



Student Orientation Handbook

QALAM WA LAWH *School Address and Contacts*

School Name: Qalam wa Lawh Center for Arabic Studies

School Location: Souissi area of Rabat about 10 minutes from the city center, school located at the intersection of the avenues Mehdi Ben Barka and Ahmed Balafrej. The school is just in front (juste en face) of the salon Dessange and next door to the Embassy of Benin.

School Address: n3 Avenue Ahmed Balafrej, Souissi, Rabat, Morocco

Tel: (+212) (0) 537-755-790

Emergency Contacts: Cell phone: (+212) (0)661-377-909 or (+)212 (0)661 377-907

School hours: Monday to Friday, 8am –8pm

Arriving and Getting to Rabat

Students should typically arrive to Morocco on the Sunday prior to the Monday start date. Once you arrive you have to go directly to school to do the check-in for the accommodation. Please note if you arrive after 20.00 you will have to spend the first night in a hotel, because check-in is not possible after this time.

By Plane

a) If you have arranged an airport pickup from CASABLANCA or RABAT airport

Upon arrival you should pick up your bags, proceed through customs and go to the arrival hall. A staff member holding a sign with your name or the name of the school will meet you there when you arrive. The staff member will take you directly to your accommodation. If you have a flight delay or an arrival problem, **you should call the emergency phone number provided on the first page of this document.**

b) If you have NO airport pick up arranged

For those students with no pick-up arranged, you are expected to make your own way to Rabat using local transport (bus, taxi, train, etc.)

From Casablanca airport:

There is a train connecting Casablanca Airport with Rabat that runs every hour. Trains in Morocco are comfortable and cheap, one way trip from Casablanca airport to Rabat will cost you around 75 dh. The last night train goes at 1 a.m. You should change the train either at Ain Sbaa or Casa Voyageurs station (approx. 35 min ride from the Airport), and get off at Rabat Agdal or Rabat Ville station in about 50 min. Station names are usually not announced in the train, so you will have to ask other passengers when you should get off. The total travel time is around 1.5 hours or less. Upon arrival to Rabat train station you can take a “petit taxi” (it has blue color) – small taxis that operate only within the city limits and are paid by meter.

If you arrive at night, the only way to go to Rabat is by so-called “grand taxi”. They are big old Mercedes cars that can take up to 6 passengers. You will have to negotiate the price with the driver, but it should not exceed 650 dh per car.

From Rabat airport:

Rabat-Salé Airport is 7 km northeast of Rabat and the only connection with the city is via “grand taxi”, white Mercedes 240 sedans. Generally they want between 150 and 250 dh (\$17-30 USD) for an airport transfer (you have to negotiate the price with the driver).

GENERAL INFORMATION

Customs

Free import

- Tobacco (200 cigarettes, 100 cigarillos, 25 cigars, or 250 grams of assortments).
- Alcoholic drinks (1 liter bottle)
- Jewelry, perfumes (150 ml) and toilet water (250 ml)
- Souvenirs, presents whose value should not exceed 2000 DH
- Camera, camcorder, binoculars or CD player
- Tape recorder, radio, TV, camera, typewriter or calculator, portable computer, mobile phone

* Non-residents must re-export these items at the end of their stay.

Am I allowed to bring my laptop with me? According to official information it should be declared to the customs and is subject to re-export procedure at the end of your stay, but in reality you can enter and quit the country with your laptop without any problems! We encourage students to bring their laptops with CD-ROM because it will be useful for their studies and will allow them to take advantage of Al-Kitaab CDs.

Money, Banks and Currency Exchange

The basic unit of currency in Morocco is the Dirham (D h). There are approximately 8 D H to \$1 U.S. and 11 D H to €1 but as with all currencies, there are fluctuations. You can check online at <http://xe.com> for accurate current exchange rates.

The Dirham is divided into 100 Centimes. Coins in circulation come in denominations of 1, 2, 5 and 10 Dirhams and 5, 10, 20 and 50 centimes. Bills come in denominations of 20, 50, 100 and 200 Dirhams. Please be informed that the Moroccan Dirham is a controlled currency. It is illegal to import or export Dirhams. Upon leaving Morocco, you can reconvert only up to 50% of the Dirhams for which you must produce exchange receipts. As you exchange money, keep your exchange receipts.

Banking

Most all Moroccan bank branches can handle foreign currency buying but not selling. They cash traveler's checks and cashier's checks from a foreign currency. It is also possible to get a cash advance with your VISA or MASTERCARD credit or debit card in the bank at the counter. Most foreign students, however, prefer to get money through ATM cash withdrawals as these transactions incur the least amount of fees.

All international currency transactions have a cost. You will need to make a decision about what form of currency is best for you.

Credit Cards and ATM s

There are ATMs (called "guichets") throughout Rabat that will dispense cash, usually at a maximum of 4000dh/day. There is no transaction fee in Morocco, but you have to check with your bank to make sure you understand your ATM transaction fees before trying to get money. Your bank should not charge you a transaction fee exceeding \$3.

