

LIGHT ON A KINGDOM OF CRAFTSMANSHIP



MOROCCO



Morocco through its crafts

Authentic, inspiring, welcoming... Are you ready to succumb to Morocco's charms?

A land of light, but also a land of riches. Whether cultural or gastronomic, few destinations offer so many possibilities in a single stay. Discover the desert in the midst of the Sahara's dunes, go climbing in the Atlas mountains. Unwind on heavenly beaches, stroll through the streets of its sublime medinas...

Morocco is an incomparable destination. You'll be touched by the Moroccan people's hospitality and the gentle pace of local life.

Moroccans transmit this warmth above all through their hands. For thousands of years, they've been weaving, turning wood, tanning hides and painting the local art of living in the form of dishes, plates, shoes, rugs and embroidery. Behind every plate, every jug, every babouche and every kaftan there hides the secret of Moroccan culture; a secret that invites you to discover it.

Morocco at a glance



All you need to do is take a couple of steps into the souk to realise that craftsmanship is omnipresent in Morocco. In the markets, it's not uncommon for each alleyway to be devoted to a specific craft. Here, silversmiths and their silver jewellery with accents of yesteryear; there, leatherworkers and their painstakingly created leather accessories; a little further still, coppersmiths, sculptors and basketmakers... You could spend hours admiring the diversity of Amazigh carpets, ceramics made with age-old know-how, and other distinctly Moroccan objects. It's even harder to choose which ones to take fit in your suitcase, with so many shapes and colours bursting forth on every street corner. Behind the stalls, you catch glimpses of the antique tools and meticulous procedures that have made the reputation of Moroccan craftsmanship. But if you want to unlock its secrets, you'll need to get a bit closer.

Talk to the shopkeepers, spend some time with a craftsman to learn pottery or the art of jewellery-making, take photos... And above all, be amazed!



Itinerary 1

Monarchs' secrets

Rabat – Meknes – Fes

In the imperial cities, craftsmanship also reigns supreme, providing visitors with a comprehensive overview of all Morocco's many talents . Its richness is expressed as much inside palaces as in Rabat's teeming streets, Fes' secret workshops, and on Meknes' ancient walls.



Itinerary 2

Amazigh getaway

Marrakesh – Taroudant – Ouarzazate

After you've done the rounds in the art galleries of Marrakesh, set off to explore the treasures of Amazigh craftsmanship. From the Taourirt Kasbah's cedar wood ceilings to its bewitching motifs by way of Taznakht's reinterpreted carpets, we promise you an enthralling journey between past and present.



Itinerary 3

Discovering know-how

Essaouira – Tiznit – Safi

After Essaouira and its Thuja marquetry, pay a visit to Tiznit and its famous jewellers. If you're looking for ceramics, Safi is the place to go. Sun-dried clay is shaped by hand into high-quality enamelled earthenware and pottery.

Moroccan craftsmanship, between tradition and modernity

Often copied but never equalled, Moroccan craftsmanship is both timeless and modern in its expression, so much so that it inspires some of the world’s most famous artists, designers and couturiers. Let’s set off in discovery of this work that gives pride of place to local materials and know-how.

Drawing up an exhaustive list of all the objects typical of Moroccan craftsmanship is next to impossible. In the souks, stalls overflow with treasures like ceramics, geometrically patterned Zellige tiles, furniture, wrought iron, jewellery, traditional clothes, carpets, mirrors and basketry. A real feast for the eye! Each object tells the story of Morocco and its people. But with the whirlwind of colours, materials and creativity that are part and parcel of any visit to Morocco, it can be hard to get your bearings. Here’s an overview of the rendezvous that lovers of beautiful things won’t want to miss out on.



Colourful spices rub shoulders with handwoven Amazigh plates in a traditional market.



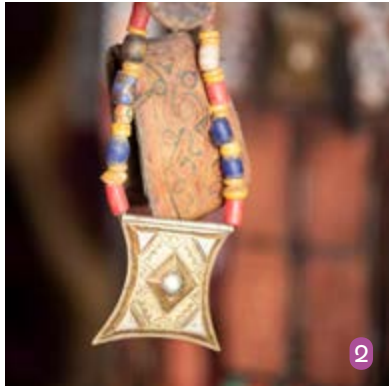
Geometrically patterned Zellige tiles adorn the country’s most beautiful buildings.



In their workshops, craftsmen work materials using age-old techniques.

