



**September 27–October 11**

Join ICAN and a small group of ceramic artists as we journey through souks, kasbahs, tiled palaces, the High Atlas Mountains, and the wide open Sahara desert. Highlights include hands-on workshops with local ceramic artists, traditional glazing demos, and group wood firing in an old family kiln.

**Let ICAN take you places you can't go on your own!**



Contact Holly Goring, ICAN Manager, at [hgoring@ceramics.org](mailto:hgoring@ceramics.org) or 614-895-4213. Learn more at [ceramicartsnetwork.org/events](http://ceramicartsnetwork.org/events).

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**ICAN presents:  
Splendors of Morocco!**  
September 27–October 11, 2022

## **Moroccan Culture**

You will possibly find Morocco is like nothing else you have ever experienced. The hustle and bustle of the souks (markets) in the ancient Medina's of the imperial cities are a total sensory overload with an intensity of color, aromatic exotic oils and spices, and the abundant decoration of woven, painted, carved, and tiled surfaces.

This is then juxtaposed with the spectacular geography and landscape where the Atlas Mountains take your mind and soul back to the geological formation of the Earth's crust, when lava flowed and continents collided. The Sahara also presents another concept of time and space with its vast expanse and extreme climate.

It is a country of great contrasts. Medieval architecture is now peppered with satellite dishes and a network of

electrical cables and wiring bringing the new world media to the masses. While many people still plow and reap the land by hand, or do their washing in the river, everyone seems to have at least one mobile phone!

Many services that we take for granted at home are not available in Morocco. You will inevitably see some evidence of poverty and struggle in a poor economy where infrastructure and welfare services may not exist. In particular many people find the litter of rubbish disturbing. The city streets are very clean, but the countryside is often littered with plastic bags although this is now improving as plastic bags have recently been banned.

Moroccans themselves are very generous and charitable and regularly give alms to the poor and you may feel compelled to give as well. Moroccans only ask that you do not ever give anything to children or buy anything from them. Problems have arisen where children take to begging or selling things like tissues instead of attending school. Even giving sweets or pencils is discouraged. If you feel compelled to give something, please find an adult guardian or speak to your guide. Your guide will also deliver any unwanted clothing and excess baggage to people in need, especially nomad people.

You will find that Moroccans are very hospitable. They often have a wicked sense of humor and a very laid back attitude. Things are not rushed in Morocco. One needs lots of time to relax after all, and everything will come together!

## Morocco FAQ

### **Do I need a visa?**

Citizens holding passports of the following countries do not need a visa to enter the Kingdom of Morocco for less than 90 days:

Algeria - Andorra - Argentina - Australia - Austria - Bahrain - Belgium - Brazil - Bulgaria - Canada - Chile - Congo (Brazzaville) - Croatia - Cyprus - Czech Republic - Denmark - Estonia - Finland - France - Germany - Great Britain - Greece - Guinea (Conakry) - Hong Kong - Hungary - Iceland - Indonesia - Ireland - Italy - Ivory Coast - Japan - Kuwait - Latvia - Libya - Liechtenstein - Lithuania - Luxemburg - Mali - Malta - Mexico - Monaco - Netherlands - New Zealand - Niger - Norway - Oman - Peru - Philippines - Poland - Puerto Rico - Qatar - Romania - Russian Federation - Saudi Arabia - Senegal - Singapore (They can stay one month without visa) - Slovakia - Slovenia - South Korea - Spain - Sweden - Switzerland - Tunisia - Turkey - United Arab Emirates - United States of America - Venezuela.

### **Do I need to be concerned for my safety in Morocco?**

As with travel in any region in the world, consider the risks and take time to research aspects of the culture and landscape you are visiting. Morocco is very a safe country to visit and violent crime and political unrest are rare. Morocco also has very good security services (police, armed forces) with special units that focus solely on tourism and keeping visitors safe. Plain clothed police survey major tourist sites and regulate the tourist industry. You will be on an escorted and closed tour and will be supported by experienced local guides who are solely focused on your safety and enjoyment. Please follow their recommendations if you have any concerns regarding your safety. Some information and suggestions are listed below:

**PERSONAL SAFETY:** Violent crime in Morocco is relatively low. Based on our experience women are generally very safe but may attract unwanted attention if they are dressed inappropriately. Women are generally very safe, especially if they dress a bit modestly. Head scarves are not necessary, but we recommend that women be respectful of local customs and cover their shoulders, so no singlet tops and no short shorts. The general rule is to cover from elbows to knees (this goes for men too as Moroccan men also dress modestly), no cleavage or see-through garments.

