

Morocco

Morocco is sensory overload at its most intoxicating, from the scents and sounds that permeate the medinas of medieval Fès and magical Marrakesh to the astonishing sights of the infinitely varied Moroccan landscape.

Most travellers enter Morocco at Tangier, that faded poster-boy for Europe's often decadent but sometimes creative presence on Moroccan shores. Turn south along Morocco's Atlantic Coast and you'll be accompanied by a sea breeze that massages the ramparts of wonderful cities whose names – Essaouira, Casablanca, Asilah, Rabat – and atmosphere carry a strong whiff of African magic. Should you instead travel east along Morocco's Mediterranean Coast, you'll be bidden into enchanted towns like Tetouan and Chefchaouen and the mountains of the Rif.

If it's mountains you love, then Morocco has them in abundance, rising from the Rif into the Middle Atlas and on into the extraordinary contours of the 1000km-long and over 4000m-tall High Atlas. And then, suddenly, everything changes. The mountains fissure into precipitous gorges the colour of the earth, mud-brick kasbahs turn blood-red with the setting sun, and the sense that you have stumbled into a fairytale takes hold.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 446,550 sq km
- **Capital** Rabat
- **Currency** dirham (Dh); A\$1 = Dh6.54; €1 = Dh11.08; ¥100 = Dh7.41; NZ\$1 = Dh5.71; UK£1 = Dh6.44; US\$1 = Dh8.71
- **Famous for** hashish, Humphrey Bogart and *Casablanca*, Marrakesh, tajine and couscous
- **Languages** Arabic, French, Berber
- **Population** 33.2 million
- **Phrases** *ssalamu'lekum* (hello); *shukran* (thanks); *ensh'allah* (God willing)
- **Telephone Codes** country code ☎ 212; international access code ☎ 00



HIGHLIGHTS

- Dive into the clamour and endless spectacle that is **Marrakesh** (p592), Morocco's most dynamic city.
- Lose yourself in the exotic charms of **Fès** (p597), a medieval treasure trove of sights, sounds and smells.
- Swagger up to the decadent charm of **Tangier** (p571), the one-time haunt of artists and writers.
- Laze by the sea in enchanted **Essaouira** (p591), Morocco's coolest resort.
- Catch a mountain breeze in the stunning Rif towns of **Chefchaouen** (p579) and **Tetouan** (p577).

ITINERARIES

- **One week** From Tangier, make a beeline for Fès and Marrakesh, imperial cities in the Moroccan interior that deserve as much time as you can spare. If you've time, a detour to artsy Essaouira is a wonderful way to step down a gear after the onslaught of Morocco's most clamorous cities.
- **Two weeks** Follow the itinerary above, but en route south head over to Tetouan or the mountains around chilled-out Chefchaouen, where you will inevitably end up staying longer than you planned. Cosmopolitan Casablanca, imperial Rabat or laid-back Asilah on the way are all possibilities depending on your inclination, but do save time for Meknès while you're in Fès.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

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. At other times, don't underestimate the extremes of summer heat and winter, particularly in the High Atlas, where snowcapped peaks persist from November to July. If you are travelling in winter, head for the south, although be prepared for bitterly cold nights. The north coast and Rif Mountains are frequently wet and cloudy in winter and early spring.

Apart from the weather, the timing of Ramadan, the traditional month of fasting and purification, is another important consideration as some restaurants and cafés close during the day and general business hours are reduced.

HOW MUCH?

- **Dorm bed** Dh45
- **Pot of mint tea** Dh5
- **Museum entry** Dh10
- **Hamam** Dh10
- **Petit-taxi ride** Dh10

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **Litre of petrol** Dh10.50
- **Litre of bottled water** Dh6
- **Bottled beer (Flag)** Dh5-7
- **Souvenir T-shirt** Dh100
- **Grilled brochette (kebab)** Dh40

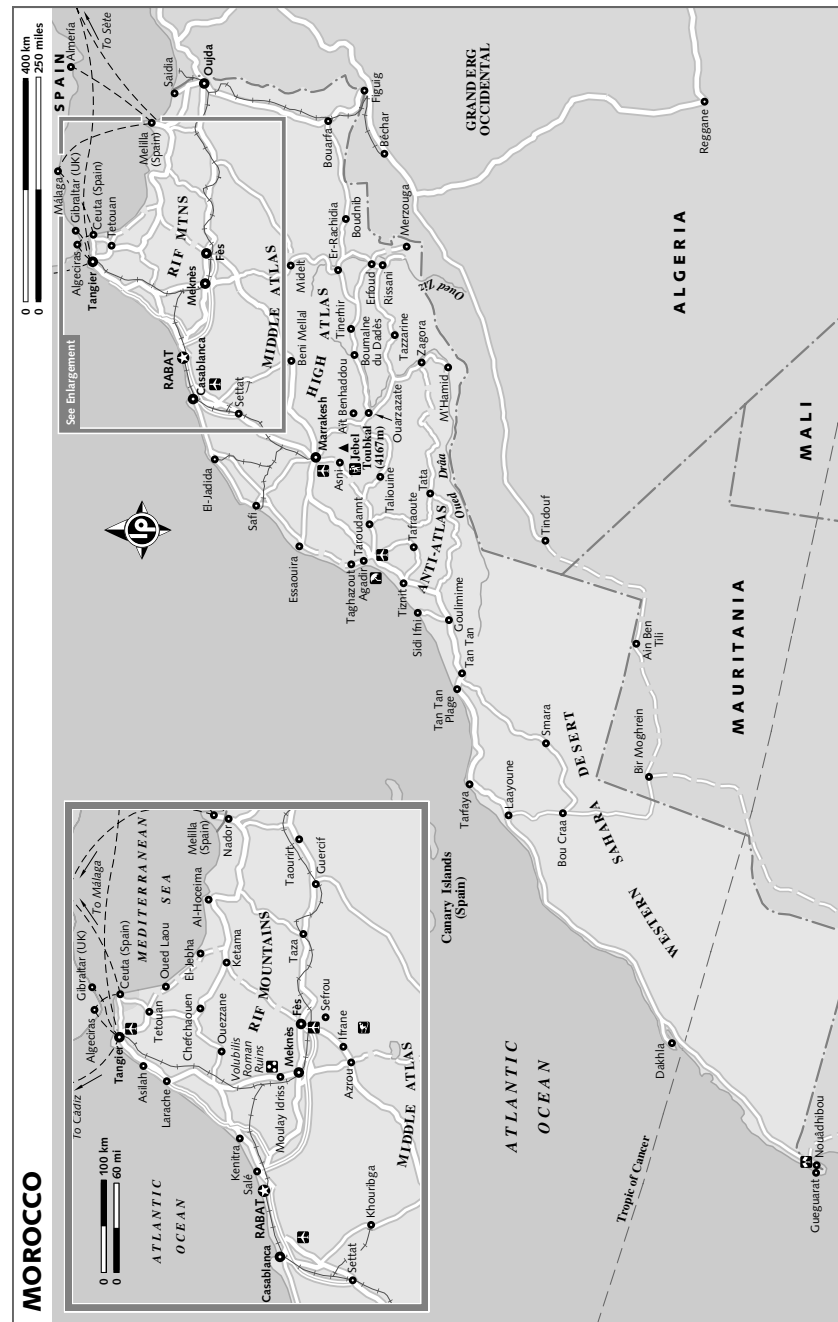
HISTORY

Most modern Moroccans are descendants of indigenous tribes that have inhabited the Maghreb hills for thousands of years. When the Romans arrived in North Africa in the 2nd century BC, they called the natives 'Berbers' (similar to the term 'Barbarian' ascribed to the northern-European tribes) because of their incomprehensible tongue.

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 the Middle East. Before long, nearly all Berber tribes were embracing Islam, although local tribes developed their own brand of Islamic Shiism, which sparked rebellion against the eastern Arabs.

By 829 local elites had established an Idrisid state with its capital at Fès, dominating all of Morocco. Thus commenced a cycle of rising and falling dynasties: the Almoravids (1062–1147), who built their capital at Marrakesh; the Almohads (1147–1269), famous for building the Koutoubia Mosque (p593); the Merenids (1269–1465), known for their exquisite mosques and *medersas*, especially in Fès; the Saadians (1524–1659), responsible for the Palais el-Badi in Marrakesh (p593); and the Alawites (1659–present).

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 crushed, but Moroccan resistance moved into political channels with the development of the Istiqlal (Independence) party.



Independence was finally granted in 1956. The Spanish also withdrew, retaining the coastal enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. Sultan Mohammed V became king, succeeded by his son in 1961. Despite moves towards democracy and several coup attempts, Hassan II retained all effective power until his death in 1999.

The new king, Mohammed VI, has adopted a reformist agenda, especially in the area of social policy and women's rights. His Western-looking policies are controversial, feeding a small but growing Islamic fundamentalist movement, which reared its head with terrorist bombings in Casablanca in 2003.

PEOPLE

People of Arab-Berber descent make up almost 100% of Morocco's population, which is mainly rural (about 60%) and young (70% are under 30 years). With a growth rate of 2.2%, the population will double almost every 25 years.

RELIGION

Ninety-nine per cent of Moroccans are Muslim. Muslims share their roots with Jews and Christians and respect these groups as *Ahl al-Kteb*, People of the Book. Fundamentalism is mostly discouraged but remains a presence, especially among the urban poor who have enjoyed none of the benefits of economic growth. That said, the majority of Muslims do not favour such developments and the popularity of fundamentalism is not as great as Westerners imagine.

Emigration to France, Israel, and the US has reduced Morocco's once-robust Jewish community to about 7500 from a high of around 300,000 in 1948. The Jewish communities that once inhabited the historic *mellahs* (Jewish quarters) of Fès, Marrakesh, Safi, Essaouira and Meknés have largely relocated to Casablanca.

ARTS Architecture

Moroccan religious buildings are adorned with hand-carved detailing, gilded accents, chiselled mosaics and an array of other decorative flourishes. A mosque consists of a courtyard, arched portico, and main prayer hall facing Mecca. Great examples include the 9th-century Kairaouine Mosque in Fès (p598) and the colossal Hassan II Mosque in

Casablanca (p589). While all but the Hassan II Mosque are closed to non-Muslims, the medersas (Quranic schools) that bejewel major Moroccan cities are open for visits.

Although religious architecture dominates, Casablanca in particular boasts local architectural features grafted onto whitewashed European edifices in a distinctive crossroads style that might be described as Islamic geometry meets Art Deco.

The street façade of the Moroccan town house (*riad* or *dar*) usually conceals an inner courtyard that allows light to penetrate during the day, and cool air to settle at night. Many classy guesthouses occupy beautifully renovated traditional *riads*.

Music

The most renowned Berber folk group is the Master Musicians of Joujouka, who famously inspired the Rolling Stones and collaborated with them on some truly experimental fusion. Lately the big names are women's, namely the all-women group B'net Marrakech, and the bold Najat Aatabou, who sings protest songs against restrictive traditional roles in Berber. Joyously bluesy with a rhythm you can't refuse, Gnaoua music, which began among freed slaves in Marrakesh and Essaouira, may send you into a trance – and that's just what it's meant to do. To sample the best in Gnaoua, head to Essaouira on the third weekend in June for the Gnaoua and World Music Festival (p591). Raï, originally from Algeria, is one of the strongest influences on Moroccan contemporary music, incorporating elements of jazz, hip-hop and rap. A popular artist is Cheb Mami, famous for vocals on Sting's 'Desert Rose'.

ENVIRONMENT

Morocco's three ecological zones – coast, mountain and desert – host more than 40 different ecosystems and provide habitats for many endemic species, including the iconic and sociable Barbary macaque (also known as the Barbary ape). Unfortunately, the pressure upon these ecosystems from ever-more-sprawling urban areas and the encroachment of industrialisation in Morocco's wilderness has ensured that 18 mammals (a staggering 15% of the total) and 11 bird species are considered endangered.

Pollution, desertification, overgrazing and deforestation are the major environmental

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

Despite extensive Westernisation, Morocco remains a largely conservative Muslim society. As a rule, a high degree of modesty is demanded of both sexes. Women are advised to keep their shoulders and upper arms covered and to opt for long skirts or trousers.

If invited into a Moroccan home, it is customary to remove your shoes before stepping onto the carpet. Food is served in common dishes and eaten with the right hand – the left hand is used for personal hygiene and should not be used to eat with or to touch any common source of food or water, or to hand over money or presents.

issues among many facing the Moroccan government. Despite plantation programmes and the development of new national parks, less than 0.05% of Moroccan territory is protected, one-third of Morocco's ecosystems are disappearing, 10% of vertebrates are endangered and 25,000 hectares of forest are lost every year.

FOOD & DRINK

Influenced by Berber, Arabic and Mediterranean traditions, Moroccan cuisine features a sublime use of spices and fresh produce.

It would be a culinary crime to skip breakfast in Morocco. Sidewalk cafés and kiosks put a local twist on the Continental breakfast with Moroccan pancakes and doughnuts, French pastries, coffee and mint tea. Follow your nose into the souqs, where you'll find tangy olives and local *jiben*, fresh goats- or cows-milk cheeses to be devoured with fresh *khoobz*, Moroccan-style pitta bread baked in a wood-fired oven.

Lunch is traditionally the biggest meal of the day in Morocco. The most typical Moroccan dish is *tajine*, a meat and vegetable stew cooked slowly in an earthenware dish. Couscous, fluffy steamed semolina served with tender meat and vegetables, is another staple. Fish dishes also make an excellent choice in coastal areas, while *harira* is a thick soup made from lamb stock, lentils, chickpeas, onions, tomatoes, fresh herbs and spices. *Pastilla*, a speciality of Fès, includes poultry (chicken or pigeon), almonds, cinnamon, saffron and sugar, encased in layer upon layer of very fine pastry.

Vegetarians shouldn't have any problems – fresh fruit and vegetables are widely available, as are lentils and chickpeas. Salads are ubiquitous in Morocco, particularly the traditional *salade marocaine* made from diced green peppers, tomatoes and red onion, while the *mezze* (up to five different small salads) is a wonderfully varied order available in some restaurants. Ask for your couscous or *tajine sans viande* (without meat).

For dessert, Moroccan patisseries concoct excellent French and Moroccan sweets.

Café culture is alive and well in Morocco, and mint tea, the legendary 'Moroccan whisky', is made with Chinese gunpowder tea, fresh mint and copious sugar. Fruit juices, especially freshly squeezed orange juice, are the country's greatest bargain. It's not advisable to drink tap water in Morocco. Beer's easy to find in the villes nouvelles (new towns) – local brands include Stork or Flag.

MEDITERRANEAN COAST & THE RIF

Bounded by the red crags of the Rif Mountains and the crashing waves of the Mediterranean, northern Morocco's wildly beautiful coastline frames diverse charms ranging from the cosmopolitan hustle of Tangier and the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla to the old colonial capital of Tetouan and the superbly relaxing town of Chefchaouen.

The region retains a noticeable Andalusian flavour; language, cuisine and culture still reflect the influence of the neighbours to the north, lending the region an atmosphere that is noticeably different from the rest of Morocco.

TANGIER pop 650,000

More than any other city, Tangier has been Morocco's face to the world for more years than anyone can care to remember. For half the 20th century, Tangier was home to a shotgun marriage with the Western powers who controlled the port via a dubious international council. Today, Tangier is like an ageing libertine propped up languidly at a bar, having seen it all.

The *brigade touristique* (tourist police) has cracked down on Tangier's legendary

hustlers, but the city is not altogether hassle free. If you take it head-on and learn to handle the hustlers, you'll find it a likable, lively place. The nightlife is vibrant, the population is cosmopolitan and the cultural vibe is infamous.

Orientation

Tangier's small medina climbs up the hill to the northeast of the city, while the ville nouvelle surrounds it to the west, south and southeast. The large, central square known as the Grand Socco (officially renamed Place du 9 Avril 1947) provides the link between the two.

Information

BMCE Bank (Banque Marocaine du Commerce Extérieur; Map p575; Blvd Pasteur; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Sat & Sun) The branch near the medina has an ATM.

Clinique du Croissant Rouge (Red Cross Clinic; Map p575; ☎ 039 946976; 6 Rue al-Mansour Dahabi)

Cyber Café Adam (Map p575; Rue ibn Rochd; per hr Dh10; ☎ 9.30am-3.30am)

Emergency Service (☎ 039 373737; ☎ 24hr)

Main post office (Map p575; Blvd Mohammed V)

ONMT (Délégation Régionale du Tourisme; Map p575; ☎ 039 948050; fax 039 948661; 29 Blvd Pasteur;

☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri)

Pharmacy El Youstr (Map p575; Ave Mohammed V)

Sights & Activities

The **Kasbah** sits on the highest point of Tangier, behind stout walls. Coming from the medina, you enter through Bab el-Aassa, the southeastern gate, to find the 17th-century **Dar el-Makhzen** (Map p575; ☎ 039 932097; admission Dh10; ☎ 9am-12.30pm Wed-Mon, plus 3-5.30pm Wed, Thu & Sat-Mon), the former sultan's palace and now a worthwhile museum devoted to Moroccan arts. Before leaving, take a stroll around the Andalusian-style **Sultan's Gardens**.

In the southwest corner of the medina, the **Old American Legation Museum** (Map 575; ☎ 039 935317; www.legation.org; 8 Rue d'Amérique; donations appreciated; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-5pm Mon-Fri) is an intriguing relic of the international zone with a fascinating collection of memorabilia from the international writers and artists who passed through Tangier.

Housed in a former synagogue, the **Musée de la Fondation Lorin** (Map p575; ☎ 039 930306; lorin@wanadoo.net.ma; 44 Rue Touahine; admission free, donations appreciated; ☎ 11am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Sun-Fri) is

an engaging collection of photographs, posters and prints of Tangier from 1890 to 1960.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Youth Hostel (Map p575; ☎ 039 946127; 8 Rue al-Antaki; dm with/without HI card Dh30/40, hot showers Dh5; ☎ 8am-10am, noon-3pm & 6-11pm) Just off Ave d'Espagne and close to an area with plenty of bars, Tangier's youth hostel is fair value as Moroccan youth hostels go – clean enough but a bit tired.

Pension Hollanda (Map p573; ☎ 039 937838; 139 Rue de Hollande; s/d Dh100/150; ☎) Tucked away in a quiet street a short walk from Place de Franc, this friendly pension has sparkling-clean whitewashed rooms, all with sinks; doubles come with a shower.

Hôtel Continental (Map p575; ☎ 039 931024; hcontinental@iam.net.ma; 36 Rue Dar el-Baroud; s/d with breakfast Dh310/396) Something of a Tangier institution, the Hôtel Continental is the pick of the bunch in the medina. Overlooking the port with a charming eccentricity, rooms are well sized, with bathrooms and TV. The terrace is great for views and imagining you're a character in a Paul Bowles novel (scenes in the film of *The Sheltering Sky* were filmed here).