Credit cards are not widely accepted in small establishments in Morocco. However, you can use a MasterCard or Visa card in places such as hotels, gas stations, travel agencies and some large shops in main cities like Rabat, Casablanca, Marrakech, Agadir, Tangier, Fez and Meknes.

Traveler's Checks

Traveler's checks are a safe means of carrying currency. But they come at a cost.

Traveler's checks must be cashed at a bank and there is a transaction fee per check. Not all banks will provide this service. Traveler's checks have both a fee to buy the check and one to cash the check. In Morocco, traveler's checks can only be cashed at a bank. If you decide to bring Traveler's checks think carefully of the denomination of the check before you buy.

Time

The time zone in Morocco is GMT (Greenwich Mean Time). GMT has traditionally been in effect year round in Morocco.

Morocco is 5 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time in the U.S.A and 2 hours ahead of European Standard Time (Except in Daylight Savings during summer, when Morocco is 4 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time and 1 hour ahead of European Standard Time).

Language

Most Moroccans speak a dialect of Arabic called Darija. However, classical Arabic, called Fus'ha, is the official language of Morocco. If you speak to a Moroccan in Fus'ha, they will understand, however, it may sometimes be difficult to convince them to reply in Classical Arabic and it may take some extra encouragement on your part.

French is the second official language and is widely used in business settings especially in central and southern Morocco. In northern cities like Tangier and Tetouan, Spanish is also commonly spoken. There are also three regional dialects of Amazigh in Morocco.

Weights, Measures and Electricity

Morocco uses the Metric system. Distance is measured in kilometers (1 mile = 1.6 km). Meat, fruit and vegetables are sold in kilograms. (2.2 pounds = 1 kilogram).

Electricity in Morocco is the same as in Europe - 220 Volts at 50 cycles. If you bring any personal electrical equipment, make sure you have an international voltage regulator/transformer. The electrical sockets in Morocco take round pins like those in France, not the flat pins of the U.S.A. Plug adapters are available in most hardware stores in Morocco but you may want to bring some international plug adapters with you.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Classes start at 8:30 on Monday. On the first day students take the placement test to define their level.

In case if there are less than 3 students in the class, the group course will be automatically changed into a semi-private course (the program of the course will not change but the hours will be reduced by 50%). This most often happens in Advanced levels or Moroccan dialect courses, particularly during low-season (October-March).

Class Attendance and Absence Policy

Attendance is a vital factor in academic success. Any absence, regardless of the reason, will prevent the student from getting the full benefit of the course. Therefore, students should recognize the advantages of regular and punctual class attendance.

Immersion Activities / Excursions

Every afternoon there are various cultural activities, clubs and workshops organized by school for students. Two Rabat excursions per week are also included in all of our courses.

You will find the calendar, description and sign-up sheet for these activities on the information board at the entrance. If you want to participate in any of these activities, you have to sign up for it a day before by putting your name in the sign-up sheet and ticking the chosen activity. The minimum required number of participants for any activity is 5 people (for weekend trips it's 8).

You will be provided with a vocabulary sheet and orientation outlining the details of each activity before departure.

You will be required to pay for entry fees during Rabat excursions however there is no charge for transportation.

Library

The Qalam wa Lawh library consists of a wide variety of rare and fascinating titles in both Arabic and English. Students may enjoy use of these books through the school property but should request special permission and pay a deposit before taking any books off campus.

Textbooks

Instructional Materials Available for purchase or **loan** from the School

Course, level	Textbook	Price of purchasing /Loan deposit
MSA Beginner Level 1	Alif Baa: Introduction to Arabic Letters and Sounds, by Mahmoud Batal, Abbas Al Tonsi, and Kristin Brustad	700 Dh
MSA Beginner Levels 1,2, 3	Al-Kitâb fii Ta'allum al-Arabiyya, vol. 1 with DVDs	700 Dh
MSA Intermediate Levels 1,2,3	Al-Kitâb fii Ta'allum al-Arabiyya, vol. 2 with DVDs	700 Dh
MSA Advanced Levels 1,2,3	Al-Kitâb fii Ta'allum al-Arabiyya, vol. 3 with DVDs	700 Dh
CMA (Moroccan Arabic)	Moroccan Arabic, by Peacecorps	200 Dh

Due to the high cost of “Al-Kitâb fii Ta'allum al-Arabiyya” in Morocco, students wishing to purchase their textbooks should buy them at home and bring them along.

At the end of their course, students can return the book to school and get their deposit back.

Tutoring

On weekday afternoons, tutors are ready to assist you with your research or any questions you may have regarding your homework. We encourage students to take advantage of this service in order to maximize their linguistic advancement while in Morocco. Every student of immersion program has the right for free 30 min tutoring every day. Ask the Student Advisor to give you a sign-up sheet for tutoring!

