

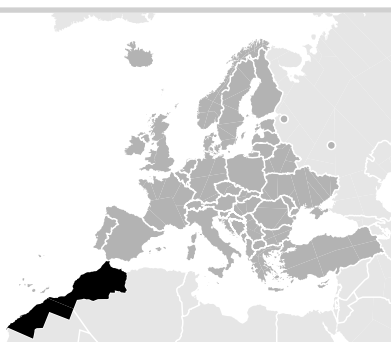
# Morocco

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Marrakesh** Dive into the clamour and spectacle of Morocco's most dynamic city (p800)
- **Fès** Lose yourself in the exotic charms of this medieval treasure-trove of sights, sounds and smells (p805)
- **Essaouira** Laze by the sea in Morocco's coolest resort (p799)
- **Chefchaouen** Catch a mountain breeze in this stunning Rif town (p792)
- **Best journey** Row across the river (and back a few centuries) from contemporary Rabat (p796) to old-fashioned Salé (p798)

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 446,550 sq km (almost the size of Spain)
- **ATMs** Widespread
- **Capital** Rabat
- **Famous for** hashish, Humphrey Bogart and *Casablanca*, Marrakesh, tajine and couscous
- **Head of State** King Mohammed VI
- **Languages** Arabic, French, Berber
- **Money** dirham (Dh); A\$1 = Dh6.54; €1 = Dh11.14; ¥100 = Dh7.69; NZ\$1 = Dh5.51; UK£1 = Dh12.29; US\$1 = Dh8.85
- **Phrases** *salamu'lekum* (hello, 'peace upon you'), *shukran* (thanks), *ensh'allah* (God willing)
- **Population** 33.2 million



- **Country Codes** country code ☎ 212; international access code ☎ 00
- **Time** GMT/UTC
- **Visas** Usually not required for visits of 90 days or less, except for citizens of Israel, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

## TRAVEL HINTS

When you arrive in Morocco, hit the bank and load up on small change for the seemingly incessant payment of taxis, tips and guides.

## ROAMING MOROCCO

Ferry to Tangier, relax in Chefchaouen, then move on to Marrakesh and continue to Essaouira. Make your way back up the coast, stopping at Casablanca, Rabat or Asilah on the way. Alternatively, take the ferry in through Ceuta, a Spanish enclave, for a more hassle-free entry into Morocco.

Welcome to one of the greatest shows on earth.

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 tempted into enchanted towns such as Tetouan and Chefchaouen and the mountains of the Rif.

If it's mountains you love, 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 earth-coloured gorges, mud-brick kasbahs turn blood-red with the setting sun and the sense that one has stumbled into a fairy tale takes hold.

Morocco's secret is simple: there is no place on earth quite like it.

## HISTORY

Most present-day 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 locals '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 Shi'ism, which sparked rebellion against the eastern Arabs.

By 829 local elites had established an Id-rissid state dominating all of Morocco, with its capital at Fès. This commenced a cycle of rising and falling dynasties, which included: the Almoravids (1062–1147), who built their capital at Marrakesh; the Almohads (1147–1269), famous for building the Koutoubia Mosque (p801); the Merenids (1269–1465), known for their exquisite mosques and medersas (Qur'anic schools), especially in Fès; the Saadians (1524–1659), responsible for the Palais el-Badi in Marrakesh (p801); and the Alawites (1659–present).

France took control in 1912, establishing its capital at Rabat and handing Spain a token zone in the north of the country. Opposition from Berber mountain tribes was crushed, but political resistance emerged 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, and was 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 that reared its head with terrorist bombings in Casablanca in 2003.

## THE CULTURE

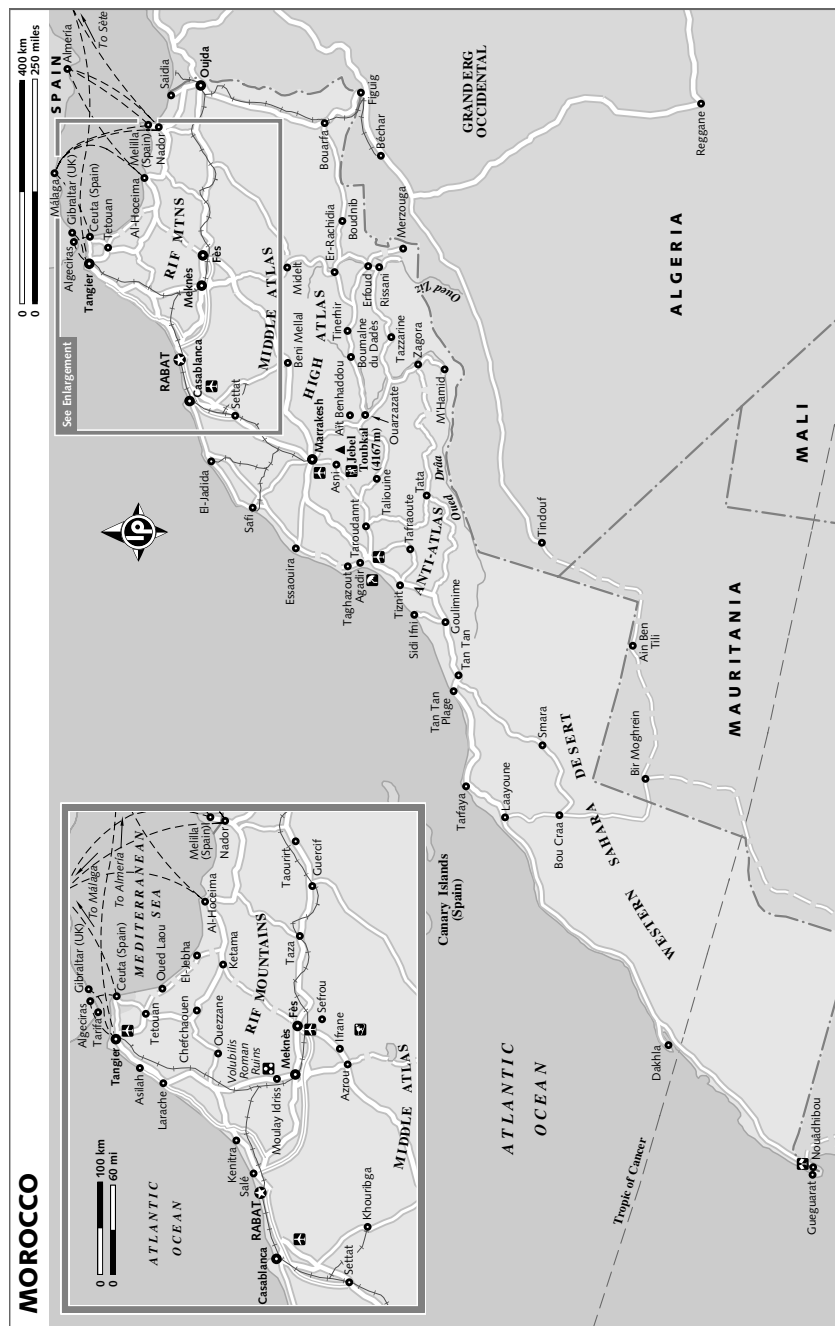
People of Arab-Berber descent make up almost the entire Moroccan population, which is mainly rural (about 60%) and young (70% are under 30 years). With a growth rate of 2.2%, the population is set to double almost every 25 years.

Despite extensive Westernisation, Morocco remains a largely conservative Muslim society. A high degree of modesty is demanded of both sexes in dress and behaviour, especially in rural areas. Women are advised to keep their shoulders and upper arms covered and to opt for long skirts or trousers. All mosques, cemeteries and religious buildings in active use are off limits to non-Muslims unless otherwise signed.

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, to touch any common source of food or water, or to hand over money or presents.

## RELIGION

Ninety-nine percent 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



### READING UP

*The Spider's House*, by Paul Bowles, describes Fès in the twilight of the French occupation, while *Tangier: City of the Dream*, by Iain Finlayson, is a highly readable account of the life of this 'seedy, salacious, decadent, degenerate' city. *Hideous Kinky*, by Esther Freud, tells engagingly of a young hippie who takes her children to Marrakesh to find herself and an alternative life. *Morocco: In the Labyrinth of Dreams and Bazaars*, by Walter M Weiss, charts an ambitious journey through the contradictions of modern Morocco.

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 USA has reduced Morocco's once robust Jewish community to about 7000 from a high of around 300,000 in 1948.

### ENVIRONMENT

Morocco's three ecological zones – coast, mountain and desert – host more than 40 different ecosystems and provide habitat for many endemic species, including the iconic and sociable Barbary macaque (also known as the Barbary ape). Unfortunately, pressure from sprawling urban areas and the encroachment of industrialisation in Morocco's wilderness means 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 issues 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.

Global warming has stolen valuable snowfall from mountain regions whose rivers depend upon the melt; in the south, most rivers have been dry for at least 10 years. Population pressures also result in more intensive farming practices and deforestation, while overgrazing is picking the land clean, thereby accumulat-

ing the pressures heaped upon the land by global environmental change. Desertification is the result, rendering crops defenceless against whipping sandstorms or torrential flooding. In the end, the ravaged villages confront a crisis of food and water supply in which poor health and sanitation fester, land becomes unsuitable for farming and pristine environments are lost forever. Pollution is another problem that threatens to choke Morocco's environment. Industrial waste is routinely released into the sea, soil and waterways, thereby contaminating water supplies used for drinking and irrigation. Morocco's cities alone produce an annual harvest of 2.4 million tonnes of solid waste, while the draining of coastal wetlands – which provide important habitats for endangered species – continues apace to address the rising demand and falling supply of water for irrigation.

## TRANSPORT

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

#### Air

Morocco's main international entry point is **Mohammed V international airport** (☎ 022 539040), 30km southeast of Casablanca. Other international airports are in Fès, Marrakesh, Rabat and Tangier. For comprehensive information on all Morocco's airports, check the website of **Office National des Aéroports** ([www.onda.org.ma](http://www.onda.org.ma), in French & Arabic).

#### Sea

Regular ferries run to Europe from several ports along Morocco's Mediterranean coast. The most trafficked is Tangier, from where there are boats to Algeciras, Spain (€31, 60 to 70 minutes, hourly), Tarifa, Spain (€22, 35 minutes, five daily) 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 Almeria and Málaga in Spain. Bringing a bicycle costs €8 to €15 extra, while a car is €50 to €80. Children travel for half price. Tickets are available at the port of departure or from any travel agent in town.

#### Bus

The Moroccan bus company **CTM** (☎ Casablanca 022 458080; [www.ctm.co.ma](http://www.ctm.co.ma)) operates buses from Casablanca and most other main cities to

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

## GETTING AROUND

### Air

**Royal Air Maroc** (RAM; ☎ 09000 0800; www.royalairmaroc.com) dominates the Moroccan airline industry, with paltry competition from one other domestic airline, **Regional Air Lines** (☎ 022 538080). Both airlines use Casablanca as their hub and many internal flights are routed through Mohammed V International Airport. Student and under-26 youth discounts of 25% are available on all RAM domestic flights, but only if the ticket is bought in advance from one of its offices.