MIDRANGE & TOP END

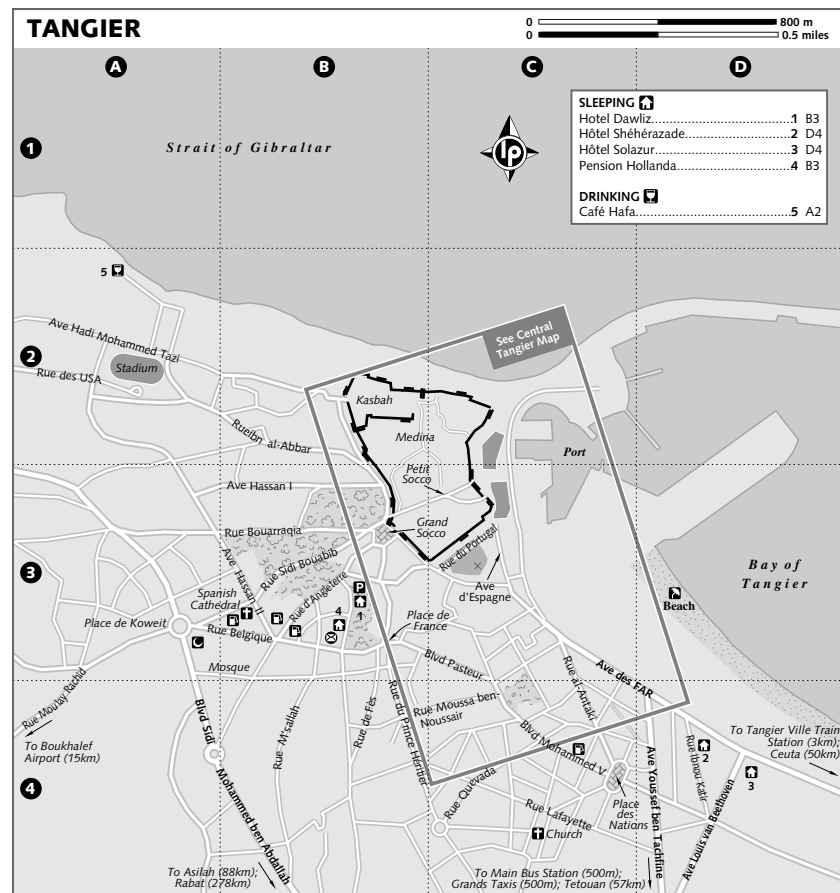
Hôtel Rembrandt (Map p575; ☎ 039 937870; rembrandt@menara.ma; Blvd Mohammed V; s/d Dh427/564;

☎) The Rembrandt is a reliable mid-range choice in the heart of the ville nouvelle. Rooms are comfortable and modern, with only the plastic 'marble' bathrooms striking an odd note. The green garden café is a tranquil spot to relax.

Hôtel Shéhérazade (Map p573; ☎ 039 940803; fax 039 940801; Ave des FAR; s/d Dh536/618; ☎) Of all the midrange options on this stretch of road, the Shéhérazade probably offers the best views. Rooms are plain but comfortable, and come complete with satellite TV and telephone.

Hôtel Solazur (Map p573; ☎ 039 940164; fax 039 945286; Ave des FAR; s/d Dh642/774; ☎) The Solazur offers comfortable if nondescript rooms with all the standard four-star amenities, and the lobby has a cool, trompe l'oeil stairwell. Views from the rooms facing the ocean are fantastic.

Hôtel Dawliz (Map p573; ☎ 039 333337; www.ledawliz.com; 42 Rue Hollande; s/d Dh710/910; ☎) This



complex offers four-star comforts and unbeatable views of the medina and the Bay of Tangier – which goes a long way to make up for the unexciting décor. Rooms have the expected facilities (the fridge is a nice touch), while the hotel has several shops, restaurants and an ATM.

Riad Tanja (☎ 039 333538; www.riadtanja.com; Rue du Portugal, Escalier Américain; r Dh800-1000; ☎) On the edge of the medina, the Tanja combines modern Spain with traditional *riad* in a very stylish mix. Rooms are extremely comfortable, and decorated with myriad paintings and prints that speak of Tangier's artistic heritage. Some look over the city while the terrace offers grand views over the straits to Spain.

Eating

MEDINA

Café Andalus (Map p575; 7 Rue du Commerce; salads Dh5, mains from Dh25) Much more of a local's place, the Andalus is a tiny place dishing out cheap and tasty plates of fish, brochettes and bowls of soup. Definitely not a palace, but none the worse for it.

Hamadi (Map p575; ☎ 039 934514; 2 Rue de la Kasbah; mains Dh40-60) A traditionally styled place just outside the medina walls. The surroundings are sumptuous, and live music accompanies your Moroccan meal (the *pastilla* is good).

Marhaba Palace (Map p575; ☎ 039 937927; Rue de la Kasbah; meals from Dh120) This garden house is lovingly decorated in traditional style; music and folklore shows are thrown in with the cost

of your meal. Set meals follow the classic soup, salad, *tajine* or couscous plus dessert pattern, all well-cooked and presented.

VILLE NOUVELLE

Agadir (Map p575; ☎ 068 827696; 21 Ave du Prince Héritier; mains Dh32-40, set menu Dh48) The interior is thoroughly unassuming, but the check tablecloths, red wine and Gallic crooning in the background give this place a hint of French bistro. Meals are good and hearty, with the free use of fresh herbs raising the succulent tajines to a level above the usual fare.

Casa de España (Map p575; ☎ 039 947359; 11 Rue el-Jebha el-Ouatania; mains from Dh60, lunch set menu Dh60) Buzzing with Spanish expats, local businessmen and the occasional tourist, this joint is as lively as they come. Snappily dressed waiters serve up classic Spanish dishes, with some wonderful specials like lamb with summer fruits.

Restaurant el-Korsan (Map p575; ☎ 039 935885; El-Minzah Hotel, 85 Rue de la Liberté; mains Dh130) One of Tangier's classier restaurants, this place serves well-presented Moroccan classics to the soft playing of live musicians, and often traditional dancing later in the evening. It's not cheap and you should dress smart, but the ambience is worth it.

Restaurant Populaire Saveur (Map p575; ☎ 039 336326; 2 Escalier Waller; set menus Dh150; ☎ Sat-Thu) This attractive and welcoming little fish restaurant down the steps from Rue de la Liberté serves excellent, filling set menus. It's as rustic as you could imagine – quaint decoration and rough-hewn wooden cutlery. The food is delicious though, with steaming fish soup, and plenty of grilled fish. Dessert is typically sticky *seffa* (sweet couscous), all washed down with the house fruit-juice cocktail. Not just a meal – a whole experience.

Drinking & Entertainment

Café Hafa (Map p573; Ave Mohammed Tazi; ☎ 10am-8pm) With a shady terrace overlooking the straits, Hafa is where Paul Bowles and the Rolling Stones came to smoke hashish, and the indolent air still lingers among the locals who hang out here to enjoy the view and a game of backgammon.

Caid's Bar (Map p575; El-Minzah, 85 Rue de la Liberté; wine from Dh20; ☎ 10am-midnight) Long the establishment's drinking hole of choice, this bar is a classy relic of the grand days of international Tangier, and photos of the famous and infa-

mous who've preceded you adorn the walls. Women are more than welcome.

Tangier's clubbing scene peaks in the summer when cover charges are typically Dh100, with drinks three times the normal bar price. Good places include **Regine's** (Map p575; 8 Rue al-Mansour Dahabi; ☎ 11.30pm-3am Mon-Sat), a large club popular with trendy young Tangerines and where DJs spin a bit of everything from Rai to Europop to house; and **Morocco Palace** (Map p575; Rue du Prince Moulay Abdallah; ☎ 9pm-4am Mon-Sat), a purely Moroccan interpretation of the nightclub experience, with traditional décor and mostly Arabic pop.

Getting There & Away

BUS

The **CTM station** (☎ 039 931172), beside the port gate, offers four daily departures for Casablanca (Dh120, six hours) via Rabat (Dh90, 4½ hours), one daily bus to Marrakesh (Dh175, 10 hours), four to Fès (Dh95, six hours) and buses to Asilah (Dh16, one hour), Meknès (Dh80, five hours), Tetouan (Dh15, one hour) and Chefchaouen (Dh35, three hours). Cheaper bus companies operate from the **Main bus station** (gare routière; ☎ 039 946928; Place Jamia el-Arabia), about 2km south of the city centre.

TAXI

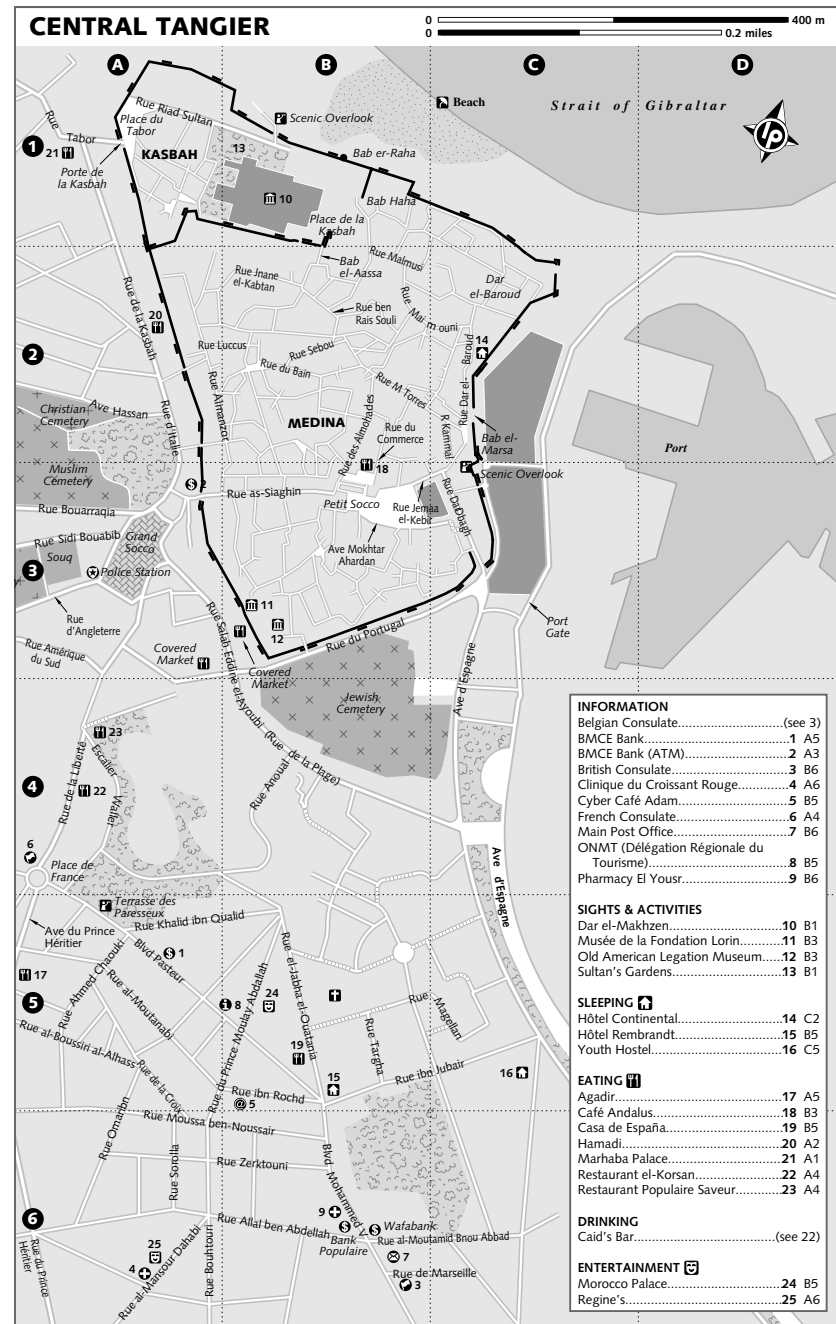
You can hail grands taxis to places outside Tangier from a lot next to the main bus station. The most common destinations are Tetouan (Dh30, one hour), Asilah (Dh15, 30 minutes) and, for Ceuta, Fnideq (Dh30, one hour).

TRAIN

Four trains depart daily from Tanger Ville, the swish new train station 3km southeast of the centre. One morning and one afternoon service go to Casa-Voyageurs in Casablanca (Dh117, 5½ hours); a midday service travels via Meknès (Dh80, four hours) to Fès (Dh96, five hours); and a night service (with couchettes) goes all the way to Marrakesh (1st/2nd class Dh274/193, without couchette Dh213/143).

Getting Around

Distinguishable by their ultramarine colour with a yellow stripe down the side, petits taxis do standard journeys around town for Dh7 to Dh10; they cost 50% more at night. From



Boukhalef Airport (☎ 039 393720), 15km south-east of the city, take a cream-coloured grands taxi (Dh70).

AROUND TANGIER

Just 14km west of Tangier lies the dramatic **Cap Spartel**, the northwestern extremity of Africa's Atlantic coast. Below Cap Spartel, the lovely beach **Plage Robinson** stretches to the south. Five kilometres along here you reach the **Grottes d'Hercule** (admission Dh10), next to Le Mirage hotel. Mythically, these caves were the dwelling place of Hercules when he mightily separated Europe from Africa.

CEUTA (SEBTA)

pop 75,000

Jutting out east into the Mediterranean, this 20 sq km peninsula has been a Spanish enclave since 1640, and its relaxed, well-kept city centre with bars, cafés and Andalusian atmosphere provides a sharp contrast to the other side of the border. Nonetheless, Ceuta is still recognisably African. Between a quarter and a third of the population are of Rif Berber origin, giving the enclave a fascinating Iberian-African mix.

Information

To phone Ceuta from outside Spain, dial ☎ 0034. Also remember that Ceuta is on Spanish time and uses the euro. ATMs are plentiful; outside banking hours you can change money at the more expensive hotels. For dirhams, the informal moneychangers on both sides of the border are useful, although note that it's technically illegal to take dirham out of Morocco. Branches of BMCE and Banque Populaire on the Moroccan side change cash only.

Banco Unicaja (Plaza Alcázar Ricardo Muñoz;

☎ 8.30am-2pm)

Caja Madrid (cnr Calle Real & Plaza de los Reys;

☎ 8.30am-2pm)

Cyber Ceuta (☎ 956 512303; Paseo Colón; per hr €2.50;

☎ 11am-2pm & 5-10pm Mon-Sat, 5-11pm Sun) Internet access.

Main post office (correos y telégrafos; Plaza de España;

☎ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat)

Tourist office (☎ 956 501401; fax 956 507746; www

.ceuta.es; Ave Muelle Cañonero Dato; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri)

Very friendly and efficient, with good maps and brochures.

Sights

Ceuta's history is marked by the **Ruta Monumenta**, a series of excellent information boards

in English and Spanish outside key buildings and monuments.

The impressive remnants of the **city walls** (☎ 956 511770; Ave González Tablas; admission free; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-8pm) and the navigable, walled **moat of Foso de San Felipe** remain from the Hispano-Portuguese period in the 16th century.

The most intriguing museum is the **Museo de la Legión** (☎ 606 733566; Paseo de Colón; admission free, donations appreciated; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 4-6pm Mon-Fri, 4-6pm Sat & Sun), dedicated to the Spanish Legion, an army unit set up in 1920 that played a pivotal role in General Francisco Franco's army at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War.

Sleeping

Pensión La Bohemia (☎ 956 510615; 16 Paseo de Revellín; r€30) A charming and spotless little place above a shopping arcade, with potted plants, shiny tile floors and a surfeit of Marilyn Monroe pictures. The rooms are fresh and clean, and there are piping-hot communal showers.

Hostal Central (☎ 956 516716; www.hostalesceuta.com; Paseo del Revellín; s/d €40/56; ☎) This good-value, two-star hostel has a cosy charm with bright, small but spotless rooms; all come with fridge. Centrally located, low-season discounts can tip this place into the budget bracket.

Ulises Gran Hotel (☎ 956 514540; fax 956 514546; 5 Calle Camoens; s/d with breakfast €52/83; ☎) Falling one short of its four-star aspirations, the Ulises is nevertheless a fine, well-appointed place to stay. Rooms with balconies have views of the sea, and the recently refurbished lobby gives the whole place a lift.

Parador Hotel La Muralla (☎ 956 514940; ceuta@parador.es; 15 Plaza de Africa; s/d from €65/90; ☎) Ceuta's top address is this grand four-star hotel on the main square. It is mostly a 1970s creation, although some rooms occupy converted munitions stores lining the Foso de San Felipe. Rooms are spacious and comfortable.

Eating

In addition to the places listed here, the Pabrado Marinero (Seamen's Village) beside the yacht harbour is home to a number of reliable if not outstanding restaurants, ranging from Italian to burger places.

La Tasca del Pedro (☎ 956 510473; 3 Ave Alcalde Sánchez Prados; mains €5-10; ☎ Mon-Sat) Small, friendly and popular with the locals, this res-

taurant has a good range of seafood, Spanish and simple Italian dishes.

Club Nautico (☎ 956 514440; Calle Edris; set menu from €7) This simple fish restaurant has a nice location overlooking the yacht harbour. The three-course *menú del día* (daily set-lunch menu) is a popular choice.

La Marina (☎ 956 514007; 1 Alférez Bayton; mains €10-12, set menu €8; ☎ Mon-Sat) This smart, friendly restaurant is often crowded at lunch time. It specialises in fish dishes, but also does a great-value, three-course set menu of the chicken/fish and chips variety.

Getting There & Away

Bus 7 runs up to the Moroccan border (*frontera*) every 10 minutes from Plaza de la Constitución (€0.60). The large grands taxi lot next to Moroccan border control has departures to Tetouan (Dh30, 40 minutes). For Tangier, take a grands taxi to Fnideq (Dh5, 10 minutes), just south of the border.

The **estación marítima** (ferry terminal; Calle Muelle Cañonero Dato) is west of the town centre and from here there are several daily high-speed ferries to Algeciras (p794).

TETOUAN

pop 320,000

Tetouan is quite unlike anywhere else in the Rif, or even Morocco. For more than 40 years, from 1912 to 1956, it was the capital of the Spanish Protectorate, bequeathing it a unique Hispano-Moorish atmosphere. The neat *medina* – a Unesco World Heritage site – sits hard against the modern Spanish part of town, with its whitewashed buildings, high shuttered windows and a spectacular backdrop of the Rif Mountains.

Information

BMCE (Place Moulay el-Mehdi; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4-8pm)

Foreign-exchange office and ATM.

ONMT (Délégation Régionale du Tourisme; ☎ 039

961915; fax 039 961914; 30 Ave Mohammed V;

☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Thu, 8.30-11am &

3-6.30pm Fri) Offers useful tourist information.

Post office (Place Moulay el-Mehdi)

Remote Studios (☎ 039 711172; 13 Ave Mohammed

V; per hr Dh9; ☎ 24hr) Internet access.

Sights

The bustling *medina* (which is home to some 40 mosques, of which the **Grande Mosquée** and **Saidi Mosque** are the most impressive)

opens through its main gate, Bab er-Rouah, onto Place Hassan II, Tetouan's grand main square. At the opposite end of the *medina*, the **Musée Marocaine** (Musée Ethnographique; admission Dh10; ☎ 9.30am-noon & 3.30-6.30pm Fri) is housed inside the bastion in the town wall.

Opposite Bab el-Okla, the *medina*'s oldest gate, children learn traditional arts and crafts at the **artisanal school** (☎ 039 972721; admission Dh10; ☎ 8am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Thu & Sat).

Sleeping

Hotel Victoria (☎ 039 965015; 23 Ave Mohammed V; s/d/r Dh50/80/120) Small but nicely formed, the Victoria gives guests a warm welcome. Rooms are simple but comfortable, and the shared bathrooms are scrubbed spotlessly clean. With just a clutch of rooms, consider booking ahead at busy times of year.

Hotel Bilbao (☎ 039 964114; 7 Ave Mohammed V; s/d Dh55/70) Virtually on Place al-Jala, this is a reliable cheapie with surprisingly big rooms, many with wrought-iron balconies. That rooms come with showers is also a big selling point. Be on your best behaviour though – feisty chambermaids rule the hotel with a rod of iron.

