



Morocco 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Burglary; Fraud; Financial Security; Winter weather; Landslides and mudslides; Religious Terrorism; Riots/Civil Unrest; Faith-based Organization; Floods; Earthquakes; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement; Rape/Sexual Violence; Hate Crimes; Drug Trafficking

Near East > Morocco; Near East > Morocco > Casablanca; Near East > Morocco > Rabat

3/7/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Medium

Crime Threats

While the Moroccan government does not publish statistics pertaining to crime, media reporting and anecdotal observation indicate that the frequency and intensity of criminal activity remains moderate.

The most common crimes tend to be crimes of opportunity -- pickpocketing, robberies, purse snatching, burglaries, similar crimes -- perpetrated by criminals who primarily operate in high-traffic and high-density areas. Criminals tend to focus on persons who appear unfamiliar with their surroundings, are dressed in obviously foreign clothing, or otherwise draw attention to themselves. While street crimes (pickpocketing, robbery, simple assaults) are not

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uncommon, areas frequented by foreigners are generally less vulnerable since they enjoy a more robust police presence.

Rabat is generally considered safe due to the volume of security forces deployed in the streets and at intersections. Generally, crime does not pose a significant threat to Americans, though the threat is greater in urban and tourist areas. The majority of crimes against tourists and visitors are reported in Marrakech, followed by Casablanca, Tangier, Fez, and Rabat. Pickpockets and bag snatchers may target pedestrians, especially in larger urban areas.

General theft and residential burglaries are commonplace in low-income neighborhoods and do occasionally occur in more affluent neighborhoods. Since most burglaries are crimes of opportunity, a well-secured home is often enough to deter criminals. With this in mind, many middle and upper class Moroccan families have taken measures to improve their residential security by installing grilles over windows and doors. Residential break-ins often occur during the day when homes are unoccupied, although break-ins while the home is occupied do occur. While it should be assumed criminals are prepared for confrontations, most generally avoid violence.

ATMs are generally safe to use if normal precautions are observed. In late 2014, police in Marrakech seized skimming equipment affixed to two ATMs before accounts were compromised. Electronic ATM fraud, however, has not been a significant problem.

Firearms are not common; most armed assailants use edged weapons (knives, razors, daggers).

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Cyber Security Issues

Cybercrime remains limited to common scams requesting money upfront for promised services or chances to obtain more money with a down payment. There have been few reports of ATM/credit card fraud.

Other Areas of Concern

No area within Morocco is considered "off-limits." Travel to the Western Sahara is possible, though visitors should be aware of the political importance of the area to the government; high-profile visits or visitors may be monitored.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Moroccan roads vary from high-speed toll roads to secondary roads, which may be poorly maintained. Road conditions vary by season. Heavy rains can wash away sections of road and create sink holes large enough to swallow a car. During the winter, heavy snow can close

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roadways in mountainous areas.

Traffic accidents are a major concern. On average, more than 11 Moroccans die in motor vehicle accidents every day; the fatality rate for motor vehicle accidents is approximately twice that of the U.S.

Drivers are erratic and often fail to stop or yield when required. It is common for drivers to execute right turns from the left lane and vice-versa. A wide variety of vehicles (bicycles, scooters, donkey carts, slower-moving utility vehicles) share the road. Many cars are older and poorly maintained. Trucks are often overladen and poorly maintained; it is common to see them overturned or broken down along highways.

Speed limits are clearly marked; gendarmerie and police radar speed traps are frequent along highways and toll roads. If stopped for speeding, expect a fine. It is common for police to stand in the road and wave vehicles over. Checkpoints are common when entering towns or cities. These are in place for security reasons, and foreign visitors are rarely questioned.

Drivers are only allowed to use cellular phones with hands-free devices. Visitors who self-drive must have their passport and driver's license with them and will be required to present these documents if stopped by the local police or Royal Gendarmerie. Traffic enforcement authorities sometimes ask for bribes; valid traffic fines will be accompanied by paperwork, similar to a traffic ticket in the U.S. Legitimate fines can be paid on the spot.

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Public Transportation Conditions

Travelers need to keep an eye on their belongings when using any type of public transport.

“Petit taxis” are common in most cities and hold up to three people. These taxis often use a meter. Each town has its own particular color for petit taxis; they are red in Casablanca and blue in Rabat. Seatbelts might not work. Petit taxis cannot be used to travel between cities.

“Grand taxis” are white Mercedes that use fixed urban or interurban routes. They can be crowded and uncomfortable. These are generally not recommended for use by visitors except in rural areas where there are no other transportation options.

Intercity buses are common and range from nice to decrepit. Avoid nighttime travel on buses for traffic safety reasons and try to use newer buses that seem to be in reasonable mechanical condition.

