

Land Rover Expeditions
Morocco Radio Script

MOROCCO.- Welcome to the land of extraordinary extremes. Don't be surprised to see people riding donkeys while talking on their mobile phones.

The name Morocco derives from Marrakech, a city that we'll be visiting and, as they say, the most moroccan of the cities.

The name of the country in moroccan is Al-Magrib, or the land where the sun sets. And this is because when they named this land, everyone was sure that the western coast of Africa was the end of the world. 31 million people live in the country.

We will probably be able to see, in the distance, (on the left hand side), Mt. Toubkal, the highest point in Morocco and also famed as North Africa's highest summit. 4167 m (13.671 ft).

We'll be telling you more about the country as we drive to our next destination. And please, feel free to ask as many questions as you like.

RURAL HOUSING.- When we drive through a village, we'll see the typical morrocan house. The roof is flat and packed with baked mud. It has one or two floors with bamboo ceilings. Most of them only one, because people living in the country areas are not wealthy. The bottom is for the animals, pit latrine, the oven and the kitchen. The floor spaces are both eating and sleeping areas. During the summer nights, the roof is used when it is very hot indoors. And it can get really hot here, this flats can bake you dry when the temperatures reach up to 45 degrees. The bricks for the construction are made with cooked mud and straw. The straw is meant to cool the brick. Because of the wind and the rain, this type of construction has to go through some kind of maintenance once a year. The mosque has a tower, and most every town has, at least, one mosque.

DON'TS.- Things that you shouldn't do in Morocco:

Stay away from mosques, religious monuments and cemeteries. They are off limits to non-Muslims.

Don't talk about the royal family, Israel and Palestine, the Western Sahara and sexual etiquette. If you do so, you are skating on very thin ice.

The left hand is used for personal hygiene after using the toilet and should never touch food or money, and it is not to be used in contact with others.

But these codes as much more relaxed in larger cities. And Morocco is one of the planet's most tolerant Islamic societies.

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Never take pictures of people without permission. In some places photography is considered a blasphemy while in others a camera will make you the Pied Piper.

You are walking into a mine field if you point your camera at anything that looks military or strategic, such as airports, bridges, government buildings or members of the police or armed forces.

WHAT IS AN ARAB?.- Many people find it difficult to distinguish between the Muslim world, the Arab world, the Middle East and even the Gulf States. Well, let's try to clarify all these:

- The Muslim world includes any part of the world where Islam is the main religion. This, includes North Africa where we are, (Somalia, Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Indonesia).

- The Arab world are those nations where Arabic is the main language, but different religions coexist. (Lebanon)

- The Middle East is the center of the Arab world. Far, far away from here. The original Arabs come from Yemen, in the south of the Arabian peninsula. The word "arab" means "nomad" because the first arabs were moving with their animals from place to place. From the Arabian Peninsula, the language and the religion spread.

And the label "Gulf State" is reserved for the six Arab states that make up the Arabian Peninsula. Because of the petrol, the Gulf States are some of the richest countries in the world. Although Iraq is an Arab state with shores on the Persian Gulf, it has never been considered a member of the club for political reasons.

Morocco is, therefore, part of the Muslim world and the Arab world. We can summarize all this saying that "muslim" has to do with religion, and "arab" with the language.

KASBAHS.- There are some ruins on top of the hill, right in front of us. It used to be is a Kasbah. And a kasbah is more or less a castle. We'll have the chance to see kasbahs in better conditions.

Some of them were initially military buildings. Garrisons. Others were the place for the local leader to live and as a defense when the town was under attack. Kasbahs have high walls and little windows, or no windows at all.

They are not very old. Most of them were built in the 17th and 18th centuries.

CURRENCY: If you are thinking of shelling out some money, you need to know that one pound equals 12 dirhams. Dirham is the name of the currency here.

HISTORY.- The principal inhabitants of northern Africa were the "berbers". But "berber" was a name given by the romans

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to the people living here. And not a nice name, because "berber" comes from "barbarian" and "barbarian", as you know, is a term for an inciviliced person, meaning someone who "babbles" when trying to speak. The romans didn't understand a word of the berber, language, therefore the name.

But anyway, their origin remains obscure. Berbers are very proud people, and when talking to them, they'll make clear that they are NOT arabs, some of them say they are not even moroccans. More than half of the population in Morocco is berber. Their language is also different from arabic, althouth it comes from the same family of languages.

The area was part of the Roman Empired for 5 centuries. When the Romans left, the berbers regained power over the land... until the second half of the 7th century, when the arab soldiers of the profet Mohammed came from the Arabian Peninsula. The soldiers were followed by a wave of Arab inmigrants in search of economic opportunity. The berbers, in order to make their own life easier, left their old religion and turned muslims.

Portugal controled for a while every major moroccan seaport.

In 1912 Morocco was declared French Protectorate. Spain also had some territories in Morocco and 10% of the country became Spanish Protectorate.