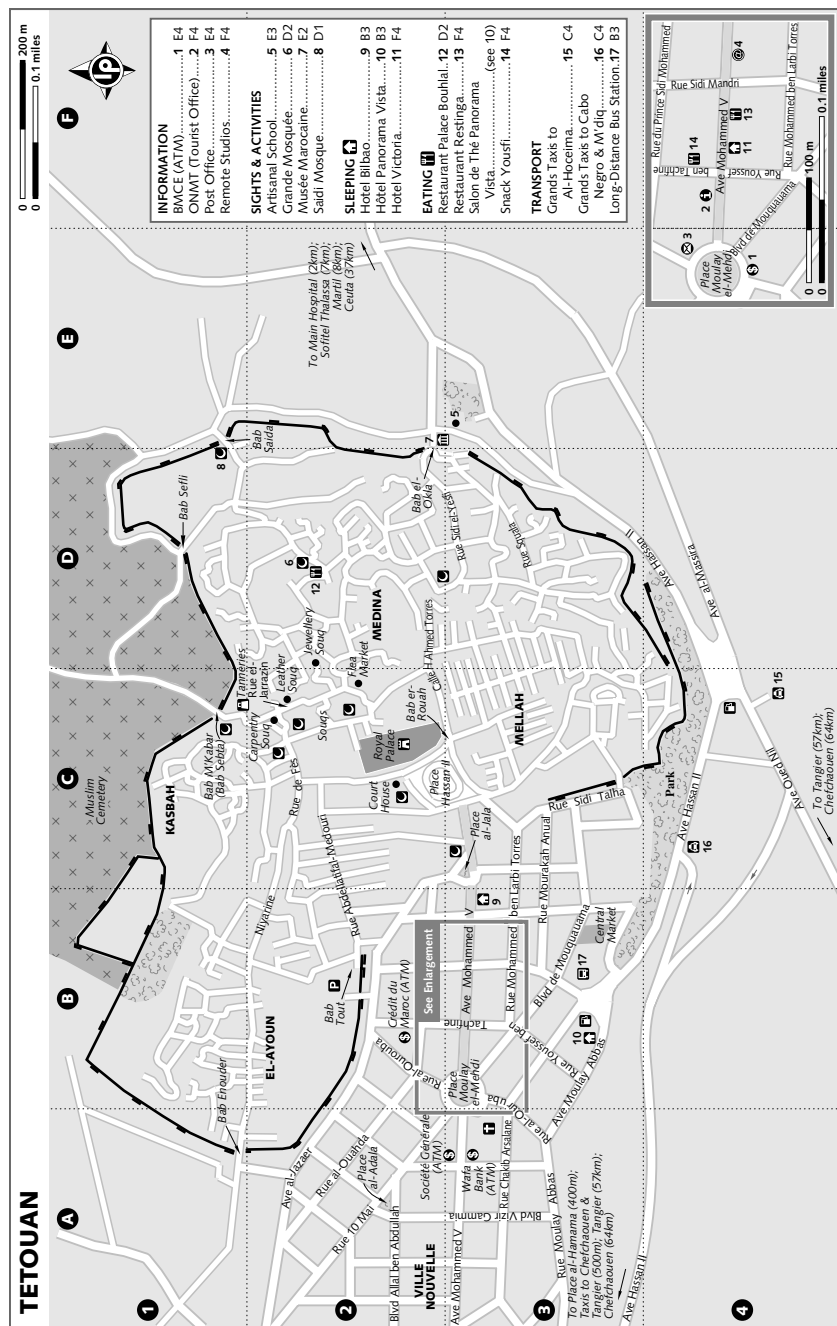
Hôtel Panorama Vista (☎ 039 964970; Rue Moulay Abbas; s/d with breakfast from Dh236/322; ☎) This three-star hotel is a rare piece of class in the centre of Tetouan, and more than lives up to its name. Rooms are immaculate, and the best have dramatic views over the Rif Mountains. The 1st-floor café is extremely popular.

Eating

Snack Yousfi (Rue Yousef ben Tachfine; sandwiches from Dh16; ☎ noon-midnight) Fill up on a sandwich here for lunch and you might not be hungry again until breakfast. Baguettes are stuffed to overflowing with various fillings, topped out with salad and a handful of chips. Great value.

Restaurant Restinga (21 Ave Mohammed V; fish dishes from Dh40; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 7-9.30pm) Easily Tetouan's top dining spot is the vine-covered courtyard of this charming restaurant, with the abundance of fish and seafood on the menu a reminder of the town's proximity to the coast. As the only restaurant serving alcohol, it's always busy – something the management takes advantage of by automatically adding a 10% service charge to the bill.

Restaurant Palace Bouhal (☎ 039 998797; 48 Jamaa Kebir; set menu Dh100; ☎ 10am-4pm) The only palace restaurant in Tetouan is popular with Spanish



tour groups, so reservations are essential. The palace is suitably sumptuous: plush carpets, gurgling fountains and rose petals. Live folk music accompanies the classically Moroccan four-course meal – soup, salad, brochettes, couscous with tajines.

Salon de Thé Panorama Vista (☎ 039 964970; fax 039 964969; Hôtel Panorama, Ave Moulay Abbas) Tetouan's trendiest café, this hotel café has quite glorious views over the Rif Mountains. Waiters work hard, and you'll need to do the same to grab their attention.

Getting There & Away

Several bus companies operate from the **bus station** (cnr Rue Sidi Mandri & Rue Moulay Abbas). **CTM** (☎ 039 961688) has buses to Tangier (Dh15, 1½ hours, once daily), Casablanca (Dh110, six to seven hours, twice daily) via Rabat (Dh85, four to five hours), and Chefchaouen (Dh20, 1½ hours, three daily). There are daily non-CTM departures to Meknès (Dh62, five hours) and Marrakesh (Dh145, 11 hours).

Grands taxis to Fnideq (for Ceuta; Dh28, 30 minutes), Martil (Dh4, 15 minutes), Cabo Negro and M'diq (Dh5, 20 minutes) leave from Ave Hassan II, southeast of the bus station.

CHEFCHAOUEN

pop 45,000

Set beneath the striking peaks of the Rif Mountains, Chefchaouen has long been charming travellers. One of the prettiest towns in Morocco, its old medina is a delight of Moroccan and Andalusian influence with red-tiled roofs, bright blue buildings, and narrow lanes converging on a delightful square.

Information

Banque Populaire (Plaza Uta el-Hammam; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3.30-9pm)

Hospital Mohammed V (☎ 039 986228; Ave al-Massira al-Khadra)

Pharmacy Alhambra (Rue Moulay Ali ben Rachid)

Post office (Ave Hassan II)

Saadoune.net (Plaza Uta el-Hammam; per hr Dh10; ☎ 10am-midnight) Internet access.

Sights & Activities

Chefchaouen's **medina** is one of the loveliest in Morocco with blinding blue-white hues and an unmistakably Andalusian flavour. The heart of the medina is the shady, cobbled Plaza Uta el-Hammam, dominated by the

red-hued walls of the **Kasbah** (☎ 039 986343; admission Dh10; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Wed-Mon) and the striking **Grande Mosque**, which is noteworthy for its unusual octagonal tower. Inside the Kasbah's gardens is a modest **ethnographic museum** where the photos of old Chefchaouen are the highlights.

Trekking in the Rif Mountains is another Chefchaouen drawcard, especially **Jebel el-Kelaâ** (1616m), which towers over the town and can be easily climbed in one day.

Sleeping

Hotel Mouritania (☎ 039 986184; 15 Rue Qadi Alami; s/d Dh45/70) For budget value, you'll have to go a long way to beat the Mouritania. Rooms are simple, but there's the obligatory roof terrace and a comfy courtyard lounge that's ideal for hooking up with other travellers. Staff are helpful, and the breakfasts (Dh15) are great too.

Hostal Yasmina (☎ 039 883118; yasmina45@hotmail.com; 12 Rue Zaida al-Horra; r per person Dh60) For the price bracket, this place sparkles. Rooms are bright and clean, there's lots of hot water in the showers and a great roof terrace.

Hotel Marrakesh (☎ 039 987774; Ave Hassan II; s/d Dh140/250, with shower Dh200/300) Set downhill from the action, the Marrakesh has soul. Bright blue rooms invite the fresh air in and the roof terrace offers fine views over the valley.

Dar Terrae (☎ 039 987598; darterrae@hotmail.com; Ave Hassan I; r with breakfast Dh250-450) Dar Terrae feels like an escape from the outside world. Cheerfully painted rooms are individually decorated with their own bathroom and fireplace, all hidden up and down a tumble of stairs and odd corners. Three terraces add to the hideaway factor. The Italian owners prepare a fantastic breakfast spread every day, and other meals on request.

Casa Hassan (☎ 039 986153; www.casahassan.com; 22 Rue Targui; s/d/tr with half board from Dh450/600/750; ☎) A long-established, up-market choice, this guesthouse has more than a hint of the Arabian Nights about it. Rooms are individually decorated with carved wooden doors, beds tucked into coves, colourful tiled bathrooms and locally woven rugs, all stylishly comfortable. The terrace is set for elegant lounging.

Eating

Plaza Café-Restaurants (Plaza Uta el-Hammam; breakfast from Dh15, mains from Dh25; ☎ 8am-11pm) One of the most popular eating options in Chefchaouen



is to choose one of the near dozen café-restaurants on the main square. Menus are virtually identical – continental breakfasts, soups and salads, tajines and seafood – but the food is good and they have the best ambience in town.

Restaurant al-Azhar (Ave Moulay Driss; mains from Dh25; ☎ 8am-9pm) Tucked in by the steps down from the post office, this place does a roaring trade, attracting workers and families in equal measure. Tajines and the like are all on offer; a better option is to check out the fish counter out front and order a huge seafood platter (Dh50).

Restaurant Tissemlal (☎ 039 986153; 22 Rue Targui; set menu Dh60) The restaurant inside the Casa Hassan is another sure bet for a fine meal in enchanting surroundings. Always hospitable, this place is especially welcoming on a chilly evening, when a fire roars and warms the bones. The menu includes the Moroccan standards with a few twists. Don't pass on the fresh goat's cheese salad, a local Rif speciality.

La Lampe Magique (☎ 065 406464; Rue Targui; mains from Dh45, set menu Dh75) This magical place overlooking Plaza Uta el-Hammam serves delicious Moroccan staples in a grand setting. Three floors include a laid-back lounge, a more formal dining area, and a rooftop terrace. Painted blue walls bring Chefchaouen's charm inside, while brick floors and dark wooden tables enhance the local flavour. The food, featuring favourites like lamb tajine with prunes and some great cooked salads, is delicious.

Shopping

Chefchaouen remains an artisan centre, and, as such, an excellent place to shop, especially for woven rugs and blankets in bright primary colours. A fair smattering of tourist shops are located around the focal points of Uta el-Hammam and Place el-Majzen.

Getting There & Away

CTM (☎ 039 988769) has two afternoon buses passing through Chefchaouen en route to Fès (Dh60, four hours) and one afternoon bus to Tangier (Dh35, three hours) via Tetouan (Dh20, 1½ hours); reserve your seat at least a day in advance.

Grands taxis heading to Tetouan (Dh30, one hour) leave from just below Plaza Mohammed V.

MELILLA

pop 65,000

Melilla is the smaller and less affluent of the two enclaves that mark the last vestiges of Spain's African empire, and with a third of its inhabitants being of Rif Berber origin, it has an atmosphere all of its own – neither quite Europe nor Africa. The centre of Melilla is a delight of modernist architecture and quiet gardens.

Information

To phone Melilla from Morocco, dial ☎ 0034. Also remember that Melilla operates on Spanish time and the unit of currency here is the euro.

Fon-Net (Calle Ejército Español; per hr €1.50; ☎ 9am-2pm & 5-10pm)

Hospital Comarcal (☎ 956 670000) South side of Río de Oro.

Oficina del Turismo (☎ 956 675444; www.melilla.turismo.com; 21 Calle Fortuny, Palacio de Congresos y Exposiciones; ☎ 8am-2.45pm & 4.30-8.30pm Mon-Fri)

Urgencias Sanitarias (☎ 956 674400; 40 Alvaro de Bazan; ☎ 5pm-9am Mon-Sat, 24hr on Sun & public holidays) Night pharmacy.

Sights

The main entrance to the fortress of **Melilla la Vieja** (Old Melilla), which perches over the Mediterranean, is **Puerta de la Marina** (Calle General Macías), where you'll find a pair of 15th-century water cisterns, **Aljibes de las Peñuelas** (admission €1.20; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-9.30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-2pm & 4.30-8.30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun Oct-Mar). The terrace of the small **Museo de Arqueología e Historia de Melilla** (☎ 952 681339; Plaza Pedro de Estopiñán; admission free; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 4-8.30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) has fantastic views overlooking the city.

The new part of town, west of the fortress, is considered by some to be Spain's 'second modernist city', after Barcelona. The highlight is Plaza de España, with the lovely façade of the **Palacia de la Asamblea**.

Sleeping

Hostal Residencia Cazaza (☎ 956 684648; 6 Calle Primo de Rivera; s/d €23/35) A decent-value *pension*, the Cazaza has eleven smallish, high-ceilinged rooms, with TVs, bathtubs and balconies. Management is friendly.

Hostal Residencia Parque (☎ 956 682143; 15 Calle General Marina; s/d €20/40) This popular *pension* overlooks Parque Hernandez. Rooms

KIF IN THE RIF

The smoking of kif is an ancient tradition in northern Morocco (the word stems from the Arabic word for 'pleasure'), and cultivation is widespread in the Rif Mountains; some villages grow nothing else. In fact, one theory claims that the Rif is the source of the Western slang term 'reefer'.

Hashish, which is essentially compressed kif, is a stronger, modern (1960s) invention developed for export. While an old goatherd in the mountains may break out his kif pipe should you stop to chat, hashish is favoured by younger, more Westernised Rifians.

The Rif is one of the most economically deprived areas of Morocco, and kif has become the mainstay of the economy, flourishing with the aid of a blind eye from the authorities. In recent years though, pressure from the US and particularly the EU has led to a less favourable opinion of this illicit activity. International aid programmes have started to target ecological and cultural tourism as sectors of development, although spend any time in the region and you'll quickly realise that much remains to be done to bring the local infrastructure up to scratch.

In 2004 the production of kif was technically made illegal and farmers can now be prosecuted. In practice, only a few prosecutions have been brought, and the discreet possession and use of kif is still largely tolerated. That said, never travel in possession of kif, and mistrust all dealers – many double as police informers.

are small but clean and bright, with TV and bathroom. Advance booking advised.

Parador de Melilla (☎ 956 684940; Ave Cándido Lobera; r€97; P) From the outside, Melilla's top hotel looks covered with strange sci-fi towers. Inside there are large, grand rooms, with shiny fittings and lots of marble. The best have balconies, with great views out to sea.

Eating

Café Central (Plaza de España; breakfast from €2, sandwiches from €1.50; ☎ 7am-1pm & 4-10pm) Next to the park, this is a busy breakfast spot, with great coffee, pastries and cooked items. The inside can sometimes be a bit smoky, but there's a seating area outside.

La Onubense (5 Calle Pareja; tapas from €0.75; ☎ noon-3pm & 7pm-midnight Mon-Sat) With its rough-hewn wood furniture and unpolished décor, this place looks like the quintessential tapas bar. The house speciality is spicy *bollito de Pringá* (meatballs) and other classic tapas delicacies.

La Cervceria (Calle de General O'Donnell; tapas from €1; ☎ 12.30-4pm & 8.30pm-midnight) Classier than the Onubense across the street, La Cervceria is decorated in Gaudíesque fashion by the Melillan architect Carlos Baeza.

Getting There & Away

To get to the border, you'll need to catch the local bus 2 (marked 'Aforos'), which runs between Plaza de España and the Beni Enzar border post (€0.60) every 30 minutes from 7.30am to 11pm.

Ferry and hydrofoil services out of Melilla are operated by **Trasmediterránea** (☎ 956 690 902;

Plaza de España; ☎ 9am-1pm & 5-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat). Tickets are also available for purchase at the **estación marítima** (☎ 956 681633). There are daily ferries to Málaga and Almería.

ATLANTIC COAST

Miles of glorious sands peppered with small fishing villages, historic ports and fortified towns weave along Morocco's blustery Atlantic Coast. It's a region of contrasts, sweeping from pristine beachfront to urban sprawl around Rabat and Casablanca, the country's political and economic capitals respectively.

ASILAH

pop 29,518

The bijou resort town of Asilah has become a firm favourite on the traveller's trail of the North Atlantic coast. It's an intimate, sophisticated introduction to Morocco with galleries lining the narrow streets. Given its increasing popularity, consider visiting out of season to appreciate the old-world charm of this lovely whitewashed town at its best.

Sights

Asilah's **medina**, surrounded by sturdy stone fortifications built by the Portuguese in the 15th century, has been largely restored (and sanitised) in recent years, and the narrow streets lined by whitewashed houses are well worth a wander amid the ornate, wrought-iron window guards and colourful murals.

The southwestern bastion of the ramparts is the best for views over the ocean.

Paradise Beach, Asilah's best beach, is 3km south of town and is a gorgeous, pristine spot that really does live up to its name.

Sleeping

Hôtel Sahara (☎ 039 417185; 9 Rue Tarfaya; s/d Dh98/126, hot showers Dh5) By far Asilah's best budget option, this small, immaculately kept hotel offers simple rooms arrayed around an open courtyard. Patterned tiles and potted plants adorn the lively entrance, and the compact rooms, though fairly spartan, are comfortable and well maintained. The shared toilets and showers sparkle.

Hôtel Patio de la Luna (☎ 039 416074; 12 Place Zellaka; s/d Dh300/450) The only accommodation option in Asilah with any local character, this intimate, Spanish-run place is secluded behind an unassuming door on the main drag. The simple, rustic rooms have wooden furniture, woven blankets and tiled bathrooms, and are set around a lovely leafy patio.

Hôtel Azayla (☎ 039 416717; e-elhaddad@menara.ma; 20 Rue Ibn Roudh; r Dh380) Big, bright, comfy and well-equipped, the rooms here are a really good deal. The bathrooms are new, the décor is tasteful and the giant windows bathe the rooms in light.

Eating

Restaurant Yali (☎ 071 043277; Ave Hassan II; mains Dh25-50) Although there's little to choose between them, this is one of the most popular of the string of restaurants along the medina walls. It serves up a good selection of fish, seafood and traditional Moroccan staples.

Restaurant de la Place (☎ 039 417326; 7 Ave Moulay Hassan ben el-Mehdi; mains Dh40-80) Friendly, less formal and more varied than its neighbours, this restaurant offers a choice of traditional Moroccan dishes as well as the ubiquitous seafood. For the best of both worlds try the delicious fish tajine.

Casa García (☎ 039 417465; 51 Rue Moulay Hassan ben el-Mehdi; mains Dh80) Spanish-style fish dishes are the speciality at this small restaurant opposite the beach. Go for succulent grilled fish fresh from the port or be more adventurous and try octopus, eels, shrimp and barnacles.

Getting There & Away

CTM has services to Casablanca (Dh70, 4½ hours) via Rabat (Dh60, 3½ hours), Fès

(Dh65, 4½ hours) via Meknès (Dh55, 3½ hours), Tangier (Dh10, one hour) and Marrakesh (Dh200, nine hours). Cheaper non-CTM buses to Tangier and Casablanca leave roughly every half-hour.

Three trains run daily to Rabat (Dh77, 3½ hours) and Casablanca (Dh101, 4½ hours), one to Meknès (three hours) and Fès (Dh81, four hours) and six daily to Tangier (Dh14, 45 minutes). One overnight train goes directly to Marrakesh (Dh174, nine hours).

RABAT

pop 1.7 million

Relaxed, well kept and very European, flag-waving Rabat is just as cosmopolitan as Casablanca down the coast, but lacks the frantic pace and grimy feel of its economic big brother. Its elegant, tree-lined boulevards and imposing administrative buildings exude an unhurried, diplomatic and hassle-free charm that many travellers grow to like.

Orientation

Ave Hassan II divides the medina from the ville nouvelle and follows the line of the medina walls to the Oued Bou Regreg, the river that separates the twin cities of Rabat and Salé. The city's main thoroughfare – the wide, palm-lined Ave Mohammed V – is home to many hotels, while most embassies cluster around Place Abraham Lincoln and Ave de Fès east of the centre; see p613 for addresses.

Information

American Bookshop (Map p584; cnr Rue Moulay Abdelhafid & Rue Boujaad)

BMCE (Map p586; Ave Mohammed V; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri) Bank with ATM.

Main post office (Map p586; cnr Rue Soékarno & Ave Mohammed V)

ONMT (Office National Marocain du Tourisme; Map p584; ☎ 037 673756; visitmorocco@onmt.org.ma; cnr Rue Oued El Makhazine & Rue Zalaka, Agdal; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 3-6.30pm Mon-Fri)

SAMU (☎ 037 737373) Private ambulance service.

