

Morocco

What kind of destination is it?

Morocco is located in the north west corner of Africa, south of Spain. It borders both the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean to the north and west respectively and Algeria and Mauritania to the south east. The indigenous people are the Berbers, who have lived in the country since the 2nd millennium BC (Geographia, 2005a). Morocco was under French protection from 1911AD to 1953 and the cultural influence is still evident today. The bombings in Marrakech in April 2011 and the Arab Spring have affected tourism in the Middle East and Morocco. The government has worked hard since then to ensure tourism safety and promotion (Euromonitor, 2012).

Morocco is about 98% Muslim, (Wikipedia, 2013a) this affects their culture and social systems, particularly with reference to women (Morocco Tourist Guide, 2007b). Female tourists need to be aware of this and dress and act in a culturally sensitive manner. Morocco's official languages are Arabic and Tamazight, a dialect of the Berber. French is also widely spoken and understood.

Morocco has a mixture of natural beauty and man-made products particularly from its rich cultural history. It has many specialties and unique crafts such as carpets and tapestries, spices, architecture, ceramics and jewellery.

What are its geographical features?

The majority of Morocco's geographical features are natural; a large part of Morocco is mountainous. The Atlas Mountains run the length of the country with the Sahara Desert lying to the south and along Morocco's eastern border. All tourism geographical features are present in Morocco, it offers urban tourism, coastal and resort tourism and rural tourism.

Morocco's cities hold many treasures and various styles are evident, Tangiers and Casablanca have French influence and colonial charm while cities in the interior, Fes, Meknes and Marrakech display the ancient imperial grandeur and labyrinthine streets (Geographia, 2005b). The coastal areas of Morocco offer beautiful beaches with many resorts offering tourists relaxing getaways. The Atlas Mountains and surrounding areas offer rural tourism for those wishing to explore nature and get away from the crowds.

Accessibility into Morocco is easiest by air with airlines offering routes from New York, Montreal, and various European cities. These often fly into Marrakech and Casablanca. You can drive in from the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla or through Mauritania but the Algerian border has been closed for a long time. There are also boats across from Spain. (Lonely Planet, 2013)



Moroccan architecture (moroccanproud)

Which of the five destination group/s does it come under?

Morocco is a base destination; it has a lot to offer and many different attractions. It is likely that a visitor to Morocco would also visit other countries nearby but would spend the majority of their time in Morocco.

Where are they on the destination life cycle model?

On the destination life cycle model I think that Morocco is in the development phase. It is identified as a tourist destination and has a lot of potential. The government has focused on tourism and is putting a lot of time and money into upgrading the required services, networks and attractions. A lot more input is needed to develop Morocco and careful planning is needed to ensure sustainable tourism growth. Visitor impact needs to be monitored and minimized to maintain the natural and historical attractions.

What products/services can Morocco offer?

Morocco offers many products and services and covers a large variety of interests. The land offers beaches, desert, mountains, parks and rivers and the many sports and activities associated with these areas. From relaxing on the beach at a resort and water sports to hikes and treks and climbing the highest mountain in north Africa Morocco has a lot to offer. You can ride through the desert on a camel, travel with a tour or catch the Oriental Desert Express from Oujda to Bouarfa (Moroccan National Tourist Office, 2013).

Moroccan markets offer many of the local products including brass-ware, leather goods, fine carpets and intricate, beautiful embroidery (Morocco Tourist Guide, 2007a). The artistic nature of the people is also expressed in architecture seen in the buildings, gardens and cities.

Morocco is ranked the third friendliest country in the world (after New Zealand and Iceland) by the Travel and Tourism Competitive Index (Cha, 2013). Tourism in Morocco is the second largest industry and the government is focused on increasing tourist numbers and developing the industry with further attractions and activities. Tourism boards in Morocco's main cities have been constantly upgrading the infrastructure and many other cities are undergoing major changes and improvements (Euromonitor, 2012).

Moroccan cuisine is a delicacy not to be missed, Morocco's home-grown spices and ingredients offer a fresh local flavour. Beef is the most common meat while lamb is preferred but expensive. Their cuisine is considered one of the most diverse in the world as a result of Morocco's location and many interactions with other countries (Wikipedia, 2013b).

"Morocco enjoys one of the most highly developed infrastructures in Africa." (Encyclopedia of the Nations, 2013). The transport system is reasonable with a good roading network, about half of the roads are paved. There are plans to modernize the railway system and there are modern airports in the major cities. Electricity is mostly imported and power shortages are common but the government plans to build additional power plants. Telecommunications systems are modern with 27 internet providers (Encyclopedia of the Nations, 2013). Although Morocco is modern for Africa some of its infrastructure is lacking and hopefully the planned upgrades will lift the standards.



Colourful carpets at Marrakech (Famous Wonders, 2011)

How is it presently marketed? Target market?

The Moroccan National Tourism website (www.visitmorocco.com) markets Morocco to all ages, groups and interests; active adventure, comfort and relaxation, history and culture, arts and crafts. Morocco is a cheap destination as their currency the Dirham is relatively weak, especially compared to rising prices in Spain. Morocco's current geographical market is Europe due to its close location and easy access; visitors also come from the United States.

The government is focusing on developing the markets in golf and sports tourism, eco-tourism, and health and wellness tourism (Euromonitor, 2012). These markets already exist, but a focus on them as targets will increase Moroccan tourism. Golf in particular attracts high-spenders and is a lucrative market for Morocco with its landscape being well suited to golf courses.

The Morocco Tourism website is comprehensive and well laid out, it is attractive to all visitors and offers the option to create your own private area on the website to aid in planning your trip to Morocco. This is all good marketing as it allows the potential visitor to interact with the website and create their ideal holiday. It also allows Morocco Tourism to build up a database of potential visitors and to send newsletters and promotions to them.

What marketing strategies would you use for future visitors?

For future visitors I would focus on promotional videos, particularly ones for YouTube at a length of around two minutes. There are a couple of ten-minute clips, but nothing done by Morocco Tourism and few that would encourage me to visit there. The tourism website should continue to be developed with up to date information and improvements to the tourist's experience in Morocco should be highlighted. Development and expansion into sports tourism is a very good marketing strategy and if Morocco can economically manage to develop and maintain the required facilities this market has a lot of potential.

On a scale of 1-10 how successful would this destination be?

On a scale of 1-10 I think Morocco future success could be rated as a 9. I think it could be a very successful destination if it was marketed well and the nation was settled and unaffected by civil unrest particularly from countries further east. Morocco has many interesting sites and activities as well as a rich and vibrant culture. Its current low Dirham encourages visitors as products and services are cheap. Morocco has started well as a tourist destination and needs to continue and gain momentum as more visitors come. A big part of their promotion will be through word of mouth as previous visitors encourage a wider variety of tourists.

Supporting Resources

<http://www.euromonitor.com/travel-and-tourism-in-morocco/report>

<http://www.visitmorocco.com/index.php/eng/Home>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morocco>

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