problems within the country, as while around 60% of the population have some form of literacy, half of these people are proficient only in Moroccan Arabic and have major problems deciphering and understanding MSA. In addition to this, the native tongue of some Moroccans is neither language, but is one of the Amazight dialects. Although it is sometimes described as lacking the prestige compared to MSA or even French, Moroccan Arabic continues to evolve even today, especially in urban centres. French and English words are being integrated, while conversely some old French and Spanish words are being replaced with MSA.

Under King Mohammed VI, the government has begun efforts to acknowledge the language's popularity, with social workers now conducting education and health awareness programmes in Moroccan Arabic, while Moroccan Arabic-language magazines are beginning to be seen on newsstands, and a recent liberalization of the air waves has seen a number of new radio stations broadcasting in the language. All of these are serving to break down Morocco's unique language barrier amongst its own people.

For the non-Moroccan, both Moroccan Arabic and French will be as useful as each other when travelling in the country. While Moroccan Arabic is the language of everyday conversation between Moroccans, most Moroccans instantly revert to French or a confusing combination of both when conversing with a westerner. French is still taught throughout much of the country's secondary education system, is used in some print and television media and is still the primary language of business, commerce, and some government. For example, all bank and bureau de change workers will converse with the traveller in French, sometimes even after greetings in Moroccan Arabic by the traveller.

But never fear ye English-speaking Compass Odyssey travellers, in the majority of the regions we will be visiting on our tour, **English** has become quite prevalent and when combined with an impromptu bout of charades, most of our travellers seem to get by. We are constantly amazed at the ease with which many Moroccans have picked up English including slang without any formal learning. We have encountered camel herders, parking attendants, shop assistants, and even street children who can hold a very good conversation in English. Our advice is to at least learn a few Moroccan Arabic pleasantries, especially "hello" and "thank you" - Crusty will happily assist in this.

In keeping with our Compass Odyssey values, we find that by merely attempting to converse with Moroccans in their own language delivers a feeling of mutual respect, and quite often results in extra assistance that may well be the difference between getting a bargain or being ripped off, and being shown the way out of a medina or being ignored.

Most of the sounds in Moroccan Arabic are similar to English, and correspond to the Roman letters used to represent them here.

Notable exceptions are:

'ai' is pronounced as 'eye';

'ei' is pronounced as the 'ai' in 'bait';

'gh' is a sound made in the back of the throat, similar to the rolling 'r' sound in French and Spanish;

'kh' comes from even deeper in the throat, and is a similar sound to the 'ch' in the Scottish 'loch';

'ou' is pronounced as 'w';

'ow' is pronounced as the 'ow' in 'cow';

'r' is pronounced with a rolling tongue;

's' should always be pronounced as in 'say' and not as the 'z' in season; and

'zh' is pronounced as the 's' in 'pleasure'.

Other peculiarities for non-Arabic speaking people are:

- The glottal stop (ʔ), a sound like that made when pronouncing 'uh-oh'.

- The letters ä, i, ö, ü, which are stressed vowels and should be spoken as a longer sound than is normal in English. For example, ä is pronounced as the 'a' in 'father', i as the 'ee' in 'bee', ö as the 'oa' in 'coat', and ü as the 'oo' in 'boot'.

- Double consonants, where the stressed consonant should also be emphasized, as in the 'z' in 'bezzef'.

English	French	Moroccan Arabic
Yes/No	Oui/Non	iyeh/la
Okay	D'accord	wakha
Please	S'il vous plaît	'afak
Thank you	Merci	shukran
Thank you very much	Merci beaucoup	shukran bezzef
You're welcome	De rien	bla zhmil
Hello (during daylight)	Bonjour	ssalamü 'lekum
Good evening	Bonsoir	msel khir
Goodbye	Au revoir	beslama
What's your name?	Comment vous appelez-vous?	ashnü smitek?
My name is	Je m'appelle	smitti
How are you?	Comment allez-vous?	ki deir? or labas?
I'm sorry/excuse me	Pardon	smeh liya
Do you speak English?	Parlez-vous Anglais?	wäsh kat' ref negliziya?
I don't speak French	Je ne parle pas Français	matan' refsh Ifaransiya
I don't speak Arabic	Je ne parle pas Arabe	matan' refsh larabiya
I don't understand	Je ne comprends pas	mafhemtsh