### Bus

A dense network of buses operates throughout Morocco, with many private companies competing for business alongside the main national carrier, **CTM** (☎ 022 753677; www.ctm.co.ma; Autoroute de Rabat, km 13.5, Casablanca).

The **Office National des Chemins de Fer** (ONCF; www.oncf.org.ma, in French) rail 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, which are slightly more expensive than those of other companies.

### Car & Motorcycle

Taking your own vehicle to Morocco is straightforward. In addition to a vehicle registration document and an International Driving Permit (although many foreign licences, including US and EU ones, are also acceptable), a Green Card is required from the car's insurer. Not all insurers cover Morocco.

Renting a car in Morocco isn't cheap, with prices starting at 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.

In Morocco you drive on the right-hand side. On a roundabout, give way to traffic entering from the right.

## Local Transport

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

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

## Train

Morocco's train network is run by **ONCF** (www.oncf.org.ma, in French). There are two lines that carry passengers: from Tangier in the north down to Marrakesh; and 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 on all these trains, but 2nd-class is more than adequate on any journey. Couchettes are available on the overnight trains between Marrakesh and Tangier. The compartments fold up into six bunks and they're well worth the extra Dh90. Children aged under four travel free. Those aged between four and 12 years get a reduction of 10% to 50%, depending on the service.

Two types of rail discount cards are available in Morocco. The Carte Fidélité (Dh149) is for those aged over 26 and gives you 50% reductions on eight return or 16 one-way journeys in a 12-month period. If you're under 26, the Carte Jaune (Dh99) will give you the same discounts. To apply for the card you will need one passport-sized photo as well as a photocopy of your passport.

# 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 the city of Tangier to the superbly relaxing town of Chefchaouen.

## TANGIER

pop 650,000

More than any other city, Tangier has been Morocco's face to the world for longer than anyone can care to remember. For half the 20th century, Tangier was home to a shotgun marriage between 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 cosmopolitan and the cultural vibe infamous.

## Orientation

Tangier's small medina climbs up the hill to the northeast of the city, while the Ville Nouvelle (New Town) 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** (Banque Marocaine du Commerce Extérieur; Blvd Pasteur; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Sat & Sun)

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

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

**Emergency Service** (☎ 039 373737; ☎ 24hr)

**Main post office** (Blvd Mohammed V)

**ONMT** (Office National Marocain du Tourisme; ☎ 039 948050; fax 039 948661; 29 Blvd Pasteur; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri) For tourist information.

**Pharmacy El Youss** (Blvd Mohammed V)

## Sights & Activities

The *kasbah* sits on the highest point of the city, behind stout walls. Coming from the medina, you enter through Bab el-Aassa, the southeastern gate, to find the 17th-century **Dar el-Makhzen** (☎ 039 932097; admission Dh10; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-5.30pm Wed-Mon, closed Fri afternoon), the former sultan's palace and now a museum devoted to Moroccan arts.

In the southwest corner of the medina, the **Old American Legation Museum** (☎ 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.

Housed in a former synagogue, the **Musée de la Fondation Lorin** (☎ 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

### CAMPING

**Camping Miramonte** (☎ 039 937133; camp sites per adult/child/tent/car/caravan Dh20/15/20/15/25, hot showers Dh10, electricity Dh10; ☎ ) A 2km walk or taxi ride from the city centre, this hillside camping ground with its lush gardens can make the hustle of Tangier miraculously melt away.

## MEDINA

**Pension Victoria** (☎ 039 931299; 22 Ave Mokhtar Ahardan; s/d Dh50/100, hot showers Dh10) This place is a bit dusty and worn, but serviceable for the price. Some rooms are set around a cool interior courtyard, but a few have good sea views.

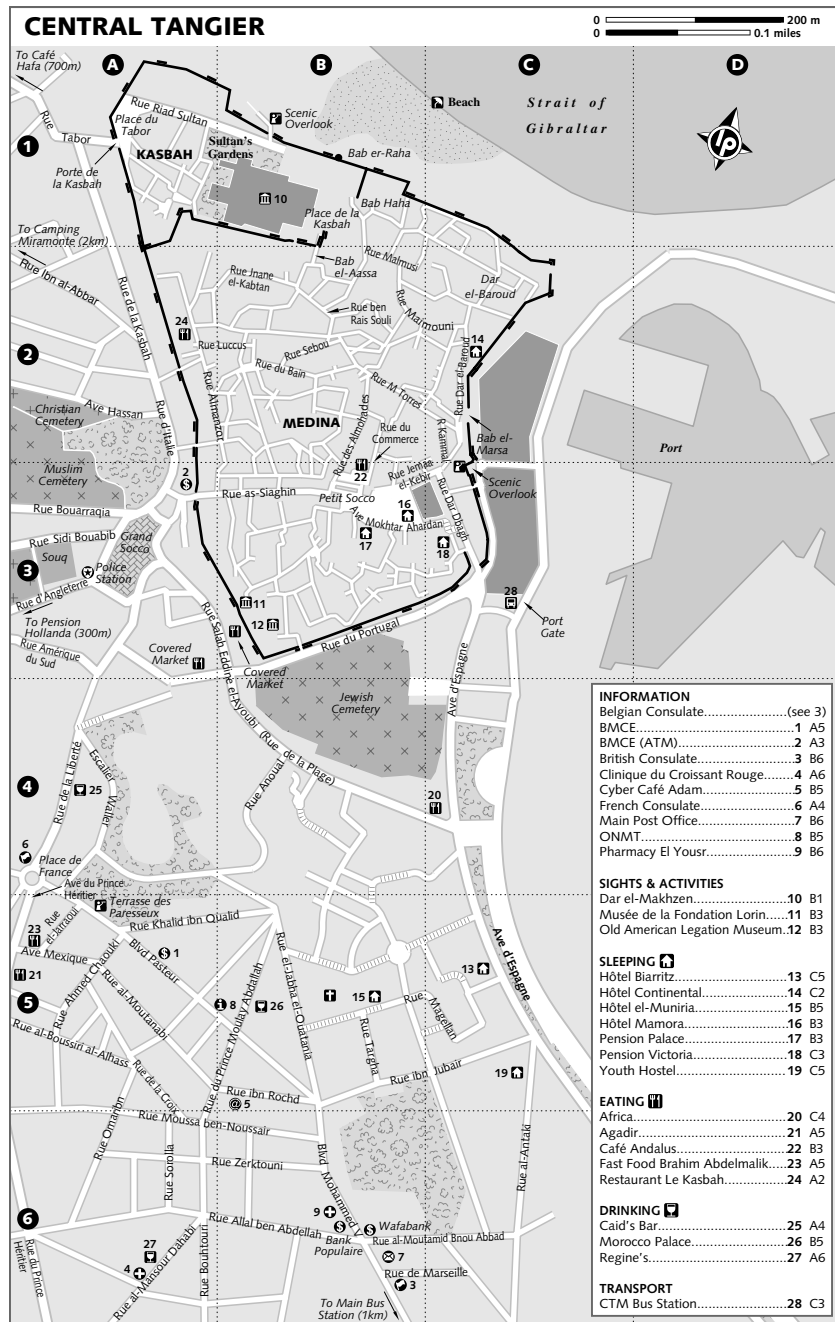
**Pension Palace** (☎ 039 936128; 2 Ave Mokhtar Ahardan; s/d Dh50/100, d with shower Dh120) Not quite the palace you'd hoped for, rooms here are as basic as you'd expect for the price. The foliage-filled courtyard adds some character.

**Hôtel Mamora** (☎ 039 934105; 19 Ave Mokhtar Ahardan; s/d from Dh225/255) With attached bathrooms and good-quality rooms, the Mamora is run well and kept in good order. The rooms overlooking the green-tiled roof of the Grande Mosquée are picturesque, but early morning wake-up calls are guaranteed.

**Hôtel Continental** (☎ 039 931024; hcontinental@iam.net.ma; 36 Rue Dar el-Baroud; s/d with breakfast Dh310/396) Something of a Tangerine institution, the Hôtel Continental overlooks the port with a charming eccentricity. Rooms are well sized,

### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- Ambulance ☎ 15
- Fire ☎ 16
- French-speaking police (Casablanca, Rabat, Tangier) ☎ 172
- Gendarmerie (countryside police) ☎ 177
- Police ☎ 19



with bathrooms and TV. The terrace offers great views – scenes in the film *The Sheltering Sky* were filmed here.

## VILLE NOUVELLE

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

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

**Hôtel el-Muniria** (☎ 039 935337; 1 Rue Magellan; s/d Dh130/150) One for fans of the Beats – Ginsberg, Burroughes and Kerouac all stayed here. The rooms are clean if a little shabby; get one with a sea view to blow some fresh air into the place.

**Hôtel Biarritz** (☎ 039 932473; 102-4 Ave d'Espagne; s/d Dh150/200) This old place holds its age well – all rooms have showers and are nicely furnished (some have balconies); it's more than comfy enough to lay your head. There's a bar and a handy restaurant.

## Eating

### MEDINA

In the medina, there's a host of cheap eating possibilities around the Petit Socco and Ave Mokhtar Ahardan, with rotisserie chicken, sandwiches and brochettes all on offer. Several cheap hole-in-the-wall places overlooking the Grand Socco dole out generous portions of fried sardines and the like with chips, salad, a hunk of bread and a squeeze of lemon. Quick, filling and exceedingly tasty. Similar stalls sit near the steps at Rue Dar Dbagh. Expect to be well fed for Dh20.

**Café Andalus** (7 Rue du Commerce; salad Dh5, mains from Dh25) A real local favourite, the Andalus is a tiny place with cheap and tasty plates of fish, brochettes and bowls of soup. Definitely not a palace, but none the worse for it.

**Restaurant Le Kasbah** (☎ 067 118847; 7 Rue Gzenaya; set menus Dh40-80; ☎ 11am-10pm) Another decent local dining hall, Le Kasbah offers soups, tajines, brochettes, fish in good portions and simple surroundings.

## VILLE NOUVELLE

In the Ville Nouvelle, try immediately south of Place de France for filling, well-priced meals.

**Fast Food Brahim Abdelmalik** (16 Ave Mexique; sandwiches Dh15-18) You can't go wrong here with half a baguette filled with *kefta* (seasoned minced lamb) and salad to eat on the hoof.

**Africa** (83 Rue Salah Eddine el-Ayoubi; soups Dh10, mains from Dh35, set menu Dh50; ☎ 10am-11pm) Downhill from the Grand Socco, Africa is an unpretentious place dishing up good Moroccan standards quickly and without fuss. Alcohol is served.