Trains are primarily used for transportation between large cities but do not service all cities. Morocco’s train network is extensive. Train destinations and times can be located on the ONCF website: www.oncf.ma, which is only in French and Arabic.

Casablanca has a limited subway system, which is used primarily by commuters and

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individuals accessing the airport.

Casablanca and the Rabat-Salé area have new, modern tram systems.

Airport Aviation Conditions

Rabat-Sale Airport (Rabat's international airport), which provides both international and national flights, is located just to the north of Rabat. The airport adheres to international air safety standards, as does management of flight operations. While security measures are not on par with U.S. airports, security personnel are present throughout the airport. The government has taken steps to improve airport security, and since the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015, there has been a noticeable augmentation of police and security personnel in and around the airport.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

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On May 16, 2003, 33 people were killed by 12 suicide bombers in Casablanca. Thereafter, the government put a great deal of effort into fighting terrorism, making numerous terrorism-related arrests every year since. Security services continue to place a large emphasis on finding and arresting potential terrorist cells before they become operational. The majority of those detained are from grassroots jihadist cells. While these cells may be inspired by and in communication with jihadists elsewhere, the government largely has been successful at keeping transnational terrorist networks from establishing a firm presence in Morocco.

However, in 2007, Casablanca again experienced terrorist bombings that targeted some of the more populated areas of the city and the U.S. Consulate. No Americans were killed. The attacks appeared to be less organized than similar attacks in other parts of the world.

On April 28, 2011, a terrorist detonated a remote-controlled bomb in Marrakesh's Argana Café in Jamaa El Fnaa square, a well-known landmark in tourist guidebooks. The attack killed 17 people and injured 23, predominantly Western tourists. The bomber was apprehended within a week and was sentenced to death.

While there have been no attacks since 2011, there have been extremist calls for attacks in Morocco targeting government institutions/personalities and Western interests/soft targets. Security services routinely report disrupting terrorist cells recruiting or financing Moroccan fighters to take up jihad in Iraq and Syria. Other broken up cells have expressed aspirations to conduct operations inside Morocco.

During 2015, authorities reported the disruption of multiple groups with ties to international networks that included al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and ISIL. AQIM and ISIL

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continued efforts to recruit Moroccans for combat in other countries, and there were reports of Moroccans attempting to join AQIM, ISIL, and other violent extremists in Iraq, Libya, and Syria.

Government authorities have estimated that approximately 1,500 Moroccans have joined terrorist organizations since 2011. Security services remain concerned about the potential return of veteran Moroccan foreign terrorist fighters from those conflict zones to conduct terrorist attacks at home and of Moroccans residing abroad becoming radicalized during their stays in Western Europe. AQIM and ISIL continued to call for attacks against the Moroccan monarchy and prominent Moroccan institutions and individuals.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

Regional events that inflame public opinion can incite large demonstrations. Anti-Israel demonstrations are often also anti-American. In September 2012, following the release of an online film entitled "The Innocence of Muslims," a few hundred protestors converged on the U.S. Consulate in Casablanca. While crowds remain generally peaceful and the vast majority of incidents are not anti-American, Americans should maintain a low profile and avoid demonstrations.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Medium

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Civil Unrest

Demonstrations occur frequently and are typically focused on political/social issues. During periods of heightened regional tension, large demonstrations may take place in major cities. By law, all demonstrations require a government permit from the local police; however, spontaneous unauthorized demonstrations, which have greater potential for violence, can occur. Impromptu protests have arisen on university campuses, in city centers, or other locations where there are internationally-affiliated facilities and are usually in response to domestic issues. In addition, unions or groups may organize strikes to protest an emerging issue or government policy. Unauthorized protests have been tolerated to a greater extent than they have been in the past.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

Religious or ethnic violence is not common. The government places strict controls on religious preaching; for more than a quarter century Imams have been under close state control. Proselytism (outside of Islam) is prohibited, and as recently as 2010, proselyting evangelical Christians have been deported.

Post-specific Concerns

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Environmental Hazards

Environmental hazards mainly revolve around flooding and the occasional earthquake. The rainy season (November-March) often results in flash floods in the mountainous and desert areas. These floods can cause landslides and damage roads, making them impassable. In addition, strong rain can overwhelm drainage systems and cause flooding. Major roadways, including the high-speed toll roads, have been closed for hours and side roads for days due to standing water.

Morocco does experience occasional strong earthquakes. There have been damaging earthquakes in the north (near Al Hoceima), and the south (in Agadir). Strong earthquakes are relatively rare.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Few industrial accidents are reported in Morocco. Hazardous chemical spills on highways are a top concern for the government. Aging buildings, especially in the Medina or "Old City" of major cities, can be hazardous. Building collapses are not common, but they have occurred.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

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Moroccan law is limited in the realm of economic espionage/intellectual property thefts. On October 1, 2011, Morocco signed the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA). In the absence of legal tendencies, companies must implement internal control mechanisms to counter this type of threat.