SOS Médecins (☎ 037 202020; house call Dh310; ☎ 24hr) Doctors on call.

Zerrad Net (Map p584; ☎ 037 686723; 68 Blvd al-Amir Fal Ould Omar, Agdal; per hr Dh8; ☎ 8am-midnight) Internet access.

Sights

Dating from the 17th century, the walled medina isn't a patch on Fès or Marrakesh, although

it still piques the senses with its rich mixture of spices, carpets, crafts, cheap shoes and bootlegged DVDs. The **Kasbah des Oudaïas** (Map p584) sits high up on the bluff overlooking the Oued Bou Regreg and contains within its walls the oldest **mosque** in Rabat, built in the 12th century and restored in the 18th. The southern corner of the kasbah is home to the **Andalucian Gardens** (☞ sunrise-sunset), laid out by the French during the colonial period. The centrepiece is the grand 17th-century palace containing the **Musée des Oudaïa** (☎ 037 731537; admission Dh10; ☞ 9am-noon & 3-5pm Oct-Apr, to 6pm May-Sep).

Towering above the Oued Bou Regreg is Rabat's most famous landmark, **Le Tour Hassan** (Hassan Tower; Map p584). In 1195, the Almohad sultan Yacoub al-Mansour began

constructing an enormous minaret, intending to make it the highest in the Muslim world, but he died before the project was completed. Abandoned at 44m, the beautifully designed and intricately carved tower still lords over the remains of the adjacent mosque.

The cool marble **Mausoleum of Mohammed V** (admission free; ☞ sunrise-sunset), built in traditional Moroccan style, lies opposite the tower. The present king's father (the late Hassan II) and grandfather are laid to rest here, surrounded by different patterned **zellij** mosaics from floor to ceiling.

Sleeping

Hôtel Dorhmi (Map p586; ☎ 037 723898; 313 Ave Mohammed V; s/d Dh80/120, hot showers Dh10) Immaculately

kept, very friendly and keenly priced, this family-run hotel is the best of the medina options. The simple rooms are bright and tidy and surround a central courtyard.

Hôtel Splendid (Map p586; ☎ 037 723283; 8 Rue Ghazza; Dh128/187, s/d with shared bathroom Dh104/159) Right in the heart of town, this hotel has spacious, bright rooms with high ceilings, big windows, cheerful colours and simple wooden furniture. Bathrooms are new and even rooms without bathrooms have a hot-water washbasin. The hotel is set around a pleasant courtyard.

Hôtel Royal (Map p586; ☎ 037 721171; royal hotel@mtds.com; 1 Rue Jeddah Ammane; s/d Dh350/400; P) The tastefully renovated rooms at the Royal are very comfortable with polished wood furniture and sparkling new bathrooms. Each has a balcony overlooking the park or street.

Hôtel Yasmine (Map p584; ☎ 037 722018; fax 037 722100; cnr Zankat Marinyne & Mekka; s/d Dh359/467; P) Strong on traditional Moroccan style and popular with local business travellers, the public areas of this elegant hotel are all marble floors, *zellij* tiles and leather furniture. The bedrooms, however, are more mundane, but they are tasteful and comfortable.

Hôtel Balima (Map p586; ☎ 037 707755; fax 037 707450; Ave Mohammed V; s/d Dh418/536) *La grande dame* of Rabat hotels has seen better days, but the rooms here are being slowly renovated. Ask for a newer room or be prepared to put up with the time-warp furniture and fabrics. The hotel has a decent restaurant, nightclub and a glorious shady terrace facing Ave Mohammed V.

Riad Oudaya (Map p586; ☎ 037 702392; www.riadoudaya.com; 46 Rue Sidi Fateh; r/st Dh1350/1650) Tucked away down an alley in the medina, this gorgeous guesthouse is a real hidden gem. The rooms are beautifully decorated with a wonderful blend of Moroccan style and Western comfort. Subtle lighting, open fires, balconies and the gentle gurgling of the fountain in the tiled courtyard below complete the romantic appeal. Meals here are sublime.

Eating & Drinking

Restaurant de la Libération (Map p586; 256 Ave Mohammed V; mains Dh29) Cheap, cheerful and marginally more classy than the string of other eateries along this road (it's got plastic menus and tablecloths), this basic restaurant does a steady line in traditional favourites. Friday is couscous day, when giant platters of the stuff are delivered to the eager masses.

Restaurant el-Bahia (Map p586; ☎ 037 734504; Ave Hassan II; mains Dh40-70; ☞ 6am-midnight, to 10.30pm in winter) Built into the outside of the medina walls and an excellent spot for people-watching, this laidback restaurant has the locals lapping up hearty Moroccan fare. Choose to sit in the pavement terrace, in the shaded courtyard or upstairs in the traditional salon.

Le Ziryab (Map p584; ☎ 037 733636; 10 Zankat Ennajar; mains Dh90-140) This chic Moroccan restaurant is in a magnificent building just off Rue des Consuls. The blend of old-world character and stylish contemporary design is also reflected in the excellent menu of interesting variations on tajine, couscous, *pastilla* and grilled meat and fish.

Restaurant Dinarjat (Map p584; ☎ 037 724239; 6 Rue Belgnaoui; mains around Dh150, bottle wine Dh80) A favourite with locals and visitors alike, this traditional Moroccan restaurant is set in a 17th-century house at the heart of the medina. It's wildly fanciful with Andalucian-style palace décor, and belly dancers sashaying across the lush carpets. The food is traditional Moroccan with local specialities like *pastilla* on the menu. Book in advance.

Café Maure (Map p584; Kasbah des Oudaïas; ☞ 9am-5.30pm) Sit back, relax and just gaze out over the estuary to Salé from this chilled little open-air café near the Andalucian Gardens. Mint tea is the thing here accompanied by little almond biscuits delivered on silver trays. It's an easy place to while away some time writing postcards, and a relaxed venue for women.

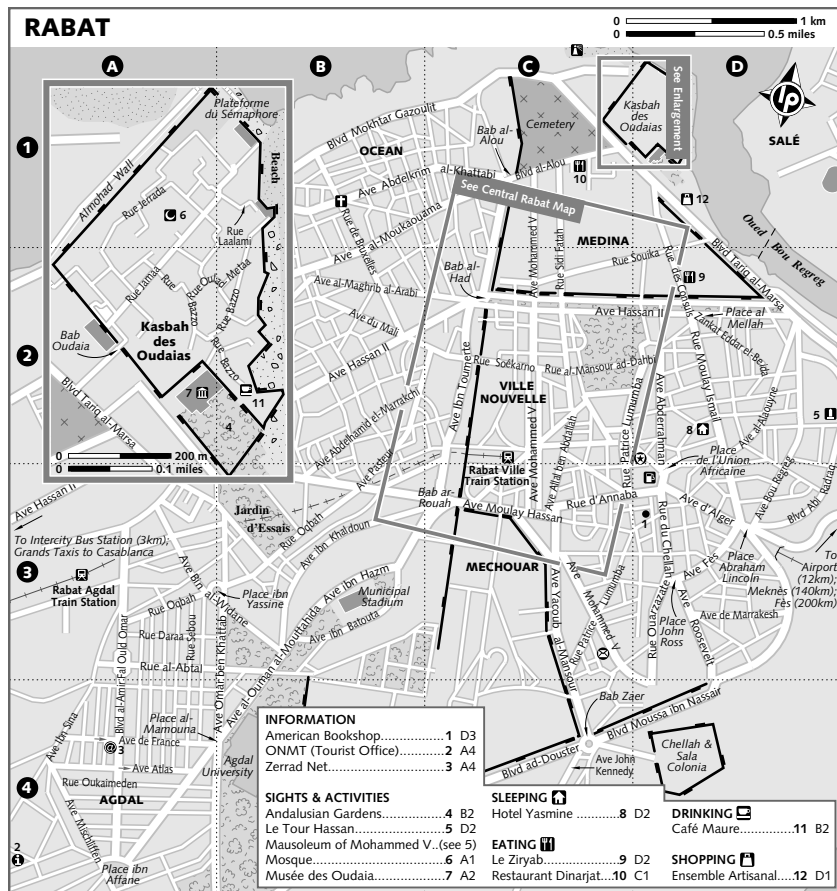
Shopping

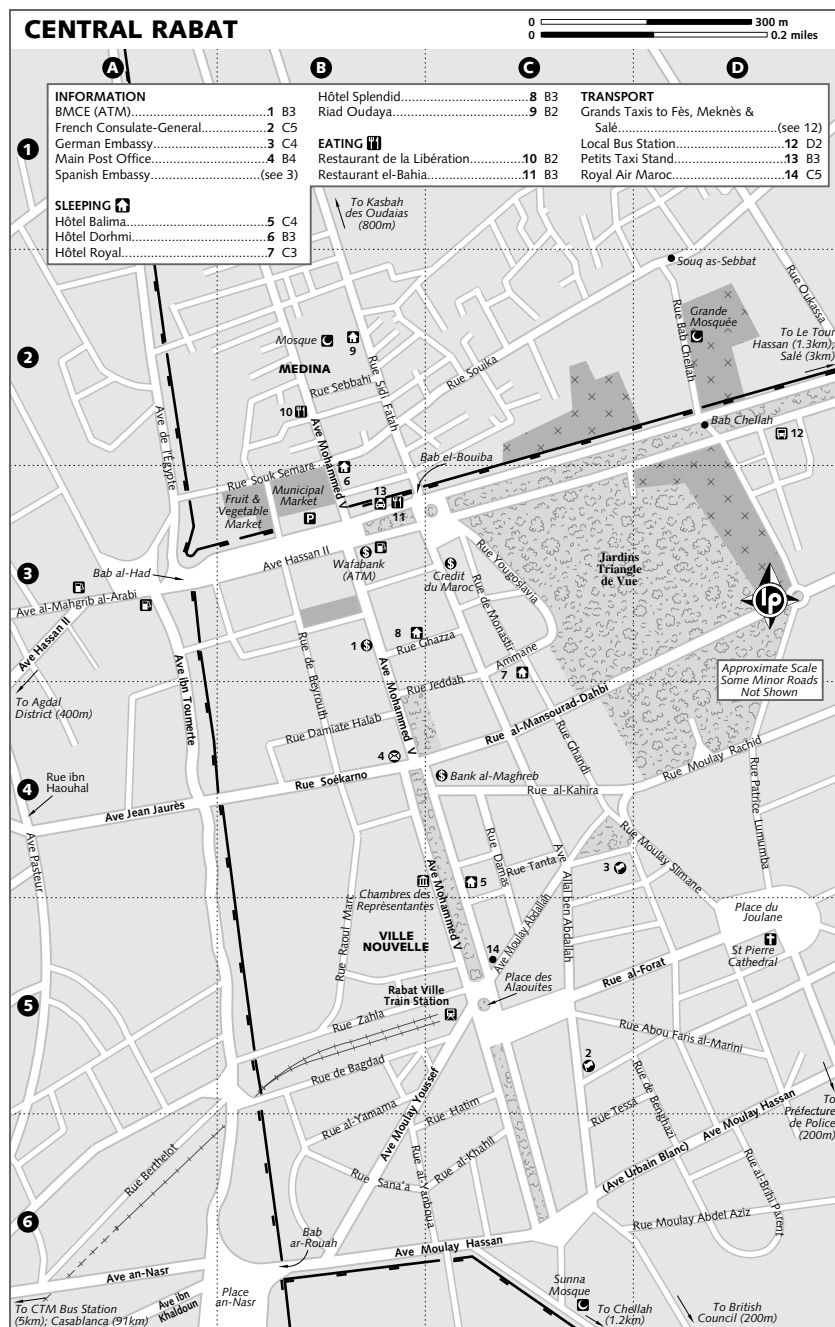
Weaving was one of the most important traditional crafts in Rabat and on Tuesday and Thursday mornings women descend from the villages to auction their carpets to local salesmen at the carpet souq off Rue des Consuls. For more formal shopping head to the **Ensemble Artisanal** (Map p584; ☎ 037 730507; Blvd Tariq al-Marsa; ☞ 9am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm).

Getting There & Away

BUS

Rabat has two bus stations: the main **gare routière** (☎ 037 795816) where most buses depart and arrive, and the less chaotic **CTM station** (☎ 037 281488). Both are about 5km southwest of the city centre on the road to Casablanca. CTM has eight daily services to Casablanca (Dh25, 1½ hours), three to Essaouira (Dh15, three hours), seven to Fès (Dh58, 3½ hours),





three to Marrakesh (Dh100, five hours), five to Tangier (Dh80, 4½ hours) and one to Tetouan (Dh80, five hours). The main *gare routière* has 13 separate ticket windows, each one clearly marked by destination.

TRAIN

Rabat Ville train station (☎ 037 736060) is right in the centre of town, from where trains run every 30 minutes between 6am and 10.30pm to Casa-Port train station in Casablanca (Dh29.50). Second-class services also run to Fès (Dh72, 3½ hours, eight daily) via Meknès (Dh56, 2½ hours), Tangier (Dh90, 4½ hours, seven daily) and Marrakesh (Dh101, 4½ hours, eight daily).

GRANDS TAXIS

Grands taxis leave for Casablanca (Dh27) from just outside the intercity bus station. Other grands taxis leave for Fès (Dh55), Meknès (Dh40) and Salé (Dh3.50) from a lot off Ave Hassan II behind the Hôtel Bouregreg.

Getting Around

Rabat's blue petits taxis are plentiful, cheap and quick. A ride around the centre of town will cost about Dh10.

AROUND RABAT

Salé

pop 400,000

A few hundred metres and half a world away, Salé is a walled city and strongly traditional backwater on the far side of the Oued Bou Regreg estuary.

Salé is best seen on a half-day trip from Rabat. The main entrance to the **medina** is Bab Bou Haja, on the southwestern wall, which opens onto Place Bab Khebaz. The **Grande Mosquée** is 500m further northwest along Rue Ras ash-Shajara; it's closed to non-Muslims, but the **medersa** (admission Dh10; ☎ 9am-noon & 2.30-6pm) is open as a museum.

Shaded by trees and unchanged for centuries, the **Souq el-Ghezal** (Wool Market), makes an interesting stop. In the nearby **Souq el-Merzouk**, textiles, basketwork and jewellery are crafted and sold.

The most atmospheric way to reach Salé is to take one of the small rowboats (Dh1 per person) that cross the Oued Bou Regreg from just below the *mellah*. Alternatively, take bus 16 (Dh3) and get off after passing under the railway bridge.

In the village of Oulja, 3km southeast of Salé, the **Complexe de Potiers** (potters' cooperative; ☎ sunrise-sunset) is a top spot for the souvenir hunter. A huge selection of ceramics is produced and sold here, including *tajine* dishes of every size and colour.

Beaches

The clean, sandy strip of beach at **Plage des Nations**, 17km north of Rabat, is a popular spot with local day-trippers. It gets some serious wave action of interest to surfers but the currents can be dangerous for swimming. There are other beautiful beaches closer to Rabat, such as the wild sandy stretches around **Temara Plage**, 13km south of the city. Popular with surfers and sunbathers alike, this beach can be reached on bus 17 from Bab al-Had in Rabat.

CASABLANCA

pop 3.8 million

Casa, as Casablanca is popularly known, is a city of incredible contrasts, offering a unique insight into modern Morocco. This sprawling, European-style city is home to racing traffic, simmering social problems, wide boulevards, parks, and imposing Hispano-Moorish and Art Deco buildings. Their rundown façades stand in sharp contrast to Casablanca's modernist landmark: the enormous and incredibly ornate Hassan II mosque.

Orientation

The medina – the oldest part of town – is relatively small and sits in the north of the city close to the port. To the south of the medina is Place des Nations Unies, a large traffic junction that marks the heart of the city. The CTM bus station and Casa-Port train station are in the centre of the city. Casa-Voyageurs station is 2km east of the centre and the airport is 30km southeast of town.

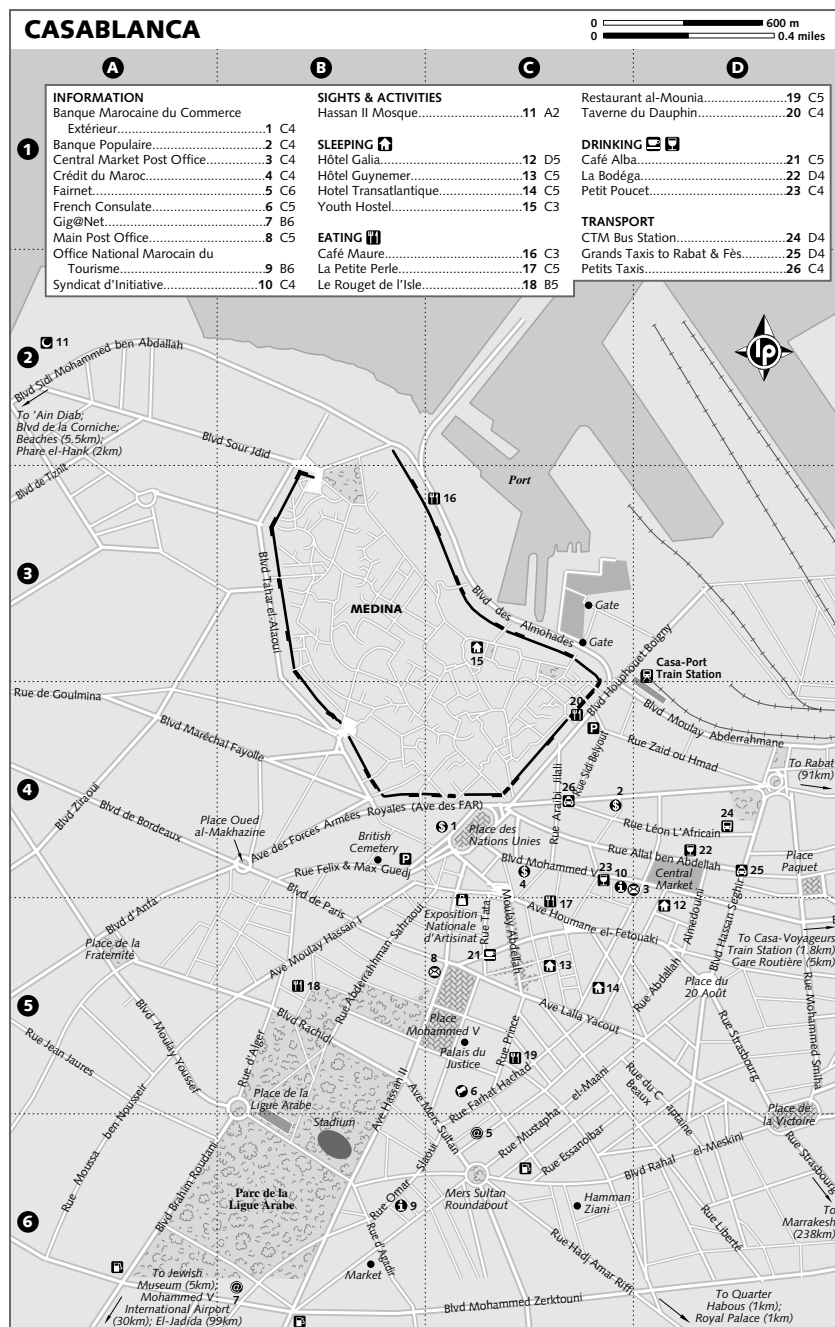
Information

EMERGENCY

Service d'Aide Médicale Urgente (SAMU) (☎ 022 252525) Private ambulance service.
SOS Médecins (☎ 022 444444; house call Dh310; ☎ 24hr) Private doctors who make house calls.