## More Information and Reading

### WEBSITES

Morocco	<a href="http://www.tourisme.gov.ma">www.tourisme.gov.ma</a> <a href="http://www.visitmorocco.org">www.visitmorocco.org</a>
Maghreb Arabe Presse (English-language news)	<a href="http://www.map.ma">www.map.ma</a>
Tingis, a Moroccan-American e-magazine	<a href="http://www.tingismagazine.com">www.tingismagazine.com</a>
Moroccan lifestyle e-magazine, based in Fes	<a href="http://riadzany.blogspot.com">http://riadzany.blogspot.com</a>
Berber culture, history, and politics	<a href="http://www.amazigh-voice.com">www.amazigh-voice.com</a>

### BOOKS & FILM

One of the most celebrated and prolific writers of Moroccan themes was Paul Bowles. Born in New York City on 30 December 1910, Bowles was published at age seventeen, abandoned college, and in 1929 began his life of travels with a trip to Paris, where he hoped to establish himself as a poet. Back in New York in 1930, he studied composition with Aaron Copland, whom he also accompanied to Paris, Berlin, and Tangier. Bowles became one of the pre-eminent composers of American theatre music, producing works for William Saroyan, Tennessee Williams, and others. In 1938 he married the aspiring writer Jane Auer, who shortly after achieved critical acclaim for her first novel, *Two Serious Ladies*. Inspired by her success and dedication to writing, Bowles began his own career as an author, eventually surpassing his already successful reputation as a composer. For the next 50 years he produced numerous and acclaimed works of fiction, essays, travel writing, poems, autobiographical pieces, and other works, many of them influenced by his adopted hometown of Tangier, where he and Jane settled in 1947. He also translated a great number of tales from Moroccan story tellers, such as Mohammed Mrabet. A 1989 reprint of *The Sheltering Sky* and Bernardo Bertolucci's 1990 film version of the novel, starring Debra Winger and John Malkovich revived international interest in Bowles, the writer. He died in Tangier on 18 November, 1999.

*The Sheltering Sky, Let It Come Down, and The Spider's House* by Paul Bowles

Bowles's 1949 novel *The Sheltering Sky* centres on Port & Kit Moresby, a married couple originally from New York who travel to the North African desert accompanied by their irritating friend, Tunner. The journey, initially an attempt by the couple to resolve their marital difficulties, quickly becomes fraught with danger due to utter ignorance of their surroundings - including hostile Arabs, French colonialists, the desert and themselves. The last of this book's three sections, when Kit is given over to her fate in the desert, is a most powerful piece of writing.

First published in 1952, *Let It Come Down* plots the doomed, downward spiral of Nelson Dyar, a New York bank teller who comes to Tangier in search of a different life and ends up giving in to his darkest impulses. Rich in descriptions of the corruption and decadence that characterised "InterZone" Tangier in the last days before Moroccan independence, Bowles's second novel is an alternately comic and horrific account of a descent into self-destruction.

Set in Fes during the 1954 nationalist uprising, *The Spider's House* is perhaps Bowles's most outstanding novel, richly descriptive of its setting and uncompromising in its characterizations. The story explores the recurring theme in many of Bowles's writings, the dilemma of the outsider in an alien society, and the gap in understanding between cultures. *The Spider's House* is dramatic, brutally honest and shockingly relevant to today's political situation in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Jennifer Baichwal's poetic and moving 1998 documentary *Let It Come Down: The Life Of Paul Bowles* shows rare, candid interviews with the reclusive Bowles at his home in Tangier, as well as in New York during an extraordinary final reunion with fellow writers Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs. Conflicting views from his supporters and detractors are also interspersed throughout the film. At the time in his mid-eighties, Bowles speaks with unprecedented candour about his work, his controversial private life and his relationships with Gertrude Stein, Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, the Beat writers and his wife and fellow author Jane Bowles.

*Lords of the Atlas* by Gavin Maxwell

Set in Marrakech and the kasbahs of the High Atlas mountains, this book is the classic account of Madani and T'hami el Glaoui, warlord brothers who carved out a feudal fiefdom over much of southern Morocco from 1893-1956. It is a story of brutal power and cultural beauty, of palaces with hundreds of rooms, and of heads piled high around cannons. Propped up by the French colonial administration, the brothers combined the aggression of gangland mobsters with the opulence of hereditary Indian princes, and ruled with a mixture of flamboyance and terror. Still riding high when T'hami travelled to London for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, the el Glaoui regime toppled like a pack of cards only three years later when Moroccan independence was finally won. Maxwell spent years researching this story, travelling by Land Rover and mule to reach the far-flung villages where the el Galouis got their start.