Privacy Concerns

Privacy concerns are not handled in the same way as in the U.S.

Personnel-Background Concerns

Harassment of women is somewhat prevalent in both urban and rural areas. Moroccan men will often engage in whistling/hissing/staring/yelling and, on occasion, inappropriate physical contact. Attempts to coax women into cars does occur with some frequency in the smaller cities and rural areas. In 2015, there was an uptick in reports of sexual assaults and rapes. Incidents of assaults and harassment typically affect woman who are walking alone at night. However, assaults have also taken place in broad daylight and at public events with many witnesses, though these incidents are rare. Legislation has been enacted to punish any form of sexual harassment; however, the law is new, and authorities are still trying to determine how best to enforce it.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons may face a great deal of pressure/discrimination. While there is a perceived level of tolerance, homosexuality is illegal,

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and open displays of affection will attract unwanted attention.

Drug-related Crimes

The drug trade is thoroughly entrenched in Morocco. The primary drugs exported are cannabis derivatives. Most of the drugs produced or transported are destined for European markets. Morocco has become a transit country for cocaine traffickers who funnel their product from South America into sub-Saharan countries and into Europe. The government places a great deal of effort into fighting narcotics trafficking, and while authorities have been implicated in assisting traffickers, when caught, they are tried and punished. Penalties for possession of narcotics are severe, and suspected traffickers will be dealt with harshly. There is not a great deal of narco-related violence reported in Morocco.

Kidnapping Threat

Kidnappings are not prevalent, but there have been a number of abductions of Westerners by terrorist organizations in the Sahel, particularly in Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and the southern desert regions of Algeria.

Police Response

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Law enforcement officials are well trained, with many attending international training programs. However, the police are understaffed and in some cases underequipped. A quick response and the familiarity of the police with the people and area they patrol often results in quick arrests of perpetrators if crimes are reported in a timely manner. In general, however, the police primarily rely on confessions to determine culpability. All police officers speak French or Arabic, but English translation may not be readily available.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Police harassment of visitors and foreign nationals, especially Americans, is very rare. There have been incidents where Americans have been arrested or detained. Any American arrested or experiencing legitimate police harassment should contact American Citizen Services (ACS) at the U.S. Consulate General in Casablanca.

Crime Victim Assistance

Police generally respond effectively to a report of a foreign victim of crime though there have been limited instances where interactions with the police, particularly in smaller cities and rural areas, have not been positive for foreigners. Victims are often present during interrogations of suspects; this can result in an uncomfortable situation for a victim. In the event a visitor is the victim of a crime and requires assistance, the visitor should contact American Citizen Services at the U.S. Consulate General in Casablanca.

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Countrywide, the police emergency number is 110. Response is dependable.

Some U.S. citizens report that police procedures appear to be less sensitive and responsive to a victim's concerns, particularly in cases of domestic violence or sexual assault or when the victim and the perpetrator are foreigners, compared to the procedures in the U.S. Few victim assistance resources or battered women's shelters exist in major urban areas, and they are generally unavailable in rural areas. Investigations of sexual assault crimes are often conducted without female police officers present, and police typically ask about the victim's sexual history and previous relationships. The quality of interpreting from Arabic to English can vary, and for some U.S. citizen victims this has caused a problem.

Police/Security Agencies

The police force is based on the French system, with the "Sûreté Nationale" (DGSN) enforcing laws in the urban areas and the Royal Gendarmerie in the rural areas.

Medical Emergencies

Morocco has adequate medical services in the larger cities, but the quality of care diminishes elsewhere. The medical facilities and hospitals in Rabat and Casablanca can treat most general illnesses and can provide emergency trauma care. However, specialized care is not as easily accessible in Morocco. French and Arabic are widely spoken by medical personnel; English is less common.

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Over-the-counter drugs that may be obtained from pharmacies in large cities may be difficult to impossible to find in the smaller cities or rural areas. Specialty prescription medication may be difficult to locate even in Rabat or Casablanca.

In the event of a medical emergency or serious traffic accident, immediate ambulance services are usually not available.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Rabat

Cheikh Zaïd Hospital

cit  Al Irfane, hay Ryad, avenue Allal AlFassi
Director: Pr Elhassani Amine Cell: 0661-170-385

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Tel: 0802-000-606
Tel: 0537-686-868
Tel: 0537-684-940
Tel: 0537-684-949

Military Hospital Mohamed V

Intersection of avenue Al Melia and ave Abderahim Bouabid. Hay Riad.
Medecin chef: DIMOU, M'Barek. Office: 0537-712-335. Cell: 0661-180-017 Email:
mbadimou@hotmail.fr

Tel: 0537-7144-19
Tel: 0537-714-417
Administration ext: 5505
Fax: 0537-715-289.