**Agadir** (☎ 068 827696; 21 Ave du Prince Héritier; mains Dh32-40, set menu Dh48) The interior here may be thoroughly unassuming, but the checked 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 above the usual fare.

## Drinking

As you'd expect from its colourful past, Tangier has its fair share of drinking establishments. Most are typically male oriented.

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

**Caid's Bar** (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 infamous who've preceded you adorn the walls. Women are more than welcome.

## Clubbing

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** (8 Rue al-Mansour Dahabi; ☎ 11.30pm-3am Mon-Sat), a large club popular with trendy young Tangerines, where DJs spin a bit of everything from Rai to Europop to house, and **Morocco Palace** (Rue du Prince Moulay Abdallah; ☎ 9pm-4am Mon-Sat) with traditional décor and mostly Arabic pop.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

The **CTM bus station** (☎ 039 931172), beside the port gate, offers departures for Casablanca (Dh120, six hours, four daily) via Rabat (Dh90,

4½ hours), Marrakesh (Dh175, 10 hours, one daily), Fès (Dh95, six hours, four daily), Asilah (Dh16, one hour), Meknès (Dh80, five hours) and Chefchaouen (Dh35, three hours). Cheaper bus companies operate from the **Main Bus Station** (Gare Routière; ☎ 039 946928; Place Jamia el-Arabia), 2km south of the city centre.

### TAXI

You can hail *grands taxis* to Asilah (Dh15, 30 minutes) and Fnideq (for Ceuta; Dh30, one hour) from a lot next to the main bus station.

### TRAIN

One morning and one afternoon service go to Casa-Voyageurs in Casablanca (Dh117, 5½ hours) from Tangier Ville, the swish new train station 3km southeast of the centre; a noon service travels via Meknès (Dh80, four hours) to Fès (Dh96, five hours); and a night service (with couchettes) goes to Marrakesh (1st-/2nd-class Dh274/193).

## CEUTA (SEBTA)

pop 75,000

Jutting out east into the Mediterranean, this 20-sq-km peninsula has been a Spanish enclave since 1640. Despite its relaxed, well-kept city centre with bars, cafés and Andalusian atmosphere, Ceuta is still recognisably African. Between a quarter and 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. Ceuta is on Spanish time and uses the euro.

**Cyber Ceuta** (☎ 956 512303; Paseo Colón; per hr €2.50; ☎ 11am-2pm & 5-10pm Mon-Sat, 5-11pm Sun)

**Main post office** (correos y telégrafos; Plaza de España; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 956 501401; www.ceuta.es; Avenida Muelle Cañonero Dato; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri)

### Sights

The impressive remnants of the **city walls** (☎ 956 511770; Avenida 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 Franco's army at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War.

The **Parque Marítimo del Mediterráneo** (Maritime Park; ☎ 956 517742; adult/child high season €6/3; ☎ 11am-8pm & 9pm-1am) has a manufactured beach, landscaped pools, waterfalls, bridges, sculptures and even a mock castle. It's great for kids.

### Sleeping & Eating

Ceuta is home to plenty of *pensiones* or *casas de huéspedes* (guesthouses), some of which are identifiable only by the large blue-and-white 'CH' plaque.

**Pensión Charito** (☎ 956 513982; pcharito@terra.es; 1st fl, 5 Calle Arrabal; s/d €15/20) Looking a little aged, Pensión Charito is clean and homy, with hot showers and a small, well-equipped kitchen.

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

**Hostal Real** (☎ 956 511449; fax 956 512166; 1 Calle Real; r €30; ☎) This guesthouse has good, clean rooms with the added bonus of on-site laundry facilities and a popcorn machine in the lobby.

For restaurants ranging from Italian to burger places, head for the Pablado Marinero (Seamen's Village) beside the yacht harbour. Also good is **La Tasca del Pedro** (☎ 956 510473; 3 Avenida Alcalde Sánchez Prados; mains €5-10; ☎ Mon-Fri) with a good range of seafood, Spanish and simple Italian dishes.

### Getting There & Away

Bus 7 runs up to the Moroccan border (*frontera*) every 10 minutes from Plaza de la Constitución (€0.60). The large *grand taxi* lot next to Moroccan border control has departures to Fnideq (for Tangier, 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 (€25, 35 minutes, hourly).

## CHEFCHAOUEN (CHAOUEN)

pop 45,000

Set beneath the striking peaks of the Rif Mountains, Chefchaouen has long been charming travellers. One of the prettiest in Morocco, Chefchaouen's **medina** has blinding blue-white hues, red-tiled roofs and an

unmistakeably 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 Mosquée**. Inside the kasbah's gardens is a modest **ethnographic museum** with photos of old Chefchaouen.

Trekking in the Rif Mountains is another of Chefchaouen's drawcards, especially **Jebel el-Kelaâ** (1616m), which towers over the town and can be easily climbed in one day. For advice, contact Abdeslam Mouden, the president of the **Association des Guides du Tourisme** (☎ 062 113917; guiderando@yahoo.fr).

### Sleeping

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

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

**Pensión La Castellana** (☎ 039 986295; 4 Sidi el-Bouhali; r per person Dh75) A well-established budget option, the rooms here are boxy and the price possibly reflects its popularity with travellers rather than the standard of the accommodation.

**Hostal Guernika** (☎ 039 987434; 49 Calle Ibn Askar; r with/without shower from Dh180/140) Run by a cheerful Spanish couple and just east of the main square, Hostal Guernika has welcoming rooms, some with private bathrooms (the shared facilities are spotless). The roof terrace with its gorgeous views is the icing on the cake.

**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.

### Eating

One of the most popular eating options in Chefchaouen is to choose one of the dozen or so café-restaurants on the main square, Plaza Uta el-Hammam. Their menus are virtually identical – continental breakfasts (Dh15), soups and salads, tajines and seafood – but

the food is good, they have the best ambience in town and mains start from Dh25.

**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 a huge seafood platter (Dh50) are the highlights.

**Snack Sandwich Dahlia** (Rue Jarrazin; light meals Dh10) The tiny square near Hotel Andaluz is a delightful spot for a quick lunch, and this snack bar fits the bill. Dahlia will prepare you a hamburger or omelette with salad and warm bread to munch under the shady vines.

### 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). Reserve your seat at least a day in advance.

## NORTH 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.

## CASABLANCA

pop 3.8 million

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

### Orientation

The relatively small medina 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 city centre. Casa-Voyageurs

train station is 2km east of the centre and the airport is 30km southeast of the city.

## Information

### EMERGENCY

**Service d'Aide Médicale Urgente** (SAMU; ☎ 022 252525) Private ambulance service.

**SOS Médecins** (☎ 022 444444; house calls Dh310;

☎ 24hr) Private doctors who make house calls.

### INTERNET ACCESS

**Fairnet** (☎ 022 482631; 25 Rue Zair Mers Sultan; per hr Dh8; ☎ 8am-11pm)

**Gig@net** (☎ 022 484810; 140 Blvd Mohammed Zerk-touni; per hr Dh10; ☎ 24hr)

### MONEY

**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

**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, built to commemorate the former king's 60th birthday. The mosque rises above the ocean on a rocky outcrop reclaimed from the sea. It's a vast building that holds 25,000 worshippers and accommodates 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 south of the centre, the **Jewish Museum of Casablanca** (☎ 022 994940; 81 Rue Chasseur Jules Gros, Oasis; admission Dh20, with guide Dh30; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri) is the only Jewish museum in the Islamic world.

Sparklingly clean and decidedly modern, **Hammam Ziani** (☎ 022 319695; 59 Rue Abou Rakrak; admission Mon-Fri Dh40, Sat & Sun Dh50; ☎ 7am-10pm) offers a range of treatments and such as massage, spa bath and the traditional steam room and

*gommage* (being scrubbed by an attendant) as well as a juice bar.

In the trendy suburb of Ain Diab, the beachside **Blvd de la Corniche** is lined with beach clubs, four-star hotels, upmarket 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 winter damp.

**Hôtel du Palais** (☎ 022 276191; 68 Rue Farhat Hachad; s/d Dh80/120, with private bathroom Dh140/240, hot showers Dh10) This basic hotel is a good choice with clean, spacious rooms with large windows. Recently upgraded, it's still fairly spartan and can be noisy.

**Hôtel Foucauld** (☎ 022 222666; 52 Rue el Araibi Jilali; s/d Dh80/120, with private bathroom Dh130/160) Incredible plasterwork decoration adorns the foyer at this simple hotel; although the rooms aren't quite so grand and can be noisy, they're much bigger than average and have a faded charm.

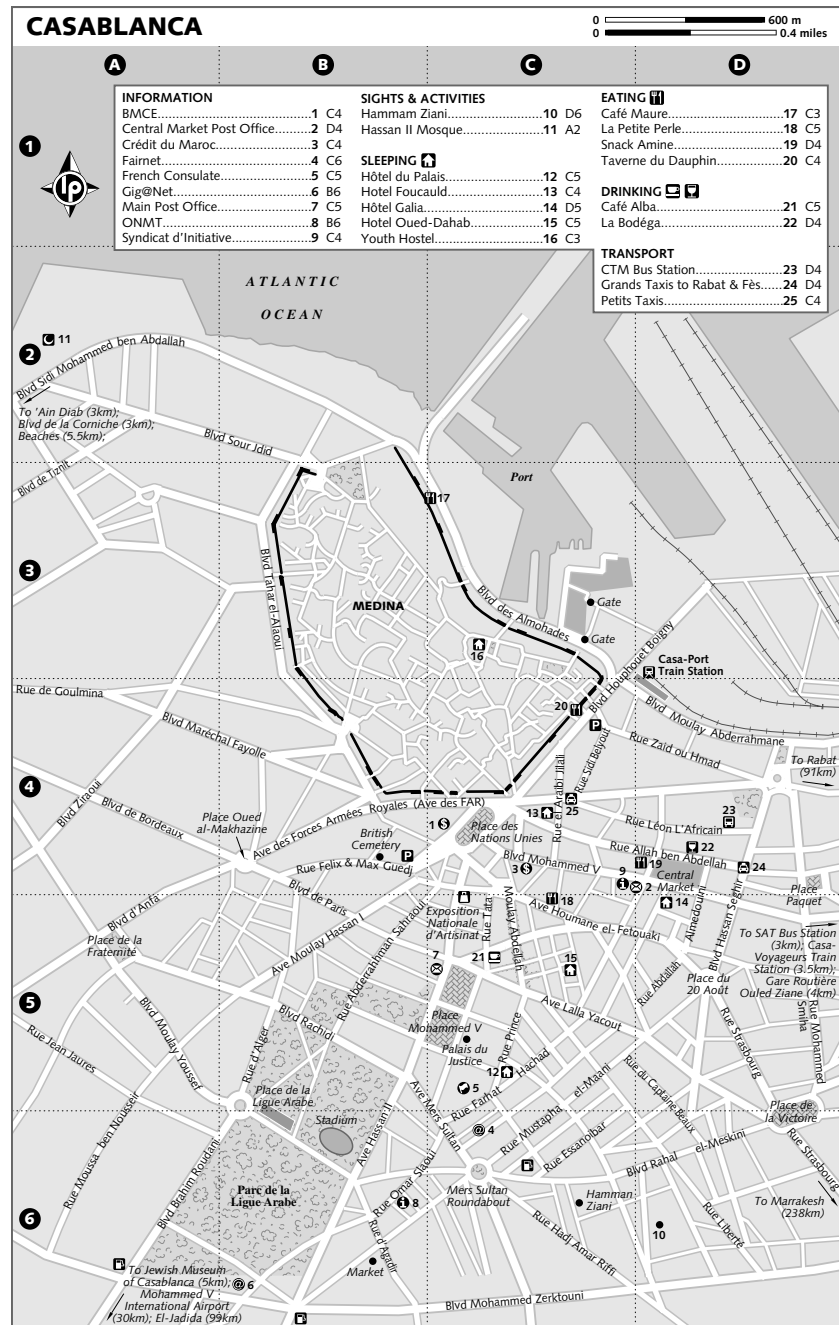
**Hôtel Oued-Dahab** (☎ 022 223866; oueddahab@yahoo.com; 17 Rue Mohamed Belloul; s/d Dh100/140, with private bathroom Dh120/180) Frayed around the edges but cheap and clean, the extremely friendly Oued-Dahab has big, functional rooms right in the centre of town. Ask for a room facing inwards for a restful night's sleep.