Lunch Service at School

Lunch is served at school Monday through Friday at 12:30pm. Students may choose to order a daily special (a traditional Moroccan meal consisting of a main course, salad and bread) for 40 dirhams or a variety of snacks and sandwiches.. Bottled water is also provided.

Laundry Service

Laundry service is provided for students attending courses at our school. The cost of clothes washing/drying is 40dh per load. Bring your dirty laundry in a bag to the school kitchen and pay the laundry service. You will find your laundry ready in the laundry room (ground floor of school) within 24 hours.

Do not tip the Laundry room attendants or any other staff person at Qalam w a Law h.

HOUSING

Students Residence

- Students' residences are apartments for 6-10 people with single and double rooms, living room, fully equipped kitchen and bathroom.
- Rooms are furnished with bed, closet and a desk for studying
- residences are located with 3 kilometers of the school
- Upon arrival, you will be instructed as to the best way to travel to and from school each day.
- Students staying in school residences are served breakfast starting at 8:00 am, Monday-Friday in the school cafeteria. Please come to breakfast promptly so as not to delay the start of classes.
- There are to be no visitors in student apartments unless expressly permitted by school directorship.
- Alcohol is strictly forbidden in students' residence!

Homestays

Is it the right choice for me? Staying with a Moroccan family is the best way to discover the local culture, try delicious home-made cuisine, learn about local customs and habits and way of life, and of course to immerse in the Arabic language on a daily basis. However, students who have chosen staying with a host family should be aware of some common difficulties like unfamiliar food, lack of privacy, traditional toilets (especially in the houses in old Medina) and obligation to respect family rules as to the hours of returning late at night or bringing visitors. We advise our students to keep a positive attitude, be friendly and open with their family and patient in the first few days of their family stay when they have to adapt to new conditions.

How do we choose our host families? It is not possible to completely "standardize" the conditions in the homes of our host families. For example, home-stay does not always mean a traditional married couple with children. Above all we look for someone who is sociable, likes to meet new people and can give a warm welcome to our students. Our host families have time to talk to our students, are patient, understanding, careful, and prepared to provide help with any problem that may arise during a student's stay.

Mutual respect. Your host family respects your beliefs and we ask that you show the same respect for their beliefs. You can discuss anything with your teacher but some subjects regarding religion, culture or politics may be inappropriate to discuss with your family.

Meals. While meals are part of the arrangement, families are not expected to depart from their standard diet and home stay participants are not entitled to "order" particular foods unless this is necessitated for reasons of medical or religious/ethical restrictions.

Laundry. Our families are not responsible for the washing of students' clothes although this service might be offered.

Valuables. Home stay participants are advised not to leave cash in unlocked bags to avoid offering temptation to servants or children.

Consuming water and electricity. Please be aware that the Western concept of schedules or spending money on non-essential items such as air conditioning or hot water heaters are against the traditional way of thinking in Morocco. Your host family is not obliged to provide you an air conditioner in Summer or heater in Winter, however, some of them might have it available. You have the right to take hot shower at least once per day, but please keep it within 10-15 min.

Visitors. Host families generally insist that foreign students not bring their new Moroccan friends to their homes as they feel, often correctly, that a foreigner may not have the necessary discrimination to differentiate between trustworthy and untrustworthy individuals. In addition, many Moroccan families may not be very flexible about allowing their guests to return late at night without prior warning. Moroccan host families will typically be more protective of female students, treating them almost as their own daughters.

Solving problems. Whatever problem you face with your family (you need an extra sheet, blanket, a new light or anything else), ask your family first. If for any reason you don't feel comfortable with the family, try to discuss this problem with them. Try to be open, friendly and sociable. Don't be shy and be the first to initiate a dialogue with your host family. If you are not able to find a solution of the problem with your family, speak with the school's accommodation manager. He will try to find an alternative solution. A change of family is considered a solution of last resort. Before changing your accommodations the staff will try to work out other solution such as clearing up misunderstandings, etc. A change of accommodations might be more difficult in the summer months.

POSTAL SERVICES / PHONE / INTERNET

Postal Services

If you want to send a postcard home, you need to buy a stamp at a post office or at a book store and put it in a yellow post box that you can find either at the post office or in the street. The central post office is located on Avenue Mohammed V, business hours are from 8.30 to 16.00.

Timing for overseas mail: Letters usually take:

To and from the U.S.: 4 to 14 days. To and from Europe: 3 to 10 days. Packages can take:

To and from the U.S.:

By Airmail: 20 days to 1 month

By Ship: Up to 2 months

To and From Europe: 15 days

ChronoPost

ChronoPost is the express service offered by Barid Al Maghreb. It is less expensive than DHL, FedEx and UPS services and is just as reliable.

Express Courier Services

DHL, FedEx and UPS are all now reasonably fast (3 to 4 days minimum) and reliable courier services to Morocco.

Telephone

Courtesy call upon arrival. Each student can make a free 5 minute courtesy international call from our school. Student should request this call during check-in procedure at the reception desk. Courtesy call can be made only on the day of arrival.