*Hideous Kinky* by Esther Freud

Daughter of British painter Lucian Freud and great-granddaughter of Dr Sigmund Freud, Esther Freud skillfully and playfully presents life on the road in 1960s Morocco as seen through the eyes of a five-year-old girl travelling with her well-meaning hippie mother and determined, rebellious elder sister. The story is a strange, wonderful book, full of evocative description, bright humour and undisguisable charm. The descriptions of life in Marrakech as it was in the 60s are especially riveting. The book was made into a film by the same name in 1998 starring Kate Winslet as the disenchanted, whimsical mother.

*La prisonnière* by Malika Oufkir and Michèle Fitoussi

The story revolves around the Oufkir family, who were, at one time, a prominent, highly respected and well known Moroccan family. Their story is told by Malika Oufkir, who is the eldest daughter of General Mohammed Oufkir, King Hassan II's strong man who tried to oust him from power in 1972. After the aborted coup, the General was executed and his immediate family was placed under house arrest. Four months later, along with two loyal family retainers who volunteered to share their fate, the family were whisked away to the first of several squalid, desert prisons that were to house them for the next 20 years. This book forced Hassan II in July 1999 (two weeks before his death) to express, reluctantly but publicly, his "regrets" over the way the Oufkir family was treated during their imprisonment for no other reason than being the wife and children of General Oufkir. It is not necessarily brilliant literature but it is the story of overcoming adversity that is truly breathtaking.

## GUIDE BOOKS

*Frommer's Morocco* by Darren Humphrys

Darren's first solely-authored guidebook was released in April, 2008, with a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition published two years later. Although you may prefer to simply have 'the real thing' in the form of Darren the Guide, reading the book before you arrive may assist you with your preparations and prior knowledge.

*The Rough Guide to Morocco*

We feel the Rough Guide series is far superior to Lonely Planet. Darren worked on some of the chapters for the 8<sup>th</sup> edition. Rough Guide guidebooks are highly regarded for their in-depth history features.

*Time Out Marrakech, Essaouira & the High Atlas*

The best guidebook dedicated to Marrakech and Essaouira. The information is relevant, up-to-date and easy to read, and the maps extensive and navigable. A good choice if you plan to extend your stay in Marrakech after our time together.

**MUSIC & DANCE** by Rachel Blech, music journalist & presenter, and good friend.

Just as a country's history can be revealed through its architecture, from imperial palaces to crumbling kasbahs, so the intricate musical textures of Morocco have stories to tell.

Tumbling quarter-tones and intoxicating rhythms beckon from every corner - be it a taxi's radio blaring out Arabic pop or *chaabi*, the snake-charmers' rasping oboe-like *raita*, or simply the soulful call of the muezzin from the mosque summoning the faithful to prayer, a reassuring chant which punctuates the day's chaotic symphony. Morocco is bursting at the seams with musical riches!

Morocco's indigenous people, the Berbers, provide the cultural firmament that gives the music a unique rustic flavour. For thousands of years the Berbers have populated the coastal plains, desert and mountains and even with the arrival of Arab invaders during the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Berber culture and identity has remained resolute. Berbers not only adopted the Muslim faith, but also incorporated the rich variety of musical influences brought from the Middle East. The Berbers have retained their own regional languages and traditions and there are many village festivals

attesting that these traditions are still very much alive. Folk music performs ritualistic, celebratory and social duties as well as providing a vehicle for broadcasting the news to generations of rural dwellers who might never have learned to read or write. In many regions, travelling poets or *rwais*, bring news of current affairs to the weekly souks. In small ensembles they sing with accompaniment on hand-crafted instruments including double-sided *duff* tambourines and the one-stringed fiddle or *rabab*. The context is usually celebratory and as such there is a rich stream of folkloric dance styles accompanying the music. In the High Atlas villagers in local costume will gather around an open-fire for a dance called the *ahouach*, in the Middle Atlas it's the *ahidous* where women will dance shoulder-to-shoulder in a large circle around the seated male musicians who play hand-held frame-drums called *bendir* and *ney* flutes.