**Hôtel Galia** (☎ 022 481694; 19 Rue Ibn Batouta; s/d/tr Dh150/220/300, with shower Dh170/250/330) Tiled floors, plastic flowers, gold, tasselled curtains and matching bedspreads adorn the rooms at the Galia. Management is friendly and helpful.

## Eating

The best place for a quick, cheap meal is Rue Chaouia opposite the central market. The line of stalls and restaurants serving roast chicken, brochettes and sandwiches (Dh20 to Dh30) stays open until about 2am.

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



**Snack Amine** (☎ 022 541331; Rue Chaouia; mains Dh25-45; ☎ noon-2am) Tucked between the chicken rotisseries by the central market, Snack Amine serves up big plates of simple but tasty fried fish in a bright, rather soulless atmosphere.

**Taverne du Dauphin** (☎ 022 221200; 115 Blvd Houphouët Boigny; mains Dh70-90, menu Dh110; ☎ Mon-Sat) A Casablanca institution, this traditional Provençal restaurant and bar has been serving up *fruits de mer* (seafood) since 1958. One taste of the succulent grilled fish, fried calamari and *crevettes royales* (royal shrimp) will leave you smitten.

**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.

### Drinking & Clubbing

**Café Alba** (☎ 022 227154; 59-61 Rue Driss Lahrizi; ☎ 8am-1am) High ceilings, swish, modern furniture and subtle lighting distinguish this café 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-aged group of Casablanca's finest, La Bodega is loud and lively, and the alcohol flows freely. There's a packed dance floor after 10pm.

**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 favourite Casa hang out is candlelit, littered with pillows and has a laid-back but exotic atmosphere.

The beachfront suburb of Aïn Diab is the place for late-night drinking and dancing, with a strip of discos along the beachfront.

### GETTING INTO TOWN

The easiest way to get from Mohammed V International Airport to Casablanca is by train (Dh30 2nd class, 35 minutes); they leave every hour from 6am to midnight from below the ground floor in the airport terminal building. A *grand taxi* between the airport and the city centre costs Dh250.

Expect to pay at least Dh100 admission and as much again for drinks.

### Getting There & Away

#### BUS

The modern **CTM bus station** (☎ 022 541010; 23 Rue Léon L'Africain) has daily CTM departures to Essaouira (Dh120, seven hours, three daily), Fès (Dh90, five hours, 12 daily), Marrakesh (Dh70, four hours, nine daily), Rabat (Dh25, one hour, 11 daily) and Tangier (Dh120, six hours, six daily). The modern **Gare Routière Oued Ziane** (☎ 022 444470), 4km southeast of the centre, is the bus station for non-CTM services.

#### TRAIN

All long-distance trains as well as those 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. Destinations include Marrakesh (Dh75.50, three hours, nine daily), Fès (Dh97, 4½ hours, nine daily) via Meknès (Dh81, 3½ hours) and Tangier (Dh117, 5¾ hours, three daily).

### Getting Around

Casa's red *petit taxis* are excellent value. Expect to pay Dh10 in or near the city centre.

### RABAT

pop 1.7 million

Relaxed, well kept and very European, flag-waving Rabat is as cosmopolitan as Casablanca, 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

The main administrative buildings and many of the hotels lie just off the city's main thoroughfare, the wide, palm-lined Ave Mohammed V. The entrance to the medina is at the northern end of the avenue, while the train station, Rabat Ville, is at the southern end.

### Information

**Main post office** (cnr Rue Soëkamo & Ave Mohammed V)  
**ONMT** (☎ 037 673756; visitmorocco@onmt.org.ma; cnr Rue Oued El Makhazine & Rue Zalaka, Agdal; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 3-6.30pm Mon-Fri)

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

### Sights & Activities

Dating from the 17th century, the walled **medina** isn't a patch on Fès' or Marrakesh's, although it still piques the senses. The **Kasbah des Oudaïas** sits high up on the bluff overlooking the Oued Bou Regreg and contains within its walls the oldest **mosque** in Rabat. The southern corner of the kasbah is home to the **Andalucian Gardens** (☎ sunrise-sunset), while 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), a 12th-century attempt to build the highest minaret in the world. At 44m, it failed, but the beautifully designed and intricately carved tower is magnificent.

The cool marble **Mausoleum of Mohammed V** (admission free; ☎ sunrise-sunset), built in traditional Moroccan style, lies opposite the tower, and is famed for its intensely patterned *zellij* (ceramic tilework) mosaics from floor to ceiling.

One of Rabat's most peaceful corners is the site of the ancient Roman city of **Sala Colonia** and the Merenid necropolis of **Chellah** (cnr Ave Yacoub al-Mansour & Blvd Moussa ibn Nassair; admission Dh10; ☎ 9am-5.30pm) south of the centre.

Above the breakers of the Atlantic coast, the modern building between the kasbah and the lighthouse is the **Oudayas Surf Club** (☎ 037 260683; fax 037 260684; 3 Plage des Oudayas; 90min lesson surfboard/body board Dh120/90, insurance Dh50), a school for surfing and body boarding.

### Sleeping

**Camping de la Plage** (camp sites per adult/child under 12 yr/tent/car/camper Dh15/8/18/15/30, power & water Dh15, hot showers Dh10) Across the estuary by the beach in Salé, this walled camping ground offers basic facilities and 24-hour security, but little shade.

**Youth Hostel** (☎ 037 725769; 43 Rue Marassa; dm Hl members/nonmembers Dh45/50, hot showers Dh5; ☎ 8am-10.30pm, closed 10am-noon & 3-6.30pm Oct-Apr) Centred around a bright, traditional courtyard, this 48-bed youth hostel has plenty of rustic character but fairly basic facilities.

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

and very friendly, this family-run hotel is the best of the medina options. The simple rooms are bright and tidy and surround a central courtyard on the 1st floor.

**Hôtel Splendid** (☎ 037 723283; 8 Rue Ghazza; s/d Dh104/159, with private bathroom Dh128/187) 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 Majestic** (☎ 037 722997; www.hotelmajestic.ma; 121 Ave Hassan II; s/d Dh239/279) Another excellent option, though not as palatial as it sounds, this wonderfully modern place has bright rooms with sleek, new furniture and fittings. Some of the compact rooms overlook the medina and can be noisy.

### Eating & Drinking

The best place for quick, cheap food in Rabat is on Ave Mohammed V just inside the medina gate where you'll find a slew of hole-in-the-wall joints dishing out cheap tajines, brochettes, salads and chips. You'll know the best ones by the queue of locals.

**Restaurant el-Bahia** (☎ 037 734504; Ave Hassan II; mains Dh40-70; ☎ 6am-midnight, to 10.30pm winter) Built into the outside of the medina walls and an excellent spot for people-watching, this laid-back restaurant has the locals lapping up hearty Moroccan fare.

**Tajine wa Tanja** (☎ 037 729797; 9 Rue Baghdad; mains Dh60-90; ☎ Mon-Sat) Down-to-earth Moroccan dishes are the speciality at this small, friendly restaurant near the train station. Choose from a range of wood-fired grills or tajines prepared to traditional recipes, or make a special outing for the magnificent Friday couscous.

**Le Petit Beur – Dar Tajine** (☎ 037 731322; 8 Rue Damas; tajines Dh84, pastilla Dh66; ☎ Mon-sat) This modest little place is renowned for its succulent tajines and one of the best *pastillas* (poultry, almonds and spices in pastry) in town. It's a little sombre at lunchtime but livens up at night when the waiters double as musicians and play the oud to accompany your meal.

Another good spot for cheap meals is around Rue Tanta in the Ville Nouvelle, where you'll find a selection of fast-food joints serving everything from burgers and brochettes to pizza and panini.



**Café Maure** (Kasbah des Oudaias; ☎ 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 is a relaxed venue for women.

**Le Purple** (☎ 037 733680; 14 Rue Mekka; ☎ 7.30pm-1am) Slick, contemporary style, designer furniture and bright but sultry colours make this trendy bar one of the hottest spots in the centre of town. It's a hang-out for the young and the beautiful and hosts a lively karaoke night on Sundays.

### Getting There & Away BUS

The main **gare routière** (☎ 037 795816) and the less chaotic **CTM station** (☎ 037 281488) are 5km southwest of the city centre. CTM has daily services to Casablanca (Dh25, 1½ hrs, eight daily), Essaouira (Dh15, three hours, three daily), Fès (Dh58, 3½ hours, seven daily), Marrakesh (Dh100, five hours, three daily) and Tangier (Dh80, 4½ hours, five daily).

### GRANDS TAXIS

*Grands taxis* leave for Casablanca (Dh27) from just outside gare routière. *Grands taxis* leave for Salé (Dh3.50) from a lot off Ave Hassan II behind the Hôtel Bouregreg.

### TRAIN

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

### Getting Around

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

### AROUND RABAT Salé

pop 400,000

Although just across the estuary from Rabat, the walled, whitewashed city of Salé has a character all of its own. Little within the city walls seems to have changed over the centu-

ries. The main entrance to the **medina** is **Bab Bou Haja**, on the southwestern wall, which opens onto Place Bab Khebaz. From here it's a short walk to the *souqs* (markets) on the northwest side of the square. The **Grand Mosqué** and the beautiful 14th-century **Medersa** (admission Dh10; ☎ 9am-noon & 2.30-6pm) are 500m further northwest along Rue Ras ash-Shajara. *Grands taxis* and bus 16 to Rabat leave from Bab Mrisa, the gate in the southeastern corner of the old walled city; you can catch small **boats** across the river below Bab Bou Haja.