The essentials

3 must-do experiences



(1) Taking a stroll through Fes’ medina: sublime and fascinating, the medina distils the extraordinary diversity of local know-how. To avoid the crowds and take advantage of the light, explore the old town early in the morning and discover traditional leatherwork, carpets, ceramics and paintings. Don’t forget to stop off at the iconic Chouara Tannery, the oldest in the city, and admire the 1,200 basins in which hides are soaked, softened and dyed.

(2) Discovering jewellery-making in Tiznit: if you like jewellery, head for Tiznit, a mecca for silverware. This tradition, once exclusive province to craftsmen, has been handed down from generation to generation, shaping the reputation of this little town on the edge of the desert. Take the time to watch jewellery being made in a craftsman’s workshop. You can even order a personalised piece.



(3) Working with clay at a pottery lesson in Safi: a must for ceramics enthusiasts; in Safi, people aren’t afraid to get their hands dirty. Many of the craftsmen in the potters’ district hold lessons on how to handle the wheel and create terracotta and clay marvels to take home with you in your suitcase.



The origins of...

History of the Moroccan kaftan

The kaftan is one of the world’s oldest garments. This traditional, usually belted long-sleeved tunic made its first appearance in the 12th century under the Almohad dynasty. With the development of the textile trade, the medieval kaftan gradually evolved into the Moroccan kaftan we know today. But it wasn’t always within everyone’s reach. Initially reserved for sultans and the wealthiest families, the kaftan has been democratised until it became an essential garment in Moroccan fashion.

Whether plain or decorated with stones and made from such precious fabrics like taffeta or silk, it’s worn for religious holidays and weddings, or simply for doing your daily shopping. In recent years, the Moroccan kaftan has inspired some of the world’s leading fashion designers, and is now regarded as a must-have by many women across the globe.

What better way to immerse yourself in Moroccan culture than to let yourself be treated to a glass of tea and wandering off the beaten track. These side streets bring you close to the traditions and secrets behind pieces now gracing design magazines and urban interiors over the past few years. Take your time, chat with the shopkeepers and you'll unearth some of the world's finest carpets, hand-crafted locally from top-quality, silky-smooth wool.

Zellige tiles, which are used to decorate bathrooms, kitchens and living rooms, are made from materials extracted from the mountains in the Fes region before being moulded, dried, enamelled and fired in accordance with the rules of the art. As for leather accessories, they're the result of a long process carried out in traditional tanneries known for their distinctive scent. There is no single city or region that encompasses the full wealth of Moroccan craftsmanship. Craftsmanship is everywhere and, most importantly, is constantly reinventing itself, becoming more creative, more eco-friendly, and sometimes more select.

The finest pieces are often found by chance, on a spontaneous detour down an unfamiliar street. And remember, there's no lack of outstanding products in Morocco, so the best approach is simply to follow your heart.



A must-do experience

Relaxing in a hammam

If you want to combine culture, art and wellbeing, there's nothing like a visit to a hammam, the traditional bathhouse where locals go to relax and recharge. Enveloped by hot steam and the scents of argan oil, rose oil and soft soap, lie back and admire the details of your surroundings. Sculpted columns, Zellige tiles, stucco, mosaics; whether you opt for a traditional experience or a luxury getaway, the hammam is a distillation of all the riches of local craftsmanship. Ceramics, wrought ironwork and soft lighting will immerse you instantly in the heart of the Moroccan art of living. If you like exploring local architecture as a couple, don't forget that hammams usually have separate sections for men and women.

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Moroccan craftsmanship is so diverse that it alone accounts for over 172 professions that employ 20% of the working population.



1. In Morocco, carpet weaving is an age-old art mainly practised and passed down by women.

2. After dyeing, wools of all colours are hung out to dry in the streets of the medina.

3. In the souk, ironmongers' shops give the alleyways the air of a market from the Arabian Nights.
4. Markets overflow with handmade bags and baskets.

5. This craftsman is working with Thuja, a precious wood used to make decorative objects and elegant little boxes, among other things.

My very own Morocco

Meeting with Haj Ben Adiba, Zellige master craftsman

Born into an old family of Fassi craftspeople, Said Ben Adiba perpetuates the demanding art of Zellige tiles, the multicoloured geometric mosaic whose secrets he passes on to new generations.

Please introduce yourself.

