

# Morocco

*A Reading A-Z Level Z Leveled Book*  
*Word Count: 1,371*

LEVELED BOOK • Z

# Morocco

## Connections

### Writing

Research more about the current Moroccan government. Write an essay that includes information about the monarch and prime minister and how they work together for the Moroccan people.

### Social Studies and Art

Make a map of Morocco. Divide your map into different geographic regions and include details that are significant to each area.

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# Morocco

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## Focus Question

Why is Morocco an interesting country to study?

## Words to Know

architecture	Islamic
cuisines	lagoon
descendant	oases
dynasties	prime minister
gender	secular
handspring	strait

Front cover: A rural Moroccan landscape

Title page: A resident looks out at the old section of the Moroccan city of Ait-Ben-Haddou.

Page 3: A market in Tangier, Morocco

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### Correlation

#### LEVEL Z

Fountas & Pinnell	U-V
Reading Recovery	N/A
DRA	50



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## Where Is It?

Morocco is a country on the coast of northwestern Africa, with shorelines along both the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. It is slightly smaller than the European country of Spain.

In Africa, Morocco's neighbors are Algeria to the east and southeast, and a territory called Western Sahara along its southern edge. Morocco and Spain are separated by the **Strait** of Gibraltar, a narrow channel that connects the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. At the Strait of Gibraltar's narrowest point, Spain is only about 13 kilometers (8 mi.) away from Morocco.



The capital of Morocco is Rabat, which is located on the Atlantic coastline at the mouth of the Bou Regreg River, right next to its sister city of Salé. Rabat has a long history stretching back to the twelfth century, and the mix of French and **Islamic architecture** that exists in the city reflects its past.

Rabat is no longer a major port due to a buildup of silt in the mouth of the Bou Regreg River, but for centuries it was a site of much sea traffic—and not all of the activity there was legal. The cities of Rabat and Salé were a hub for pirates from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. They ranged the seas along the coasts of Spain, Italy, England, Ireland, and Iceland.



A wall (left) surrounds a section of the Moroccan capital city known as “Old Rabat.”



A musician performs on a street in Rabat. Music is important to Moroccan life.

## People

A little more than 33 million people live in Morocco, 60 percent of whom live in urban areas. Casablanca is the largest city, with a population of about 3.5 million. Tourism employs more people than other main industries such as mining and manufacturing. In rural areas, agriculture provides employment for about one-third of Moroccans. With plenty of farmland and a mild climate, Morocco stands out among its neighboring countries for its ability to grow crops.

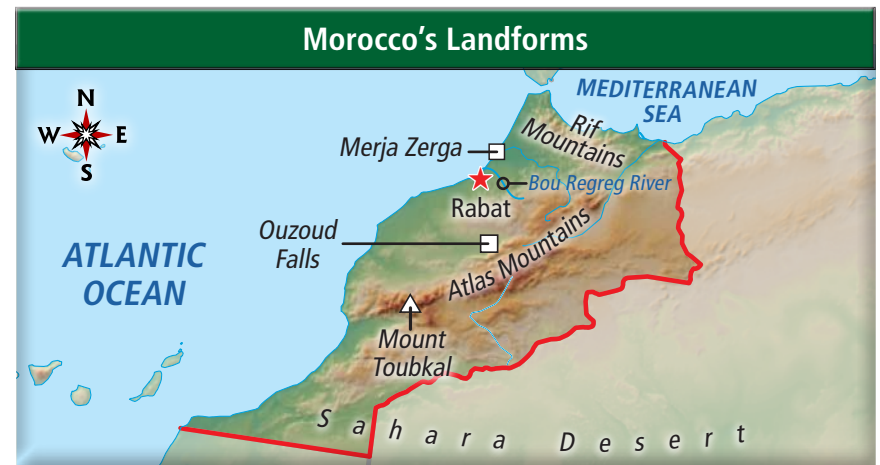
In urban areas, many Moroccan men enjoy getting together in cafés to visit and watch soccer matches on television. Soccer has replaced traditional horsemanship competitions as the most popular sport in Morocco. In large cities, people also enjoy going to see movies, eating in restaurants, shopping in stores or open-air markets, and going to the beach.

Moroccans are mostly of Berber (native people of the region) descent, Arabic descent, or a mixture of both. There are many young people in Morocco—almost half of the population is under the age of twenty-four.