Clinique Les Nations Unies

Av. des Nations-Unies, rue Ibn Hanbal, Agdal.

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Tel: 0537-670-505
Tel: 0357-671-409
Fax: 0537-673-535

Clinique Agdal

6 place Talhah, Avenue. Ibn Sina, Agdal.
Director: Dr. Hamdouch Mohamed Zineddine (general surgeon) Cell: 0661-164-363

Tel: 0537-777-777
Tel: 0537-677-777
Tel: 0537-675-030
Fax: 0537-774-005

Clinique la Capitale

46 Avenue du Chellah.

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Tel: 0537-767-272
Tel: 0537-767-576
Fax: 0537-767-273

Recommended Air Ambulance Services

Union Marocaine d'Assistance (Tel: 0522-45-0000) can arrange a variety of medical transport and services within Morocco and air evacuation to Europe. They will need verification of ability to pay up front. English is spoken. There are other global air evacuation services available.

Recommended Insurance Posture

Travelers should consider informing themselves of insurance and flight options before leaving home.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

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For information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:
http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/morocco?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-single-001.

OSAC Country Council Information

Due to Casablanca's status as the commercial center of Morocco and the volume of American businesses situated there, the OSAC Country Council resides in Casablanca. Casablanca is the largest city in North Africa, is considered a regional hub for exports, and is home to the American Chamber of Commerce. Morocco is the only country in Africa to have a Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. As the Country Council is jointly managed by RSO Rabat and RSO Casablanca, OSAC inquiries can be directed to both the RSOs. RSO Rabat can be reached at RabatRSO@state.gov or +212 537 637 692 while RSO Casablanca can be contacted at DS_RSO_Casablanca@state.gov or +212 (0) 522 64 2084. To reach OSAC's Near East team, please send an e-mail to OSACNEA@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

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Embassy of the United States of America

Km 5.7, Avenue Mohamed VI

Souissi, Rabat 10170 Morocco

Embassy Contact Numbers

Switchboard: +212-537-63-7200

U.S. Mission Morocco Duty Officer (after hour emergencies only): +212-661-13-1939

Website: <http://morocco.usembassy.gov/>

Nearby Posts

Consulate General Casablanca: <http://casablanca.usconsulate.gov/>

Embassy Guidance

The Regional Security Offices at the U.S. Embassy in Rabat and at the U.S. Consulate in Casablanca remain the best sources of information for the latest on the security situation in

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Morocco. Utilize the country specific information at www.travel.state.gov for additional travel information and for the latest Travel Warnings and Public Announcements regarding the security/safety situation in the country or region.

All travelers should enroll in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program: <https://step.state.gov/step/>

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Maintaining situational awareness, careful control of your belongings, and walking with your bag/purse well protected will significantly mitigate the risk of petty theft. One common scenario is for two assailants on a scooter to approach the victim; the passenger will snatch valuables from the victim. Pedestrians walking alone in isolated areas, or late at night, are at greater risk for being targeted. Gratuitous displays of wealth may attract unwanted attention and increase the risk of being targeted. Dress in a conservative manner, do not display a large amount of currency, protect smart phones from being easily snatched, carry wallets in front pockets for men, ensure that purses/backpacks are carried securely, and do not wear elaborate jewelry/watches. Simply remaining aware of one's surroundings and looking to see who is in your vicinity is an effective means of dissuading potential thieves. It is important to make special efforts to reduce one's profile, attempt to blend into the society as much as possible and not draw unwanted attention. Visitors are advised to guard their possessions carefully if riding on public transportation. Leaving any item of value unattended in a public place or in a vehicle in plain sight can make that item the target of petty theft.

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Visitors, especially females, should make a concerted effort to travel in pairs and avoid walking alone at night. Tourists are advised to travel in pairs/groups, drink in moderation, maintain control over drinks, and never accept drinks from strangers. Visitors should avoid being out alone and during late-night or early morning hours. At night, particularly, avoid areas that are poorly illuminated or are secluded.

If you are with a friend or a colleague, have them watch the surrounding area as you are focused on completing your transaction at an ATM.

Americans should live in homes that are equipped to prevent unauthorized entry. This generally means having security grilles protecting accessible windows and glass doors; exterior doors should be solidly built and have a minimum of two deadlocks; single-family homes should have a wall that discourages intruders from entering the premises. Apartment dwellers should consider the possibility of intruders gaining access via adjacent balconies or structures and ensure that there are functional locks or other protection for areas vulnerable to unauthorized entry. It is best to keep doors and windows locked, even when home.

Establishments that could be perceived as catering to U.S. or Western visitors or those owned by Western companies could be potential targets for terrorism. Visitors should remain particularly alert and informed during periods of heightened tension in the country and the region.

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