

BIG FIVE[®]

TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

Enriching Lives Through Distinctive Journeys

Destination Information Guide

Morocco



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Welcome to the World of Big Five!

The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



Marrakech Average High Temperature

Years on Record: 21

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
°F	79	64	67	72	74	80	87	98	98	90	80	72	66

Marrakech Average Low Temperature

Years on Record: 21

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
°F	56	43	47	50	53	57	62	69	69	66	59	52	47

Agadir Average High Temperature

Years on Record: 19

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	74	68	69	72	71	73	80	90	90	80	74	69

Agadir Average Low Temperature

Years on Record: 19

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
°F	57	47	50	53	55	59	62	65	66	65	60	55	49

WEATHER

Weather varies according to region. The coast has a warm, Mediterranean climate, tempered on the eastern coast by southwest trade winds. Inland areas have a hotter, drier, continental climate. Cooler climate prevails in the mountains. In the south, the weather is very hot and dry throughout most of the year, with the nights coolest in the months of December and January.

November to March is the rainy season in coastal areas while the summer is mostly dry with high temperatures. Average temperatures in Marrakech during June - 82°F; July & August - 98°F, but can rise to 110°F. In Agadir, June & September 79°F; July & August 89°F. Rainfall is irregular and diminish progressively from north to south, and from west to east.

There are six Atlas Mountain areas: the south (Siroua and Saghro) are a barrier between the Sahara and High Atlas Mountains of the Mgoun and Toubkal/Oukaimeden - stark, volcanic and hot and dry. The south-western Anti-Atlas Mountains (around Tafraoute, south of Agadir) are invariably dry. The peaks are snow-capped between November and April in the Mgoun and Toubkal ranges.

TIME ZONES

Morocco is GMT, GMT+1 from 1st June to 31st August.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passports: For international travel, a passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing at least 3 blank pages are necessary.

Visas: Many countries require travelers to obtain visas prior to arrival. Big Five Tours & Expeditions has appointed Trivisa to process required visas for our passengers. You can find the necessary forms from Trivisa's website at: www.trivisa.com. Please use account code JP1551, and follow the directions.

Important: Even if you do not need a visa prior to departure, please check your passport well in advance of departure to insure:

- 1) It is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa/entry stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: *Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.*

Note: Remember to carry with you in a safe place photocopies of all important documents in the event your

passport or other documents are lost or stolen. Also, it's a good idea to have a passport photo with you. As a tourist, you will need to produce your passport when booking in at hotels, changing money or travelers' checks and prove your identity whenever requested by a policeman.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Upon arrival, proceed through immigration and baggage claims and customs. Big Five personnel or their representatives will assist you with your baggage and escort you to your hotel. They will assist with check-in formalities. **Airport Departure Tax:** None at this time.

Duty-Free Items: The import and export of Moroccan currency is prohibited, but any amount of foreign currency may be brought in. The following may be imported duty-free: 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco; one liter of spirits and one liter of wine; 50g of perfume, a camera, a pair of binoculars, a musical instrument, camping equipment, and reasonable amounts of coffee and tea.

Prohibited Items: All narcotics (hemp, opium, cocaine, morphine, heroin, etc.), firearms, obscene literature, pictures, or articles. Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

U.S. Customs: Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. Regulations frequently change, so check with your nearest customs office for a list of restricted and exempt items. You can also write to the U.S. Customs Service at Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044, or visit their web site at www.customs.ustreas.gov.

HEALTH REQUIRMENTS

Visitors to Africa should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. Be prepared to take precautions against sunburn with sunscreen and lip balm.

No vaccination certificate is required for visitors coming from Europe or America. An anti-cholera vaccination certificate may be required of visitors coming from areas where the disease is prevalent.

Malaria: Anti-malarial treatment is not necessary. There is a minimal malaria risk, exclusively in the benign vivax form, from May to October in rural areas in provinces of Beni Mellal, Chefchaouèn, El Kelâa Srarhna, Larache,

Khouribga, Khénifra, Khémisset, Settat, Taounate and Taza.

