

Morocco Travel Planning Tips

from 10 Years Living in Morocco

A little story...

My love for Morocco really began in 2001, when I moved my family to Fes, Morocco. That was the start of an amazing journey with the people and culture of Morocco. During my 10 years of living in Morocco, we have developed a strong understanding of real Morocco and have a passion for opening the eyes of our clients to experience this too.



Since the beginning days in 2001, not only did we launch Moroccotours.org, but also we added Julia and Stephen to our family (both born in Fes). Over the years, our family has traveled all over Morocco and we want to share some of the things we have learned. We hope this will help you in planning your trip to Morocco.

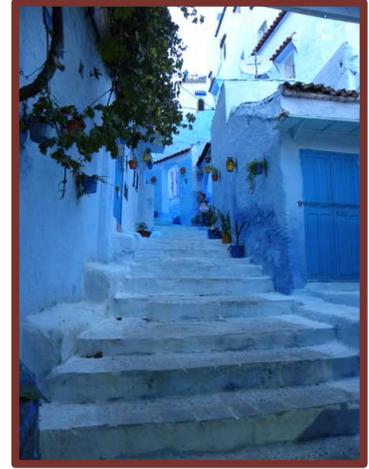
Must Sees of Morocco!

When I talked to my 4 kids about the best places to visit in Morocco, these are the places that they would recommend to you...

1. Ancient Fes Medina - Take a step back into history 1000 years into the labyrinth of Fes. Make sure you visit the potters, weavers, tanners, and the souks. **Bethany** (18 years) says, "Don't miss out on a trip to the "Berber Pharmacy" where you enjoy learning about the spices of Morocco, natural perfumes and even try their makeup."



2. Sahara Desert - Enjoy a ride on the camels out onto the dunes and spend the night in a Berber tent. The beautiful, golden dunes are unlike anything I have ever seen. **Stephen** (10 years) says, "Playing in the Sahara is like having your own gigantic sandbox."



3. Chefchaouen - The "blue city" of Morocco is located in the Rif Mountains. Very peaceful and relaxing, this spot is a must for all photographers. As a "wannabe" photographer, Chefchaouen is one of my (Jeff) highlights in Morocco.

4. Marrakech Square - Coming alive at night, the Jemaa El-Fna is one of the highlights of Marrakech. From snake charmers to barbecue pits, you must visit the square. **Kirsten** (20 years) says, "When you're in Marrakech, make sure you have dinner at the Riad Kniza or the La Maison Arabe."

5. Essaouira - The small coastal town is perfect for your last few days...relax and enjoy the ocean & artisans. If you love the sound of the ocean, ask for an "ocean view suite" in the 4 star Riad Mimouna. **Julia** (12 years) says, "Essaouira has so many wonderful shops and crafts. I love exploring the medina and taking pictures of what I saw."



Photo by Julia Wilson

Riads versus Hotels - Which is best for you?

As you begin to plan for your stay in Morocco, you have 2 main options for accommodations: Riads & Hotels! As a family we've been spoiled...we've experienced

some of the best riads of Morocco. We strongly recommend staying in riads, if you want a traditional and authentic experience.

So what's the difference...

Riads: These traditional style houses (some with gardens) are smaller and more authentic than a normal hotel. Usually offer 6 - 14 rooms, riads welcome you into a more "homey" atmosphere. Offering the modern amenities like any hotel, riads display the traditional features of



Moroccan architecture like fountains, intricate tile work and hand-carved plaster. Riads do book up quickly, so you will want to book ahead.

Hotels: For those looking for a little cheaper option, normal hotels are slightly cheaper than riads. Hotels usually have more than 100 rooms so are easier to book in high season. If you are traveling with a family, hotels usually have larger pools and facilities that work with families. To be honest, some nationalities prefer to stay in the spacious modern hotels than the smaller boutique style riads.

5 Ways to Avoid Awkward Travel Situations

If traveling to a North African country, you'll soon discover that your culture differs greatly in a number of ways. Here are a few things we discovered the hard way.

1. In Arab culture, men and women rarely interact regularly. When out wandering through the cities, men should not approach women and begin conversations. Likewise, women should not engage in or instigate conversation with men. Local men will often try everything they know to do to get a foreign woman's attention. Don't give in.

2. Always have tissue or baby wipes on your person. Toilet paper can often be hard to find in the bathrooms. Occasionally, there will be tissues for sale outside, but it is best to be prepared.

3. Frequently, beggars will target foreigners. When approached by a beggar, you are welcome to give if you feel so inclined. However, use discretion. It is best to provide some sort of tangible food, but if you don't have any on you and would like to give money, do not feel obligated to give a large amount. Use wisdom.

4. If you are given the opportunity to visit a local family, take advantage of it! Upon entering the house, it is customary to remove your shoes before stepping on the carpet. When offered tea and halua (cookies), it is polite and honoring to the house to accept it. Plus, it's delicious!

5. When haggling over prices in the markets, know that most of the products are going to be overpriced. Don't be taken advantage of. Your starting price should be at about half of the price you're given. Have a limit, and if the seller is unwilling to meet you there, don't feel as though you have to give in. Chances are, you'll be able to find the product you're wanting at another shop. "must visit" list from my 10 years of living in Morocco.

Travel Photo Tips

1. Sahara Travel - Bring along a ziplock bag to protect your camera from the sand. It is amazing how one tiny piece of sand can cause a camera to quit working.

2. People Pictures - Remember to be sensitive when taking pictures of people. Most cultures do



no appreciate photos being taken of them. If you want to take a picture of a person, please ask them first.

3. Look for the unique - Most tourists capture the "same old" pictures. Try to look from a different angle or perspective. Capture the culture! If you are traveling with kids, you might want to let them carry the camera for some unique points of view.

Tips for Choosing the Right Company

1. **Ask for referrals** - Before you book with any company, you should ask for some references of previous clients. Testimonials on websites are great, but emailing real people is even better!

2. **Do they respond quickly** - I love a company that writes back quickly and keeps in touch with me.

3. **Call them** - Take some time to call the company and talk to them. Are they real people and do they know what they are talking about?

4. **Pricing** - Check out what their pricing compared to other companies offering the same service. Be careful to compare "apples to apples" because lots of companies offer & promise different things.

5. **Are they legal?** Over the past 5 years, many small non-registered travel websites have popped up on the internet. By law in Morocco, you must use a "registered travel agent" for booking tours in the country. Although some of these small providers offer excellent service, they may not be licensed by the government and therefore could cause issues if any problems arise.

Group OR Private - Which is best for you?

As you start planning your next trip, the first thing you will want to decide is whether you are looking to join an existing group or travel in a private tour? If you are looking to save money, then the group tour is the obvious choice for you. You can find some inexpensive deals (from other companies) offering larger group tours!

Reasons to stick with a private tour:

1. Design your trip the way you want it.
2. Travel at your own leisure - not someone else's schedule.
3. Invite whomever you want to come along.
4. Enjoy "your trip" as you created it!

Your Next Step...

If you are looking to experience an authentic, private tour of Morocco AND want someone who knows Morocco because they have lived there for years, please call us at **1-800-615-5497** or email us at contact@moroccotours.org

Looking forward to hearing from you,
Jeff Wilson & Kit Brostek