But Moroccans didn't want to be tamed by europeans and soon started their resistance. In 1956 the Protectorate came to an end. Spain kept the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, in the north. Both cities became property of the Spanish crown on the 16th century and now-a-days they still belong to Spain. And there is the WESTERN SAHARA, from where the Spaniards were evicted in 1975. The area is huge and it is calimed by Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania. It consists mainly of Desert flatlands, but it is a mineral rich region. Phosphorus is obtained for use in agriculture as fertilizaers, and industry. But also used in military applications as incendiary bombs, smoke screening, smoke bombs and tracer ammunition.

The UN doesn't really know how to deal with the situation in the Western Sahara.

KUBAS.- Right after the roundabout, on the right hand side, there is a mosque, but we'd like to point out the white building on the left hand side. It as a round roof. It looks like a chapel, more or less.

Well, you will see buildings like that here and there. They are not obviously chapels, they are mausoleums.

The person burried there, most of the times a man, used to be someone considered a saint, a holly person according to his neighbours. So when this person died, instead of having

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a normal funeral and be buried without any frills, his followers built what we are about to see.

Once a year, the whole village gathers there to pray and commemorate the life of his saint.

These buildings are called Kubas, and people come also here seeking for advise or a cure, because moroccans consider their saints to be wisemen and doctors.

HIGHWAY.- This new highway is still under construction. It will link the northern cities with Agadir, on the south coast. Agadir is a popular destination for tourists and the main fishing harbour in Morocco.

CHICHAOUA.- There is not much to say about this town. It is in the middle of a very dry area, may be that's the reason why the city attracted people from the south of Morocco, called "Saharaouis" or "people from the desert". Sahara means desert, so when we say the Sahara desert, we are really saying the Desert Desert.

Anyway, most of the saharawis work here at the cement factory.

And from here we are half an hour away from the coffee stop.

This is the highway that, in the near future, will link Marrakech and Essaouira. The cities are 100 miles apart. On the old road it was a 3 hour trip, because the traffic is heavy with big lorries, but when the new highway is completed, the trip will take one and a half hours.

HOUSE PRICES.- The price of the houses on our right hand side, if you'd like to buy one, is 44.000 pounds per house.

And talking about money:

The salary of a policeman is 240 pounds a month.

Somebody working in a bank or a company clerck makes 500-600.

A recepcionist in a nice hotel, 250 pounds.

The price of a donkey: 150 pounds.

The price of a camel: much more expensive than a donkey: 1500 pounds.

Diesel: 0.70 pence per liter.

SIDI MOJTA.- Sidi means mister, and Mojta is a name. So we are in the city of Mister Mojta. It is the most important carpet making town in Morocco. We are going to have a break here, and we will have the chance to take a look at some carpets and also the way they make them.

For your information, an average carpet 3x2 meters, costs about 400 pounds. But you can find smaller ones.

One thing about carpets that carpet makers usually don't mention: according to the muslims, only Allah (God) is perfect, so even the most beautiful carpets should have

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some imperfections, and berbers weave one, according to the tradition.

We will also enjoy the typical moroccan mint tea.

ARGAN TREES.- Now we are entering Argan tree country. The argan tree once covered the whole of north Africa. Now it is endangered and under protection of UNESCO. The tree grows 8 to 10 meters high (25 to 30 feet), and it lives for about 150 to 200 years. The oldest it gets, the less fruit it produces. The fruit is one to two inches long and it contains one to three small oil rich seeds. With the seed, the moroccans make argan oil, which is valued for its cosmetic, nutritive and medicinal properties. Argan oil is quite expensive. A pint costs 20 pounds. The trees are growing back again. Moroccans used to cut them for wood, but now a days and due to the interest of some cosmetic companies in Europe, they really pamper these trees because they bring a lot of money.

GOATS CLIMBING ON TREES.- You can see that they have been tied. Tomorrow we might see goats freely climbing on trees. They climb because they like to eat the leaves that are more tender.

LANDSCAPE.- Little by little the landscape is changing due to the influence of the Atlantic ocean and also because of last winter's heavy rains. The fields are wheat fields, and they are turning from green to yellow. (First rotations. Last rotations the fields are all yellow or even harvested.

COOPERATIVES.- You will see a lot of signs saying in French "female cooperative". They are little companies ran by women and they work on the argan oil industry. The government loaned money to the women at a very low interest.

MOVIES.- And now we are going to take you to the movies. We will run a little quiz show. Norman has volunteered to pay the beers to the winner. Let me ask you a question: are there any movie fans in the convoy?

If I say that one of the most accomplished dramatic artists of the 20th century, film director, writer, actor and producer, was here, and that he was an American from Wisconsin, you will know that I'm talking about... In 1938 the broadcast of "The War of the Worlds" brought him instant fame... Orson Welles. Essaouira was one of his filming locations for his Othello. The opening scene was filmed in the town walls. There is a square on the seafront named Orson Welles.

And now is the turn of a very popular English filmmaker and producer, from Leytonstone, London... He pioneered many

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techniques in the suspense and psychological thrillers... Sir Alfred Hitchcock chose Marrakech for "The man who knew too much".

The Italian movie director Bernardo Bertolucci filmed in Tangier most of his "The Sheltering Sky" starring Debra Winger &... for his roles in "Places in the heart" and "In the line of fire" he received academy award nominations... John Malcovich. The sheltering sky is a novel by the New Yorker Paul Bowles, who lived in Tangier for more than 50 years.