INTERNET ACCESS

Fairnet (☎ 022 482631; 25 Rue Mers Sultan; per hr Dh8; ☎ 8am-11pm)
Gig@net (☎ 022 484810; 140 Blvd Mohammed Zerkouni; per hr Dh10; ☎ 24hr)

**MONEY**

Banque Marocaine du Commerce Extérieur (BMCE; Hyatt Regency Hotel; ☎ 9am-9pm)

Crédit du Maroc (☎ 022 477255; 48 Blvd Mohammed V)

POST

Central Market post office (cnr Blvd Mohammed V & Rue Chaouia)

Main post office (cnr Blvd de Paris & Ave Hassan II)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Office National Marocain du Tourisme (ONMT; ☎ 022 271177; 55 Rue Omar Slaoui; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

Syndicat d'Initiative (☎ 022 221524; 98 Blvd Mohammed V; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun)

Sights

Rising above the Atlantic northwest of the medina, the **Hassan II Mosque** is the world's third-largest mosque, built to commemorate the former king's 60th birthday. The mosque rises above the ocean on a rocky outcrop reclaimed from the sea, a vast building that holds 25,000 worshippers and can accommodate a further 80,000 in the courtyards and squares around it. To see the interior of the mosque you must take a **guided tour** (☎ 022 482886; adult/child/student Dh120/30/60; ☎ 9am, 10am, 11am & 2pm Sat-Thu).

Set in a beautiful villa surrounded by lush gardens, the **Jewish Museum of Casablanca** (☎ 022 994940; 81 Rue Chasseur Jules Gros, Oasis; Dh20, with guide Dh30; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri) is the only Jewish museum in the Islamic world.

In the trendy suburb of Ain Diab, the beachside **Boulevard de la Corniche** is lined with beach clubs, four-star hotels, up-market restaurants, bars, coffee shops, nightclubs and a new multiplex cinema. Take bus 9 from Place Oued al-Makhazine, just west of Place des Nations Unies.

Sleeping

Youth Hostel (☎ 022 220551; fax 022 227677; 6 Place Ahmed el-Bidaoui; dm/d/tr with breakfast Dh45/120/180, sheets Dh5; ☎ 8-10am & noon-11pm; ☑ ☑) Clustered around a bright central lounge area, the rooms here are basic but well kept, with high ceilings and a lingering smell of damp in winter.

Hôtel Galia (☎ 022 481694; 19 Rue Ibn Batouta; s/d/tr Dh170/250/330, with shared bathroom Dh150/220/300) Tiled floors, plastic flowers, gold, tasselled curtains and matching bedspreads adorn the rooms at the Galia, a top-notch budget option

with excellent-value rooms and rather dubious taste in décor. Management is friendly and helpful.

Hôtel Guynemer (☎ 022 275764; www.geocities.com/guynemerhotel; 2 Rue Mohammed Belloul; s/d/t Dh372/538/676; ☑ ☑) This family-run hotel has 29 recently redecorated rooms tastefully decked out in cheerful colours. Fresh flowers, TVs, breakfast, new bathroom fittings and firm, comfortable beds make them a steal at these rates and the service is way above average. There's also wi-fi access in the lobby and a dedicated PC for guests' use.

Hôtel Transatlantique (☎ 022 294551; www.transatcasa.com; 79 Rue Chaouia; s/d Dh620/740; ☑ ☑) Set in one of Casa's Art Deco gems, this 1922 hotel has buckets of Neo-Moorish character. The grand scale, decorative plaster, spidery wrought ironwork and eclectic mix of knick-knacks give it a whiff of colonial-era decadence crossed with '70s retro. There's a lovely outdoor seating area and comfortable, but fairly plain, bedrooms.

Hôtel le Littoral (☎ 022 797373; www.hotel-littoral.ma; Blvd de l'Océan Atlantique, Ain Diab; s/d Dh699/850; ☑ ☑) This cavernous, well-kept hotel is rather dark, with rooms that were once the height of fashion but now look dangerously '80s. However, they've got large balconies and wonderful views over the waterfront.

Eating

La Petite Perle (☎ 022 272849; 17-19 Ave Houmane el-Fetouaki; mains Dh22-45; ☎ 11.30am-3pm & 6-11pm) Popular with young professionals and a quiet break for women travelling alone, this spotless, modern café serves up a range of sandwiches, crepes, pastas and pizzas as well as a great choice of breakfasts.

Café Maure (☎ 022 260960; Blvd des Almohades; mains Dh60-90; ☎ 10am-midnight, to 6pm in winter) Nestled in the ochre walls of the *sqala* (an 18th-century fortified bastion) this lovely restaurant is a tranquil escape from the city. The menu favours seafood and salads, although meat dishes are also available, and the exotic fruit juices are simply sublime.

Taverne du Dauphin (☎ 022 221200; 115 Blvd Houphouët Boigny; set menu Dh110, mains Dh70-90; ☎ Mon-Sat) A Casablanca institution, this traditional Provençal restaurant and bar has been serving up *fruits de mer* since it opened in 1958. On first glance it's a humble, family-run place, but one taste of the succulent grilled fish, fried calamari and *crevettes royales* will leave you smitten.

Le Rouget de l'Isle (☎ 022 294740; 16 Rue Rouget de l'Isle; mains Dh110-130; ☎ noon-3pm & 7-11pm Mon-Fri, 7-11pm Sat) Sleek, stylish and renowned for its simple but delicious French food, Le Rouget is one of Casa's top spots. Set in a renovated 1930s villa, it is an elegant place filled with period furniture and contemporary artwork. The impeccable food is reasonably priced though, and there's a beautiful garden. Book in advance.

Restaurant al-Mounia (☎ 022 222669; 95 Rue Prince Moulay Abdallah; mains Dh110-140) Dine in style at this wonderfully traditional restaurant where you can choose to sit in the elegant Moroccan salon or the cool, leafy garden to enjoy the sumptuous Moroccan cuisine. There's a selection of salads worthy of any vegetarian restaurant and an array of exotic delicacies such as chicken *pastilla* and pigeon with raisins.

La Fibule (☎ 022 360641; Blvd de la Corniche, Phare El-Hank; meals around Dh250; ☎ Subtle lighting, warm colours and traditional décor give La Fibule a wonderfully inviting atmosphere. The food here is traditional Moroccan and Lebanese, and is lovingly prepared and presented at low tables overlooking the ocean.

Drinking & Entertainment

Café Alba (☎ 022 227154; 59-61 Rue Driss Lahrizi; ☎ 8am-1am) High ceilings, swish, modern furniture and subtle lighting mark this café out from the more traditional smoky joints around town. It's hassle-free for women and a great place for watching Casa's up-and-coming.

La Bodéga (☎ 022 541842; 129 Rue Allah ben Abdellah; ☎ 12.30-3pm & 7pm-midnight) Hip, happening and loved by a mixed age group of Casablanca's finest, La Bodéga is a tapas bar where the music (everything from salsa to Arabic pop) is loud and the alcohol flows freely. It's a fun place with a lively atmosphere and a packed dance floor after 10pm.

Petit Poucet (Blvd Mohammed V; ☎ 9am-10pm) A die-hard relic of 1920s France, this strictly male-only bar was where Saint-Exupéry, the French author and aviator, used to spend time between mail-flights across the Sahara. Today, the bar is pretty low key but is an authentic slice of old-time Casa life.

La Petite Roche (☎ 022 395748; Blvd de la Corniche, Phare El-Hank; ☎ 12.30-3pm & 7pm-midnight) With stunning views across to the Hassan II Mosque, this is another favourite Casa hangout. Littered with pillows thrown across low-level seating, and lit by an army of can-

dles, this place has a laid-back but exotic atmosphere.

The beachfront suburb of Aïn Diab is the place for late-night drinking and dancing. However, hanging out with Casablanca's beautiful people for a night on the town doesn't come cheap. Expect to pay at least Dh100 to get in and as much again for drinks.

The strip of disco joints along the beachfront ranges from cabaret-style bar-cum-restaurants such as **Balcon 33** (33 Blvd de la Corniche) to the pastel-coloured pop sensation **Candy Bar** (55 Blvd de la Corniche) and the catch-all **VIP club** (Rue des Dunes).

Getting There & Away

BUS
The modern **CTM bus station** (☎ 022 541010; 23 Rue Léon L'Africain) has daily CTM departures:

Destination	Cost (Dh)	Duration (hours)	Frequency
Essaouira	120	7	3 daily
Fès	90	5	12 daily
Marrakesh	70	4	9 daily
Meknès	70	4	11 daily
Rabat	25	1	11 daily
Tangier	120	6	6 daily
Tetouan	120	7	3 daily

The modern **Gare Routière Ouled Ziane** (☎ 022 444470), 4km southeast of the centre, is the bus station for non-CTM services.

TRAIN

All long-distance trains, as well as trains to Mohammed V Airport, depart from **Casa-Voyageurs train station** (☎ 022 243818), 4km east of the city centre. Catch bus 30 (Dh3.50), which runs down Blvd Mohammed V, or hop in a taxi and pay about Dh10 to get there. Destinations include Marrakesh (Dh75.50, three hours, nine daily), Fès (Dh97, 4½ hours, nine daily) via Meknès (Dh81, 3½ hours) and Tangier (Dh117, 5½ hours, three daily).

The **Casa-Port train station** (☎ 022 223011) is a few hundred metres northeast of Place des Nations Unies. Although more convenient, trains from here run only to Rabat (Dh29.50, one hour).

Getting Around

The easiest way to get from Mohammed V International Airport to Casablanca is by train

(2nd class Dh30, 35 minutes); they leave every hour from 6am to midnight from below the ground floor of the airport terminal building. A grands taxi between the airport and the city centre costs Dh250.

Casa's red petits taxis are excellent value. The minimum fare is Dh7, but expect to pay Dh10 in or near the city centre.

ESSAOUIRA

pop 69,000

The laid-back attitude, plum accommodation, artsy atmosphere, bracing sea breezes and picture-postcard ramparts make Essaouira a firm favourite on the traveller's trail. It's the kind of place where you'll sigh deeply and relax enough to shrug off your guarded attitude and just soak up the atmosphere.

Sights & Activities

Essaouira's walled **medina** was added to Unesco's World Heritage list in 2001, its well-preserved, late-18th-century, fortified layout a prime example of European military architecture in North Africa. The mellow atmosphere, narrow winding streets lined with colourful shops, whitewashed houses and heavy old wooden doors make it a wonderful place to stroll. The easiest place to access the ramparts is at **Skala de la Ville**, the impressive sea bastion built along the cliffs. Down by the harbour, the **Skala du Port** (adult/child Dh10/3; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6pm) offers picturesque views over the fishing port and the **Île de Mogador**.

A number of outlets rent water sports equipment and offer instruction along Essaouira's wide sandy beach. **Magic Fun Afrika** (☎ 024 473856; www.magicfunafrika.com; Blvd Mohammed V; ☎ 9am-6pm Mar-Dec) rents windsurfing equipment (Dh150 per hour) and surfboards (Dh60 per hour). It also offers kite surfing (from Dh250 per hour) and kayaking (Dh100 per hour, Dh330 per day).

The **Gnaoua and World Music Festival** (third weekend June) is a four-day musical extravaganza with concerts on Place Moulay Hassan.

Sleeping

Riad Nakhla (☎ /fax 024 474940; www.essaouirant.com/riad-nakhla; 2 Rue Agadir; s/d Dh200/300) For budget travellers who have endured countless nights in grotty hotels, the Riad Nakhla is a revelation. The stone columns and fountain trickling in the courtyard immediately make you feel like you're somewhere much more

expensive, and the bedrooms, though simple enough, are immaculately kept. Breakfast on the stunning roof terrace is another treat.

Riad Émeraude (☎ 024 473494; www.essaouirahotel.com, in French; 228 Rue Chbanate; s/d Dh340/440) This lovely little hotel opens up from a stunning central courtyard with stone arches and tiled floors to 12 charming rooms bathed in light. Elegantly simple with brilliant white linens, minimalist local touches and splashes of blues or yellow, these rooms (which include breakfast) offer incredible value for money.

Lalla Mira (☎ 024 475046; 14 Rue d'Algerie; www.lalla mira.ma; s/d/st Dh436/692/920; ☎) This gorgeous little place claims to be Morocco's first eco-hotel and has a selection of simple rooms with ochre *tadelakt* (smooth-polished lime) walls, wrought-iron furniture, natural fabrics and solar-powered underfloor heating. The anti-allergy beds, on-site *hammam* (also heated by solar power) and cheerful restaurant (mains Dh90 to Dh120) serving a good selection of vegetarian food are all nice touches.

Casa Lila (☎ 024 475525; www.riad-casalila.com; 94 Rue Mohammed el-Qory; d/st Dh750/1200) An oasis of calm, this glorious little place is all restful hues and natural materials. A subtle palette of blues, purples and soft pinks runs through this lovely *riad*, which has plenty of original carved woods and traditional tiling, as well as wrought iron, soft linens and *tadelakt* bathrooms with chrome or copper baths.

Riad Mimouna (☎ 024 785753; www.riad-mimouna.com; 62 Rue d'Oujda; s Dh700-1050, d Dh850-1200, ste Dh1500-1900; ☎) This stunning new hotel offers grand Moorish design with sumptuous carved *thuya* (type of local, fragrant wood) ceilings, plush carpets, a whiff of incense as you walk into your room and glorious sea views. There's also a fantastic roof terrace, a *hammam* and a subtly lit restaurant (menu Dh160).

Eating

Chez François (☎ 086 164087; 1 Rue Homme el-Fatouaki; lunch set menu Dh60; ☎ Mon-Sat) An excellent choice for a light, healthy meal, this pared-back little place offers a choice of savoury tarts served with three tangy salads. It's simple, well-made food and is a glorious find after a diet of tajine and *kefta*.

Restaurant Ferdaous (☎ 024 473655; 27 Rue Abdesslam Lebadi; mains Dh50, set menu Dh75) Don't be put off by the grimy back street this place is on – it's still one of the best spots in town

for traditional Moroccan food. The seasonal menu offers an innovative take on traditional recipes, and the low tables and padded seating make it feel like the real McCoy.

Le 5 (☎ 024 784726; 5 Rue Youssef el-Fassi; set menu Dh150; 🕒 7pm-11pm Wed-Mon, plus noon-3pm Sat & Sun) Deep purple seating, warm stone arches and giant lampshades dominate this slick newcomer on the Essaouira restaurant scene. It's currently *the* place to see and be seen in town and serves a good choice of international and Moroccan dishes.

One of Essaouira's best food experiences is the outdoor fish grills that line the port end of Place Moulay Hassan. Just choose what you want to eat from the colourful displays of fresh fish and seafood outside each grill, agree on a price (expect to pay about Dh40 for lunch) and wait for it to be cooked on the spot.

Getting There & Away

The **bus station** (☎ 024 784764) is about 400m northeast of the medina, an easy walk during the day but better in a *petits taxi* (Dh6) if you're arriving or leaving late at night. CTM has two buses daily for Casablanca (Dh110, six hours), and one to Marrakesh (Dh50, 2½ hours).

Supratours (☎ 024 475317), the ONCF subsidiary, runs buses to Marrakesh train station (Dh60, 2½ hours, four daily) to connect with trains to Casablanca. You should book several days in advance for this service, particularly in summer.

IMPERIAL CITIES

From green hills and wooded mountains to historic cities and holy shrines, this region lays a strong claim to being the most diverse in the country. From grand old Fès to the clamour of Marrakesh, this could be the part of Morocco where you spend the most of your time.

MARRAKESH

pop 1.9 million

Capital of the south and the epicentre of Moroccan tourism, Marrakesh is changing fast. Once the hub of camel caravans from the south, Marrakesh remains exotic, but just as Moroccans craved modern housing, Europeans arrived dreaming of old houses in the heart of the medina. This happy exchange has transformed the place, bringing money

and work to a city that lives off its looks and its wits.

The looks are still there, as the first glimpse of its 16km-long, time-worn ramparts confirm. And some things have remained – the Djemaa el-Fna and the area around remains the beating heart of the city and the greatest souq in the south.

It takes 30 minutes to walk from the centre of the ville nouvelle to Djemaa el-Fna, the main square in the heart of the old city; you may want to use public transport between the two.

Information

EMERGENCY

Ambulance (☎ 024 443724)

Brigade Touristique (☎ 024 384601; Rue Sidi Mimoun; 🕒 24hr)

INTERNET ACCESS

Cyber Park (Ave Mohammed V; per hr Dh5;

🕒 9.30am-8pm)

Hassan Internet (☎ 024 441989; Immeuble Tazi, 12 Rue Riad al Moukha; per hr Dh8; 🕒 7am-1am)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Pharmacie de l'Unité (☎ 024 435982; Ave des Nations Unies, Guéliz; 🕒 8.30am-11pm)

Polyclinique du Sud (☎ 024 447999; cnr Rue de Yougoslavie & Rue Ibn Aïcha, Guéliz; 🕒 24hr emergency service) A popular, private clinic used by many resident expats.

MONEY

Crédit du Maroc (Rue de Bab Agnaou; 🕒 8.45am-1pm & 3-6.45pm Mon-Sat)

POST

Main post office (☎ 024 431963; Place du 16 Novembre; 🕒 8.30am-2pm Mon-Sat) In the ville nouvelle.

Post office (Rue Bab Agnaou; 🕒 8am-noon & 3-6pm Mon-Fri) A convenient branch office in the medina.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Office National Marocain du Tourisme (ONMT; ☎ 024 436131; Place Abdel Moumen ben Ali, Guéliz; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 3-6pm Sat)

Sights

The focal point of Marrakesh is **Djemaa el-Fna**, a huge square in the medina, and the backdrop for one of the world's greatest spectacles. Although it can be lively at any hour of the day, Djemaa el-Fna comes into its own at dusk

when the curtain goes up on rows of open-air food stalls smoking the immediate area with mouthwatering aromas. Jugglers, storytellers, snake charmers, musicians, the occasional acrobats and benign lunatics consume the remaining space, each surrounded by jostling spectators.

Dominating the Marrakshi landscape, southwest of Djemaa el-Fna, is the 70m-tall minaret of Marrakesh's most famous and most venerated monument, the **Koutoubia Mosque**. Visible for miles in all directions, it's a classic example of Moroccan-Andalusian architecture.

The largest and oldest-surviving of the mosques inside the medina is the 12th-century **Ali ben Youssef Mosque** (closed to non-Muslims), which marks the intellectual and religious heart of the medina. Next to the mosque is the 14th-century **Ali ben Youssef Medersa** (☎ 024 441893; Place ben Youssef; admission Dh40; 🕒 9am-6pm winter, 9am-7pm summer), a peaceful and meditative place with some stunning examples of stucco decoration.

Inaugurated in 1997, the **Musée de Marrakesh** (☎ 024 390911; www.museedemarrakech.ma; Place ben Youssef; admission Dh40; 🕒 9am-7pm) is housed in a beautifully restored 19th-century palace, Dar Mnebbhi. A combined ticket that also covers Ali ben Youssef Medersa costs Dh60.

South of the main medina area is the **Kasbah** (Royal Quarter), which is home to the most famous of the city's palaces, the now-ruined **Palais el-Badi** (Place des Ferblantiers; admission Dh10; 🕒 8.30-noon & 2.30-6pm), 'the incomparable', once reputed to be one of the most beautiful palaces in the world. All that's left are the towering pisé walls taken over by stork nests, and the staggering scale to give an impression of the former splendour. The **Palais de la Bahia** (☎ 024 389564; Rue Riad Zitoun el-Jedid; admission Dh10; 🕒 8.30-11.45am & 2.30-5.45pm Sat-Thu, 8.30-11.30am & 3-5.45pm Fri), the 'Brilliant', is the perfect antidote to the simplicity of the nearby el-Badi.

Long hidden from intrusive eyes, the area of the **Saadian Tombs** (Rue de la Kasbah; admission Dh10; 🕒 8.30-11.45am & 2.30-5.45pm), alongside the Kasbah Mosque, is home to ornate tombs that are the resting places of Saadian princes.

Marrakesh has more gardens than any other Moroccan city, offering the perfect escape from the hubbub of the souqs and the traffic. The rose gardens of Koutoubia Mosque, in particular, offer cool respite near Djemaa el-Fna.