### ASILAH

pop 29,518

Delightful Asilah's old-world charm has made it 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; they host the annual **International Cultural Festival** in July/August.

The impressive 15th-century Portuguese ramparts are largely intact. The southwestern prong offers a peak into the nearby **Koubba of Sidi Mamsur** (which is otherwise closed to non-Muslims) and the **Mujaheddin Graveyard**.

A revolving exhibition of international art is housed in the **Centre de Hassan II** (☎ 039 417065; fax 039 418396; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm) and in the **El-Kamra Tower**, a renovated Portuguese fortification on Place Abdellah Guennoun.

Sun worshippers and bathing beauties are advised to head 3km south of Asilah to **Paradise Beach**, a gorgeous, pristine spot that really does live up to its name.

### Sleeping

Asilah has a limited choice of budget hotels, most of which are looking tired.

**Hôtel Marhaba** (☎ 039 417144; Place Zellaka; s/d Sep-Jun Dh60/80, Jul & Aug 80/150) Right in the centre of town but fading badly, the friendly Marhaba has clean but well-worn rooms. There's a nice roof terrace overlooking the medina.

**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 around a courtyard and clean shared facilities.

**Hôtel Belle Vue** (☎ 039 417747; Rue Hassan ben Tabit; d low/high season Dh100/200) Friendly and functional, this small hotel has rather nondescript but well-kept rooms. A few have their own bathroom.

There are a number of campgrounds along the beach north of town with only basic washing facilities:

**Camping Echrigui** (☎ 039 417182; camp sites per person/tent/car/caravan/camper Dh15/10/10/20/20, r low/high season Dh100/200) Along the beach north of town.

**Camping as-Saada** (☎ 039 417317; camp sites per person/tent/car/caravan/camper Dh15/10/10/20/20, electricity Dh15, r low/high season Dh100/120) Also north of town.

### Eating

Asilah has a wide choice of restaurants clustered around Bab Kasbah and Ave Hassan II. There are a few other cheap options on Rue Ahmed M'dem and near the banks on Place Mohammed V.

### Getting There & Away

CTM has services to Casablanca (Dh70, 4½ hours) via Rabat (Dh60, 3½ hours), Fès (Dh65, 4½ hours), 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.

### ESSAOUIRA

pop 69,000

The laid-back attitude, stylish 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.

Essaouira's walled, late-18th-century **medina** was added to Unesco's World Heritage list in 2001. 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**. 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 **île de Mogador**.

**Magic Fun Afrika** (☎ 024 473856; www.magicfunafrika.com; Blvd Mohammed V; ☎ 9am-6pm Mar-Dec) rents water-sports equipment and offers instruction along Essaouira's wide sandy beach.

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

### Sleeping

**Dar Afram** (☎ 024 785657; www.dar-aftram.com; 10 Rue Sidi Magdoul; s Jun-Sep/Oct-May Dh150/100, d Jun-Sep Dh300-400, d Oct-May Dh200-300) This extremely friendly guest-house has simple, spotless rooms with shared bathrooms and a funky vibe. The Aussie-Moroccan owners are musicians and an impromptu session often follows the evening meals shared around a communal table.

**ourpick** **Riad Nakhla** (☎ /fax 024 474940; www.essaouiranet.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. Shuttered windows, colourful bedspreads and great bathrooms give the rooms some local character, and if you're planning a night in, you even get a TV. Breakfast on the stunning roof terrace is another treat. All in all it's an incredible bargain at this price.

**Le Grand Large** (☎ 024 472866; www.riadlegrandlarge.com; 2 Re Oum-Rabia; s/d/t Dh290/390/490) After the simple whitewash and muted colours of many *riads* (traditional townhouse set around an internal garden) in town, Le Grand Large is a riot of colour with pink, green and blue walls, bright throws on cast-iron beds and buckets of character.

**Riad Émeraude** (☎ 024 473494; www.essaouiraahotel.com, in French; 228 Rue Chbanate; s/d incl breakfast Dh340/440) This gorgeous little place opens from a stunning central courtyard with stone arches and tiled floors to 12 charming rooms bathed in light and decorative flourishes. Elegantly simple with brilliant white linen, minimalist local touches and splashes of blue or yellow, these rooms offer incredible value for money.

### Eating

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.

There are plenty of snack stands and hole-in-the-wall places along Ave Sidi Mohammed ben Abdallah, Ave Zerktouni and just inside Bab Doukkala. On Place Moulay Hassan, three sandwich stands sell excellent baguettes



stuffed with meat, salad and just about anything else for around Dh15.

**Mareblú** (☎ 067 646438; 2 rue Sidi Ali Ben Abdellah; meals Dh30; ☎ 9am-3pm, closed Wed) Another great spot for lunch is this tiny but incredibly popular place that serves up bowls of steaming Italian pastas.

**Chez Françoise** (☎ 086 164087; 1 Rue Hommane el-Fatouaki; lunch set menu Dh60; ☎ closed Sun) An excellent choice for a light, healthy meal, this pared-back little place offers a choice of savoury tarts served with three tangy salads.

## Getting There & Away

The **bus station** (☎ 024 784764) is about 400m northeast of the medina. It's an easy walk during the day but you're better in a *petit taxi* (Dh6) if you're arriving/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. Book in advance.

## 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. Whether in grand old Fès or the clamour of Marrakesh, this could be the part of Morocco where you spend most of your time.

## MARRAKESH

pop 1,091,540

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; 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 the city's 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.

### GETTING INTO TOWN

A *petit taxi* from the airport (6km) should cost no more than Dh60. Alternatively, bus 11 runs irregularly to Djemaa el-Fna.

## Orientation

It takes about 30 minutes to walk from the centre of the Ville Nouvelle to Djemaa el-Fna, the main square in the old city's heart. The main area of the Ville Nouvelle is Guéliz, where the bulk of offices, restaurants, cafés and shops, plus a few hotels, are clustered near the main thoroughfare, Ave Mohammed V.

## 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** (☎ 024 441989; Immeuble Tazi, 12 Rue Riad el 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 Aicha, 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 de Bab Agnaou; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri) A convenient branch office in the medina.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**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. Al-

though 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 mouth-watering aromas. Jugglers, storytellers, snake charmers, musicians, the occasional acrobat 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-Andalucian 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, combined admission to Medersa & Musée de Marrakech Dh60; ☎ 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, combined admission to Musée, Medersa ben Youssef & Koubba Dh60; ☎ 9am-7pm) is housed in a beautifully restored 19th-century palace, Dar Mnebbi.

South of the main medina area is the **kasbah**, home to the most famous of the city's palaces, the now-ruined **Palais el-Badi** (Place des Ferblantiers; admission Dh10; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6pm), the 'Incomparable', once reputed to be one of the most beautiful palaces in the world. All that is 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 traf-

fic. The rose gardens of Koutoubia Mosque in particular offer cool respite near Djemaa el-Fna.

## Sleeping

**Youth Hostel** (☎ 024 447713; Rue el-Jahed, Quartier Industriel; dm incl breakfast Dh60, hot showers Dh6) This youth hostel is spotlessly clean and boasts a kitchen, but there's an 11.30pm curfew and even though it is quiet, it's a long way from the action of the medina. You'll need your HI card.

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

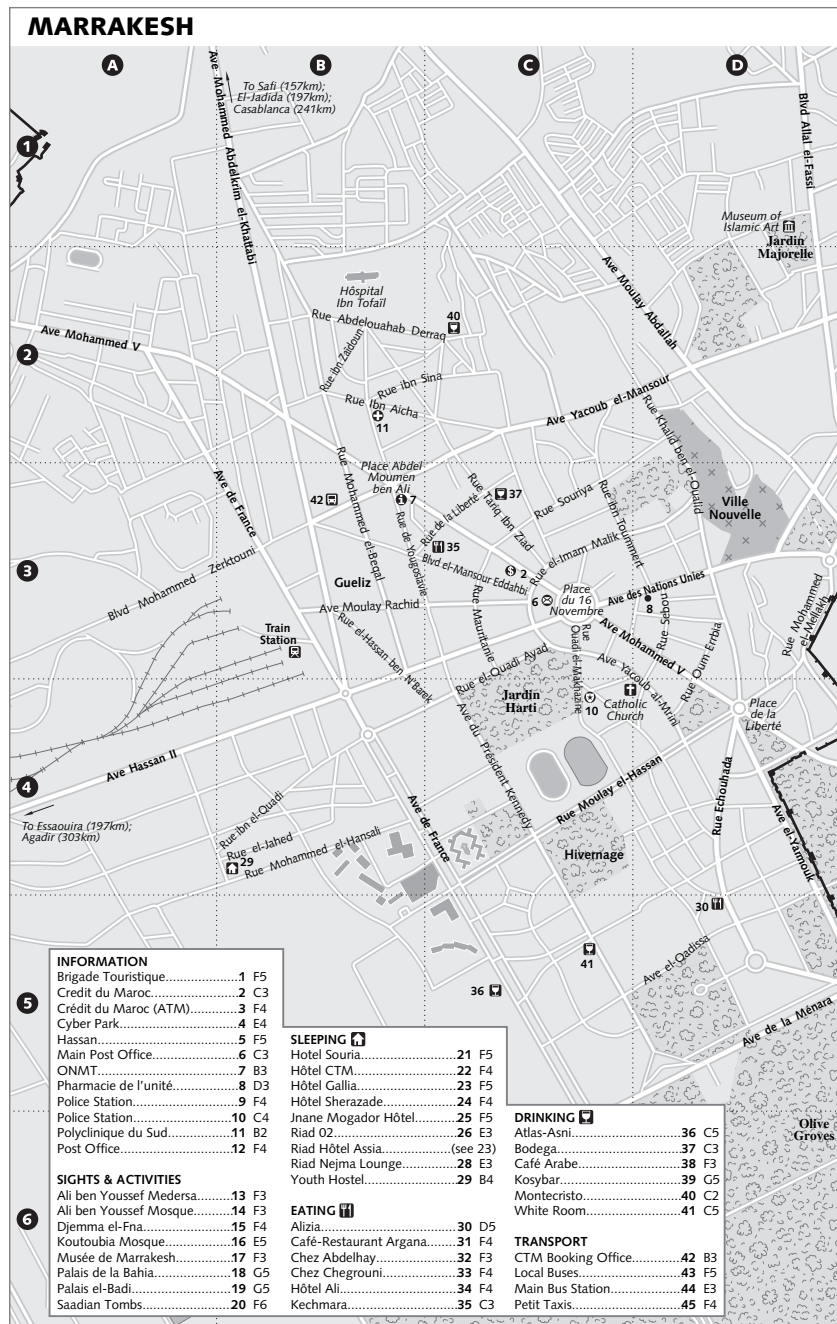
**Hôtel Souria** (☎ 024 426757; 17 Rue de la Recette; s/d Dh120/160) A popular and charming budget hotel with 10 simple but very well-kept rooms arrayed around a courtyard full of plants. The roof terrace has great views over the rooftops of the medina. Fills up really quickly.