International calls.

- 1) At the post office, request a domestic or international booth from the front counter. Payment is made following the call.
- 2) Public phone booths require either coins or telephone cards. Moroccan telephone cards, called TELECARTE, are ideal for calling long distance from specially-equipped public phones, can be purchased along with stamps at kiosks and from many other tabacs.
- 3) Teleboutiques, small shops with pay phones and sometimes photocopy machines and fax services, do not accept telephone cards. They can, however, make change for you.
- 4) Home phones. Relatively few Moroccans have telephones in their homes, and few of those that do have international lines. If you are living with a family and they do have a phone, it is generally best not to ask to make international calls, even if you will be reversing the charges or using a calling card. Since phone bills are not itemized and there is a charge for even local calls, Moroccans are often very hesitant to allow others to use their phone. For international calls, dial "00" and then dial the appropriate country code and number (Country codes: England = 44, USA = 001, France = 33, Germany = 49, Holland = 31).

Students may also receive calls at the school at times when the administration is open. Such calls, however, should be limited to ten minutes to keep the lines free.

International Calling Cards: Some international calling cards, including MCI, AT&T, and British Telecom, have recently introduced a direct calling service from Morocco which is not yet very well known. If you use another long distance calling card, check with the company to see if it can be used from Morocco. Calls with an international calling card can be made free of charge from the post office, but may not work from all pay phones. The following are the main direct access numbers: AT&T = 00 211 0011; MCI = 00 211 0012; British Telecom = 00 211 0044.

Collect Calls: Collect calls can be placed through the post office or a private phone line by dialing 12 for the operator and requesting "PCV." You give the operator the number and city you're calling and he or she then calls you back once the connection has been made.

Mobile phone. Upon arrival you can buy a sim card of one of the local mobile telecom operators: Maroc Telecom, Meditel, Inwi, Bayn. They are sold at the airport (in working hours only) or in numerous sales offices with company logo in the city.

If your mobile phone is not compatible with sim cards of other operators, you can rent a phone with a local sim card from school for free (with a deposit of 200 dh).

You can recharge the balance on your phone with the help of recharge scratch card that you can buy in any shop or by dictating your number to the store keeper (direct recharge).

One minute of national call will cost you around 1 dh.

Internet

Students have many possibilities to connect to Internet during their studies in Morocco:

At school building: you can connect to Internet on your laptop through Wi-Fi which runs throughout the building or use school computers that have internet access and are available for student use.

At students' residence: all students' residences have Wi-Fi Internet connection.

At host family house: not all host families have Wi-Fi Internet access at home, so you might need to buy your own modem or use internet at school or in cybercafé.

Free Wi-Fi at public places: you can connect to Internet on your laptop at train stations, McDonalds and some cafes and restaurants.

Cybercafé: you can find them everywhere in the city, they are pretty cheap (about 3-5 dh per hour) and provide the services of printing, scanning, photocopying.

Mobile internet stick: you can buy it from one of the national telecom operators (Maroc Telecom, Meditel, Inwi). A modem with 1 month access to Internet will cost you around 200-300 dh.

WHAT TO BRING

Medical Kit. If you are under special medical treatment, bring the prescription medicines that you use clearly marked in the containers from your pharmacy. Almost all common drugs are available in Morocco but they will likely be manufactured for the European market. The brand names may be unfamiliar. Bring your favorite occasional medicines for allergies, or other mild ailments. Solutions and cleaners for contact lenses are hard to get so bring a six month supply with you. Distilled water is available in pharmacies if you have soft lenses. Bring your driver's license if you plan to rent a car.

Personal items You should bring towels as they are not supplied in many home stays and standard apartments. Also, lower end hotels in Morocco may not supply towels so you might need one when traveling. All personal hygiene products are locally available.

Clothing

On-Campus The school dress code applies to all public areas of the school including the hallways, eating and social areas of the residence.

Off-Campus The strictest Islamic prescriptions require that a Muslim woman be completely covered except for her hands and face and that a Muslim man be covered from his navel to his knees. Most city-dwelling Moroccans are fairly tolerant in their attitudes and do not expect foreigners to adhere to local dress codes, which often vary dramatically from person to person anyway. However, this does not mean that anything goes. For both men and women, modest and understated clothing is preferable in Rabat.

Men Few Moroccan men do not wear shorts nor do they go bare-chested except at the beach. Foreigners who do this are usually tolerated but stick out like sore thumbs.

Women While there are Moroccan women who wear skin-tight jeans and low cut tops, this is not necessarily the model for female students. Moroccan women who dress in a "risqué" fashion are aware of what kind of response their attire will attract, and presumably know how to react, or not react, to provocation and catcalls from Moroccan men.

Female students are encouraged to dress in a way, which balances their need for comfort with a basic minimum of modesty to avoid attracting attention to themselves as objects of sexual desire. This does not mean they are expected to wear headscarves or long dresses, but they should avoid mini-skirts, tight pants, shorts, and low-cut tops. The bottom line is that women can often avoid unwanted attention by dressing modestly.