And there is this one place, close to the city of Ouarzazate, at the gates of the desert, and which is the film capital of Morocco. Many movies have been filmed here, the most famous ones: Lawrence of Arabia, starring... Peter O'Toole and Omar Shariff. Jesus of Nazareth and, more recently, "Gladiator" (2000) and "Black Hawk down" (2001) both of them directed by ... Ridley Scott

Casablanca is the biggest city in Morocco with 5 million people, and I bet you are thinking about the movie "Casablanca" with... Humphry Bogart and the beautiful girl from Stockholm, Ingrid Bergman. Well, sorry to disappoint you, but it was filmed in California, at the Warner Brothers studios. Casablanca is a Spanish name meaning White House. And they were not the Spaniards the ones who named the city. Casablanca used to be called Dar al-Baida, white house in Arabic, but the Moroccan king, Mohamed III in 1781, changed the name in commemoration of a Spanish trade agreement.

ESSAOUIRA.- We are approaching Essaouira. Let me tell you now about the city because we'll soon be splitting the convoy in two in order to make easier our arrival at the hotel.

Pop: 50.000. It is the most popular of the Atlantic coastal towns and the most romantic city in Morocco.

Inside the town walls there is a labyrinth of narrow lanes, houses, workshops and squares. Essaouira is also Morocco's best known windsurfing and kite surfing center.

We can tell we are getting close to Essaouira because of the colors of the houses. You can see that the main colors are blue and white. Even the taxis are painted with these colors.

Some of the cities in Morocco have their own color. Essaouira, as I said, is blue and white. Why? I don't know. We've tried to find out, and after a lot of asking, talking and researching we came up with three plausible reasons:

One.- Blue, due to the proximity of the drink.

Two.- Blue, because the boats loaded with indigo departed from Essaouira on their way to Europe.

Three.- Because of the Jewish influence in the city, and blue and white are the colors of the Jewish.

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HISTORY.- Essaouira has a long history. The Phoenicians were here around the 7th century BC. There were already 30.000 people living here in the year 450 BC. At the end of the 15th century, the Portuguese built the ramparts and established a commercial and military bridge head. They named it Mogador, (watch tower, in Phoenician), but according to other historians the name Mogador comes from a shrine after a saint called Sidi Mogatur. Most of what we can see today was built in 1765, when the ruling sultan hired a french architect to create a city for foreing trade. The sultan liked what he saw and he renamed the city Essaouira, meaning "well designed". The city became an important commercial link between Timbuctu and Europe. When the French protectorate was established in 1912, the town was renamed Mogador. But with the independence in 1956, it again became Essaouira. The old town is laid out on a simple grid system, so it is very easy to orientate yourself. Up on the wall there is a nice walkway with great views out to sea. It is a popular place to watch the sun disappear over the horizon.

The harbour is worth a wander, and if you are lucky you will catch the fish auction. It takes place in the market hall. (Just outside the port gates 15:00-17:00 mon-sat). Off the coast, to the SW, is the Mogador Island, with another massive fortification, a mosque and a prison. Nobody lives there now, only falcons that can be seen through binoculars at sunset. (Eleanora). In Essaouira many hippies can be found all year round. During the winter lots of people from Europe drive all the way down here with their motorhomes to spend the cold season.

Jimmy Hendrix visited Essaouira in 1968, two years before he died in London when he was only 27. Now a days, the city is home of a large community of artists.

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Today we are going to be heading to Argan tree country and also

to olive tree country. For coffee we'll be stopping at an oil mill and learn about the process of making oil. Lunch will be in a peculiar place. An oasis hidden in a small valley. After lunch we will be heading for the beach, where the most challenging part of the trip is waiting for us: the sand and the dunes.

ECONOMY.- Morocco is heavily dependent on agriculture. Argan oil is a fundamental source of income in this area, but the first industry is the phosphate, mined in the Western Sahara, the problematic area I was telling you about yesterday. The second strongest industry is tourism. The government wants to attract 10 million tourists by the

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year 2012. Also lots and lots of Moroccans working in Europe send money to support their families here. Slow but steady progress is under way. Very soon every village will have electricity and new roads are being constructed everywhere along with hospitals and schools. Morocco exports, unofficially, nearly 100 tons of hashish to Europe each year.

FAMILY.- For Moroccans, family is paramount. Grown children stay at home most of the times. When women marry they go to live with their husband's family. If you make friends with locals be prepared to meet their family and friends, and to admire photos of their friend's nephew's fourth cousin who is living in ... Holland. You will always be offered, at least, a cup of tea.

Body contact plays an important role. Handshakes are an icebreaker, followed by placing your right hand over your heart. Close friends kiss up to four times. Two guys walking holding hands doesn't mean anything... funny, if you get my drift...

A man is not supposed to kiss a woman when he is introduced to her. That happens in Mediterranean countries in Europe.

WOMEN.- Moroccan women have seen tremendous changes in the last ten years while preserving islamic tradition.

But, for instance, in theory, women have a lot of don'ts, such as: don't dance in public, don't smoke, don't show your hair, don't look a man in the eye or don't challenge your husband.