Rabies: Present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. Bilharzia (schistosomiasis) is present. Avoid swimming in fresh water. Swimming pools that are well-chlorinated and maintained are safe. Soil parasites are also present so wear shoes. Hepatitis A and E also occur.

Medical Treatment: There are good medical facilities in all main cities, particularly in Rabat, Marrakech, Fes and Casablanca. Private clinics and hospitals meet high quality standards. Emergency pharmacies (sometimes in the Town Hall) operate outside normal opening hours. Government hospitals provide free or minimal charge emergency treatment. Full health insurance is essential.

Please note: If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage.

Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel. U.S. medical insurance is not always valid outside the United States. U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States. Doctors and hospitals in Morocco often expect immediate cash payment for health services. Uninsured travelers, who require medical care overseas, may face extreme difficulties.

For more information: please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. Or, visit the CDC Internet home page at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.*

Lightweight cottons and linens are best during summer, with warm medium weights for evenings during winter and in the mountains. Waterproof materials are advisable in the wet season, particularly on the coast and in the mountains. Whatever the season, it's wise to pack a few warm items of clothing in addition to cool, cotton, summer clothing. In early spring and autumn, a warm

jacket or coat is necessary in the evenings, especially in the mountains and areas near the Sahara, where the temperature can drop quite dramatically after sunset. Along the coast, evenings can be cool and damp throughout the year. During the daytime, however, it gets rather warm, and you would do well to wear lightweight clothes, as well as a good pair of sunglasses and sun protection for your head. If on a dromedary ride - bring long trousers and a big hat.

Proper Attire: Please observe appropriate dress codes when visiting religious sanctuaries, buildings, sites, or palaces, where modesty is the rule. If you are inappropriately dressed, you may not be allowed to enter. Casual clothing is acceptable for tourists, but we discourage short shorts, halter-tops, or muscle shirts worn in public.

LUGGAGE

*For general baggage information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials.*

Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions apply for charter flights. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final documents.

MONEY

Currency: Moroccan Dirham (Dh) = 100 centimes. Notes are in denominations of Dh200, 100, 50, 20 and 10; coins in denominations of Dh10, 5 and 1, and 50, 20, 10 and 5 centimes.

Currency exchange: Moroccan Dirhams can be obtained only in Morocco. Travelers can exchange currency at hotel reception desks or at banks. There is no commission charge for exchanging cash. Visitors will be issued with a receipt that they must keep in order to exchange Moroccan currency back into the original national currency before departure. Money can be withdrawn in banks with a credit card or with an ATM card directly from a cash dispenser in most cities. Personal checks will not be accepted. **Credit cards:** Most credit cards are accepted. Check with your credit card company for details. **Traveler's checks:** Travelers checks are accepted but you will be charged a fee.

COMMUNICATION

The official language is Arabic. Berber dialects are spoken by large minority. French is often used in business, government, and diplomacy. Spanish is also spoken in some areas, and English is understood, particularly in the north and in main tourist areas.

ELECTRICITY

Usually 220 volts. Older buildings and a few areas still use 110 volt sockets, but you are unlikely to be visiting these areas. Two pin, round, plugs are used.

FOOD & DRINK

Bottled water is available and is recommended. Use it also for brushing teeth and cleaning contacts. Drinking water outside main cities and towns may be contaminated and sterilization is advisable. Milk is pasteurized unless you buy it fresh in the countryside, in which case it should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available, but make sure that it is reconstituted with pure water.

The national drink is mint tea. Coffee is prepared very strong. Laws on alcohol are fairly liberal for non-Muslim visitors. In cities, bars are open for both locals and tourists. Check with your guide about which are recommended for tourists.

Morocco's traditional dishes are excellent, and often elaborate. Specialties include harira, a rich soup; bastella, a pastry stuffed with pigeon and almonds; couscous, an all-in-one dish of semola, meat, and vegetables. Tagine comes in several versions and may include meat, fish, or poultry that is combined with vegetables and other ingredients, and is stewed in terracotta dishes over charcoal fires. Mechoui is roasted lamb. Pastries are delicious, and include kab el ghzal, briouats, beghrir, served with almonds and honey.