**THEFT:** Some instances of petty theft are occasionally reported. Be advised to keep an eye on your luggage and personal possessions and avoid walking alone late at night or in sparsely populated areas.

**FAUX GUIDES:** Unfortunately Morocco does have people who pretend to be guides and also opportunists who will offer assistance to tourists when they appear a bit lost. Some local people genuinely want to help, but many are just interested in taking you to a trader where they can make a commission on any sales.

**How can I access cash in Morocco?**

The local currency is the Moroccan Dirham (MAD) and it is not generally available outside of the country. ATM machines are very easy to find and we will make regular stops to top up our wallets. First stop will be an ATM with your guide on arrival. Please ensure your card is accepted internationally and call your credit card company alerting them to your international travel before your departure. AMEX is generally not accepted. Some credit cards will not let you access savings in the same way you do at home so you might need a debit card as well.

**How much spending money will I need?**

Good question. Of course it will depend on your budget and your spending habits. Marrakech has been voted as the 9th best city in the world for shopping and there will be many temptations among the traditional crafts, jewelery, carpets, etc. Haggling is a large part of making purchases. We will give you some tips about haggling at our first briefing on arrival. Before arriving, make sure you are aware of the current conversion rate—many good apps are available for smartphones. Lunch and dinner not included in the package can cost as little as 50MAD, up to 200–300MAD as it depends on the venue and whether you want to include alcoholic drinks. When the tour takes you out of the city then dinner is usually included (half board) and the guesthouses will provide.

**What will the weather be like?**

Morocco is described as having a cool climate with a hot sun, with distinct seasons—snow in the mountains in winter and hot summers. Obviously the Sahara is mostly hot, but can be cool overnight in autumn and spring and cold in winter. It is best to pack and dress in layers. You will need sunscreen and a hat all year round and cool, loose clothing in summer. The tour bus will be air conditioned and all accommodations with air conditioned rooms. Many guesthouses also have a swimming pool to cool off.

**What to pack?**

A recommended packing list will be provided to you prior to the tour departure. Keep in mind that Moroccans are generally very conservative in their dress. Don't forget chargers for phones etc and a plug converter—Morocco uses the 2-pin European plug system. Our guides will help you access a local sim card for your phone if necessary, although free wi-fi is widely available. If you do find you forget something, it can usually be readily purchased and our guides are always on hand to provide any assistance.

**Do I need to wear a head scarf?**

No. Many women in Morocco wear a head scarf as it is a part of their religious custom, but there is no expectation that visitors will do the same. However, we encourage our clients to be respectful of local customs so dressing modestly is recommended. This goes for both men and women.

**Do all hotels have clean bathrooms and en-suite toilets?**

Yes. All accommodations have been selected with attention to clean en-suite bathrooms and Western style toilets. Sometimes the hot water will take some time to come through. Remember we are in a very dry environment and water should be conserved as much as possible. Be aware, occasionally, on an unscheduled toilet stop we may come across a squat toilet facility as the only option.

**Can I purchase alcohol in Morocco?**

Being an Islamic country the majority of Moroccan's do not consume alcohol and so it is not as readily available, but there are some restaurants and bars that serve alcohol in the major cities, and a few larger supermarkets with bottle shops. Not all guesthouses have alcohol available, but they don't mind if you bring your own and you can always get some duty free on the way in. We do make occasional stops where you can purchase take away.

**The trip has a ceramic art focus, but do we get to see the traditional attractions in Morocco?**

Yes, we certainly do. This is a cultural journey that will include guided tours to major attractions to give you a great insight into the people, customs, and spectacular landscape in Morocco. It is all about experiencing Morocco, traveling with like-minded people who enjoy ceramics, and discovering many exotic sites such as palaces, kasbahs, and ksars (fantastic

adobe villages, houses, and fortresses). You may indulge in some local cultural experiences such as the highly recommended Hammam or a cooking class. ICAN's tour partner will help you arrange any additional activities.