In the remote countryside a woman is not supposed to be treated by a male physician. In in some places arranged weddings remain commonplace, though the lawful age has been increased to 16. Husbands and fathers still dominate their wives and daughters. A high degree of modesty is demanded when it comes to dressing, but tourists women are generally excused for cultural blunders, specially in big cities. But on the other hand, women obtain college degrees, run for office, marry whom they choose, receive maternity benefits, can initiate a divorce, open bank accounts, travel on their own or dress more liberally.

According to the reformed Family Law of 2004, a wife is no longer legally obliged to obey her husband.

We can really tell things are changing because the major or Marrakech is a woman. In Morocco, poligamy is forbidden.

HARVEST.- Here they harvest by hand, with sickles. Most of the weat has already been harvested. Depending on where you come from, it might be early for you, but you have to consider the latitud and also that there are different types of weat.

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Do women harvest? Yes they do. And they also pick up the grains on the field after the harvesting is done, so nothing is left on the ground. But women do a lot more: They look after the kids, do the house chores, milk the cows, tend the cattle, or make carpets. Women don't have a break.

BERBERS.- The folks living on these valleys are berbers. As you may recall, yesterday I said that berbers were the first inhabitants of what is today Morocco. They were pushed away by the arabs from the more fertile lands down in the valleys to the mountains. This land is very rich in underground water, aquifers is the technical name. When the arabs came here they didn't know a word about the aquifers and the land was not as fertile as it is right now.

A lot of berbers have facial tattoos. They are applied to ward off evil spirits that may try to enter through facial orifices.

Berber women don't cover their faces. Even though they turned muslims many years ago, they still stick to some of the customs of their old religion.

SAINT.- On the left hand side, on the corner, there is one of those "chapels" I was telling you about yesterday, with one saint buried.

RELIGION.- Islam is much more than a religion. It is a way of life, a code of living standards and also the basis of the law. Friday is their holyday. Many businesses are closed or have an extended lunch break on the afternoon to go to the mosque. But many other businesses, such as banks, stick to the Monday through Friday work week.

Islam is very simple compared, for instance, with christianism. The doctrine of Trinity, the "Three in One" has baffled christians for centuries. To convert, all you have to do is say a little prayer three times in front of two witnesses and accept the five pillars of the Islam. These five pillars are:

1 (Shahada) You must believe that there is no god but Allah and Mohammed his prophet.

2 (Sala) Pray five times a day facing the holy city of Mecca.

3 Zakat) Give money to the needy.

4 (Sawm) Observe the month of Ramadan.

5 (Hichcha) Make the pilgrimage to Mecca.

- The first pillar is a phrase commonly heard as part of the call, or prayer. This first part of the sentence, "Allah-o-Akbar" which literally means "Allah is great" is an exclamation useful for any time or situation. It's the sentence you need to say to become muslim.

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- The second, praying five times a day, can be done anywhere, as long as the muslim faces Mecca. Most people think that Muslims pray facing the east, but they pray facing the Holy City of Mecca, in Saudi Arabia. So yes, here in Morocco they face east, but Arabs in Indonesia face west, and Arabs living in Moscow face south. The most important prayer is the midday prayer on Fridays, in the mosque, followed by a sermon. But in other muslim nations, such as Saudi Arabia, life comes to a stop five times a day while people is praying. But before they pray in the mosque, they have to purify themselves. It is a complicated ritual where they wash hands, head and feet. And if there is no water, they can use sand, as a symbol.

- The third pillar, give money to the poor, is an essential part of the social teaching of Islam. In some muslim countries there is a special tax to give money to the needy.

- Ramadan is the ninth month of the muslim calendar. The month of fasting. (It commemorates the revelation of the Quram to Mohammed). Muslims as asked to abstain from sex, eating, drinking or smoking between dawn and dusk. Dawn until dusk is defined by whether there is enough daylight to tell the difference between a black thread and a white thread. And remember that the Muslim calendar goes with the moon. In other words, Ramadan falls on 10-11 days earlier every year according to our calendar and very soon it will be in summer.

You can imagine how hard it is not to drink anything when days are long and temperatures high. Fasting is a hard discipline and only people in good health are ask to participate. Children, pregnant women, travellers, people with illness or those doing hard physical work don't have to do it.

And then, the pinnacle of a muslim's life is the trip to Mecca, and the holy places around it. Ideally the pilgrim should go to Mecca the last month of the muslim year. The highlight of the trip is the visit to the Kaaba, the construction housing the stone of Ibrahim (Abraham) in the center of the complex. The faithful, dressed in white, circle the Kaaba seven times and then kiss the black stone, or try to kiss it. Due to the huge number of pilgrims, now it is not necessary to kiss the black stone, but just point at it. Throwing pebbles at large pilars was also done. The pilars represented the devil. For safety reasons, the pilars were changed to long walls, because the pebbles thrown from people in the last rows were hitting people on the firsts rows.

The pilgrims drink from the well in the center of the mosque. They also fill up bottles to bring some of that water back home.

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Then they must walk seven times from one hill to another. Now there is a tunnel with air conditioning between the hills.

Even with crowd control techniques there are accidents every year. The worst one happened in 1990 when nearly 1500 people died trampled. Anyway, these are only some of a series of acts of devotion carried out by pilgrims.