**Hôtel Sherazade** (☎ /fax 044 429305; www.hotel.sherazade.com; 3 Derb Djamaa, Riad Zitoun el-Qedim; s/d Dh160/210, s with private bathroom Dh210-510, d with private bathroom Dh260-610, mini-apt d Dh460) Centrally located but very quiet, this *riad* is decorated in traditional style with a sea of *zellij* tiling. Run by a friendly Moroccan-German couple, it's on a par with the Hôtel Gallia; reservations are strongly recommended here as well.

**Riad Hôtel Assia** (☎ 024 391285; www.hotel-assia-marrakech.com; 33 Rue de la Recette; s/d/t/q B&B Dh250/360/550/650; ☎) The staff at this *riad*, next door to the Gallia, are friendly and helpful, and the small but comfortable rooms, with bathrooms and TV, are decorated in traditional style with *zellij* tiling and local woodwork. Superb views from the roof terrace are an added bonus.

**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* built around an elegant central courtyard complete with tinkling fountain, grand marble staircase, a *hammam* (Turkish bath) and attractive rooms decorated in Moroccan style.

**Hôtel Gallia** (☎ 024 445913; fax 044 444853; www.ilove-marrakesh/hotelgallia; 30 Rue de la Recette; s/d Dh270/420; ☎) This delightful budget hotel



near the Djemaa el-Fna has been run by the same French family since 1929. The 20 pleasant rooms surround two lovely courtyards and the entire place is scrubbed clean daily. The breakfast is excellent. Not surprisingly, you'll need to book (by fax only) weeks if not months in advance.

**Riad Nejma Lounge** (☎ 024 382341; www.riad-nejmalounge.com; 45 Derb Sidi M'hamed el-Haj, Bab Doukkala; d B&B Dh300-600, up to Dh900 during Christmas holidays; ♿ ♿) This is one of the coolest *riads* in town and at cool prices. The French owners have painted it all in white, with brightly coloured 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.

## Eating

The cheapest and most exotic place to eat in town in the evening remains the food stalls on Djemaa el-Fna, piled high with fresh meats and salads, goats' heads and steaming snail. At lunchtime, much the same is available in the *qissaria* on the north side of the square. You'll eat well for under Dh40.

**Chez Chegrouni** (☎ 065 474615; 4-6 Djemaa el-Fna; salads Dh10-15, mains Dh35-50; ☎ 8am-11pm) Known for its excellent tajines, considered by many to be the best in the city, this little restaurant right on Djemaa el-Fna is always crowded. Whether you choose lemon chicken with olives or lamb with prunes, it will arrive steaming hot and delectably tender.

**Kechmara** (☎ 024 434060; 3 Rue de La Liberté, Guéliz; set menus Dh80-120; ♿) With carefully chosen contemporary décor, good music all day and night and beautiful staff, this is one of the few trendy places that does not charge the

world for excellent Moroccan-Mediterranean food.

**Café-Restaurant Argana** (☎ 024 445350; 1 & 2 Djemaa el-Fna; set menus Dh90-140) Overlooking Djemaa el-Fna's frenzied chaos, Argana is a good place to try some local delicacies such as *pastilla* (Dh85 to Dh90) and *tanzhiya* (Marrakeshi stew, Dh90). It also serves speedy lunchtime tajines.

**Alizia** (☎ 024 438360/076 516295; Rue Ahmed Chouhada Chawki, Hivernage; pizzas from Dh50, mains Dh100-150; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 7-11pm; ♿) Madame Rachida, who has her own reality-TV cookery show, runs this very pleasant Italian-Moroccan restaurant with terrace. She loves fish, as well as wood-oven baked pizzas and some Marrakeshi specialities.

**Chez Abdelhay** (☎ 071 157821; 46 Rue el-Baroudiyenne; meals Dh25-40; ☎ 8am-8pm) This great eatery, near the Ben Youssef Medersa, specialises in grills, Moroccan salads and *harira* (soup of chick-peas and lamb broth), with tables outside.

**Hôtel Ali** (☎ 024 444979; Rue Moulay Ismail; set menus from Dh60, buffet guests/nonguests Dh60/70; ☎ dinner) The all-you-can-eat buffet attracts hungry travellers who binge on couscous, salads, fruit and desserts, including lots of options for vegetarians. This is a great place to meet other travellers.

## Drinking

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

As elsewhere in Morocco, the traditional bars in Marrakesh are mostly dire beer- and male-oriented places. The new, trendy upmarket bars, however, are OK for women to go to, particularly if you are not alone.

**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 a Moroccan salon and, best of all, the gorgeous terrace overlooks the medina and the 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.

**Bodega** (☎ 024 433141; 23 Rue de la Liberté; ☎ 7pm-1am; ♿) This wildly popular spot is unique in Marrakesh for its raucous crowd and unassuming atmosphere. The music is a mix of Latin, Arabic and good old-fashioned rock-and-roll. *Cervezas* (beers) and *mojitos* (rum cocktails) are reasonably priced, and tapas (Dh40 to Dh50) are available if you get the munchies.

## Clubbing

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. Admission ranges 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 till after midnight or 1am.

Highlights include: **Pacha** (☎ 024 388405; www.pachamarrakech.com; Complexe Pacha Marrakech, Blvd Mohammed VI; admission before 10pm free Mon-Fri, after 10pm Dh150, Sat & Sun Dh300; ☎ 8pm-5am), a superclub south of the medina 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.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

The **main bus station** (☎ 024 433933; Bab Doukkala) is just outside the city walls, a 20-minute walk or roughly Dh5 to 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** (Window No 10 at Bab Doukkala bus station; ☎ 024 434402) 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). Tickets can be bought at the **CTM Office** (☎ 024 448328; Blvd Mohammed Zerktouni, Guéliz).

## 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 buses (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

The creamy-beige *petits taxis* around town cost between Dh5 and Dh15 per journey.

## AROUND MARRAKESH

The highest mountain range in North Africa, the High Atlas, runs diagonally across Morocco, from the Atlantic coast northeast of Agadir all the way to northern Algeria, a distance of almost 1000km. In Berber it's called Idraren Draren (Mountains of Mountains). There are several summits higher than 4000m and more than 400 above 3000m. The Toubkal region contains all the highest peaks, and is the most frequently visited area of the High Atlas. It's only two hours from Marrakesh and is easily accessed by public transport.

Although wild and harsh, the area has long been inhabited by the Atlas Berbers. Their flat-roofed, earthen villages cling tenaciously to the mountainsides, while irrigated, terraced gardens and walnut groves flourish below. The entire area is crisscrossed by well-used mule trails – some of which once undoubtedly carried trade caravans and pilgrims between the Sahara and the northern plains.

Numerous foreign and Moroccan operators offer trekking tours in the High Atlas:

**Atlas Sahara Trek** (☎ 044 393101; www.atlas-sahara-trek.com; Marrakesh)

**Nature Trekking Maroc** (☎ 024 432477; www.maroc-trekking.com; Marrakesh)

**Sahara Expedition** (☎ 044 427977; www.sahara-expe.ma; Marrakesh)

## 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

## SPLURGE

**Riad O2** (☎ 024 377227; www.riado2.com; 97 Derb Semmaria, Sidi Ben Slimane, Sidi Ahmed Soussi, Zaouia; s/d incl breakfast 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*. The bedrooms are equally pleasant, decorated in a fusion of modern Western and traditional Moroccan style, and all come with traditionally decorated bathrooms.

bazaars are crammed with shops, restaurants, workshops, mosques, medersas and extensive dye pits and tanneries, a riot of sights, sounds and smells.

## Orientation

Fès is neatly divided into three parts: Fès el-Bali (the core of the medina) in the east; Fès el-Jdid (containing the *mellah*, or Jewish quarter, and Royal Palace) in the centre; and the Ville Nouvelle, the administrative area constructed by the French, to the southwest.

## Information

### INTERNET ACCESS

**London Cyber** (Map p807; Ave de la Liberté; per hr Dh10; ☎ 10am-10pm)

**Telboutique Cyber Club** (Map p809; Blvd Mohammed V; per hr Dh7; ☎ 9am-11pm)

### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Hôpital Ghassani** (☎ 055 622777) Located east of the Ville Nouvelle in Dhar Mehratz.

**Night Pharmacy** (Map p809; ☎ 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 p807; 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 p809; cnr Ave Hassan II & Blvd Mohammed V)

**Post office** (Map p807; Place de l'Istiqlal) In the medina.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourist Office** (Map p809; ☎ 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*. The situation has improved with the introduction of a *brigade touristique*, but high unem-ployment forces many to persist.

## Festivals & Events

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.

## 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 is a certainty, but therein lies 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 p807) 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, you'll have to suffice with glimpses of its seemingly endless columns from the gates along Talaa Kebira and Place as-Seffarine.

Located 150m east of Bab Bou Jeloud, the 14th-century **Medersa Bou Inania** (Map p807; 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 Said in 1325 in the heart of the medina, the **Medersa el-Altarine** (Map p807; admission Dh10; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 2.30-5pm) displays the traditional patterns of Merenid artisanship, with a *zellij* base, stucco work and cedar at the top of the walls and a ceiling every bit as elegant as the artistry of the Medersa Bou Inania.