Morocco is a very religious country. Islam is the official religion, and 99 percent of the population is Muslim. Moroccan law consists of both Islamic and **secular** laws. In 2004, Morocco changed its laws to give women more rights. As a result of these laws, Morocco has one of the highest levels of **gender** equality among Arab countries.



The sign for the Princess Lalla Meryem School, named after a Moroccan president's daughter, is in three languages.



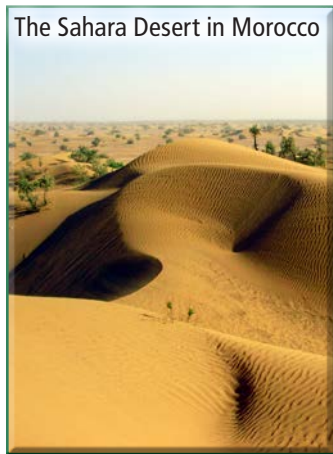
### Land

Even with Morocco's Atlantic and Mediterranean coastlines, much of the land is at an elevation high above sea level. There are two major mountain ranges in Morocco: the Atlas Mountains in the middle of the country, and the Rif Mountains in the north. The tallest mountain in Morocco is Mount Toubkal, which is 4,165 meters (13,665 ft.) high. The mountain ranges receive a lot of rain and snow, which creates a large number of streams.

The climate in Morocco varies drastically, from mild Mediterranean temperatures in northern areas and along the coasts to desert conditions in the south. Temperatures in the coastal areas range from 18°C to 28°C (64°F–82°F). Inland areas can be extreme, with temperatures often more than 35°C (95°F) in summer and sometimes dropping below freezing in winter.

A hot wind called the *sharqī* (shar-KEE) blows out of the Sahara Desert in late spring or early summer. The *sharqī* increases the temperatures, often causing heat waves as high as 41°C (106°F).

The Moroccan landscape is widely varied, ranging from mountains and waterfalls to coastal beaches and desert. In the areas with milder weather, forests cover the land. In some high mountain areas, there are forests of argan trees—a tree that only grows in Morocco. In contrast to the milder areas of Morocco, its Saharan area has few plants except in **oases**, where people grow date palms.

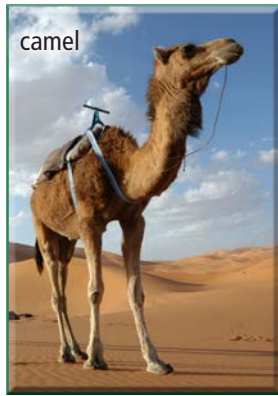


## History

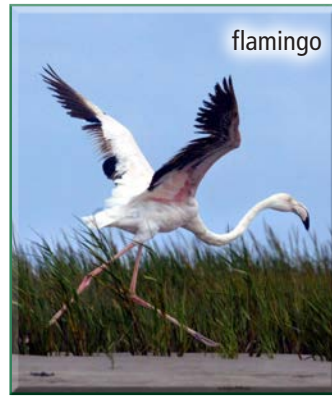
More than twelve hundred years ago, Islamic **dynasties** emerged in what is now Morocco when Idris I, a **descendant** of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, came to the area from the Middle East. Idris took control from the native people of the region, the Berbers. Later Muslim kingdoms controlled parts of what is today Spain until Catholic rulers forced them out in 1492. After more than a thousand years of independence, Morocco found itself subject to political powers of Europe. Spain established control along the Moroccan coast in 1884. Following civil unrest in Morocco, the rest of the country came under French control in 1912. The French promised to share their military strength and protect the standing of the Moroccan royal house. Morocco was under French rule until 1956.

Today, Morocco has both a king and a **prime minister**. In the 1970s, Spain gave the desert area of Western Sahara to Morocco and Mauritania. Since then, Morocco has fought armed battles with Algeria and Western Saharan groups over this land. The area is a harsh desert, but beneath the barren landscape lie valuable minerals, which could make the country that controls them very rich. Morocco claims and controls most of Western Sahara, but many people still question its claim today.





camel



flamingo

## Animals

Morocco hosts an impressive variety of bird life. Visitors to Merja Zerga (MUR-zhah ZUR-kah), a **lagoon** on Morocco's Atlantic coast, can see huge flocks of herons, flamingos, and ducks. The birds are especially numerous in the winter.