To be safe, eat well-cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Note: If you have food allergies or are on a special/restricted diet, please notify your travel agent or our office in advance, so that we may try to comply with your needs. Also, please advise your travel agent or our office if you have any mobility restrictions, so that we may inform our representatives accordingly. They will always strive to accommodate you to the best of their ability.

TIPPING

Tipping should be done at your discretion and as a reward for good or exceptional service.

For general tipping guidelines please refer to:
www.cntraveler.com/travel-tips/travel-etiquette/2008/12/Etiquette-101-Tipping-Guide

SHOPPING

Crafts are a staple of Morocco. Coopartim, state sanctioned cooperatives sell local handicrafts at fixed prices and issue an authenticity receipt or a certificate of origin for customs when exporting. Souks are also worthwhile places to visit for local products.

Maronquinerie (leatherware) has been highly prized among traders since the 16th century. The country is also known for its production of wool rugs and carpets, pottery, jewelry, brassware, woodwork, silver, copperware; and silk or cotton garments.

Painted and sculpted panels for interior decoration are commonplace, and intricate tiled ornamentation still graces the interior of various medersas and other religious buildings and wealthy homes. The mashrabiyya, screens allowing Muslim women to observe the goings-on in the street unseen, survive also. While these items aren't likely candidates for souvenirs, they do serve to show that Moroccan crafts aren't completely dependent on floods of tourists.

Bargaining is essential, and good buys generally work out at around a third of asking price. In the south there are Berber carpet auctions, especially in Marrakech, Taroudannt, and Tiznit. Visitors will need a guide to make the best of these occasions.

CUSTOMS IN MOROCCO

Greeting: Handshaking is the customary form of greeting. Many of manners and social customs emulate French manners, particularly in the middle class. The visitor may find, in some social situations, that patience and firmness will pay dividends.

Often visitors may find themselves the center of unsolicited attention. In towns, young boys after money will be eager to act as guide, sell goods, or simply charge for a photograph while unofficial guides will always offer advice or services. The visitor should be courteous but wary of the latter.

Normal social courtesies should be observed in someone's home. Casual wear is widely acceptable, although swimsuits and shorts should be confined to the beach or poolside. Smoking is widespread and it is customary to offer cigarettes.

Religious Sites: Non-Muslims are not allowed in any mosques in Morocco with the exception of Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca and Moulay Ismail Mosque in Meknes. Remember to show respect when touring religious sites. In a Muslim mosque, men should wear hats and women should be well covered with slacks or a long skirt, a long-sleeved blouse buttoned to the neck, and a scarf over the hair. All should remove their shoes before entering the mosque. Avoid entering a mosque if there is a religious gathering.

MOROCCO'S IMPERIAL CITIES

Casablanca, Rabat, Meknes, Fes, and Marrakech are known as the imperial cities because each served as the country's capital at one time.

Rabat: Rabat, fourth of the imperial cities, became Morocco's capital city during the early days of French occupation. Rabat also has its own international airport (for flights from Paris) The city dates back to the 12th Century, and was built high on the banks of the Bouregreg River. It became a haven for Muslims and Jews driven from Spain during the Spanish Inquisition in the 1600s. The city's ambience is a mix of Islamic and European influences, and can be seen in the number of European-style cafes as well as religious sites. The city is most famous for the Tour Hassan, the incomplete minaret of the great mosque begun by Yacoub al-Mansour. An earthquake brought construction to a halt in 1755. Nearby is the Mausoleum of Mohammed V, the present king's grandfather.

The Kasbah des Oudaias, built on the bluff overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, houses a former palace that is today a museum of traditional art. The ancient city of Salé, also known as Chella, sits just outside the city and is home to Morocco's finest archaeology museum. Most of the city's hotels and restaurants are between the beautiful central park (Jardins Triangle de Vue) and Rabat's main train station.