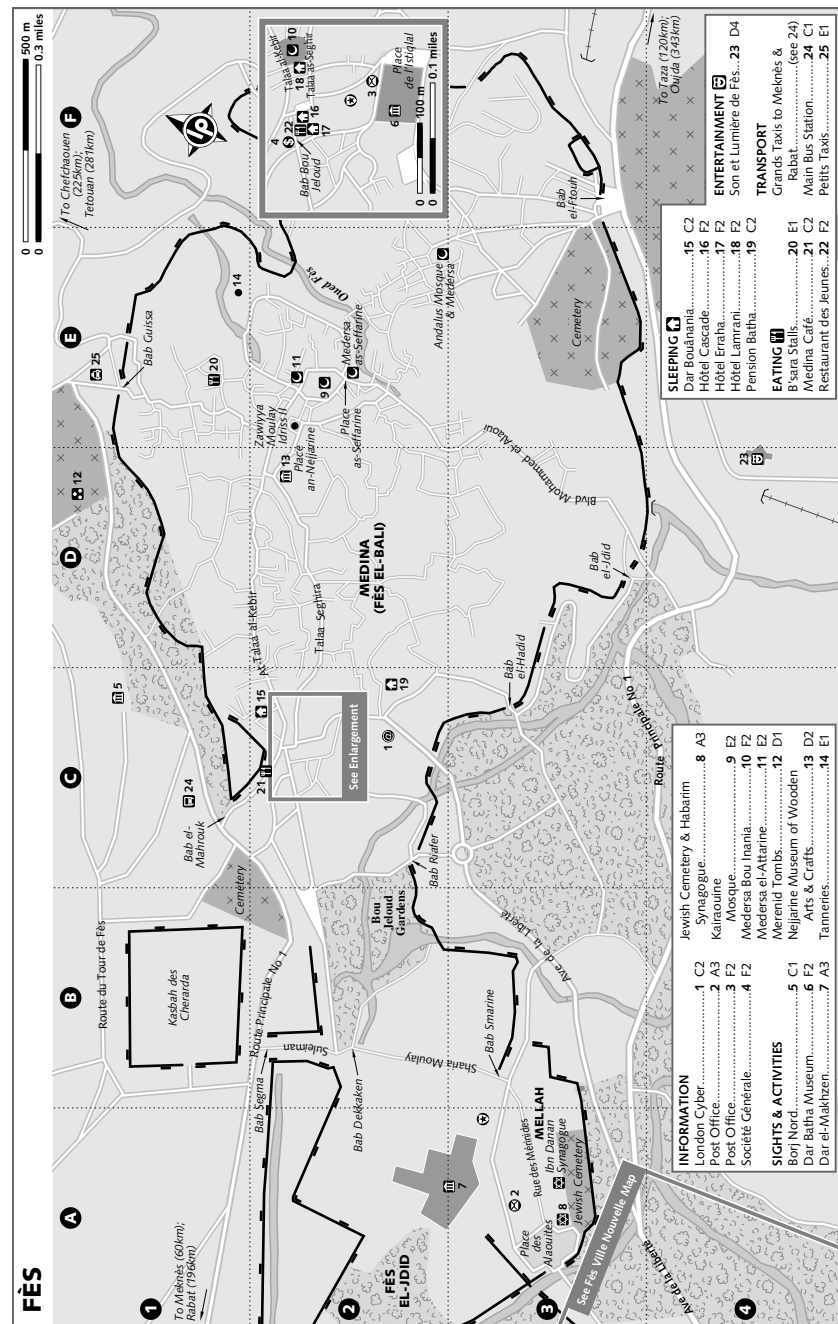
The **Nejarine Museum of Wooden Arts & Crafts** (Map p807; ☎ 035 740580; Place an-Nejarine; admission Dh20; ☎ 10am-5pm) is in a wonderfully restored *funduq* – a caravanserai for travelling merchants. Photos are forbidden.

In a century-old Hispano-Moorish palace, the **Dar Batha Museum** (Map p807; Museum of Moroccan Arts & Crafts; ☎ 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 p807) 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.

### FÈS EL-JDID (NEW FÈS)

The entrance to **Dar el-Makhzen** (Map p807; Royal Palace; 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**, or Jewish quarter. The *mellah*'s southwest corner is home to the fascinating **Jewish Cemetery & Habarim Synagogue** (Map p807; admission free, donations welcomed; ☎ 7am-7pm).

### BORJ NORD FORTRESS & MERENID TOMBS

Viewed from the surrounding hills, Fès' jumbled buildings merge into a palette of white-flecked sandstone. Only here and there do the green-tiled roofs of the mosques and medersas provide a hint of colour. For one of the best panoramas of the city, head up to **Borj Nord** (Map p807).

Further up, the **Merenid tombs** (Map p807) are dramatic in their advanced state of ruin, although little remains of their fine original decoration. The views over Fès are spectacular and well worth the climb. It's best at dusk as the lights come on and the muezzins' prayer calls echo round the valley, although it's advisable not to hang around after dark.

### Sleeping FÈS EL-BALI

Many of the ultracheapies cluster around Bab Bou Jeloud in Fès el-Bali. They're pretty basic, and cold showers might have you exploring the local *hammams*.

**Hôtel Erraha** (Map p807; ☎ 035 633226; Place Bou Jeloud; s/d Dh50/80, hot showers Dh10) Just outside Bab Bou Jeloud, this cheapie has large airy rooms and a roof terrace. As with many places in this price bracket, the shared bathroom facilities reflect the price tag.

**Hôtel Cascade** (Map p807; ☎ 035 638442; 26 Rue Serrajine; s/d Dh60/120) This place has been a backpacker's favourite as long as we've been visiting Morocco, noted for its central location and roof terraces with unbeatable views. That said, these days it's pretty battered and grubby, and the shared facilities could use a more frequent mopping.

**Pension Batha** (Map p807; ☎ 035 741150; 8 Sidi Lkhayat; s/d incl breakfast Dh110/145) You'll do a lot of stair climbing in this tall thin building, to reach a cluster of simple, decent rooms. Its family-run nature gives it a friendly atmosphere, and there's a nice roof terrace.

**Hôtel Lamrani** (Map p807; ☎ 035 634411; Talaa Seghira; r/Dh150-200) Another place with a great location,

### GETTING INTO TOWN

There's a regular bus service (bus 16) 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.

just away from the hustle of Bab Bou Jeloud. Rooms are large and bathrooms are clean with hot showers. If only the management weren't so grumpy, this would be fantastic.

**Dar Bouânania** (Map p807; ☎ 035 637282; 21 Derb e 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 courtyard, a series of nicely decorated bedrooms over several floors and a small roof terrace.

### VILLE NOUVELLE

**Youth Hostel** (Map p809; ☎ 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 cared for, and right in the centre of the Ville Nouvelle. Tidy rooms and facilities (including Western-style toilets) are super clean. There's a Dh5 surcharge for non-HI members. Cold showers mean that that you should look to *hammams*.

**Hôtel Lamdaghri** (Map p809; ☎ 035 620310; 10 Rue Abbasse El-Msaadi; s/d Dh150/190) A great-value place just off the action on Mohammed V, the Lamdaghri has compact and fresh rooms. Rooms come with hot showers, but toilets are shared. Just make sure you're not put on the top floor – it's a tall building with an awful lot of stairs.

**Hôtel Splendid** (Map p809; ☎ 035 622148; splendid@iam.net.ma; 9 Rue Abdelkarim el-Khattabi; s/d Dh282/337; ☎ ☎) A step up in price and quality, this place has large, comfortable rooms with modern amenities, TV and bathroom. Even better are the inviting pool, bar and restaurant (the breakfasts are excellent value).

### Eating MEDINA

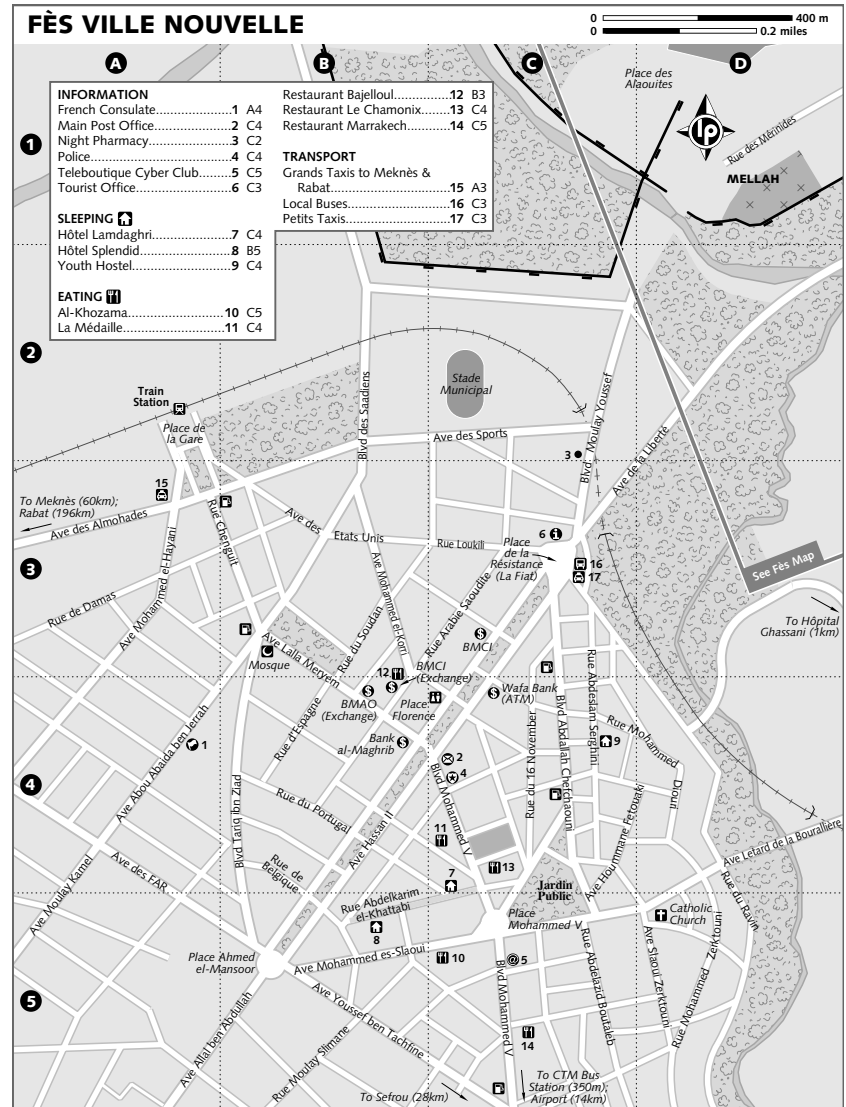
The cheap-and-cheerful restaurants and snack stands just inside Bab Bou Jeloud are among the most popular places to eat in the medina,

especially as they provide prime seats to watch the passing cavalcade.

**B'sara Stalls** (Map p807; Various locations in Fès el-Bali; soups Dh3) You shouldn't leave town without sampling this Fassi speciality. *B'sara* (butter bean and garlic soup) 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.

**Restaurant des Jeunes** (Map p807; 20 Rue Serrajine; mains Dh25-30, set menu Dh35; ☎ 10am-10pm) One of the many popular hang-outs close to Bab



Bou Jeloud, this is next to the Hôtel Cascade. It's basic, cheap and quick, with brochettes, sandwiches and the like.

**Médina Café** (Map p807; ☎ 035 633430; 6 Derb Mer-nissi, 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. During the day it's a good place for a quick bite or a fruit juice; 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.

## VILLE NOUVELLE

In the Ville Nouvelle there are a few cheap eats on or just off Blvd Mohammed V, especially around the central market. You'll also find sandwich places around Place Florence.

**Restaurant Le Chamonix** (Map p809; ☎ 035 626638; 5 Rue Moukhtar Soussi; set menu Dh52; ☎ 10am-10pm) This place doesn't look like much, but the service is friendly (the maître d' has been here for years) and the menu reliable, tasty and inexpensive. All sorts of food is on offer, from tajines to pizza, with the bonus of some outside seating – rare in the Ville Nouvelle.

**Restaurant Bajelloul** (Map p809; Rue Arabie Saoudite; meals around Dh30; ☎ noon-midnight) This simple little place is popular with the locals and has a good selection of meat, including liver and various sausages, which is grilled while you watch and served with salad and bread.