Bring warm clothes in winter. If you're coming in mid-winter an umbrella and rain-resistant jacket may also prove useful, as well as warm sweaters and long underwear! Keep in mind that indoor heating is practically non-existent in Morocco, so it can be quite cold indoors during the winter months. Bring your warm pajamas and socks for cold winter nights at home! Temperature can go down to zero degrees at night. During the day it's between 13 and 18. It can also rain a lot during winter months. Take warm comfortable sport clothes with you if you are planning a trip to Sahara in winter (you will spend a night in a tent, and it's rather cold in the desert at night in winter).

SAFETY AND HEALTHCARE

Safety Rules in the Street

While Rabat is a relatively safe city, it is not famed for its lively nightlife. Outside of Ramadan, streets become fairly deserted by 9:30 - 10:00 p.m. and purse snatching and hold ups with knives are not unheard of. If you are drunk, or smell of alcohol, and are out on the streets after this hour, this makes you just that much more of an attractive target. Students should avoid being alone in the streets after 9:00pm especially in the older parts of town such as the Medina and l'Ocean.

- **never carry with you without a real need big amount of money, your credit card, originals of important documents (for example, passport), expensive jewelry and other valuable things. Leave your diamond ring and golden watch at home, it's much easier to survive without them for a few weeks than to lose them forever during your trip!**
- **don't expose your valuables (golden jewelry, expensive watch, iphone, laptop, etc.) in public places**
- **dress modestly in order to not become an object of interest for thieves. Avoid provocative look and expensive accessories**
- if you are a girl, wear loose and simple clothes covering your shoulders, breast, knees and back. Avoid eye contact with men in the street and ignore any of their attempts to speak to you
- Watch your bag and pockets in crowded areas like medina and souk; try to put valuables in a backpack or a bag across the shoulder. If you travel, it is generally safe to leave your valuables at hotel room locked in your suitcase.
- If you need to carry a lot of cash with you, put it in different places, preferably in inner jacket pockets or special secret pockets that you can hide under your clothes.
- Although as a foreigner you are always obliged to carry an ID or passport with you, it is recommended to carry just a copy of your documents
- Don't speak on the phone or type sms as you walk in the street. If you want to talk, stop in a place convenient to observe the people around you
- Pay special attention when you sit in street café, don't leave your valuables or a bag on the table or a chair that can be easily reached by the people passing by. Don't use your laptop if you are sitting outside
- Write down and remember police and school emergency phone numbers

Safety for Female Students

The greatest problems most female foreign students will encounter are cat calls from men on the streets. This treatment is not reserved only for foreigners. Moroccan women receive similar advances, and are generally aware that, while extremely annoying, such advances are seldom physically threatening.

- If you hear "bonjour, ca va" or "hello" from a man that you don't know, do not respond anything and ignore the stranger. A response is not expected. Don't worry about being "rude" as it is not impolite to ignore a stranger's greetings or questions in the street; to respond - even in a negative way - is to offer them reason to continue bothering you. It goes without saying that invitations from unknown men to "meet their families" should be flatly refused.
- If anyone becomes particularly persistent, rude, or difficult to avoid, call him to someone else's attention. Other Moroccans - both men and women - are often more than willing to intervene when they see someone in need of help and won't hesitate to chastise someone whom they see behaving shamefully.
- Try not to walk alone in the streets after 9-10 pm. It is easy to get a small taxi everywhere and they are very cheap.
- Avoid deserted places and stick to areas where there are plenty of people around to help should you have any difficulties.
- If you are ever followed more than once by the same man, contact the school administration rather

than trying to deal with him on your own.

- Try, at least in the beginning of your staying in Morocco, to go out in a group with other students or friends.

False Guides and Street Hustlers

The legendary hustlers of Morocco remain an unavoidable part of the Moroccan experience. A few years ago any person suspected of trying to operate as an unofficial guide could face jail and/or a huge fine. This has greatly reduced, but not eliminated, the problem of faux guides. You'll generally find them hanging around the entrances to the big cities' medinas, and outside bus and train stations. Sometimes you meet them in the train going to Marrakech or Fes. They can introduce themselves with a friendly smile as 'students' or similar, and suggest you to stay in a hotel of their "uncle" and even warn you against false guides. These people are often desperate to make a living, and they can be persistent and sometimes unpleasant. Many of them are very experienced and speak half a dozen languages, and some times their main interest is the commission gained from certain hotels or on articles sold to you in the souks. Be sure to agree on a price before setting off and set some parameters on what you expect to see and the number of shops you're taken to. Unofficial guides charge around Dh50 to Dh100 per day (rates should always be per guide not per person); a few dirhams will suffice if you want to be guided to a specific location (like a medina exit).