If Berber village music represents a pastoral heritage, then the vestiges of Morocco's foreign military history can be found in its "classical" music, known as *andalous*. It stems from the Arabic invasion and subsequent Islamic domination of Spain's Iberian Peninsula from the early 8<sup>th</sup> century. For 500 years the Moors ruled the region known as Andalusia - a melting-pot of Spanish, Berber, Arabic and Jewish influences. The complex structure of andalous music is largely attributed to a composer named Ziryab, who travelled to Cordoba from Baghdad in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and created a highly stylised classical system of suites called *nuba*, each *nuba* corresponding to a time of day. The music was traditionally performed in courtly settings on state occasions and, though it is still viewed as Morocco's "high art", it remains very popular among the general public, with concerts being broadcast every evening on TV during Ramadan. The typical *andalous* orchestra uses *rabab*, *oud* (lute), *kamenjah* (European-style violin played vertically), *kanuun* (zither), *darbouka* (goblet-shaped drum) and *taarija* (tambourine). When the Arabs were driven back out of Spain during the Inquisitions of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the music was dispersed across Morocco and today the most famous orchestras can be found in Fes, Tetouan, Tangier and Rabat.

Morocco's position at the northern edge of Africa and at the western extreme of the Arab world gave it a key role in trade with Europe and beyond - spices, salt, gold and slaves were all valuable commodities. From this emerged another distinct type of music and dance - *gnaoua*. The Gnaoua people are descendants of slaves originally captured by the Arabs during 17<sup>th</sup> century in Guinea, Mali and Sudan and brought across the Sahara for onward trading and to serve the sultans in Morocco. Gnaoua music can be recognized by its call-and-response blues-like style and its instruments - the bass lute or *gimbri*, the persistent rhythms of metal castanets or *qraqeb* and the acrobatic leaps of the vividly robed dancer-musicians who form the troupe. The effect is intentionally hypnotic - tassels swirling from the dancers' skullcaps and the cyclic groove are all designed to induce a trance-like state in the audience. Gnaoua music is not just an entertainment, but it has a deeply rooted spiritual and healing purpose derived from the Sufi tradition of Islam and ancient Sub-Saharan African rituals. The healing ceremonies, or *lilas*, take place from dusk till dawn and are conducted by a priestess who invokes ancient African spirits, or *djinn*, and Islamic saints. For many years respectable Moroccans shunned the music, but now it is openly performed and has pride of place at the annual Gnaoua Music Festival in Essaouira, which attracts crowds of 400,000 people.

Heading south towards the Sahara desert, the insistent rhythms of the city slow to a more reflective pace in the valleys of Ziz, Dra and Souss and beyond to the Western Sahara. Like the mountains, the desert also yields a wealth of folkloric music. The Souss valley is the home of the *guedra* dance of the Saharan nomads or "Blue Men". The word "guedra" means cooking pot and it is that pot covered with an animal hide that forms the drum. To a hypnotic heartbeat rhythm, a female dancer remains kneeling and carves mesmerizing movements with her arms and fingers while swaying her head from left to right. It's said that the ritual can attract a mate from miles away. From south of Agadir comes the *tissint* or "dagger dance" which forms a central part of

marriage ceremonies amongst desert nomads. To a crescendo of drums the couple perform a passionate duet in which the groom holds a dagger and circles around the girl. He then raises the dagger and puts it around the neck of the young girl before collapsing to his knees. Further north, where the rivers of Ziz and Rheris meet in the Tafilalt, is another type of desert music called *al baldi* that draws upon Berber, Arab, African and Andalusian influences in songs about religious and social issues.

Political and social themes find expression in many modern Moroccan music forms and towards the fringes of the long-disputed territory of Western Sahara one is far more likely to hear the yearning voice of Saharwi refugees living in exile in Mauritania than the classical strains of andalous. The music is sparse, poetic and dominated by female singers such as *Dimi Mint Abba* who play a small stringed harp-lute called an *ardin* and are often accompanied by a solo electric guitar. Hugely popular also is *rai* music originating from western Algeria and once rooted in Bedouin music. The word "rai" means "opinion" and Moroccans have produced their own home-grown variety that reflects contemporary and controversial views on social issues.

Morocco has a stunning variety of folk music and colourful dance traditions that can only be touched upon here. There are over 700 festivals every year to visit and each region has it's own particular flavour. There are ancient songs remaining virtually unaltered, traditions that have evolved into other genres and there are many exciting new fusions emerging due to the ever-present influence of the Western world...jazz, electronica, hip-hop, house and rock. From the stereotypical image of seductive belly-dancers (*raks sharqi*), to the flamboyant balancing act of candle-tray dancing (*raks al senniyya*) found in the North, Morocco will never fail to fascinate the curious traveller.