STAY YOUNG.- We cannot tell you how to find the philosopher's stone, but while we are in Argan tree country, and if any of you is interested, we can tell you the secret to stay young.

You have to cover your body with argan oil once a week, but most important: you have to lie about your age.

MOHAMMED.- He was born in Mecca, in 570. As an orphan kid, he grew up with his uncle, going through the desert on trading journeys. When he was 25 he married Khadiya, a wealthy 40 year old widow. They had 4 daughters, and only one of them, Fatima, had kids. Fatima was the Prophets' favorite. Muhammed started to preach in Mecca about the excess of riches, and the powerful merchants evicted him. In the year 622 Muhammed emigrated to Medina, and that's considered the beginning of the Islamic era. After a while he came back with an army to Mecca, his home town, where the merchants surrendered to him and converted.

Muhammed died without a successor, and that created a big problem. But according to muslims, Mohammed never died. He went to heaven riding his horse.

LANGUAGES IN MOROCCO.- The official language is Arabic. French is very used in the cities because the country was a french protectorate for 45 years. Many berbers on the mountains only speak their berber dialects. Hassan, our moroccan colleague, is a berber, and he speaks arabic, french and two berber dialects. Written Arabic is read from right to left. They have an alphabet with 28 letters, all of them consonants. Vowels are added by using dots or small lines. Across the Arab world the language varies very little, but Morocco is the exception to the rule. They have what they call the MSA or Modern Standard Arabic, and it is used by educated people here and differs quite a lot from the everyday language. An Arab from Irak will have little trouble discussing politics with an educated Moroccan, but might have difficulties ordering lunch.

SOUQ.- Yesterday we took a walk around the shopping mall in Essaouira. Souq is the arabic word for "market". A souq is basically a maze of narrow streets. You turn three corners and you are lost. The network of streets allows light only to penetrate through small openings, keeping the interior

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cool and well ventilated. But a souq is much more than a place of business. It is a social gathering place. A place to see and to be seen. In the old days the shops were grouped around the mosque in guilds. The shops close to the mosque used to sell objects for the rites of worship. Next were the book sellers. Then, clothing stalls, the domain of the richest and most influential merchants.

Finally the most ordinary wares, close to the wall and gates of the city; such as the ironmongers, blacksmiths, etc.

The potteries and tanneries were usually kept beyond the city walls because of the smell and the smoke they produced. Bargaining is a central part of Morocco's commercial culture. The most useful tool is patience. Vendors are expert performers. They'll make you think you are going to kill them with the price you offer. Never lose your temper and keep smiling.

MOSQUES.- The typical mosque has a courtyard, portico and main prayer hall, always facing Mecca. And remember that they are off limits to non-muslims. The tower has staircases for the prayer leader to climb to call to the faithful to prayer, but now-a-days a microphone saves them the effort. The oldest mosque in Morocco dates back from the 9th century and it is located at Fes, in the north of the country, but the most celebrated is the mosque, in Casablanca. I took seven years to build. It was inaugurated in 1993. It has room for 25.000 worshipers, but a further 80.000 can be accommodated in the grounds around the mosque. So more than 100.000 people can be praying there at the same time. That is not much if Casablanca's mosque is compared with the one in Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, with a capacity of 820.000 people. Anyway, the one in Morocco has the world's tallest tower, at (210 m or) 700 feet.

The king of Morocco wanted a mosque that would stand second only to Mecca. The government lacked the means to pay for it, so every Moroccan family had to give money, and that was not well received (behind closed doors, of course). You can imagine living in the sticks, with no infrastructure and having to pay for a monument you'll probably never visit.

LIMIT.- The valley below us is the limit of the province of Essaouira. It is also the limit of argan tree country. The trees in the background are pine trees. The name of the village is Imintlit and the little shops that are closed now belong to people living on the mountains, and they open them only once a week, when market day happens in the village.

FOOD IN MOROCCO.- Today we had for lunch Morocco's most traditional dish, "tajine". But if we have to talk about

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food in Morocco, there is a very important word, and this is "HALAL", and muslims must always eat halal food. Halal means legal and includes human behavior, speech communication, clothing, etc. But when it comes to food, it describes the food that can and cannot be eaten, as well as the proper way to slaughter animals for consumption. However, if there is no other food, a muslim is allowed to eat non halal food. The coran forbids to eat pork meat and blood. Alcohol is also forbidden. Animals must be slaughtered by qualified people. These people must use a clean knife, face Meca and say a prayer while they kill the animal by cutting the jugular vein with a swift and deep incision. Fish is always halal, or legal. Prickly pears are a very important part of the diet. They grow nearly anywhere in the country, during the summer season. The flower is yellow and the fruit is red. Since, as I said, they grow every where, moroccans can freely pick them up. They are also sold in cities, and they are very cheap.

TEA.- Mint tea is one of the essential elements of the Moroccan experience. But tea was introduced in Morocco by the british in the middle of the 19th century, during the Crimean War. UK merchants were frustrated by the blockades and unloaded the cargo from the Far East here at the ports of Tangier and Essaouira.