Official guides can be engaged through tourist offices and some hotels at the fixed price of around Dh250 to Dh300 per day (plus tip) for a local/national guide. It's well worth taking a guide when exploring the medinas of Fez and Marrakesh. Their local knowledge is extensive and they'll save u from being hassled by other would-be guides. If you don't want a shopping expedition included in your tour, make this clear beforehand.

Moroccan Law

Students may find life in Morocco laid-back and easy in many respects, how ever they are encouraged to keep in mind that life in Morocco comes with a s et of rules.

Drugs. Although you may encounter kif and hashish being smoked openly, it is illegal; and some police take great pleasure in applying this law to foreigners. The penalty can vary, but may involve an extended stay in a Moroccan prison - an experience most visitors to the country would prefer to avoid.

The school will not take responsibility for students who have broken the law and possession of alcohol or illegal substances on school premises and in the residence is grounds for eviction from the residence and expulsion from classes.

Other rules and prohibitions:

- It is prohibited to discuss religion for the purpose of converting the listener. Doing so may be grounds for being forcibly returned to your home country. While Moroccans are usually delighted if a Westerner embraces Islam, one rarely encounters a proselytizing spirit among them.
- It is prohibited to publicly criticize the King or the royal family.
- It is prohibited for the foreigners to participate in certain political activities (for example, demonstrations).
- It is not allowed to take pictures of governmental buildings in Morocco.

Alcohol

Drinking alcohol is expressly forbidden in Is lam and its negative social connotations derive largely from this interdiction. It is completely prohibited on the school property as w ell. While Rabat does have several bars, hotels and restaurants that serve liquor, most Moroccans do not drink. Those that do are often not the best elements of Moroccan society. Therefore, students - especially w omen - are cautioned about social drinking with Moroccans, as this can sometimes lead to unpleasant and, occasionally, even dangerous situations.

Healthcare

Standards of health c are in Morocco are generally quite good, though government clinics and hospitals often leave much to be desired. French-trained doctors, who often have experience dealing with a wider variety of

ailments than their Western counterparts, are plentiful in hospitals, clinics, and private practice offices. Pharmacies abound in and around Rabat. Should you feel you're coming down with something, please feel free to contact the school administration. In general, however, you can stop at a pharmacy, which, in addition to prescribing medication on the spot, can also recommend doctors. Business hours for pharmacies are typically from 8:30 to 12:30 in the mornings and 3:00 to 7:30 in the evenings.

Problems with stomach

The ailment you're most likely to encounter in Morocco is traveler's diarrhea; which is a natural consequence of any change in diet and water flora. The best remedy for this is simply to let it run its course while avoiding fresh fruit & raw vegetables. In more severe cases, the best remedy is either Ercefuryl or Intetrix, which are available in pharmacies in both 100 and 200 mg doses. Such cases generally can be avoided by staying away from charcoal-grilled meats and fish at market stalls, salads in inexpensive restaurants, ice cream from street vendors, and any fruit that is unpeeled. If preparing fruits and vegetables (particularly lettuce) at home, especially in the summer months, it is advisable to soak them in a solution of permanganate (available in small bottles in pharmacies) or "javel" (Clorox bleach). Be sure to rinse well! Don't become unnecessarily paranoid, however, as tasting the local cuisine is one of the highlights of the Moroccan experience.

Water

Although tap water in Morocco is generally considered safe in the modern sections of larger towns, the water in the medinas may contain a wide variety of intestinal flora. Drinking from freshly washed glasses should also be avoided if possible. To avoid an unnecessarily upset stomach, you may want to stick with bottled mineral water. Brands widely available in Morocco include Sidi Ali, Sidi Harazem, and Oulmes (naturally carbonated).

Heat

Heat exhaustion can be a problem in the summer months, particularly when traveling to other cities with more extreme summer temperatures than Rabat. In a dry climate; it's often difficult to notice how quickly the body loses moisture.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion: nausea, dizziness, headaches, and sometimes profuse sweating.

How to avoid heat exhaustion:

- put a little extra salt in your food,
- drink plenty of water
- cover your head and body, wear cotton clothes

What to do in case of heat exhaustion:

- Rest in a moderately warm (not cold) place,
- put on a sweater if you feel a chill
- Eat a lot of salted snack food, or in small increments, take a couple teaspoons of salt
- When you've had your fill of salted food, slowly and over a period of time, drink as much warm (not cold) liquid as your system can stand.

Vaccines

Although not mandatory, it is probably a good idea to have typhoid, hepatitis A&B, tetanus, and polio immunizations brought up to date before traveling to Morocco. There are cases of meningitis occasionally reported in areas with poor water supplies in the summer, so a vaccine for this may be advisable if you plan to live in the medina.

Prescription Medication

Please note that anti-depressant medications cannot be purchased over the counter OR with a foreign prescription. You must have a prescription from a Moroccan doctor so please bring any necessary medications of this sort with you.