### **Do I require any immunizations to visit Morocco?**

The COVID-19 vaccination(s) is required to register for this tour and to enter the country of Morocco. There are generally no additional inoculations required for Morocco, although some doctors may recommend additional vaccinations against influenza, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Polio, and Typhoid, but this is usually only if you are planning an extended stay in the country. Please consult with your general practitioner at least six months before departure. We recommend you drink bottled water (which will be supplied on the tour bus) or filtered water.

### **Can I purchase medicine and medical products if I need to?**

Please make sure that you bring any prescription medications that you require during the trip. There are plenty of pharmacies here but language can be a difficulty so it is best to avoid the need to purchase more en route. Consult with your doctor before you travel. Insect repellent is a good idea if you are prone to bites. Some gastro tablets can come in handy just in case you do pick up a tummy bug while traveling.

### **What types of restaurants will we be eating at?**

We always choose restaurants carefully to make sure the food is healthy and of the highest quality. The local network of guides and drivers also spread the word quickly if anyone gets sick, so those restaurants are avoided. When guests have free time to eat on their own, we can recommend places nearby and we often also offer to take anyone who is less adventurous to come join us and we go together. Guesthouses will prepare meals if given some notice. Often in the remote locations we will have a shared meal as they do not have restaurant options as they do in the city, and we have to order ahead of time and notify them of the dietary requirements. A few of the guesthouses have buffet-style meals with a lot of choices.

### **How are food allergies handled in Morocco?**

We often discourage travelers who have life-threatening allergies from signing up for a tour that puts food preparation into the hands of others. It is just too hard to control with the language and cultural barriers. We often have vegetarians and occasionally a vegan or a lactose intolerant individual. Individuals with a gluten allergy will have trouble eating in Morocco. Vegetarians are no problem, although sometimes the choices are limited, although in reality there are lots of great traditional vegetarian dishes in Morocco. There are always great cooked vegetable salads. One of the problems is that culturally Moroccans think that foods like vegetables, lentils, beans are peasant food and they don't offer them. Sometimes we just have to ask and insist.

### **Can I take photos in public while in Morocco?**

It is considered offensive in Morocco to take photographs of people or their personal environment without first seeking permission. You are advised to be mindful of where you point your camera and always ask permission first. Sometimes you will be either asked to make a tip/payment or denied permission altogether. Other times people are more than happy to be the subject of a photo. Taking photos of landscape or general scenes is not a problem. It is forbidden to photograph the police or armed forces.

### **How is tipping handled in Morocco?**

Morocco does have a tipping culture and 5–10% is recommended for restaurants and services. Guests can tip for meals or services that they have on free time. We also will leave it to the group to tip the principal guide and driver at the end of the tour and any left over funds that we hold will be divided between them too. We always discuss this all as a part of the first day briefing. The general rule is:

- 5-10% of the bill
- Local guides 50-100 dirham per person per day/service
- Driver 50-100 dirham per person per day
- Porters 10-20 dirham per piece of luggage

**Will I be able to ship ceramics and other purchases home?**

The potteries in Fes have very reliable shipping services and fantastic packaging and crates for ceramics, but outside of Fes ceramics can be a problem. There are some very reliable shipping services in Morocco such as DHL but it can be expensive and also take time as the offices are always very busy. We can certainly help with unbreakable items, but can accept no responsibility if things go missing in transit. We do frequent some fabulous textiles cooperatives in the South. They are very reliable and do not have inflated prices so we work with them regularly and they contact us if there are any problems with shipping to track and trace. We have worked with them for other purchases in the past as we also know they get very good rates so this could be an option. However, we also always recommend that people pack light so they have plenty of space in their luggage for shopping. This is the best option.

**I want to arrive a day early and stay an extra day? Will someone help me with the arrangements?**

ICAN's tour partner is happy to arrange extra nights at the guesthouses listed in the itinerary and they will even try to arrange the same room. They also often arrange extra post-tour excursions in Morocco if people have extra time to spend and want to explore further.

**All tour inquiries should be directed to the ICAN manager, Holly Goring, at [hgoring@ceramics.org](mailto:hgoring@ceramics.org) or 614-895-4213.**