

MOROCCO

Morocco officially the **Kingdom of Morocco**, is a country located in North Africa with a population of nearly 34 million and an area just under 447,000 km². The capital is Rabat, and the largest city is Casablanca. It has a coast on the Atlantic Ocean that reaches past the Strait of Gibraltar into the Mediterranean Sea. Morocco has international borders with Algeria to the east, Spain to the north (a water border through the Strait and land borders with two small Spanish autonomous cities, Ceuta and Melilla), and Mauritania to the south via its Western Saharan territories

History

Islamic Morocco

In the second half of the 7th century, the soldiers of the Prophet Mohammed set forth from the Arabian Peninsula and overwhelmed the peoples of North Africa. Within a century, nearly all Berber tribes had embraced Islam, although, true to form, local tribes developed their own brand of Islamic Shi'ism, which sparked rebellion against the eastern Arabs.

France took control in 1912, making its capital at [Rabat](#) and handing Spain a token zone in the north. Opposition from Berber mountain tribes was officially crushed, but continued to simmer away and moved into political channels with the development of the Istiqlal (independence) party

Royal Morocco

Under increasing pressure from Moroccans and the Allies, France allowed Mohammed V to return from exile in 1955, and Morocco successfully negotiated its independence from France and Spain in 1956.

When Mohammed V died suddenly of heart failure in 1961, King Hassan II became the leader of the new nation. Hassan II consolidated power by crackdowns on dissent and suspending parliament for a decade. With heavy borrowing and an ever-expanding bureaucracy, Morocco was deeply in debt by the 1970s. In 1973, the phosphate industry in the Spanish Sahara started to boom. Morocco staked its claim to the area and its lucrative phosphate reserves with the 350,000-strong Green March into Western Sahara in 1975, settling the area with Moroccans while greatly unsettling indigenous Sahrawi people agitating for self-determination.

Geography

At 172,402 square miles (446,550 km²), Morocco is the fifty-seventh largest country in the world (after Uzbekistan). It is comparable in size to Iraq, and is somewhat larger than the US state of California. Algeria borders Morocco to the east and southeast though the border between the two countries has been closed since 1994. There are also four Spanish enclaves on the Mediterranean coast: Ceuta, Melilla, Peñón de Vélez de la Gomera, Peñón de Alhucemas, and the Chafarinas islands, as well as the disputed islet Perejil. Off the Atlantic coast the Canary Islands belong to Spain, whereas Madeira to the north is Portuguese. To the north, Morocco is bordered by and controls part of the Strait of Gibraltar, giving it power over the waterways in and out of the Mediterranean Sea.

Morocco's capital city is Rabat; its largest city is its main port, Casablanca.

Other cities include Agadir, Essaouira, Fes, Marrakech, Meknes, Mohammadia, Oujda, Ouarzazat, Safi, Salè, Tangier and Tétouan

Climate

The climate is Mediterranean, which becomes more extreme towards the interior regions where it is mountainous. The terrain is such that the coastal plains are rich and accordingly, they comprise the

backbone for agriculture. Forests cover about 12% of the land while arable land accounts for 18%. 5% is irrigated

Morocco is at its best in spring (mid-March to May), when the country is lush and green, followed by autumn (September to November), when the heat of summer has eased.

Population: 34,859,364

Currency: Moroccan dirhams (MAD)

Getting there and around

The Moroccan bus company, **Compagnie de Transports Marocains** operates buses from Casablanca and most other main cities to France, Belgium, Spain, Germany and Italy. Buses to Spain leave Casablanca daily except Sunday. Book at least a week in advance.

Morocco's main international entry point is the **Mohammed V International Airport**, 30km southeast of Casablanca.

Taking your own vehicle to Morocco is straightforward. In addition to your vehicle registration document and an International Driving Permit (although many foreign licences, including US and EU, are acceptable), a Green Card (proof of insurance for your vehicle) is required from the car's insurer. Not all insurers cover Morocco, renting a car in Morocco isn't cheap. Morocco's train network is run by the **Office National des Chemins de Fer (ONCF; www.oncf.ma** in French). There are two lines that carry passengers: the line from **Tangier** in the north down to **Marrakesh**, and the line from Oujda in the northeast, also to **Marrakesh**, joining with the **Tangier** line at Sidi Kacem. The Belgian-made trains are comfortable, fast and preferable to buses. There are different 1st- and 2nd-class fares; 2nd-class is more than adequate.

More information

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