**Al-Khozama** (Map p809; 23 Ave Mohammed es-Slaoui; set menu Dh60, sandwiches Dh15-20; ☎ 7am-11pm) The draw to this restaurant near Place Mohammed V is the indoor terrace – a comfortable, quiet place for women. There are no surprises on the menu, but the food's tasty and comes in decent portions.

**Restaurant Marrakech** (Map p809; ☎ 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 p809; ☎ 055 620183; 24 Rue Laarbi al-Kaghat; mains Dh70-90, set menus Dh110-150; ☎ closed Sun dinner) 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.

## Entertainment

**Son et Lumière de Fès** (Map p807; Sound & Lights of Fès; ☎ 035 763652; Borj Sud; admission Dh100; ☎ 9.30pm May-Aug; 7.15pm Mar, Apr, Sep & Nov) This sound-and-light show recounts 12 centuries of history in 45 minutes.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

The **CTM bus station** (☎ 035 732992) is near Place Atlas in the southern Ville Nouvelle. CTM runs services to 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) and Chefchaouen (Dh60, four hours, three daily). Non-CTM buses depart from the **main bus station** (Map p807; ☎ 035 636032) outside Bab el-Mahrouk.

### TAXI

There are several *grand 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** (☎ 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 there are two overnight trains. Five trains go to Marrakesh (Dh71, eight hours) and one goes to Tangier (Dh96, five hours).

## Getting Around

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 on tourist itineraries, but Meknès is worth getting to know. Quieter and smaller than its grand neighbour, Fès, 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.

The heart of Meknès' medina lies to the north of the main square, Place el-Hedim, with the *mellah* (Jewish quarter) 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'll find the grand **Mausoleum of Moulay Ismail** (admission free, donations welcome; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2-6pm Sat-Thu), named for the sultan who made Meknès his capital in the 17th century.

Overlooking Place el-Hedim to 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

**Camping International d'Agdal** (☎ 035 551828; camp sites per adult/child/tent/car/caravan/camper Dh17/12/10/17/17/20, hot showers Dh7, electricity Dh15) Barely 50m from Héri es-Souani, this camping ground has a great location, an attractive shady site, well-maintained facilities and a small shop, café and restaurant.

**Youth Hostel** (☎ /fax 035 524698; dm incl breakfast Dh50, hot showers Dh5; ☎ 8am-10pm Sep-Jun, 8am-midnight Jul & Aug) In a quiet residential area, the hostel has dorms clustered around a shady courtyard. There's a small café, a communal kitchen and fairly simple bathroom facilities. A Youth Hostel membership card is mandatory.

**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 B&B Dh136/178, with bathroom Dh214/241) Built in the 1930s, this grand old lady, in the Ville Nouvelle, carries her age well. There's a good mix of rooms (all have sinks) and plenty of character to go around, plus a peaceful patio and roof terrace with panoramic views. Management are helpful.

**Hôtel Palace** (☎ 035 400468; fax 055 401431; 11 Rue Ghana; s/d Dh176/220) Looking very dour from the

street, this hotel turns out to be surprisingly good value, with large, airy rooms with attached bathrooms, many with balcony. The mezzanine sofas give an extra option for chilling out.

## Eating

The cluster of **sandwich stands** (sandwiches around Dh20; ☎ 7am-10pm) 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 with generous handfuls of salad.

**Snack Bounana** (Rue Najjarine; meals Dh40-45; ☎ 11am-10pm) A popular pit stop on the *souq* trail is on the square near the medersa. The setting, on the square with its green vines, is half the attraction – a chilled respite from the haggling and finagling with shop owners.

**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 school-girls. 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 Rouamzine; set menu Dh65; ☎ 7am-10pm) This informal restaurant is inside a family home, just off the main drag of 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.

## 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, to the west of the medina. CTM departures include: Casablanca (Dh75, four hours, six daily) via Rabat (Dh45, 2½ hours), Marrakesh (Dh135, eight hours, daily) and Tangier (Dh80, five hours, three daily).

The principal *grand 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** (Ouaillil; admission Dh20, parking Dh5, guided tours Dh120; ☎ 8am-sunset) is the largest and best-preserved Roman ruins 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 *grand taxi* for the return trip. A half-day outing will cost around Dh300.

# MOROCCO DIRECTORY

## ACCOMMODATION

Camping facilities are available around or near most Moroccan cities, while youth hostels (*auberges de jeunesse*) operate in Casablanca, Chefchaouen, Fès, Marrakesh, Meknès, Rabat and Tangier. Hostels are usually safer and more comfortable than the unclassified medina hotels that rival them for price. In most budget hostels and hotels you'll be required to share toilet and shower facilities. Prices throughout this chapter are, therefore, for rooms with shared bathroom facilities unless stated otherwise. The prices listed in this chapter are for the 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 and a practical solution for those who don't have hot water at home (or in their hotel). Every town has at least one public *hammam*. A visit usually costs Dh10, with a massage costing an extra Dh15 or so.

### Surfing & Windsurfing

With thousands of kilometres of Atlantic coastline, Morocco has some great surfing spots. Highlights are the beaches in Essaouira (p799) for windsurfing and around Rabat (p797) for surfing.

### Trekking

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 (p805) or from the nearby village of Imlil. Chefchaouen (p793) is the place to start treks through the Rif Mountains. Spring and autumn are the best times for trekking.

## BUSINESS HOURS

**Cafés** ☎ 7am-11pm

**Restaurants** ☎ noon-3pm & 7-11pm

**Shops** ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-8pm Mon-Sat (often closed longer at noon on Fri)

**Tourist offices** ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Thu

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Morocco's era as a hippy paradise is long past. Plenty of fine *kif* (dope) is grown in the Rif Mountains, but drug busts are common and Morocco is not a good place to investigate prison conditions.

A few years ago the *brigade touristique* was set up in the principal tourist centres to clamp down on Morocco's notorious *faux guides* (false guides) and hustlers. Anyone convicted of operating as an unofficial guide faces jail time and/or a huge fine. This has reduced but not eliminated the problem of *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. Remember that their main interest is the commission gained from certain hotels or on articles sold to you in the *souqs*.

A certain level of sexual harassment is the norm for women travellers in Morocco. It comes in the form of nonstop greetings, leering and other unwanted attention, but it's rarely dangerous. It's best to avoid overreacting and to ignore this attention. 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.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

For details of all Moroccan embassies abroad and foreign embassies in Morocco, go to [www.maec.gov.ma](http://www.maec.gov.ma).

### Embassies & Consulates in Morocco

All of the following are in Rabat:

**Belgium** (☎ 037 268060; [info@ambabel-rabat.org.ma](mailto:info@ambabel-rabat.org.ma); 6 Ave de Marrakesh)

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

**France** (☎ 037 689700; [www.ambafrance-ma.org](http://www.ambafrance-ma.org); 3 Rue Sahnoun, Agdal)

**Germany** (☎ 037 709662; [www.amballemagne-rabat.ma](http://www.amballemagne-rabat.ma); 7 Rue Madnine)

**Italy** (☎ 037 706598; [ambaciata@iambitalia.ma](mailto:ambaciata@iambitalia.ma); 2 Rue Idriss el-Azhar)

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

**Mauritania** (☎ 037 656678; [ambassadeur@mauritanie.org.ma](mailto:ambassadeur@mauritanie.org.ma); 7 Rue Thami Lamdaouar, Soussi I)

**Netherlands** (☎ 037 219600; [nlgovrab.mtds.com](http://nlgovrab.mtds.com); 40 Rue de Tunis)

**Spain** (☎ 037 633900; [emb.rabat@mae.es](mailto:emb.rabat@mae.es); Rue Ain Khalouiya, Route des Zaers km 5.300, Souissi)

**UK** (☎ 037 238600; [www.britain.org.ma](http://www.britain.org.ma); 17 Blvd de la Tour Hassan)

**USA** (☎ 037 762265; [www.usembassy.ma](http://www.usembassy.ma); 2 Ave de Marrakesh)

## Moroccan Embassies & Consulates Abroad

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

**Canada** (☎ 613-236 7391; [www.ambassade-maroc.ottawa.on.ca](http://www.ambassade-maroc.ottawa.on.ca); 38 Range Rd, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 8J4)

**Japan** (☎ 03-3478 3271; [www.morocco-emb.jp](http://www.morocco-emb.jp); 5-4-30 Miami Aoyama Minat 107-0062, Tokyo)

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

**USA** (☎ 202-462 7979; [fmehdi@embassyofmorocco.us](mailto:fmehdi@embassyofmorocco.us); 1601 21st St NW, Washington, DC 20009)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Religious festivals are significant for Moroccans. Local *moussems* (saints days) are held all over the country throughout the year and some draw big crowds.

Major festivals:

**Festival of Folklore** (Marrakesh; [www.maghrebarts.ma](http://www.maghrebarts.ma), in French) Held in June.

**Gnawa & World Music Festival** (Essaouira; [www.festival-gnaoua.co.ma](http://www.festival-gnaoua.co.ma)) Takes place in June.

**Festival of World Sacred Music** (Fès; [www.fezfestival.org](http://www.fezfestival.org)) Every June/July.

**International Cultural Festival** (Asilah) July/August.

**Mousseum of Moulay Idriss II** (Fès) September/October.

## HOLIDAYS

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

**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, including: **Aid al-Adha** Marks the end of the Islamic year. Most things shut down for four or five days.

**Aid 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.maghrebarts.ma), in French) 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](http://www.tourism-in-morocco.com/index_en.php)) Morocco's official tourist information site; user-friendly, with guided tours, links and news.

## MONEY

The Moroccan currency is the dirham (Dh), which is divided into 100 centimes. There's not much of a black market and little reason to use it. The Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla use the euro.

ATMs (*guichets automatiques*) are now a common sight and many accept Visa, MasterCard, Electron, Cirrus, Maestro and InterBank cards. Major credit cards are widely accepted in the main tourist centres, although their use often attracts a surcharge of around 5% from Moroccan businesses. Amex, Visa and Thomas Cook travellers cheques are also widely accepted for exchange by banks. Australian, Canadian and New Zealand dollars are not quoted in banks and are not usually accepted.

## 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.

## 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.

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.

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](http://www.cellular-news.com/coverage/morocco.php). Moroccan mobile numbers start with the codes ☎061 to ☎068.

## TOILETS

Outside the major cities, public toilets are rare and you will usually need to bring your own paper (*papier hygiénique*), a tip for the attendant (Dh2 to Dh3), stout-soled shoes and very often a nose clip. Toilets are mostly of the Asian-style squat variety (referred to as 'Turkish toilets').

## 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. Moroccan embassies have been known to insist that you get a visa from your country of origin. Should the standard 90-day stay be insufficient, it is possible to apply at the nearest police headquarters (Préfecture de Police) for an extension. The Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla have the same visa requirements as mainland Spain.