Casablanca: In the 1942 classic Casablanca, Hollywood immortalized the name of this city, forever associating it with the quintessential expatriate living in an exotic outpost. But modern Casablanca is far from the quaint and mysterious image painted in this and other films. It is Morocco's largest city and industrial center. This port city was remodeled by the French, who put in place wide boulevards, public parks and imposing Mauresque (Moorish) buildings, including those found in the square known as Place Mohammed V. The city's medina, or ancient quarter, is worth visiting. The Hassan II Mosque is one of the largest in the world. Casablanca shares the Mohammed V airport with Rabat.

Marrakesh: Marrakesh is a lively former capital famed for its markets and festivals, and remains one of the most important cultural centers in the country. The Place Djemaa el-Fna is a huge square in the old city, where rows of open-air food stalls perfume the air with mouth-watering aromas. Jugglers, storytellers, snake charmers, magicians, and acrobats are among the characters you'll see here. The souqs (markets) here are among the best in Morocco. The old quarter (Medina) is home to the

splendid Almoravid-style Koubba Ba'adiyn mosque annex, the magnificent Koutoubia Mosque and the Palais Dar Si Said (Museum of Moroccan Arts). Trains and buses to this inland city run regularly from Casablanca and Rabat.

Fès: Oldest of the imperial cities, Fès is the symbolic heart of Morocco to many people. The city's founding dates back to the end of the 8th Century, Idriss I founded the city along the right bank of the Oued Fès River after fleeing persecution by the Abbassids of Baghdad. The medina of Fès el-Bali (Old Fès) is one of the largest living medieval cities in the world, and the gates and walls that surround it make it all the more magnificent. UNESCO has designated the entirety of the Fez Medina a World Monument. Unlike many walled cities of this vintage, Old Fès hasn't burst its banks. The population has instead exploded out towards the southwest and spread to the hillsides in an arc stretching north and south of the new city. Within the old city, tucked among roughly 9,400 streets and alleys, is the towering Medersa Bou Inania, a theological college built in 1350. Not far from here the henna souq is a market specializing in the dye used for coloring hair and tattooing women's hands and feet. Next door to the old walled city is Fès el-Jdid, home to the city's Jewish community in the Mellah, and many spectacular buildings. In between the two self-contained cities is the Dar Batha, now the Museum du Batha. Fès is best reached by train from Rabat, Marrakesh or Tangier.

Tangier: While it's a compelling sort of city and a popular port of entry for tourists, Tangier is also home to some of the world's best hustlers. Perched on Morocco's northern tip, its international flavor remains strong; as does its reputation for inspiring shady deals and foreign misfits.

The city's central Petit Socco is the focus of attention. Back in the days when Tangier was a neutral international zone, this area provided the background for the seediest of lifestyles and it hasn't completely lost this air, with the kasbah being of great interest. It contains the 17th-century Dar el-Makhzen, the former sultan's palace and now a good museum. The nearby American Legation Museum is a fascinating reminder that Morocco was the first country to recognize American Independence. Tangier is five hours from Rabat by train, and an easy ferry ride from Spain or Gibraltar.

TRAVELED DISTANCE AND APPROXIMATE DRIVING TIMES:

City limits to city limits (not taking into account traffic within each city)

CAS/RBA: 110km 1hr10mins

RBA/FES: 210km 2 1/2 hrs direct

RBA/MEKNES/VOLUBILIS/FES: 270km 5hrs w/visits/lunch en-route

CAS/RBA/MKNS/VOL/FES: 390kms 8hrs w/visits/lunch en-route

FES/RAK: 510 kms 7 1/2hrs summer w/lunch en-route: 9hrs winter w/lunch en-route

FES/ERFOUD: 480kms: 7 3/4hrs summer w/lunch en-route: 8 1/2-10 hrs winter w/lunch en-route (+1hr to Saharan bivouac @ Erg Chebbi)

ERFOUD/OUARZAZATE: 420kms 7 hours w/lunch

OUARZAZATE/MARRAKECH: 230kms 4 1/2hrs summer w/visit Ait Ben Haddou: 6hrs winter w/visit ABH

