

Kapp 2 Cape

FAQs Morocco

A hint to the GPS that you are using would be great please?

In the end we went for a Garmin GPSMAP62-series. This mainly because we wanted something we can use for hiking and biking as well. And it is pretty rugged so will handle rough terrain. This is no SatNav though. It won't tell you what direction to turn to get you to your destination, but it has a map that you can move around in with the little arrow. We have bought Tracks4Africa which provides a lot of info at a granular level, especially tracks and pistes (the majority in Southern Africa as it is a South Africa based company). If you want a satnav based product, I am not so certain, but apparently you can get satnav maps for Morocco and for some of Africa as well. I didn't really look into satnav as we knew we wanted a GPS.

We found the latest version of the Michelin maps invaluable. Get maps for individual countries rather than region. Region is too crude. There are other companies as well selling paper maps, it is worth spending some time online looking for them.

We have also come across OziExplorer which gives you a lot of different maps and a lot more functionality than MapSource that Garmin offers. OziExplorer is also compatible with most GPSs, and I have been able to create a piste on Ozi that I could download onto my Garmin.

What did you do about money?

We have been able to use our Credit Card (see below on fuel) for fuel purchases. We have also used Caxton FX prepaid Visa for withdrawing cash. This works well if you use a bank connected to the international system. We used Banque Populaire (with a prancing horse as a logo) and this worked really well.

What has your experience with gas been in Morocco?

We had two Campingaz 907 bottles. The one bottle lasted us about 5 weeks and we have now had to look for refill/replacement. In 2010/2011 it seems the law changed, and small bottles can no longer be refilled in Morocco. We have now bought a small Moroccan bottle and have had to leave one of the Campingaz bottles behind (no space for three). The one we bought was 80DH, ca €8! We also bought a bottle in Western Sahara, this was 30DH. The thread on the Moroccan bottle is the same as on the Campingaz bottle, so the regulator is interchangeable.

What is the situation with fuel?

Morocco has a good network of fuel, and a station is not too far away. The main are Shell, Total, Afriquia, and ZIZ. We have been able to fill using a Credit Card (Tesco MasterCard) at Total and once at Shell. We also tried once at Afriquia, but although they had a reader they didn't have connection.

We travelled with two French guys for a while, and they were not able to use their French Visa CarteBleu. I think MasterCard is the better option than Visa.

Is 7-10 days enough?



Seven days would be an absolute minimum for a stay in Morocco. This does not include the time taken to get there. Two weeks would be better as this allows you more time to enjoy the scenery, to interact, and to go on some of those small roads where you won't meet too many other tourists.

Where would you suggest for a short trip?

We have only been here once, and opinions are personal so some may disagree with our views, but these are sights we have enjoyed: Todra Gorge, the drive from M'hamid to Merzouga through the desert, Agadir – Tafraoute – Fom El Hisn across the mountains,

What time of year?

We have been here 7 weeks from the beginning of November to the middle of December. This is what Moroccans call "le saison mort" – which means the dead season. Not many tourists as they have all either been or are coming for Christmas. Price levels are good and bargains can be had (I managed to negotiate a hotel room down from 1500DH room only to 600DH including dinner for two...). But it is very cold in most of northern Morocco this time of year – and usually snow in the mountains.

Accommodation?

There are lots of places to stay, and most of the touristy towns and areas will have a choice of several Auberges, Kasbahs, Hotels, and some camping sites. In some of the more remote areas there may be a Gite (homestay type accommodation). It is also possible to wild camp almost everywhere, especially in the remote areas, and locals may also be able to point you to a place to spend the night if you ask them. Having a backup tent and sleeping bags will increase your options significantly.

Budget?

We have travelled for £40 per day for the two of us, including the ferry, 5000km of driving, visas to Mauritania, and some work done to the vehicle. Camping varies from 40DH to 100DH for a car with two people and roof top tent. Some sites offer electricity, some wifi, some hot showers, and some a combo of the above three. Rooms at an Auberge usually start from about 150DH per night for the room, and Kasbahs will be more expensive.

Equipment?

For the vehicle it depends on your vehicle and the type of driving you'll be doing. However, you can get repairs done to all types of vehicle in most places.

The small 3kg bottles of gas cannot be refilled any longer, so either bring enough gas for the journey, or buy a bottle when you arrive – they are about £6 and will last for a few weeks. And they have the same thread as the UK bottles (Campingaz 907).

Winter in UK = winter in Morocco. Nights can be cold (freezing) and days can be very chilly, so pack warm clothes and a beanie. If you use a tent, get a good sleepingbag.

You can buy anything in Morocco, so if you forget something don't worry.



Itinerary – not to be missed?

4x4: there are many pistes, so exploration is easy. We enjoyed the piste between Todra and Dades, the piste from Tagounite to Merzouga, our attempt at reaching Cirque de Jaffar (too much snow), and our piste into Fom Zgouid from Zagora. Also the paces below.

Other vehicle: Todra up to Lac Tislit, Midelt south to Todra, mountains between Agadir and Icht (via Targa n'Touchka). The last bit is very steep and narrow in places, so a big campervan or towing a caravan is not advisable.

Where not to go?

We went to Rabat, and didn't like it. Could be because we had stayed in the desert for four weeks and had that as our main experience. We were only in Rabat to get visas though, so I guess not really representative.

Visas?

If you are from a country where visa is not required, entry will be stamped into your passport on arrival at the border. If you need a visa (e.g. South African passport) you need to sort the visa out in advance. Always check yourself what the requirements are for your passport.

Best way to get there?

Up to you as there are many ferry crossings from Europe.

Swapping?

Morocco has the most amazing carpets, and you will be tempted to buy! If you want to buy, there are two ways: pay with money, or swap with items that are needed. Obviously the big cities will be more expensive than the rural areas, sometimes three times as much. So if you do want a carpet, head for the smaller towns away from Marakech, Agadir, Fes, etc.

Swapping can be done with several items: tools, tyre inflators, battery charges, good clothing, sleeping bags to name a few. You agree a price for each item and then for the carpet. Shake hands – deal done.

For kids?

Sorry – no info from us...

Language?

A smattering of French goes a long way. In a lot of the touristy places the guys (always guys) who hassle you the most usually speak a bit of English, French, German, Italian, Spanish,... but further out French is best. If you go off the beaten track you'll find that not even French is spoken, in which case body language and smiles is the best option.