My name is Maître Said Ben Adiba; I was born in Fes in 1950, into a family of craftsmen. My father was a traditional shoemaker and my mother came from an old family. I've always lived in an environment imbued with artisanal customs and traditions. After a few years at school, I decided to perpetuate my family's legacy...

How did your encounter with the Zellige technique come about?

I started when I was still in school. I used to accompany my uncle Hajj Idriss Ben Adiba to the workshops and houses where he practised his craft, to help him and familiarise myself with it. Over time, my uncle noticed my interest and passion for this work and spoke to my father about it. He agreed and I was officially able to join his workshop in Arsat El Madalassi in Fes and work alongside him.

How would you describe what it's like to work with the Zellige technique?

Above all, I feel enormous pride. I've had the privilege of training a number of traditional craftsmen who've become some of the best-known teachers on the Moroccan landscape in recent years. It's my love for my country and this new generation that drives me to innovate and pass on my know-how.

What are the most memorable works in your career?

The Hassan-II Mosque in Casablanca, whose beautiful interior and exterior ornamentation is admired far beyond the borders of the kingdom. My first project abroad was also the Hassan-II Mosque in Ivory Coast. This was followed by a series of emblematic cultural monuments, including several royal palaces in Morocco, sublime houses, and the

restoration of museums such as Dar Al-Manbhi in Marrakesh and the former Ali Ben Youssef School. Internationally, I've worked at the Islamic Museum in London and in several royal palaces in Saudi Arabia and Oman. My projects have taken me to Malaysia, to Chicago for the Zellij Fountain, and more recently to Argentina and Japan, where I created the Moroccan Royal Garden in the Rose Garden of Gifu. All these experiences have won me prizes, but I'm particularly proud of the Royal Medal awarded to me by His Majesty Mohammed VI.

Zellige tiling is an integral part of Moroccan culture. Does it have a special place in the Moroccan people's hearts?

Certainly! Zellige tiles are a time-honoured artistic and cultural symbol that expresses the true Moroccan identity. This traditional mosaic is a blend of creativity, history and heritage handed down from generation to generation over the centuries. It testifies to the ingenuity of Moroccans and their excellence in the ancient schools of Fes and Meknes, which aren't only places of learning, but also symbols of Moroccan Islamic civilisation, combining the beauty of their architecture with the values of education and religion. Still today, these schools are a living testimony to Moroccan craftsmanship and the pioneering role Morocco played in spreading Islamic knowledge and culture.



Zellige tiling is often copied, but never equalled. What makes Moroccan Zellige tiling so special?

Characteristics like its intricate geometric motifs, rich and varied colours inspired by nature, diversified designs and references to Islamic culture. But above all, it's the precision of the craftsmanship that's inimitable and gives it exceptional longevity. It's difficult, if not impossible, to copy. Creation of some of its motifs requires know-how that's only available in Morocco. Since 2019, I've been devoting my time to collecting all the Moroccan designs, studying and reinterpreting them in order to preserve this heritage. The next step? Register all these innovations with the Industrial and Commercial Property Office.

How do you view Moroccan craftsmanship today?

It's a constantly evolving sector that's enjoying significant development thanks to the expertise of craftsmen who are revisiting colours and forms. Moroccan craftsmanship has modernised and the designs created by our craftsmen are now being exported internationally, with more and more of them appearing in foreign interiors.



What's your favourite place when it comes to appreciating traditional Moroccan craftsmanship?

The Hassan-II Mosque in Casablanca is one of Morocco's greatest religious and architectural monuments. I worked there for three years alongside a great many master craftsmen. It's not just a place of prayer, but a true work of art that combines tradition and modernity, reflecting the beauty and spirituality of Moroccan Islamic architecture.

Do you have any advice for people who'd like to use Zellige tiling in their homes? The Moroccan Zellige technique can be used almost anywhere in a house in order to add an elegant traditional touch.

- Here are a few decoration ideas:
- On walls and in living rooms to create a warm atmosphere;
 - On floors, whether indoors or in interior gardens;
 - In fountains and pools, where their brilliance creates reflections;
 - In kitchens, as a background and on surfaces;
 - To create interior decoration features like small tables, murals, ornate columns and sculpted doors;
 - In bathrooms, as they're water-resistant and give the room a majestic look.

Whether you use them on large surfaces or in small touches, Zellige tiles are sure to add a touch of authenticity and timeless sophistication.

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Depending on the complexity of shapes and materials, making an Amazigh carpet by hand can take up to eight weeks before you get to admire it in a local shop or market.