DATES.- They are staple food in northern Africa. They are delicious, healthy and nutritive. 70% of the fruit is sugar. There are more than 30 sorts of dates only in Morocco. They are harvested in November. The ones on the Marrakech palm trees are not edible. Dates grow in palm trees and we'll give you some facts about palm trees: Since 1870. north Africa has lost 75% of its palm trees due to a (fungal) disease. Also because of drought, demographic pressure and overgrazing, but mainly because of the disease.

Palm trees can bear fruit for more than 150 years. Every part of the palm tree is used: Dates for eating, flowers provide a very popular afrodisiac, trunk and leaves are used as building materials, sap for making a drink and the fibers are woven into ropes. Dates are so important because, legend has it, Mohammed was born in a palm grove. Ramadan fast is broken each night with a date and a glass of water.

BREAD.- Is sacred in Morocco. Many families bake their own bread. A piece of bread found in the street must be removed with a short prayer to Allah. But off the record, I still remember my grand mother making a cross on the bread with the knife before she cut it. And that could lead us to talk

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about the many similarities between christians and muslims, but we can discuss that during our next stop.

- One god
- Believer will go to heaven
- Non believers will go to hell
- There will be a final judgment
- Women covering their heads.
- Both pray facing the cradle of their religion (muslims facing Mecca and christians facing Jerusalem. All churches built between the 7th and 13th century have their apses facing east (apse is the semi-circular termination of the main bilding, where the altar is) so that the faithful believers could face Jerusalem while the priest celebrated the mass. And not too long ago, in the catholic rite, the priest was with his back to the people. That way, everyone was looking at the east. The only time the priest faced his... customers, was for the sermon.

Fasting. Muslims have the month of Ramadan. Christians used to

have Lent, a lot more severe in ancient times than today.

SIDI KAUKI, our next stop, is a very popular place for surfers and wind surfers. You will realise that as soon as you step into the coffee venue.

CAPE.- This cape here divides the territory between surfers and wind surfers.

SEAWEEEDS.- They collect them so that they can be sold as soap at the public baths.

JIMMY HENDRIX- This is the village where Jimmy Hendrix stayed in 1968. On the left hand side there is a little bar-restaurant, painted in red, commemorating his stay.

GOLF COURSE.- This building here will be the hotel of the golf course on our right hand side. The golf course was inaugurated a year ago.

ARAUCARIAS.- The trees on the right and left hand side are the official trees of Essaouira. They are called araucarias.

UNIVERSITY.- Here on the left hand side is the university of Essaouira.

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We are living the coast to go inland. Today's destination is the city of Taroudant. In order to reach it, we'll climb a pre-Atlas range of mountains.

KHEMIS MESKALA.- This city has a huge underground water reserve. They use the water to irrigate their lands, but now they have a big issue with the people from Essaouira, because they are piping the water from the aquifer to feed the golf course, and that is not being well received by the people here.

Tuesdays are busy because is market day. Markets happen once a week, and people from all the little villages around come here to do their shopping, selling or bartering.

BENT RAILING.- The railing on the bridge is bent because the water was over the bridge during last winter rains. Moi was here and he saw it, so you can ask him.

BUILDING.- The building is a hospital and also the bureau to arrange legal paperwork. It's still blue and white because the town belongs to the province os Essaouira.

KASBAH.- You can see the ruins of a Kasbah on top of the hill.

MOHAMMED VI rules the country. His picture is everywhere: hotels, restaurants, shops and so on. He has been on the throne ever since his father, Hassan II, died in 1999, and when Mohammed was 34 years old. He married a computer engeneer in 2002 and they have to kids, a boy and a girl. His dynasty, the Alawites, has been in power for nearly 350 years. He is the 17th king of the dynasty and he is a direct descendant of the Prophet. And now that we've mentioned the name Muhammed, it is the most common first name in the world. There are round about 30 million Muhammeds. In fact, it is so common in the Arabic world that if you want to get a man's attention but don't know his name, you address him as "Si Muhammed" (Mr. M) and he will respond!

BRIDGE.- The bridge was washed away last winter.

ANIMALS.- If you have the chance to take a close look at a camel, you will see that they have three eyelids to shield their eyes from sandstorms. But they are not really camels, they are dromedaries. Camels have two humps.

We haven't seen much wild life, but people who enjoy coloring their trips with close encounters of the crawling kind, are not disappointed here. But your first encounter with Morocco's reptiles is going to be at the souq in Marrakech. At the square in Marrakech, the snakes' mounths

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are stitched closed leaving tiny gaps for their tongues to flicker through. They develop mouth infections and they can't feed, so they are replaced very often. Scorpions hide under rocks. They will not sting unless provoked.

On the desert most species are either nocturnal or active only in the cool of dusk and dawn. And on the mountains there are apes, leopards, foxes, lynxes and mountain gazelles, but all of them very difficult to spot.

PRE-ATLAS.- This is a small range of mountains that we have to climb to get to Taroudant, today's final destination.

PLATEAU.- This plateau is about 3000 feet high, or 1000 meters above sea level. It has, mainly, olive and almond trees.

IBN BATUTA.- The school on the right hand side is called Ibn Batuta. Ibn Batuta is the most famous Moroccan. He was a writer and a traveller born in the 14th century. He was born in Tangier and he travelled during 29 years. He covered 80,000 miles. He went as far as China on the east, the Russian steppes on the north, Timbuctu on the south and the Iberian Peninsula on the west.