TRANSPORTATION IN MOROCCO

Trains

If you are planning a trip to Casablanca, Marrakech, Meknes, Fes, Tangier the most convenient transportation is train. On the whole, trains in Morocco are modern, comfortable, and reliable. Most trains have first and second classes. Price difference between first and second class is small, but a ticket for the first class will

guarantee the availability of a seat for you during rush hours, weekends and holidays, when second class is full. Compartments in the first class have 6 seats; they are slightly more comfortable and always have air conditioning. Second class consists of individual compartments having eight seats each and is not always air-conditioned. In all trains there is trolley snack service (sandwiches, hot & cold drinks).

Long distance trains (for example, Tangier-Marrakech) have "couchettes" (night sleepers). One word of caution: thieves and pickpockets are not uncommon on trains in Morocco, particularly on overnight trips where passengers are tired and not attentive of their belongings. Be particularly vigilant in the corridors between compartments and cars, especially when people are getting on and off at different stations - never put your wallet, passport, or other valuables in pants pockets and have locks on all luggage zippers. Also, take special care with luggage or other belongings nearest open windows.

There are two train stations in Rabat: **Rabat Ville** (in the city center) and **Rabat Agdal** (the nearest to school).

If you are wishing to go to destinations that can not be reached by train (for example, Agadir, Essaouira, Ouarzazate), the ticket office at the train station will offer you a connecting bus service by their affiliate company Supratours. Their stations are located next to train station and their buses are safe and comfortable.

You can check the train and Supratours bus schedule and prices of tickets at www.oncf.ma.

Rabat-Sale Tram

the new tramway network connecting Rabat and Sale was launched in 2011. At present time there are 2 lines, and modern comfortable tramways are a convenient and fast way to travel from Agdal to Hassan and Medina areas of Rabat, as well as to the city center of Sale. You can check the tram network layout and schedule at every tram station. You have to buy a ticket in the ticket office at the station before getting on a tram. One ride will cost you 6 dh.

Petit Taxi

The petit taxis, recognizable from their blue color in Rabat, are ideal for travel within the city. They are meter operated (always demand that the meter be running and do not allow to driver to demand a flat rate). They can be stopped on the street by calling out or waving to them. They have a maximum capacity of three passengers. They are not licensed to travel between Rabat and Salé. Prices are subject to a 50% increase at night (after 8 pm in Winter or 9 pm in Summer).

Grand Taxi

The "grand taxi" are white Mercedes 240 sedans that can take up to 6 people. They have fixed routes within the city or between cities and a fixed price per car for each destination. The price of a ride within Rabat/Sale is 4dh (5 dh at night). You will probably want to pay for 2 seats to have more comfort.

Coach

It is recommended to use two major Moroccan bus companies that are safe, comfortable and travel precisely according to schedule: CTM and Supratours. CTM station in Rabat is located next to Al Qamra coach station (Gare Routiere Al Qamra) at Avenue Hassan II. You can get there from city center by bus, grand taxi or petit taxi. You can check CTM schedule and prices at www.ctm.ma. At Al Qamra coach station there are plenty of cheaper bus companies offering their service for all major cities of Morocco. However, most of them are extremely old and uncomfortable and have no air conditioning, while their departure and travel time is rather unpredictable.

City bus service

City buses are a good and cheap transport system to get about in Rabat. A ride in a bus will cost you 4dh. But understanding bus schedules and routes can be a bit difficult. Bus stations offer easy access to information about routes, schedules and bus numbers. You can also check city bus map at www.reseaustareo.ma.

SOME USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT RABAT

Cultural Life and Entertainment

There are plenty of opportunities for cultural life and entertainment in Rabat. The most convenient Internet resource to know the cultural agenda in Morocco is www.babelfan.ma.

You can listen to classical music and see dance and drama in the **National Theatre of Mohammed V** located in Hassan area. The price of tickets is quite moderate (usually between 50 and 150 dh). Download the

program at www.tnmv.ma.

National Library of Morocco hosts a number of exhibitions, concerts and other cultural activities every month in its modern building. Check the program at www.bnrm.ma.

Villa des Arts of Rabat is a museum and a stage for cultural events representing both modern and traditional Moroccan and international culture. Get more information at www.fondationona.ma/vdarabat.htm.

CDG Art Gallery was opened in 2010 and hosts exhibitions of painting, sculpture and photography.

There are two cinemas in Rabat, **Cinema Royal** and **7eme Art**, both of them in Hassan area, where you can see movies in French and Arabic. Ticket price is around 20 dh. Check the program at www.ocine.ma.

There is a number of **cultural centers** in Rabat that offer cultural activities (lectures, round tables, exhibitions, projection of movies, musical concerts, etc.) on a weekly basis. You can check their program online:

- Institut Francais www.ifrabat.org
- Instituto de Cervantez www.rabat.cervantes.es
- Instituto Italiano di Cultura www.iicrabat.esteri.it
- Goethe Institut www.goethe.de/rabat
- British Council www.britishcouncil.org/morocco-events-local.htm
- American Language Center www.alcrabat.org

Festivals

Mawazine is a big festival of world music that takes place annually in *May* in Rabat, featuring Arab and international music icons. The festival is held on several stages throughout the city and featured such world stars like Sting, Shakira, Alicia Keys, Kylie Minogue. Most of the concerts are for free.