A must-do experience

Visit Taznakht, and admire the carpets

If you go by way of Taliouine, the saffron fields will lead you straight to Taznakht, an authentic, picturesque village in the province of Ouarzazate and a paradise for aficionados of Amazigh carpets. Because here, it's not the almond trees' white flowers that have shaped the town's reputation, but the quality of its handmade carpets. They are recognisable by their vibrant colours, intricate details and motifs that include geometric designs, traditional Amazigh symbols and floral themes. Their smooth wool is dyed with natural colourants. But what makes them so special is that they're handwoven by local women organised into weaving associations and cooperatives (you'll see them all over town). So in Taznakht, weaving not only provides families with an income, it's also a means of social advancement for the women weavers.

By the way....

Morocco is a land of know-how as well as festivities. All year round, you can enjoy concerts, lectures and themed shows devoted to Moroccan culture. Every year in April, Fes hosts the annual Sufi Culture Festival, which brings together musicians from all over the world. In September, Tangier's TanJazz festival is a must for jazz fans. Moussems are large gatherings that pay tribute to a holy man. You can admire traditional dances, songs and costumes, or take part in processions or tastings of local products. It's not uncommon to witness a Tbourida, or "Fantasia", an equestrian tradition consisting of a simulated cavalry charge. Among the main moussem gatherings, don't miss out on the Almond Blossom Festival held in Tafraout in February, when the trees are in spectacular bloom. If you'd like to find out more, take a look at our "Light on a kingdom of festivities and traditions" brochure.



Immersion

A Moroccan wedding

In Morocco, we love to entertain. Wedding ceremonies are often worthy of a tale from the thousand and one nights. Attending a traditional wedding celebration is an experience anyone who loves Morocco dreams of. Here, weddings are a major event, with festivities lasting three days. From the henna ceremony to the day after the reception, it's a celebration of love as well as cultural heritage and family traditions. It's also an opportunity to showcase Moroccan know-how. Pay close attention to the fabrics and ornaments on the bride and groom's outfits (the bride may wear up to seven kaftans or takchitas), and the varied colours of the flower arrangements and dishes served. Moroccans love to entertain and never fail to bring out their finest crockery, cover the floor with carpets and dance by lantern light. What should you wear? A kaftan, a djellaba, Western clothes, the choice is wide... just so long as it shines forth!

Good to know

Never has the expression «follow the guide» been more important than in the medina. The old towns are real labyrinths. Weavers, jewellers, soapmakers, cobblers, ceramists, blacksmiths, embroiderers and tanners: the diversity of the crafts will make your head spin. Often for the better.

A Moroccan day in the life



8am For breakfast, opt for a typically Moroccan dish: Khilii, dried preserved meat simmered with eggs in a traditional pottery tagine.



9am Visit a university, school or palace to contemplate the ceramics and Zellige tiles adorning their walls.



1pm After a session at the hammam, try Tanjia – a dish emblematic of the city of Marrakesh – slow-cooked in a terracotta urn. Composed of beef or mutton shank, lemon and a mixture of spices, this dish is traditionally prepared by men and cooked in the embers of public ovens.



4pm Time for an art workshop. As a bonus, enjoy a glass of tea prepared by the craftspeople themselves – simply the best!



6pm Get lost in a souk seeking to unearth the last treasures of the day.



7pm End your day with a Seffa Medfouna, a delicate recipe combining vermicelli, chicken and spices. Like craftsmanship, it's a dish that requires patience and precision.

B'chhal Hada

The essence of words

بشّحال هَذَا

How much does it cost? It's used in souks and chic boutiques alike. Being able to speak a few words of Arabic can be very useful when you're bargaining!



Memories, memories

3 little things to slip into your suitcase...

Babouches: the term «babouche» is borrowed from the Turkish pāpuş, meaning «shoe». Colourful and comfortable, these soft leather slippers are sometimes decorated with embroidery and beads.

A basket: in all shapes and sizes, it's the essential accessory for going to the beach, storing everyday objects or adding a Moroccan touch to your home decoration.

Ceramic cups: glazed, enamelled, plain or painted in vibrant colours, you'll be spoilt for choice.

Spotlight on...



OCEAN
WAVES



BEACH
AND SUN



TREKKING
AND HIKING



CULTURE



GASTRONOMY



BUSINESS
TRIP



OFF THE TRACKS
HOSTING



CITY
BREAK



SUSTAINABILITY



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