SUNNIS & SHIAH.- Last thing we say yesterday about Mohammed, the Prophet, is that he died without a successor, and that created a problem. You've probably heard on the news about two different denominations of the Islam: the sunnis and the shiah. The demographic breakdown between the two groups is difficult to assess but, more or less, 85% are sunni and 15% shiah. The shiah make up the majority of the population in Iran and Irak. Now a days their relations are not the best. They have differences in tradition, customs, religious practise and belief.

The shia are the more radical group. The two of them splitted because the sunnis believed that Muhammad's successor should be elected according to his capacities, while the Shia believe that Muhammed nominated his cousin (and son-in-law) Ali -in accordance with the command of god- to be the next caliph.

That would make Ali and his descendants Muhammed's successors. And that's the main rift between the two groups.

There are also small differences in the way they pray, the way they dress and even on their given names. The name sunni comes from "sunna", or the oral tradition dictated by Muhammed, while the Qur'an is the holy book of the Islam and was dictated by the angel Gabriel to Muhammed. And the name Shiah comes from Shiat Ali, or Ali's followers. One

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example: the shiah always place their foreheads onto a piece of natural material. The Quram says not to postrate on a non-natural surface. Shiah hold their hands at their sides during prayer. Sunnis cross their arms). Shiah women dress in black and they never show their chin.

GREENHOUSES.- All those shining things down in the valley are greenhouses where they grow vegetables.

DEATH ROAD.- This road is known as the Death Road. It is very dangerous because it is always full of trucks loaded with fruit, vegetables and fish from Agadir. They are building now a highway from Agadir to Marrakech. Right now, when the trucks reach Marrakech, they can get to any European capital driving on four lane highways. Agadir is the most important fishing harbour in Morocco. A truck with two drivers can make it from Agadir to Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia in the heart of Europe, in 5 days.

TAROUDANT.- The city of Taroudant is located in the Sous Valley. Taroudant has the feel of a small fortified market town on some caravan route. Taroudant contains almost the whole city within its walls. But now-a-days they are developping a new area outside the city walls, and this new area is located around the university campus.

HISTORY.- The town was the capital of a small kingdom nearly 1000 years ago. Later on, it was used as a base to attack the Portuguese in Agadir. The city prospered selling market goods that grew on the fertile plains of the Sous Valley, such as sugar cane, cotton, rice and indigo. The sad event in the history of Taroudant is the massacre its population suffered on the 17th century because they resisted royal control. Taroudant was the city that resisted the French army for the longes time when the French established their protectorate in Morocco. Today Taroudant is a remarkable market town with two souqs, or markets. One of them, the arabic souq, is oriented to tourists with handycraft, pottery, brass, leather, carpets, etc. The other one, the berber souq, is more for locals, and they have spices, dried fruits, clothes and household goods (most of them plastic).

The ramparts of the city are 6 kms. long (almost 4 miles) and have 9 gates.

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Good morning. Today we have to go through the Atlas Mountains. The road we'll be driving on, long, narrow and winding, and beautiful. It goes up to 2.100 meters high, nearly 7.000 feet high. It is called the Tizin-Test. The

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lead car will be telling us on the radio if we are to expect on coming traffic. On top of the mountain pass we'll stop for coffee. You will be reminded to use the engine to brake the vehicle on the way down. On the other side of the Atlas Range is Marrakech, where we'll be arriving to meet mayhem, bedlam and chaos at the same time while trying to reach the hotel, located very close to one of the most famous squares in the world Jamal Fnaa.

Most of the trees on both sides of the road are orange trees. Half of Europe eats oranges from this area.

TIN MEL- The mosque on the left hand side is one of the most popular mosques in Morocco. It is one of the oldest in the country. It dates back from the 12th century. It is being restored. Around the mosque there used to be a city with 16.000 inhabitants. The city and the ramparts was destroyed by the reigning dynasty, but they kept the mosque because it was a holy bilding.

KASBAH.- And on the right hand side there is another old Kasbah.

DAM.- The water reservoir was inaugurated only two years ago. It feeds the towns around the area and the water is used mainly for agricultural purposes. Later on we'll see the dam that feeds Marrakech.

ATLAS MOUNTAINS.- An Atlas is a book full of maps. But according to greek mythology, Atlas was a Titan who was condemned to stand at the western end of the earth and hold up the sky on his shoulders. But there is another myth. Atlas was transformed into the stony mountains that we have in front of us, also as a punishment. Atlas mountains are snow-capped most of the year

MT. TUBKAL can't be seen from Marrakech. Mt. Oukaïmeden stands in front of it. Oukaïmeden has a ski resort. Once you are skiing up there it's very hard to believe that you are in subtropical Africa. At nearly 11.000 feet above sea level, the snow conditions are pretty reliable from January until March or even April. And this is only 70 kms. from Marrakech.