Sleeping

Hôtel CTM (☎ 024 442325; Djemaa el-Fna; s/d/tr Dh100/150/200, with shared bathroom Dh68/104/158; 📍) Something of an institution, this hotel is in the thick of things, right on the Place, with unbeatable views from the roof and from the (noisy) front rooms, though most rooms open onto an unspectacular courtyard. The communal facilities have definitely seen better days.

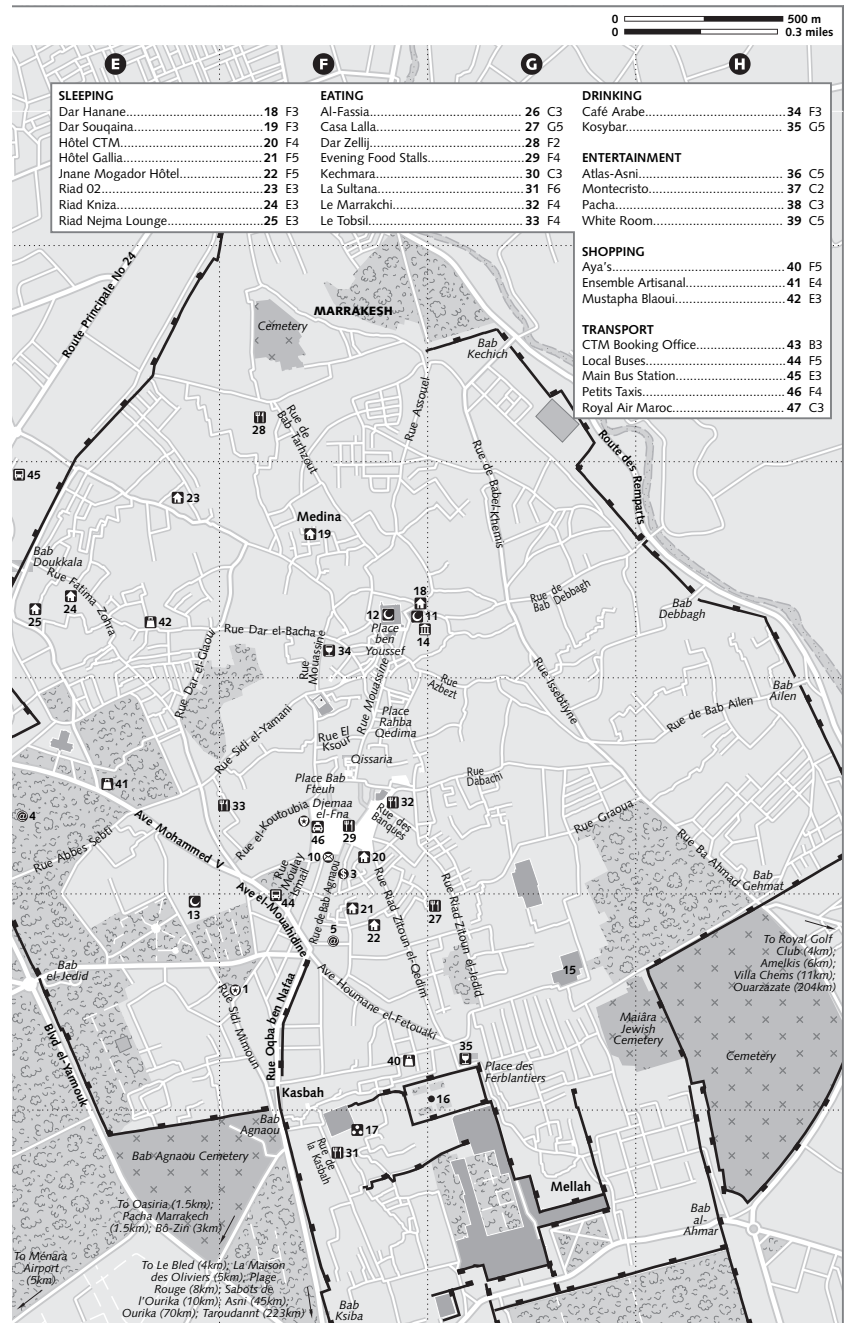
Hôtel Gallia (☎ 024 445913; fax 044 444853; www.love-marrakesh.com/hotelgallia; 30 Rue de la Recette; s/d Dh270/420; 📍) This delightful budget hotel in a quiet backstreet near the Djemaa el-Fna has been run by the same French family since 1929. The 20 pleasant rooms are located around two lovely courtyards and the entire place is scrubbed clean daily. Most rooms have air-con, while the central heating is welcome in winter. The breakfast is excellent. You'll need to book (by fax only) weeks if not months in advance.

Jnane Mogador Hôtel (☎ 024 426323; www.jnane.mogador.com; Derb Sidi Bouloukat, 116 Riad Zitoun el-Qedim; s/d/q Dh290/380/520) The Jnane Mogador is a wonderfully restored 19th-century *riad* around an elegant central courtyard complete with tinkling fountain, grand marble staircase, a *hammam* and attractive rooms decorated in Moroccan style.

Riad Nejma Lounge (☎ 024 382341; www.riad-nejma.lounge.com; 45 Derb Sidi M'hamed el-Haj, Bab Doukkala; d incl breakfast Dh300-600, during Christmas holiday up to Dh900; 📍 📍) This is one of the coolest *riads* in town and at cool prices. The French owners have painted it all in white, with bright colours in the details, and blood-red carpets. With lots of palms and exotic plants and a groovy roof terrace, this laid-back house attracts the young 'lounge' crowd.

Dar Souqaina (☎ 024 376055; www.darsouqaina.com; 19 Derb el-Ferrane, Riad Laarouss; s/d/tr incl breakfast Dh760/860/1010) A traditional *riad* lovingly restored to retain all its quirky features, not least the tiny doors and low ceilings. Beautifully whitewashed with a lilac trim, Dar Souqaina is a peaceful and tranquil haven with orange trees in the courtyard.

Riad 02 (☎ 024 377227; www.riado2.com; 97 Derb Semmaria, Sidi Ben Slimane, Sidi Ahmed Soussi, Zaouia; s/d B&B Dh500/1000, ste Dh900/1200; 📍 📍) The architecture says it all in this large *riad*, lovingly restored with almost monastic simplicity. After a hectic day in the medina you can relax in the small pool, or steam away in the *hammam*.



AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Riad Kniza (☎ 024 376942; www.riadkniza.com; 34 Derb l'Hotel Bab Doukala; d incl breakfast €199-220, ste €275-320 🍷) Most of Marrakesh's luxury hotels are backed or run by foreigners, but the Kniza is Moroccan through and through, from the antique decorations to the efficient staff and the generous welcome. The seven rooms are spacious and sumptuous, and a pool and spa were under construction at the time of writing.

Bedrooms are equally pleasant, decorated in a fusion of modern Western and traditional Moroccan style, and all come with *tadelaght* bathrooms.

Dar Hanane (☎ 024 377737; www.dar-hanane.com; 9 Derb Lalla Azzouna; r incl breakfast Dh880-1320, ste Dh1100-1650) Dar Hanane is an unusually spacious *riad* with good-sized rooms, luxurious but simply decorated in muted tones to bring out the best from the architecture. The house, near the Ali ben Youssef Medersa, exudes an almost zen-like tranquillity, and the service is friendly.

Eating

Kechmara (☎ 024 434060; 3 Rue de La Liberté, Guéliz; set menu Dh80-120; 🍷) Carefully chosen contemporary décor, good music all day and night, beautiful staff and most importantly, this is one of the few trendy places that does not charge the world for excellent and well-presented Moroccan-Mediterranean food.

Al-Fassia (☎ 024 434060; 55 Blvd Mohammed Zerktouni, Guéliz; mains around Dh120-160; 🍷 noon-2.30 & 7.30-11pm; 🍷) A reminder that the ville nouvelle is still in Morocco, Al-Fassia serves some of the best local cuisine in town. Specialities need to be ordered in advance, but there's plenty to choose from the à la carte menu, and portions are large. Unusually, the place is run by a women's cooperative, and only women work here. Book ahead.

Le Marrakchi (☎ 024 443377; www.lemarrakchi.com; cnr Djemaa el-Fna & Rue des Banques; meals Dh150-250, set menu Dh250-350; 🍷 11.30am-11pm) A good, safe option for a couscous with a view. The sweeping views over the square and the city, particularly from the 2nd floor, are wonderful, and the food is good, and comes with a belly dancer later in the evening.

Dar Zelij (☎ 024 382627; 1 Kaasour Sidi Ben Slimane, Bab Taghzout; meals Dh250-350; 🍷 7-11pm Wed-Mon) This

superb 17th-century *riad* has a courtyard of orange trees, traditional Moroccan salons with carved cedarwood ceilings and a rooftop terrace with views over the medina. The food is traditional, but looks even better. The Moroccan owner serves dishes that can be hard to find elsewhere such as lamb *tajine* with fresh figs, and *trid*, pigeon wrapped in a pancake.

Casa Lalla (☎ 024 429757; www.casalalla.com; 16 Derb Jamaa, off Riad Zitoun el-Qedim; set menu Dh350; 🍷 7-11pm Tue-Sun) Michelin-starred chef Richard Neat left Europe for a quieter life in Marrakesh. He runs a small unlicensed restaurant in his guest-house, delights in shopping in the market every morning and prepares a set six-course menu of beautifully presented delicacies, a fusion of Moroccan and *haute* French cuisine. You need to book well in advance, bring your own wine (no corkage) and arrive promptly at 8pm.

La Sultana (☎ 024 388008; www.lasultanamarrakech.com; Rue de la Kasbah, Kasbah; set menu Dh400-500; 🍷 noon-3pm, plus 7-11pm by reservation only) The food is as refined, sumptuous and exotic as the setting, a happy fusion of French with traditional Moroccan, using only the freshest seasonal ingredients. Have a romantic dinner under the stars overlooking the Saadian Tombs or sit in the warm patio in winter.

Le Tobsil (☎ 024 444052; 22 Derb Abdellah ben Hessaïen, Bab Ksour; set menu with drinks Dh600; 🍷 7-11pm Wed-Mon) Intimate and elegant, this French-owned place is downright classy. Service is impeccable, though perhaps less formal than at some of the other venues. Some foodies consider it to be the best restaurant in Marrakesh.

The cheapest and most exotic place to eat in town remains the food stalls on Djemaa el-Fna, piled high with fresh meats and salads, goats' heads and steaming snails.

Drinking

The number one spot for a cheap and delicious drink is right on Djemaa el-Fna, where fresh-squeezed orange juice is only Dh3. The juice stands are open all day and much of the night for a thirst-quenching, refreshing treat.

Kosybar (☎ 024 380324; http://kozibar.tripod.com; 47 Place des Ferblantiers, Medina; 🍷 noon-1am; 🍷) The Kosybar combines three different venues within one *riad* near the *mellah*. The ground floor is a piano bar, the 1st floor is a Moroccan salon and, best of all, the gorgeous terrace overlooks the medina and storks nesting on the city walls. It also has one of Marrakesh's largest selections of wines.

Café Arabe (☎ 024 429728; 184 Rue el-Mouassine, Medina; 🍷 10am-midnight; 🍷) Another bar-tea-room-restaurant in a large *riad* in the medina, Café Arabe is perfect for a sunset drink or a light meal with a beer. The décor is funky Moroccan, with a large courtyard and more intimate salons inside, while the terrace commands great medina views.

Entertainment

Marrakesh no longer sleeps, and nightlife is fast becoming one of its attractions. Most of the hottest clubs are in the ville nouvelle, or in a new zone outside the city. Admissions range from Dh150 to Dh300 including the first drink. Each drink thereafter costs at least Dh50. Dress smartly and remember most places don't get going until after midnight.

Highlights include **Pacha** (☎ 024 388405; www.pachamarrakech.com; Complexe Pacha Marrakech, Blvd Mohammed VI; admission after 10pm Mon-Fri Dh150, Sat & Sun Dh300; 🍷 8pm-5am), a super-club that boasts famous DJs; **Montecristo** (☎ 024 439031; 20 Rue Ibn Aicha; admission free with drink; 🍷 8pm-2am), a hugely popular Latin club/salsa bar; **White Room** (☎ 060 595540; Hôtel Royal Mirage, Rue de Paris, Hivernage; admission Dh100; 🍷 10pm-dawn), for a very groovy mix of contemporary Arab dance tracks, techno beats, 1980s new wave and salsa; and the dark and exotic **Atlas-Asni** (☎ 024 447051; Hôtel Atlas, 101 Ave de France; admission Dh150; 🍷 midnight-4am), where the crowd and music is predominantly Arab.

Shopping

Marrakesh is a shopper's paradise, its souqs full of skilled artisans producing quality products in wood, leather, wool, metal, bone, brass and silver.

Ensemble Artisanal (Ave Mohammed V; 🍷 8.30am-7.30pm) To get a feeling for the quality of merchandise it is always good to start at this government-run spot in the ville nouvelle.

Mustapha Blaoui (☎ 024 385240; 142-144 Bab Doukkala; 🍷 9am-8pm) Knock on the huge, unmarked door and enter an Aladdin's cave – this is the best warehouse in town and the source of many of those chic *riad* furnishings.

Aya's (☎ 024 383428; www.ilove-marrakesh.com/ayas; 11 Bis Derb Jdid Bab Mellah; 🍷 9am-1.30pm & 3.30-8pm) The delightful Nawal and her husband Simohamed run this tiny boutique, a well-kept secret among local residents. Her gorgeous, very wearable clothes in wool, silk and cotton, are based on traditional Moroccan designs and

handmade by the finest tailors. Her shop is in the little alley beside the restaurant Douiria near the Place des Ferblantiers.

Getting There & Away BUS

The **main bus station** (☎ 024 433933; Bab Doukkala) is just outside the city walls, a 20-minute walk or roughly Dh10 taxi ride from Djemaa el-Fna. Services run to Fès (Dh120, 8½ hours, at least six daily) and Meknès (from Dh110, six hours, at least three daily).

CTM (☎ 024 434402; Window No 10, Bab Doukkala bus station) operates daily buses to Fès (Dh150, 8½ hours, one daily), Ouarzazate (Dh70, four hours, one daily), Casablanca (Dh80, four hours, three daily) and Essaouira (Dh60, three hours).

TRAIN

For the **train station** (☎ 024 447768, 090 203040; www.oncf.org.ma; cnr Ave Hassan II & Blvd Mohammed VI, Guéliz), take a taxi or city bus (3, 8, 10 and 14, among others, Dh3) from the centre. There are trains to Casablanca (2nd-class *rapide* Dh76, three hours, nine daily), Rabat (Dh101, four hours), Fès (Dh171, eight hours, eight daily) via Meknès (Dh154, seven hours) and nightly trains to Tangier (Dh188).

Getting Around

A petits taxi to Marrakesh from the airport (6km) should cost no more than Dh60. Alternatively, bus 11 runs irregularly to Djemaa el-Fna. The creamy-beige petits taxis around town cost anywhere between Dh5 and Dh15 per journey.

FÈS**pop 1 million**

The medina of Fès el-Bali (Old Fès) is the largest living Islamic medieval city in the world. Nothing quite prepares you for your first visit, which can truly be an assault on the senses. Its narrow, winding alleys and covered bazaars are crammed with shops, restaurants, workshops, mosques, medersas (theological colleges) and extensive dye pits and tanneries; a riot of sights, sounds and smells.

Orientation

Fès can be neatly divided into three distinct parts: Fès el-Bali (the core of the medina; the main entrance is Bab Bou Jeloud) in the east; Fès el-Jdid (containing the *mellah* – 'Jewish quarter' – and Royal Palace) in the centre;

WORTH A TRIP

Aït Bou Goumez Valley is often called 'the Happy Valley' and when you get there you will understand why: there is a touch of Shangri-la about this lush and unusually beautiful valley. East of Marrakesh, beyond Azilal, the Aït Bou Goumez Valley feels remote because it is. A year-round road link was opened in 2001, before which the valley was snowbound for four months a year. Even now the road is rarely busy.

The only real sight in the valley is the marabout of Sidi Moussa, though trekking in the M'Goun Massif is also possible. But the real attraction of the valley is the joy of being in so peaceful a place and seeing this landscape – the rich fertility of the valley floor and terraced hillsides – and the Berber villages, which seem to have grown out of the mud and rock on which they sit. The views over the valley from the shrine, and from the *agadir* (fortified granary) on the adjacent hill, are spectacular.

and the ville nouvelle, the administrative area constructed by the French, to the southwest. Frequent local buses connect the ville nouvelle with the medina (the 10-minute journey costs Dh3).

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

London Cyber (Map p599; Ave de la Liberté; per hr Dh10; 10am–10pm)

Teleboutique Cyber Club (Map p601; Blvd Mohammed V; per hr Dh7; 9am–11pm)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Hôpital Ghassani (☎ 055 622777) Located east of the ville nouvelle in Dhar Mehraz.

Night Pharmacy (Map p601; ☎ 055 623493; Blvd Moulay Youssef; 9pm–6am) Located in the north of the ville nouvelle; staffed by a doctor and pharmacist.

MONEY

Société Générale (Map p599; Ave des Français; 8.45am–noon & 2.45–6pm Mon–Thu, 8.45–11am Fri, 8.45am–noon Sat) Immediately outside Bab Bou Jeloud.

POST

Main post office (Map p601; cnr Ave Hassan II & Blvd Mohammed V)

Post office (Map p599; Place de l'Istiqlal) In the medina.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist Office (Map p601; ☎ 055 623460; fax 055 654370; Place de la Résistance; 8.30am–noon & 2.30–6.30pm Mon–Thu, 8.30–11.30am & 3–6.30pm Fri)

Dangers & Annoyances

Fès has long been notorious for its faux guides (unregistered guides). The situation has improved with the introduction of a *brigade touristique* (tourist police); still, high unemployment forces many to persist. A few hus-

blers hang about Fès train station and hotels, but the worst place is around Bab Bou Jeloud, the main western entrance to the medina.

Sights

FÈS EL-BALI (OLD FÈS)

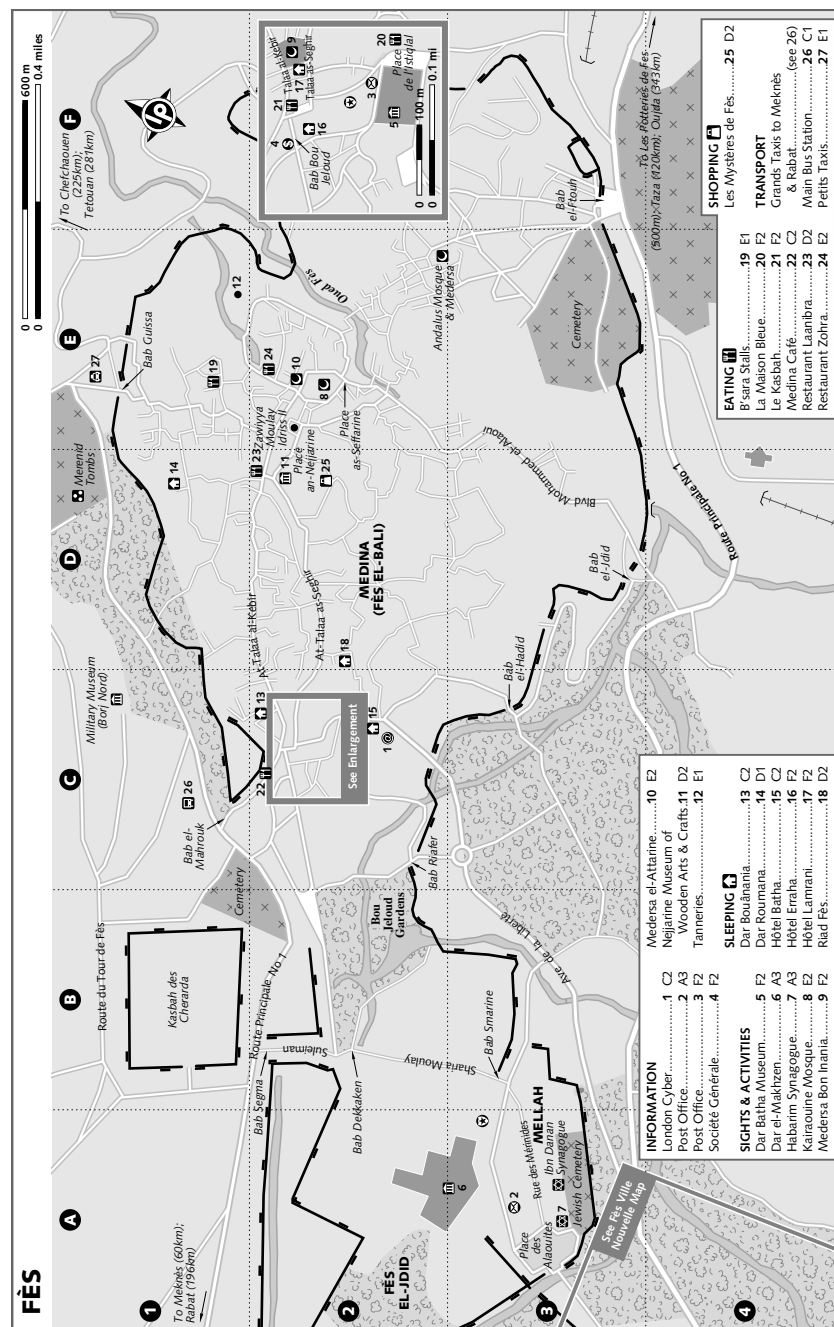
Within the old walls of Fès el-Bali lies an incredible maze of twisting alleys, blind turns and hidden souqs. Navigation can be confusing and getting lost at some stage a certainty, but this is part of the medina's charm: you never quite know what discovery lies around the next corner.