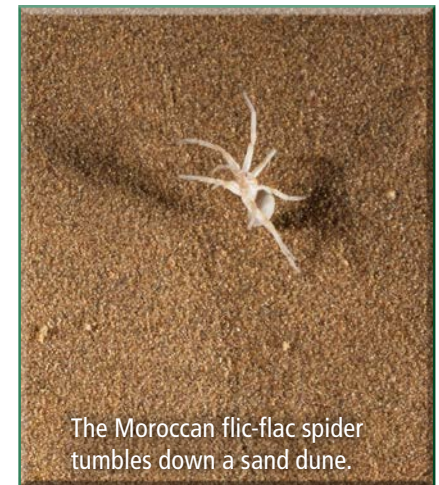
Northern Africa is home to single-humped camels, or *dromedaries*, which thrive in Morocco. They play an important part in the country's tourist industry. Visitors can take a trek through the countryside on a camel.

The Barbary macaque (muh-KAK), a forest-dwelling monkey, is another species living in Morocco. Barbary macaques are interesting among macaques because the male monkeys help take care of the young members of their group. Barbary macaques also live across the Strait of Gibraltar in Spain and are the only monkeys living in Europe.



The fennec fox's large ears help it release body heat to stay cool.

Other interesting animals dwell in Morocco's deserts. For example, fennec foxes, the smallest type of fox in the world, live in the Sahara in Morocco. Fennec foxes are active at night to beat the desert heat. The Moroccan desert is also home to a spider with a very unusual skill. When the spider feels threatened, it flings itself end over end in a manner that is similar to a gymnast's **handspring**, or "flic-flac." The spider can do this flipping move forward or backward, and can even use it to travel uphill. When performing this tricky move, the spider can cover 2 meters (6.6 ft.) per second, twice as fast as it usually travels.



The Moroccan flic-flac spider tumbles down a sand dune.

## Food

People from around the world enjoy Moroccan food, which contains elements of Spanish, French, Berber, and Arab **cuisines**. One of the Moroccan main dishes is couscous, which is a tiny round pasta. As in other Arab countries, people serve bread with meals. Moroccans use a special clay pot called a *tagine* (tah-ZHEEN) to cook many dishes. The word *tagine* appears in the names of dishes people cook in this type of pot.



chicken tagine

Meat is plentiful in Morocco and is featured in dishes such as kebobs of many varieties and a lamb stew that people serve during the holy month of Ramadan. Another popular meat dish is *b'stillah* (buh-STI-lah), which is a pastry filled with pigeon meat and topped with sugar. People also eat fish regularly in coastal areas.

Tomatoes, onions, peppers, and eggplant are hallmark vegetables of Moroccan cuisine. The flavors of garlic, olives, lemons, and spices such as saffron, cumin, coriander, and cinnamon are often present in Moroccan food. People often wash down their meals with mint tea or black coffee.



The city of Casablanca shines at night.

## Conclusion

Morocco is a land with an ancient history, filled with snowy mountains, sunbaked desert dunes, and inviting beaches. The different areas are home to a variety of interesting animals. Due to its location, tourists to this unique land find Morocco a bridge to Africa as well as a gateway to Europe. Morocco stands out in the region for its mild climate in the north, its strong ability to grow crops, its reforms regarding gender equality, and its delicious, world-famous cuisine.





**Population:** 33,322,699

**Land:** 446,300 square kilometers  
(172,317 sq. mi.)

**Capital City:** Rabat

**Primary Languages:** Arabic, Berber

**Primary Religion:** Islam

**Name of Currency:** dirham



Source: Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook (2016)

## Glossary

<b>architecture</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the design and construction of buildings (p. 5)
<b>cuisines</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	ways of cooking; foods cooked in certain ways or in the styles of specific countries (p. 13)
<b>descendant</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the offspring of a particular person or group that lived in the past (p. 10)
<b>dynasties</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	series of rulers from the same families in a country (p. 10)
<b>gender</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the state of being male or female; males as a group or females as a group (p. 7)
<b>handspring</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a tumbling move made by jumping to land on one's hands and swinging the legs up and over the body to land back on one's feet (p. 12)
<b>Islamic</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	of or relating to the monotheistic faith of Muslims (p. 5)
<b>lagoon</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a shallow, calm body of water between a reef and the shoreline (p. 11)
<b>oases</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	fertile places with water in a desert (p. 9)
<b>prime minister</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the leader of the government in most countries that have a parliament (p. 10)
<b>secular</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	not religious or related to spiritual things (p. 7)
<b>strait</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a narrow passage of water connecting two large areas of water (p. 4)