SPORTS.- Yesterday, while we were having tea at the oil mill, we told you about the satelite dish they had. Moroccans love to watch football games. Football is, by far, the most popular sport. There is no one on the streets if there is a big match. The Moroccan national team is nicknamed "The Lions of the Atlas" and they are regarded as heroes. But it is in the field of athletics where Moroccans have had olympic medalists and world record holders. The

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likes of Al-Moutawakil, Said Aouita or Al-Guerrouj may ring a bell to you if you are into athletics.

FLAG.- On top of every official building, such as schools, hospitals and so on, there is always the moroccan flag. It's red. Red has historic significance and proclaims that the ruling royal family descends from Mohammed, the Profet. The 5 pointed star is green, the color of the Islam, and the five branches symbolized the five pillars of Islam.

HENNA.- During this trip you might have noticed, and also today in Marrakech, this afternoon at the square, you'll see that some moroccan women have red hands. That's because of the henna, the name of a make-up. They use it for weddings, festivals, holidays or just for fun. Henna is made by extracting a dye from the leaves of a plant (Lawsonia intermis). Once applied, henna is allowed to dry and then rubbed off. It leaves behind a dark brown stain which fades over a period of time. Three to four weeks. Henna is also used as a hair dye, and in traditional medicine. It relieves headaches and reduces high temperatures.

You can get your hands decorated with henna at the square in Marrakech.

HAMMAMS.- With all this dust and no running water in the houses, you might wonder what do they do to wash themselves.

Well, another essential feature of Islamic towns are the hammams, or public baths. In houses where there is no water, most of them, the hammam is the only place to get clean, and it is also the perfect place for socialising and gossiping. It is divided in two bath houses for men and women, and in more modest towns the hammam is open to either sex at different times of the day.

NUMBERS ON SCHOOL WALLS.- You will see numbers and squares painted on walls, mostly on school walls. Most of the people living in the country are illiterate. So when election time comes, the candidates running for major put their pictures by a number to make life easier for the people voting.

Off the record, in Spain is the other way around. People voting is very educated, but our polititians are illiterate.

GUEMASSA. Is the name of this town. Most of the people here work in the production of olive oil.

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS.- Moroccans have two remarkable celebrations: The end of Ramadan, a month of prayer and fasting and ment to give people time for reflection and to

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appreciate the value of food. And the other one: If you are familiar with the Quram or the Bible, you'll remember that Abraham was order by God to sacrifice his own son. When Abraham was about to kill his son, God told him he could swap his son for a lamb, and so he did. Now, every muslim family kills a sheep once a year to connemorate that. It is a must, and that causes a lot of problems to a lot of families with no economical means.

CELEBRATIONS.- Moroccans also like to celebrate different stages of life, just like in the western world. If the family has money, on the 7th day after a birth, a sheep is killed and the child's name is officially anounced. Weddings are filled with symbolism. When the bride arrives, the mother-in-law gives her a loaf of bread, a symbol of prosperity. Funerals are also an occasion for special methods of cooking, as fires are not lit for three days in the houses of the family and friends.

TRIVIA.- Now that our trip is coming to an end, let me tell you what the Muslims used to do, way back when, when they started a long trip. The very first day they used to take off late in the afternoon, and set up camp no more than one or two hours away from their starting point. This way, they were close to home in case they had forgotten anything.

BEE HIVES.- There are quiet a lot of bees in the country. Honey, along with almonds, is the base for their pastry.

STING.- Gordon Mathew Tomas Sumner, AKA Sting, celebrated his 50th birthday on the kasbah that there is at our left hand side.

MARRAKECH.- Pop: 2 million. The color of the city is the ochre. The city has 12 kms of mud-brick ramparts. Marrakech was founded almost 1000 years ago. It is one of the great cities of the Maghreb, or North Africa, and is home to the most perfect Islamic monument: the Koutoubia tower. Marrakech has the Hight Atlas Mountains in the background, snow-capped most of the year, and it has one of the greatest open-air spectacles in the planet: Djemaa el-Fna square. Marrakech was founded by a tribe of religious fundamentalists called the Almoravids in 1062. The city was the capital of Morocco for two different periods of time. It was the center of a huge caravan trade. Almost 10 centuries later, the 1001 Nights oriental mystique still lingers over Marrakech. Why, I've always wondered, 1001 Nights, and not simply 1000. When I asked, somebody told me that in the old days, even numbers were bad luck. The Koutoubia tower dominates Marrakech landscape. 70 meters (213 feet) high. The tower is visible for miles in any

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direction. It is the flag ship of the city. The city ramparts are still standing and in mint condition. You will see that they have holes. The holes are meant to support pieces of wood, as scaffolding, when they were building the walls. Now they have another use: they are nests for different kind of birds.

DJEMAA EL-FNA.- The focal point of Marrakech. A huge square in the medina, or old city, and the backdrop for one of the planet's greatest spectacles. It is lively at any hour of day, but the square comes into its own at dusk. You can find restaurants, jugglers, storytellers, snake charmers, musicians, acrobats, boxing matches... you name it. It is not a big problem, but keep your wallet out of reach and keep your eyes open, but remember that there is not point walking around in a state of permanent alert. Close by is the souq (market). It is a great labyrinth of small lanes. Remember: you always need to stay calm. Some of the vendors are aggressive to the brink of assault. But don't worry, as I probably mentioned, they are all great comedians.