If Fès is the spiritual capital of Morocco, the **Kairouine Mosque** (Map p599) is its true heart. Built in 859 by refugees from Tunisia, and rebuilt in the 12th century, it can accommodate up to 20,000 people at prayer. As non-Muslims are forbidden to enter, most visitors have to suffice with glimpses of its seemingly endless columns from the gates on Talaa Kebira and Place as-Seffarine.

Located 150m east of Bab Bou Jeloud, the 14th-century **Medersa Bou Inania** (Map p599; admission Dh10; 8am–5pm) is said to be the finest of Fès' theological colleges constructed by the Merenids. The *zellij*, *muqarna* (plasterwork) and wood carving are amazingly elaborate, and views from the roof are also impressive.

Founded by Abu Saïd in 1325, the **Medersa el-Attarine** (Map p599; admission Dh10; 8.30am–1pm & 2.30–5pm) displays the traditional patterns of Merenid artisanship with a *zellij* base, stucco work and cedar wood at the top of the walls. The ceiling is every bit as elegant as the artistry of the Medersa Bou Inania.

The **Nejjarine Museum of Wooden Arts & Crafts** (Map p599; ☎ 035 740580; Place an-Nejjarine; admission Dh20; 10am–5pm) is in a wonderfully restored *funduq* – a *caravanserai* for travelling merchants. Photography is forbidden.



In a century-old, Hispano-Moorish palace, the **Dar Batha Museum** (Museum of Moroccan Arts & Crafts; Map p599; ☎ 035 634116; Place de l'Istiqlal; admission Dh10; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6pm Wed-Mon) houses an excellent collection of traditional Moroccan arts and crafts.

The **tanneries** (Map p599) of Fès are one of the city's most iconic sights (and smells). Head northeast of Place as-Seffarine and take the left fork after about 50m, you'll soon pick up the unmistakable waft of skin and dye that will guide you into the heart of the leather district.

Every June the **Fès Festival of World Sacred Music** (☎ 055 740535; www.fesfestival.com) brings together music groups and artists from all corners of the globe, and has become an established favourite on the world-music festival circuit.

FÈS EL-JDID (NEW FÈS)

The entrance to **Dar el-Makhzen** (Royal Palace; Map p599; Place des Alaouites) is a stunning example of modern restoration, but the 80 hectares of palace grounds are not open to the public.

In the 14th century, Fès el-Jdid became a refuge for Jews, thus creating a *mellah* (Jewish quarter). The *mellah*'s southwest corner is home to the fascinating **Habarim Synagogue** (Map p599; admission free, donations welcome; 🕒 7am-7pm) and a Jewish cemetery.

Sleeping MEDINA

Hôtel Erraha (Map p599; ☎ 035 633226; Place Bou Jeloud; s/d with shared bathroom Dh50/80, hot showers Dh10) Just outside Bab Bou Jeloud, this cheapie has large airy rooms and a roof terrace. Murals give the place a bit of a lift. As with many places in this bracket, the shared bathroom facilities reflect the price tag.

Hôtel Lamrani (Map p599; ☎ 035 634411; Talaa Seghira; r Dh150-200) Another place with a great location, just away from the hustle of Bab Bou Jeloud. Rooms are of a good size, and bathrooms are clean with hot showers. If only the management weren't so grumpy, this would be fantastic.

Dar Bouânania (Map p599; ☎ 035 637282; 21 Derb be Salem; s/d Dh200/250, with shower Dh250/300) Fès has long lacked any *riad*-style budget accommodation, so this new hotel makes a welcome appearance on the scene. Well signed off Talaa Kebira, it's very much a traditional Moroccan house, with a lovely *zellij* and stucco court-

yard, a series of nicely decorated bedrooms over several floors, and a small roof terrace.

Hôtel Batha (Map p599; ☎ 035 741077; fax 035 741078; Place Batha; s/d with breakfast Dh327/452; 📞 📺 📶) Great value on the edge of the medina, this old favourite is a mix of the reasonably modern with the traditionally decorated. Rooms come with sunken bathtubs, although hot water can be erratic. The whitewashed courtyard is a wonderful, cool refuge from the city heat – as is the pool.

Dar Roumana (Map p599; ☎ 035 741637; www.darroumana.com; 30 Derb el Amer, Zkak Roumane; r Dh700-1200; 📞 📺) Many *riads* claim to have the best views of Fès medina, but this beautiful house might just take the prize. There are just five rooms, all immaculate and subtly decorated to show off the painstaking restoration process that brought the building back to life, plus some modern touches like wi-fi throughout. The roof terrace is a gorgeous place for breakfast, or a drink over dinner – you may even get to lend a hand in the kitchen as the owner (a cordon bleu chef) offers Moroccan cookery lessons.

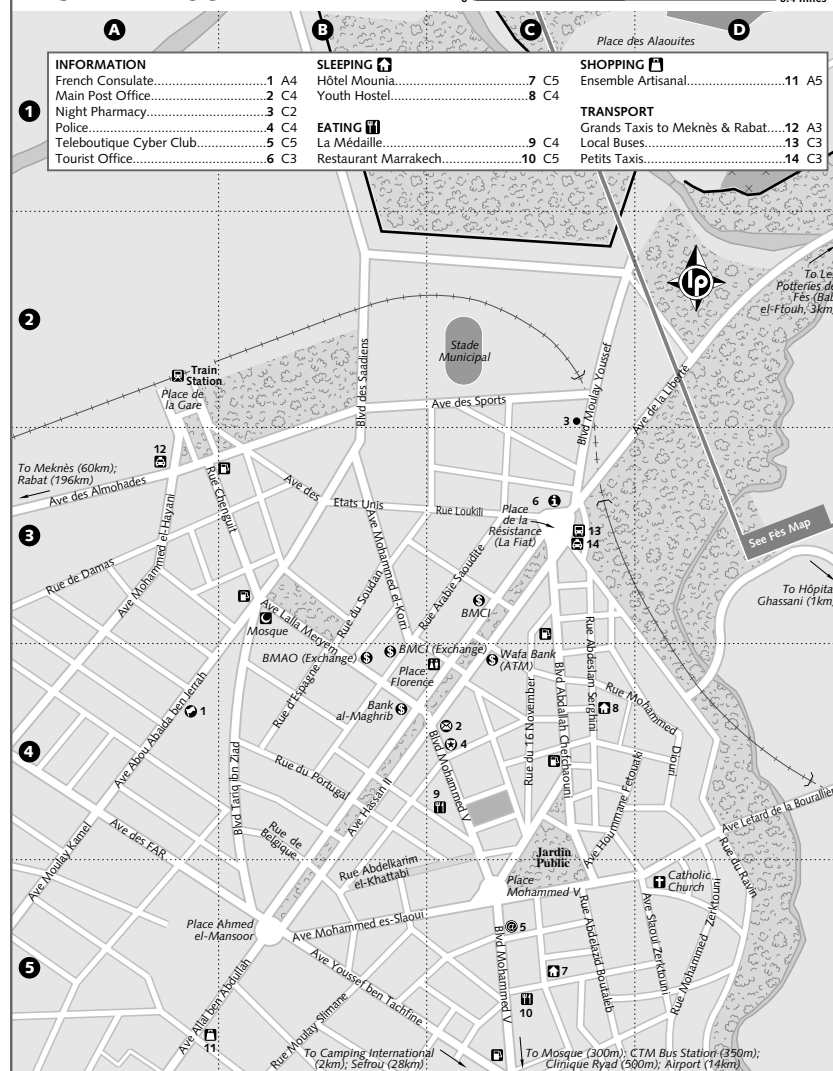
Riad Fès (Map p599; ☎ 035 741012; www.riadfes.com; 5 Derb ibn Slimane; r/ste with breakfast from Dh1800/3000; 📞 📺 📶) This labyrinthine *riad* blends ancient and modern with impressive panache. The older section shows off the best of traditional décor, while the newer quarters wouldn't look out of place in a Parisian boutique hotel, yet remain unmistakably Moroccan.

VILLE NOUVELLE

Youth Hostel (Map p601; ☎ 035 624085; 18 Rue Abdeslam Serghini; dm Dh45; 🕒 8-10am, noon-3pm & 6-10pm) Easily one of the better youth hostels in Morocco, the Fès branch is well looked after, and right in the centre of the ville nouvelle. Tidy rooms and facilities (including Western-style toilets) are super clean. If you're not a Hostelling International member, there's a Dh5 surcharge. Cold showers mean that you should look to *hammams*.

Hôtel Mounia (Map p601; ☎ 035 624838; www.hotelmouniafes.ma; 60 Blvd Zerktouni; s/d with breakfast from Dh507/607; 📞 📺) A *zellij*-tiled lobby guides you into this modern and classy hotel. Rooms are bright and tidy, with satellite TV. The restaurant is good, and there's a smokier bar with plenty of water pipes. It is popular with tour groups, and good discounts are often available. Staff are exceedingly helpful.

FÈS VILLE NOUVELLE



Eating MEDINA

B'sara Stalls (Map p599; soup Dh3) You shouldn't leave town without sampling this Fassi speciality. A butterbean and garlic soup, *b'sara* is served out of hole-in-the-wall places throughout the medina – our favourites are in the Acherbine area. Look for the big cauldrons

facing the street, and a guy serving great ladlefuls into rough pottery bowls. Delicious with an extra dash of olive oil and a hunk of bread, *b'sara* is perfect fuel for exploring the city.

Le Kasbah (Map p599; Rue Serrajine; mains Dh40, set menu Dh70) On several floors opposite the cheap hotels at Bab Bou Jeloud, this restaurant occupies a prime spot – the top floor looks out

over the medina. The food is good, standard Moroccan fare, with the four-course menu particularly good value.

Restaurant Zohra (Map p599; ☎ 055 637699; 3 Derb Ain Nass Blida; set menus Dh70-90) Tucked away in the backstreets north of the Kairaouane Mosque, this is a simple little place, well regarded for its home cooking and warm family welcome.

Medina Café (Map p599; ☎ 035 633430; 6 Derb Memissi Bab Bou Jeloud; menus Dh70-110; ☎ 8am-10pm) Just outside Bab Bou Jeloud, this small restaurant is an oasis of serenity, decorated in a traditional yet restrained manner, with fine attention to details. During the day it's a good place to visit for a quick bite or a fruit juice, and in the evening the best of Moroccan fare is on offer – the lamb tajine with dried figs and apricots is a real winner, while the plates of couscous are big enough for two.

Restaurant Laanbra (Map p599; ☎ 035 741009; 61 Ain Lkhail; set menus Dh120-400) This is a sumptuously decorated 14th-century palace, with all the craftsmanship you'd expect to find in a *riad*, with side alcoves forming a series of private dining areas. The menu shows equal care and attention – the rich *pastilla* is a favourite, difficult to finish if you've loaded up on starters (vegetarians will love the cooked salads). This place is open for lunch year-round, but for dinner only in summer.

La Maison Bleue (Map p599; ☎ 035 636052; 2 Place de l'Istiqlal; set menu incl drinks guests/nonguests Dh500/550; ☎ 7-11pm) Reservations are necessary at this elegant *riad* restaurant. The setting is intimate and romantic, with diners serenaded by an oud player (replaced by livelier Gnaoua song and dance later in the evening). Set menus run along traditional lines – salads, tajines and the like – but the preparation and presentation are a definite cut above most other places. Alcohol is served.

VILLE NOUVELLE

Restaurant Marrakech (Map p601; ☎ 035 930876; 11 Rue Omar el-Mokhtar; mains from Dh55) This restaurant's recent makeover has added hugely to its charm – red plastered walls and dark furniture, with a cushion-strewn salon at the back. But the menu's variety continues to be its strength, offering delights such as chicken tajine with apple and olive, or lamb with aubergine and peppers. Delicious food in lovely surroundings.

La Médaille (Map p601; ☎ 055 620183; 24 Rue Laarbi al-Kaghat; mains Dh70-90, set menus Dh110-150; ☎ noon-

3pm daily, 7-11pm Mon-Sat) This French-Moroccan place is unique for the Sephardic influence on the menu. Try the *saucisse merguez* (lamb sausage) or the *saucisse de foie* (liver sausage) – you won't find them anywhere else. Seats at the front of the house are preferable, as the rear is a smoky bar that's more canteen than restaurant (alcohol is served, naturally).

Shopping

Fès is and always has been the artisanal capital of Morocco. The choice of crafts is wide, quality is high, and prices are competitive. As usual, it's best to seek out the little shops off the main tourist routes.

Ensemble Artisanal (Map p601; Ave Allah ben Abdullah; ☎ 9am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm) Slightly out of the way in the ville nouvelle, the state-run Ensemble Artisanal is, as always, a decent place to get a feel for quality and price.

Les Potteries de Fès (Bab el-Ftouh) An attraction in itself, this is the home of the famous Fassi pottery. You can see the entire production process, from pot throwing to the painstaking hand painting and laying out of *zellij* – it's a joy to behold.

Les Mystères de Fès (Map p599; 53 Derb bin Lemssari) This place is stuffed to the rafters with jewelry, furniture, pots and trinkets.

Getting There & Away

BUS

The main station for **CTM buses** (☎ 035 732992) is located near Place Atlas in the southern ville nouvelle. CTM services Casablanca (Dh90, five hours, seven daily) via Rabat (Dh60, 3½ hours), Meknès (Dh18, one hour, six daily), Marrakesh (Dh150, nine hours, two daily), Tangier (Dh80, six hours, three daily), Tetouan (Dh80, five hours, two daily) and Chefchaouen (Dh60, four hours, three daily). Non-CTM buses depart from the **main bus station** (Map p599; ☎ 035 636032) outside Bab el-Mahrouk.

TAXI

There are several grands taxi ranks dotted around town. Taxis for Meknès (Dh14) and Rabat (Dh55) leave from in front of the main bus station (outside Bab el-Mahrouk) and from near the train station.

TRAIN

The **train station** (Map p601; ☎ 035 930333) is in the ville nouvelle, a 10-minute walk northwest of

Place Florence. Trains depart every two hours between 7am and 5pm to Casablanca (Dh97, 4¼ hours), via Rabat (Dh72, 3½ hours) and Meknès (Dh17, one hour), plus two overnight trains. Five trains go to Marrakesh (Dh71, eight hours) and one goes to Tangier (Dh96, five hours).

Getting Around

There is a regular bus service (No 16) that runs between the airport and the train station (Dh3, 25 minutes), with departures every half-hour or so. Grands taxis have a set fare of Dh120.

Drivers of the red petits taxis generally use their meters without any fuss. Expect to pay about Dh10 from the train or CTM station to Bab Bou Jeloud.

MEKNÈS

pop 680,000

Morocco's third imperial city is often overlooked by tourist itineraries, but Meknès is worth getting to know. Quieter and smaller than its grand neighbour, it's also more laid-back and less hassle, but still awash with all the winding narrow medina streets and grand buildings befitting a one-time capital of the Moroccan sultanate.

Information

Banque Marocaine du Commerce Extérieur (BMCE; 98 Ave des FAR; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-7pm)

Cyber de Paris (Zankat Accra; per hr Dh8; ☎ 9am-2am) Internet access.

Délégation Régionale du Tourisme (☎ 055 524426; Place de l'Istiqlal; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Thu, 8-11.30am & 3-6.30pm Fri)

Hôpital Moulay Ismail (☎ 035 522805; off Ave des FAR)

Main post office (Place de l'Istiqlal)

Night Pharmacy (Rue de Paris)

Sights

The heart of Meknès medina lies to the north of the main square, Place el-Hedim, while the *mellah* can be found to the west. To the south, Moulay Ismail's **imperial city** opens up through one of the most impressive monumental gateways in all of Morocco, **Bab el-Mansour**. Following the road around to the right, you will come across the grand **Mausoleum of Moulay Ismail** (admission free, donations welcome; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2-6pm Sat-Thu), named after the sultan who made Meknès his capital during the 17th century.

Overlooking Place el-Hedim on the north is the 1882 palace that houses the **Dar Jamaï museum** (☎ 055 530863; Place el-Hedim; admission Dh10; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6.30pm Wed-Mon). Deeper in the medina, opposite the Grand Mosque, the **Medersa Bou Inania** (Rue Najjarine; admission Dh10; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6pm) is typical of the exquisite interior design that distinguishes Merenid monuments.

Sleeping

Maroc Hôtel (☎ 035 530075; 7 Rue Rouamzine; s/d Dh60/120) Despite the inauspicious exterior, this is a budget gem. Friendly and quiet, rooms (with sinks) are freshly painted, and the shared bathrooms are clean. The great terrace and orange tree-filled courtyard add to the ambience.

Hôtel Majestic (☎ 035 522035; 19 Ave Mohammed V; s/d with shared bathroom Dh136/178, with private bathroom Dh214/241) Built in the 1930s, this grand old lady carries her age well. There's a good mix of rooms (all have sinks) and there's plenty of character to go around, plus a peaceful patio and panoramic roof terrace. Management is helpful and breakfast is included in the price.

Maison d'Hôtes Riad (☎ 035 530542; www.riadmeknes.com; 79 Ksar Chaacha, Dar el-Kabir; r incl breakfast Dh500-800; ☎ ☎) Meknès' first *riad* is located amid the ruins of the Palais Ksar Chaacha, the 17th-century imperial residence of Moulay Ismail. There are just six rooms, each individually and tastefully decorated in traditional style. There's an excellent restaurant on the ground floor and small plunge pool.

Riad Bahia (☎ 035 554541; www.riad-bahia.com; Derb Sekkaya, Tiberbarine; r incl breakfast Dh500-800; ☎ ☎) This charming little riad is just a stone's throw from Place el-Hedim. The alley entrance opens onto a courtyard, (which also hosts a great restaurant), with stairs leading off in all directions to quaint, pretty rooms that have been carefully restored and decorated with fine attention to detail, from the bathroom fittings to the plush rugs.

Palais Didi (☎ 035 558590; www.palaisdidi.com; 7 Dar el-Kbira; r/ste with breakfast Dh1200/1500; ☎ ☎) Didi is the fancy older sister to the other *riads* in the Meknès medina, and easily the largest. Five sumptuous suites and five romantic rooms, all different and decked out with antique furniture in the luxurious rooms, and deep tubs in the *zellij* bathrooms, are set around a sleek, marble-tiled courtyard.