Jazz au Chellah is an annual jazz festival that takes place in *June* at the magnificent historical site of Chellah in Rabat and unites at one stage European and Moroccan musicians.

Restaurants and Cafes

There are dozens of cafes and restaurants scattered throughout the city where a decent meal can be had cheaply.

Tips. In some restaurants a service charge of 10 - 15% is listed as a separate item on the bill (not to be confused with the T.V.A., a 19% government tax which may also be added in some cases). If this service is not included in the bill it is normal to leave a 10 - 15% tip for the waiter provided the service was up to par.

Fast foods usually offer salads, panini, sandwiches, steaks, brochettes, grilled chicken, omelets.

Traditional Moroccan restaurants. Traditional Moroccan restaurants are often housed in hotels or splendid villas that look more like palaces. For 100- 250 dh you can have a sumptuous feast frequently accompanied by Berber or Andalusian rhythms and dancing.

International cuisine. In Rabat, there are many restaurants offering Italian, Mexican, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and other international fare. Most of them are located in Agdal area.

International fast food chains. There are also familiar western chains like McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Dominos, and Southern Fried Chicken in Souissi and Agdal.

Religious Services

There is a praying room at school and 2 mosques walking distance from the school building and everywhere throughout Morocco. They are open during prayer times and close between prayers. There is one Presbyterian, one Catholic and one Orthodox churches in Rabat. There is also a synagogue in Centreville.

CULTURAL ISSUES

Male-Female Relations

Relations between men and women in Morocco differ considerably from those in Europe. Students should try to be sensitive to these differences, as misunderstandings can lead to hurt feelings, resentment, and, occasionally, physically threatening situations. Strong, non-romantic friendships between members of the opposite sex are far less common in Morocco than in Europe, and these are generally formed and maintained

within the structure of family gatherings, work, or school. The occasional couples you will see walking together or in cafes are most often married or dating - a practice which is still not as common or open in Rabat as in other major Moroccan cities.

This is not to say that male-female friendships do not exist, however, as many students have developed many lifelong friendships in the hotel lounge and through their families. Should you be interested in something more intimate than a platonic friendship, whether you're male or female, make sure you know what you're getting into! Outside of schoolyard flirtations, much of the dating that does go on in Rabat occurs with marriage as the eventual aim. Some couples, in fact, are not allowed to date until after their engagement. If you have no intention of getting married, it's wise to make sure that the other interested party (and his or her family!) shares your feelings.

Culture Shock

Your time abroad will be a wonderful way of enriching and diversifying your education. You will learn a tremendous amount simply from living in a new social and cultural environment as well as from the local people you meet and your fellow classmates and from life as it unfolds.

The golden rule is: be patient, don't panic and allow yourself to settle slowly into the culture. When traveling things don't always go as planned: missed flights, long delays, getting lost, and not being able to communicate effectively.

Minor problems may quickly assume the proportions of major crises, and you may find yourself growing somewhat depressed. You may feel an anxiety that comes from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social interaction, a kind of psychological disorientation. You may indeed be experiencing what has come to be referred to as "Culture Shock". Such feelings are perfectly normal, so, knowing this and with a bit of conscious effort, you will soon find yourself making adjustments that will enable you to adapt to your new cultural environment.

Whether you are a complete beginner or even an advanced speaker in another language, a little preparation can really help you get the most out of your language program. Below is some advice, which might ease the transition into a new culture and make learning the language a little easier. Learning another language isn't easy; it takes time, and practice. Go into each class with the goal of increasing your communication skills. If you're a complete beginner, buy a phrase book and learn some basic expressions in either *darija* (Moroccan dialect) or French and learn phrases such as: "Please" *aa-fack*, "Thank you" *Shukran*, "Where is..." *Fin ...?*, "How much..." *b's hal...?*, etc. Knowing these phrases and using hand gestures effectively will help you in daily life. For intermediate or advanced speakers, we recommend learning as much vocabulary as possible before you go. Your language instruction will focus mainly on grammar, conversation and listening.

There is diversity of non-verbal communication styles throughout the world. It is not only words that are important but how body language and expression are used as well. In Morocco, you often voice a welcome when entering a store. Also, informal dress when attending cultural events is considered disrespectful.

The best tool for learning a language at any level is a good attitude. Understanding the culture helps language acquisition. Don't be afraid to make mistakes, they are great to learn from and can be funny too! A sense of humor really helps.

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

The country code for Morocco is 212

Ambulance: 15

Fire: 15

Poison Control: 0537 686 464

Police: 177

Clinique Agdal: 0537-77-01-00

UK Embassy, Rabat 0(537) 720905 UK Consulate, Casablanca 0(522) 203316

US Embassy, Rabat 0(537)762265, Fax: 765661 US Consulate, Casablanca 0(522) 264550