MARRAKECH/ESSAOUIRA: 180kms 1 3/4 hours

ESSAOUIRA/CASABLANCA: 350kms 4 1/4 hours direct

ESSAOUIRA/CASABLANCA (via Safi, El Jadida, Azemmour) 380kms 7hrs w/visits/lunch en-route

MARRAKECH/CASABLANCA: 250kms 2 3/4 hrs

SUGGESTED READING LIST

Many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, etc., many books relating to this destination. Here are a few selections we thought might interest you. Longitude Books at <http://www.longitudebooks.com> has an extensive collection of books, searchable by country.

THE MAGIC OF MOROCCO

Tahar Ben Jalloun, Alain D'Hooghe

The magic of Morocco has enticed many visitors to its people and places. Delacroix and Matisse created some essential works there. William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, and Jack Kerouac all responded to the magnetic pull of Morocco — its promising smiles, its heady dust and perfume in the air, the curves of the dunes as far as the eye can see. Richly illustrated.

MOROCCO MODERN: WORLD DESIGN

Herbert Ypma, Herbert Ypma

Colorfully ethnic and stylishly urban, Morocco is a visually sophisticated nation. By the time this unique Islamic nation emerged into the modern world, history had begun to recognize the importance of ancient artistic traditions. Emphasizing the basic concept that design has become a marriage of decorative object and architectural space, Morocco Modern highlights the details that lend character to these traditions. 150 full-color photos.

MOROCCO: SAHARA TO THE SEA

Mary Cross, Preface by Paul Bowles

Morocco: Sahara to the Sea presents photographs of ancient peoples who lead a strongly independent way of life, whose customs have resisted incursions by the modern world but are nonetheless threatened. Choosing subjects in which history impinges on the present, where architecture gives expression to the country's past, and where natural surroundings offer a continuing commentary on the lives of the people within the landscape, Cross has assembled a stunning collection of more than 120 striking images.

MOROCCO SINCE 1830: A HISTORY

C. R. Pennell

The first general history in English of Morocco in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Morocco Since 1830: A History explores the profound changes that have affected social relations in Morocco over the last 150 years, especially those between the sexes, and between linguistic identities and cultures.

Although the country has returned to roughly its pre-colonial boundaries, Morocco still suffers from the effects of colonization by France and Spain. Its current king, like the sultans of the nineteenth century, claims legitimacy through his leadership of the Islamic

community, but there is a long tradition of dissent based on Islamic ideals. Morocco's history is also marked by the enduring presence of a large Jewish community.

This comprehensive political and cultural portrait examines the tactics used by Moroccan rulers to cope with European penetration in the nineteenth century and colonialism in the twentieth, and, since the 1950s, to retain control of the independent state. As Pennell points out, however, the ruling dynasty is not sufficiently representative of modern Morocco, nor are political events the only influence on change. Many Moroccans live in poverty, and Pennell shows how their experiences are shaped by the quality of harvests, access to land and water, and external trade.

THE ROAD TO FEZ

Ruth Knafo Setton

After her mother's death, 18-year-old Brit Lek returns to Morocco, her birthplace and memory-house, to fulfill her mother's dying wish that she make a pilgrimage to Fez and the grave of Suleika, a 19th-century Jewish martyr revered by both Arabs and Jews. But Brit gets sidetracked when she falls in love with her Uncle Gaby, her mother's passionate, restless younger brother. Gaby strains to break free from the borders of his life as a Jew in Morocco. Moving easily between the Jewish Mellah and the Arab Medina, Gaby offers a window for Brit to see beyond the confines of their family's life in Morocco.

As Gaby and Brit's forbidden love deepens, their story is interwoven with that of Suleika, the 17-year-old Jewish woman who was killed because she refused to renounce her faith. Setton provides a backdrop composed of fragments of Suleika's brief, mysterious life - pieces of a puzzle that don't quite fit together. Who was Suleika? Why did she choose death over life? Did she fall in love with a handsome Arab boy, the Sultan, or her own brother?