Eating

Sandwich stands (Place el-Hedim; sandwiches around Dh20; ☎ 7am-10pm) This cluster of snack stands on the northwest corner of Place el-Hedim is ideal for a lunchtime snack, which can easily stretch into an afternoon of people-watching on the square. There's a wide range of grilled-meat fillings, all topped out with generous handfuls of salad.

Marhaba Restaurant (23 Ave Mohammed V; tajines Dh25; ☎ noon-9pm) 'Never beaten on price' should be this place's proud motto. More a canteen than restaurant, it packs in everyone from lunchtime workers to gangs of schoolgirls. Food is cheap and tasty – a bowl of *harira* and a plateful of *makoda* (fried potato patties) will fill you up and still give change from Dh10. Superb.

Restaurant Oumnia (☎ 035 533938; 8 Ain Fouki Rouazine; set menu Dh65; ☎ 7am-10pm) This informal restaurant is inside a family home, just off the main drag of the Meknès medina, giving diners a warm welcome. There's just a three-course set menu, but it's a real winner, with delicious *harira*, salads and a choice of several tajines of the day.

Restaurant Zitouna (☎ 055 530281; 44 Djemma Zitouna; set menus from Dh110) In the heart of the medina, this grand establishment offers the same palace-restaurant style you'd find in Fès. Its ornate, covered courtyard is done up with *zellij* and stucco, with several small salons for more restrained dining. Traditional Moroccan dishes are naturally the order of the day, with *pastilla* being something of a house speciality.

Getting There & Away

The **CTM bus station** (☎ 035 522585; Ave des FAR) is about 300m east of the junction with Ave Mohammed V. The main bus station lies just outside Bab el-Khemis, west of the medina. CTM departures include Casablanca (Dh75, four hours, six daily) via Rabat (Dh45, 2½ hours, six daily), Marrakesh (Dh135, eight hours, daily) and Tangier (Dh80, five hours, three daily).

The principal grands taxi rank is a dirt lot next to the bus station at Bab el-Khemis. There are regular departures to Fès (Dh18, one hour) and Rabat (Dh40, 90 minutes). Grands taxis for Moulay Idriss (Dh10, 20 minutes) leave from opposite the Institut Français – this is also the place to organise round trips to Volubilis.

AROUND MEKNÈS

In the midst of a fertile plain about 33km north of Meknès, **Volubilis** (Oualili; admission Dh20, parking Dh5, guided tour Dh120; ☎ 8am-sunset) is the largest and best-preserved Roman ruin in Morocco. One of the country's most important pilgrimage sites, **Moulay Idriss**, is only about 4.5km from Volubilis. The simplest and quickest way to get here from Meknès is to hire a grands taxi for the return trip. A half-day outing will cost around Dh300.

MOROCCO DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Youth hostels (*auberges de jeunesse*) operate in Casablanca, Chefchaouen, Fès, Meknès, Rabat and Tangier. Hotels vary dramatically, from dingy dives to gorgeous guesthouses and fancy five-stars (mostly in larger cities). Cities also offer gorgeous guesthouses in the style of a traditional courtyard house, or *riad*.

Venues are divided into and listed by price ranges which include budget (up to Dh400), midrange (Dh400 to Dh1000) and top end (Dh1000 and up). Prices given are for high season and include tax; always check the price you are quoted is TTC (all taxes included).

Advance reservations are highly recommended for all places listed in this chapter, especially in summer.

ACTIVITIES

Hammams

Visiting a *hammam* (traditional bathhouse) is a ritual at the centre of Moroccan society (especially for women) and a practical solution for those who don't have hot water at home. For travellers, it is an authentic local experience akin to visiting a spa – cleansing and totally relaxing. Every town has at least one public *hammam*. A visit usually costs Dh10, with a massage costing an extra Dh15 or so.

Walking

Morocco's many mountain ranges offer a wide array of trekking opportunities. Most travellers head straight for the highest peaks of the High Atlas – treks can be organised from Marrakesh. Chefchaouen is the place to start treks through the Rif Mountains. Spring and autumn are the best seasons for trekking.

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BUSINESS HOURS

Tourist offices are usually open from 8.30am to 12.30pm, and from 2.30pm to 6.30pm between Monday and Thursday. Restaurants often have a lunch from noon to 3pm, and then a dinner from 7pm to 11pm. Most cafés are open continuously from 7am to 11pm. Shopping times are from 9am to 12.30pm and 2.30pm to 8pm from Monday to Saturday. Some shops close at noon on Friday.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Morocco's era as a hippy paradise is past. *Kif* is grown in the Rif Mountains, but drug busts are common and Morocco isn't a good place to investigate prison conditions.

A few years ago the *brigade touristique* (tourist police) was set up in the principal tourist centres to clamp down on Morocco's notorious faux guides and hustlers. Anyone convicted of operating as an unofficial guide faces jail and/or a huge fine.

This has reduced – but not eliminated – the problem of the faux guides. You'll still find plenty of these touts hanging around the entrances to medinas and outside train stations, especially at Tangier port and near Bab Bou Jeloud in Fès. If you end up with one of these people remember their main interest is the commission gained from certain hotels or on articles sold to you in the souqs.

Official guides can be engaged through tourist offices and hotels at the fixed price of Dh120 per half-day (plus tip).

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

For details of all Moroccan embassies abroad and foreign embassies in Morocco, go to www.maec.gov.ma.

Moroccan Embassies & Consulates

Morocco has diplomatic representation in the following countries, among others:

Australia (☎ 02-9922 4999; Suite 2, 11 West St, North Sydney, NSW 2060)

Canada (☎ 613-236 7391; www.ambassade-maroc.ottawa.on.ca; 38 Range Rd, Ottawa, Ont K1N 8J4)

France (☎ 01 45 20 69 35; www.amb-maroc.fr; 5 Rue Le Tasse, 75016 Paris)

Germany (☎ 030-206 1240; www.maec.gov.ma/berlin; Niederwallstr 39, 10117 Berlin)

Japan (☎ 03-3478 3271; www.morocco-embaj.jp; 5-4-30 Miami Aoyama Minat 107 – 0062, Tokyo)

Netherlands (☎ 070-346 9617; www.marokkaanse-ambassade.nl; Oranjestraat 9, 2514 JB, The Hague)

Spain (☎ 91 563 1090; www.maec.gov.ma/madrid; Calle Serrano 179, 28002 Madrid)

UK (☎ 020-7581 5001; mail@sifamaldn.org; 49 Queen's Gate Gardens, London SW7 5NE)

USA (☎ 202-462 7979; fmehd@embassyofmorocco.us; 1601 21st St NW, Washington, DC 20009)

Embassies & Consulates in Morocco

Belgium (☎ 037 268060; info@ambabel-rabat.org.ma; 6 Ave de Marrakesh, Rabat)

Canada (☎ 037 687400; fax 037 687430; 13 Rue Jaafar as-Sadiq, Agdal, Rabat)

France (☎ 037 689700; www.ambafance-ma.org; 3 Rue Sahnoun, Agdal, Rabat)

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

Italy (☎ 037 706598; ambaciata@iambitalia.ma; 2 Rue Idriss el-Azhar, Rabat)

Japan (☎ 037 631782; fax 037 750078; 39 Ave Ahmed Balafrej Souissi, Rabat)

Mauritania (☎ 037 656678; ambassadeur@mauritanie.org.ma; 7 Rue Thami Lamdaouar, Soussi I, Rabat)

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

Spain (☎ 037 633900; emb.rabat@mae.es; Rue Ain Khalouija, Route des Zaers, Km 5.300 Souissi, Rabat)

UK (☎ 037 238600; www.britain.org.ma; 17 Blvd de la Tour Hassan, Rabat)

USA (☎ 037 762265; www.usembassy.ma; 2 Ave de Marrakesh, Rabat)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Religious festivals are of more significance to Moroccans, but local *moussems* (saints' days) are held all over the country throughout the year and some draw big crowds.

Major festivals include the following:

Festival of Folklore (Marrakesh; www.maghebarts.ma in French) June

Gnaoua & World Music Festival (Essaouira; www.festival-gnaoua.co.ma) June

Festival of World Sacred Music (Fès; www.fezfestival.org) June/July

International Cultural Festival (Asilah) July/August

Mousssem of Moulay Idriss II (Fès) September/October

HOLIDAYS

All banks, post offices and most shops are shut on the main public holidays, including these:

New Year's Day 1 January

Independence Manifesto 11 January

Labour Day 1 May

Feast of the Throne 30 July
Allegiance of Oued-Eddahab 14 August
Anniversary of the King's and People's Revolution 20 August
Young People's Day 21 August
Anniversary of the Green March 6 November
Independence Day 18 November

In addition to secular holidays there are many national and local Islamic holidays and festivals, all tied to the lunar calendar.

Aïd al-Adha Marks the end of the Islamic year. Most things shut down for four or five days.

Aïd al-Fitr Held at the end of the month-long Ramadan fast, which is observed by most Muslims. The festivities last four or five days, during which Morocco grinds to a halt.

Mawlid an-Nabi (Mouloud) Celebrates the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed.

INTERNET RESOURCES

The Lonely Planet website (www.lonelyplanet.com) has up-to-date news and the Thorn Tree bulletin board, where you can post questions.

Al-Bab (www.al-bab.com/maroc) Also called The Moroccan Gateway, Al-Bab has excellent links, especially for current affairs, news and good books about Morocco.

Maghreb Arts (www.maghrebarts.ma) French-language site with up-to-the-minute coverage of theatre, film, music, festivals and media events in Morocco.

Tourism in Morocco (www.tourism-in-morocco.com/index_en.php) Morocco's official tourism information site; user-friendly, with guided tours, links and news.

MONEY ATMs

ATMs (*guichets automatiques*) are now a common sight and many accept Visa, MasterCard, Electron, Cirrus, Maestro and InterBank systems. Major credit cards are widely accepted in the main tourist centres, although their use often attracts a surcharge of around 5% from Moroccan businesses.

Tipping

Tipping and bargaining are integral parts of Moroccan life. Practically any service can warrant a tip, and a few dirham for a service willingly rendered can make your life a lot easier. Tipping between 5% and 10% of a restaurant bill is appropriate. An endless supply of small coins is absolutely vital for the payment of taxis, tips, guides and beggars. It is a good idea to load up at a bank when you arrive so you are well prepared.

Travellers Cheques

American Express (Amex), Visa and Thomas Cook travellers cheques are widely accepted for exchange by banks. Australian, Canadian and New Zealand dollars are not quoted in banks and are not usually accepted.

POST

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

The postal system is fairly reliable, but not terribly fast. It takes about a week for letters to get to their European destinations, and two weeks or so to get to Australia and North America. Sending post from Rabat or Casablanca is quicker.

The parcel office, indicated by the sign *colis postaux*, is generally in a separate part of the post-office building. Take your parcel unwrapped for customs inspection. Some parcel offices sell boxes.

TELEPHONE

A few cities and towns still have public phone offices, often next to the post office, but more common are privately run *téléboutiques*, which can be found in every town and village on almost every corner.

Mobile Phones

Morocco has two GSM mobile phone networks, Méditel and Maroc Telecom, which now cover 85% of the population. For a map of the mobile coverage for Morocco's two carriers, click on www.cellular-news.com/coverage/morocco.php. Moroccan mobile numbers start with the codes ☎ 061 to ☎ 068.

Phone Codes

All domestic phone calls in Morocco require a nine-digit number, which includes the three-digit area code (or GSM code). When calling overseas from Morocco, dial ☎ 00, the country code and then the city code and number. Morocco's country code is ☎ 212.

VISAS

Most visitors to Morocco do not require visas and are allowed to remain in the country for 90 days on entry. Exceptions to this include nationals of Israel, South Africa and Zimbabwe. These people can apply for a three-

month, single-entry visa (about US\$30). In all cases, your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond your date of entry.

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

The Spanish enclaves Ceuta and Melilla have the same visa requirements as mainland Spain.

VOLUNTEERING

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

A good place to start looking is the Morocco page for **Volunteer Abroad** (www.volunteerabroad.com/Morocco.cfm) which provides links to NGOs (nongovernment organisations) with Morocco-specific programmes. Also worth getting hold of is Lonely Planet's *The Gap Year Book*, which lists hundreds of NGOs that organise volunteer and other work and study programmes around the world. Your embassy may also be able to put you onto other projects and NGOs, but unless you have a working knowledge of Arabic or Berber, or have specific specialist skills, many will not be interested.

Chantiers Sociaux Marocains (☎ 037 297184; ccsm@planete.co.ma; BP 456, Rabat) A local NGO with international links.

Jeunesse des Chantiers Marocains (<http://perso.menara.ma/youthcamps>; internationalcamps@yahoo.com) A non-profit group that promotes cultural exchange through three- to four-week courses in Moroccan Arabic during which you stay with local families and take part in cultural events.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Many bars in Morocco are smoky, all-male dives where women travellers will feel decidedly uncomfortable. This doesn't apply to most of the bars covered in this chapter, as many belong to the new Morocco of designer bars and gender mingling, but plenty of unconstructed male dens remain.

A certain level of sexual harassment is the norm in Morocco. It comes in the form of non-stop greetings, leering and other unwanted attention, but it is rarely dangerous. It

is best to avoid overreacting and to ignore this attention. In the case where a would-be suitor is particularly persistent, threatening to go to the police or the *brigade touristique* is amazingly effective. Women will save themselves a great deal of grief by avoiding eye contact, dressing modestly and refraining from walking around alone at night.

TRANSPORT IN MOROCCO

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Morocco's main international entry point is the **Mohammed V International Airport** (☎ 022 539040), 30km southeast of Casablanca.

Other international airports:

Fès Airport (☎ 055 674712) Fifteen kilometres south of Fès at Saïss.

Ibn Batouta Airport (☎ 039 393720) Eighteen kilometres south of Tangier.

Ménara Airport (☎ 044 447865) In Marrakesh.

Rabat-Salé Airport (☎ 037 808090) Ten kilometres east of Salé.

For comprehensive information on all Morocco's airports, log on to the website of **Office National des Aéroports** (www.onda.org.ma in French & Arabic).

Airlines flying to and from Morocco include the following (phone numbers are for offices in Casablanca):

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

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

British Airways (BA; ☎ 022 229464; www.britishairways.com)

easyJet (EZY; www.easyjet.com)

Iberia (IB; ☎ 022 279600; www.iberia.com)

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

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

Regional Air Lines (RGL; ☎ 022 536940; www.regionalmaroc.com)

Royal Air Maroc (RAM; ☎ 022 321122; www.royalairmaroc.com)

Ryan Air (FR; www.ryanair.com)

Land

The Moroccan bus company **CTM** (☎ in Casablanca 022 45 80 80; www.ctm.co.ma) 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.

Another Moroccan bus service with particularly good links to Spanish networks is **Tramesa** (☎ 022 245274; www.tramesa.ma). UK-based companies with services to Morocco include **Eurolines** (www.eurolines.co.uk) and **Busabout** (☎ 020 7950 1661; www.busabout.com).

Sea

Regular ferries run to Europe from several ports along the Moroccan Mediterranean coast. The most trafficked is Tangier, from where there are boats to Tarifa, Spain (€22, 35 minutes, five daily); Algeciras, Spain (€31, 60 to 70 minutes, hourly); and Sete, France (€220, 36 hours, two weekly). Hourly ferries also run from Ceuta to Algeciras (€25, 35 minutes, hourly). Daily ferries go from Al-Hoceima (summer only), Melilla and Nador to Almería and Málaga in Spain. Bringing a bicycle is an additional €8 to €15, while a car is €50 to €80. Children travel for half the price. Tickets are available at the port of departure or from any travel agent in town.

Ferry companies include the following:
Comarit (www.comarit.com) Casablanca (☎ 022 293320; Blvd d'Anfa); Tangier (☎ 039 947402; Tangier Port)
Ferry Rapidos del Sur (FRS; www.frs.ma) Spain (☎ 956 681830); Morocco (☎ 039 942612)
Transmediterranea (☎ 902 454645; www.transmediterranea.es; Calle Alcalá 61, Madrid)

GETTING AROUND

Air

Royal Air Maroc (RAM; ☎ 022 912000; www.royalairmaroc.com) dominates the Moroccan air industry with paltry competition offered by **Regional**

Air Lines (☎ in Casablanca 022 538080). Internal airports that are serviced by RAM include Casablanca, Essaouira, Fès, Marrakesh, Rabat and Tangier.

Student and under-26 youth discounts of 25% are available on all RAM domestic flights – but this is only if the ticket is bought in advance from one of their offices. Group reductions are available, and children aged from two to 12 travel at half price.

Bicycle

There are no special road rules pertaining to cyclists and they're really not given much consideration by drivers. Distances are great and those on bikes will need to carry all supplies with them (including any spare parts you may need, food and plenty of drinking water). You can transport bikes on both buses and trains.

Bus

A dense network of buses operates throughout Morocco, with many private companies competing for business alongside the main national carrier, **Compagnie de Transports Marocains** (CTM; ☎ in Casablanca 022 753677; www.ctm.co.ma).

The ONCF train company runs buses through Supratours to widen its train network. Morocco's other bus companies are all privately owned and only operate regionally. It's best to book ahead for CTM and Supratours buses.

Bus travel is relatively cheap considering the distances that have to be covered. Typical fares from Casablanca to Marrakesh, Fès and Tangier are Dh70, Dh90 and Dh120. More often than not you'll be charged for baggage handling – Dh5 is common.

Car & Motorcycle

BRINGING YOUR OWN VEHICLE

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 is required from the car's insurer. Not all insurers cover Morocco.

FUEL & SPARE PARTS

Petrol in the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla is tax-free, so drivers heading to Morocco and mainland Spain via the enclaves should arrive with a near-empty tank. Moroccan mechanics are generally extremely good and all decent-sized towns will have at least one garage.

HIRE

Renting a car in Morocco isn't cheap, starting from Dh3500 per week or Dh500 per day for a basic car with unlimited mileage. Most companies demand a returnable cash deposit (Dh3000 to Dh5000) unless you pay by credit card. The best cities in which to hire cars are Casablanca, Marrakesh and Tangier, where the competition is greatest and prices lower. However, it is usually cheaper to arrange car rental in advance through a travel agent or international agency.

By law, insurance must be sold along with all rental agreements.

PARKING

In many Moroccan towns, parking zones are watched by *gardiens de voitures* in characteristic blue coats. The going rate is Dh3 for a few hours and Dh10 overnight. In an increasing number of big city centres, parking tickets are issued from blue kerb-side machines (Dh2 per hour for a maximum stay of 2½ hours). Parking is free on Sundays.

ROAD RULES

In Morocco you drive on the right, as in Continental Europe. Speed limits in built-up areas

range from 40km/h. Outside towns there is a national speed limit of 100km/h, rising to 120km/h on the motorways. It's compulsory for drivers and passengers to wear seat belts in cars, but no-one does.

Local Transport

GRANDS TAXIS

The elderly Mercedes vehicles you'll see belting along Moroccan roads and gathered in great flocks near bus stations are shared taxis (grands taxis in French). They link towns to their nearest neighbours. Grands taxis take six extremely cramped passengers and leave when full.

PETITS TAXIS

Cities and bigger towns have local petits taxis, which are a different colour in every city. Petits taxis are not permitted to go beyond the city limits. They are licensed to carry up to three passengers and are usually metered.

Train

Morocco's train network is run by the **Office National des Chemins de Fer** (ONCF; www.oncf.org.ma). 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 although 2nd-class is more than adequate on any journey.

Couchettes (bunks) are available on the overnight *ordinaire* trains between Marrakesh and Tangier. The compartments fold up into six couchettes and they're well worth the extra Dh90. Sample 2nd-class fares include Casablanca to Marrakesh (Dh75.50, three hours), Rabat to Fès (Dh72, 3½ hours) and Tangier to Marrakesh (Dh188.50, 9½ hours).

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

TOURS

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

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

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

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

Naturally Morocco (☎ 0709-2343879; www.naturallymorocco.co.uk) Sustainable ecotourism deeply involved in local communities.

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