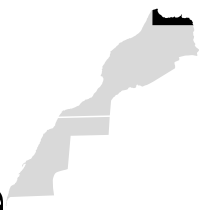


Mediterranean Coast & the Rif

شاطيء البحر المتوسط والريف البحري



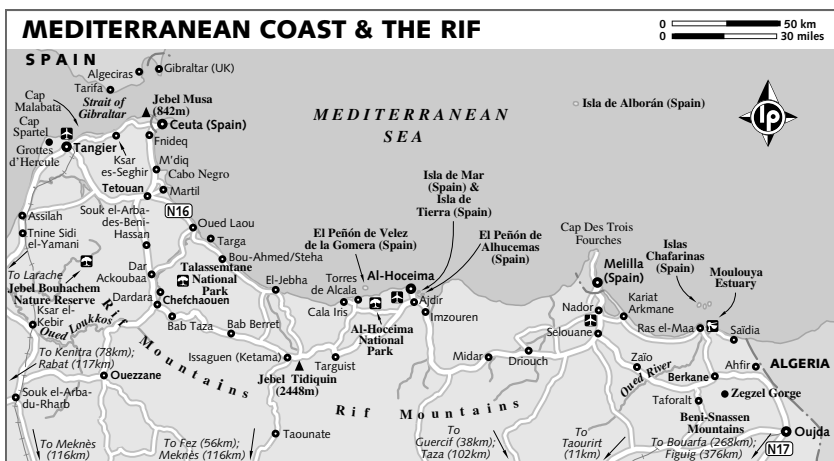
Northern Morocco is like a living dream. Fantastic elements come and go, leaving you wondering, when safely back at home, if it was all real. The gateway to the region is also the historic gateway to Africa: Tangier, where the ghosts of the International Zone can still be found, among scenes straight from *The Thousand and One Nights*. Heading east, you enter the former Spanish Protectorate, beginning with its capital, Tetouan, where the medina still rings with the sound of medieval craftsmen. The wild and rocky coast contains living remnants of that time, including the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, with their impressive medieval fortifications and spectacular architectural treasures, and two island fortresses still manned by the Spanish Foreign Legion. Two undiscovered national parks, in Al-Hoceima and the Beni-Snassen mountains, add Barbary sheep and fishing eagles to the exotic mix. Heading inland, one passes through endless fields of marijuana, and finds the mountain village of Chefchaouen, with its central kasbah, set against the dramatic escarpments of the Rif, the home of tough Berber tribes.

Once you're out of Tangier, all of this unfolds with a sense of discovery. This is one of the least visited parts of Morocco, and days go by without seeing a foreign face. But go quickly: the coastline is rapidly being developed into a Moroccan version of southern Spain, with a single highway from end to end nearing completion, and resorts blooming in Martil, M'Diq, Saïdia and even Nador. Unfortunately, that's one more part of this never-ending story.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Stare into the eyes of the Moroccan Mona Lisa in **Tangier** (p176)
- See the dragons launching from the roof of an eclectic palace in **Ceuta** (p191)
- Wander amidst 900 Modernist and art-deco buildings in **Melilla** (p217)
- Smoke sheesha (flavoured tobacco) in the ancient medina of **Tetouan** (p198)
- Discover **El Peñón de Velez de La Gomera** (p214), an exotic fortress still manned by the Spanish Foreign Legion
- Explore the undiscovered **National Park of Al-Hoceima** (p214)
- Stay in a rural Berber house in the picturesque **Beni-Snassen Mountains** (p225)
- Wander the gardens of the kasbah in **Chefchaouen** (p203)





History

Due to its location just across the Strait of Gibraltar, Mediterranean Morocco has long been subject to European influences, especially from Portugal and Spain. During the 15th century, every port on the Mediterranean fell under the control of the Portuguese, with the exception of Melilla, which was Spanish. The Iberian powers were finally pushed out of Morocco in the 16th century, but not for good.

In the 19th century, Morocco was again carved up by European powers, and Spain landed 90,000 troops at Melilla. France and Spain soon came to agreement on a territorial-administrative division for Morocco, which created a Spanish Protectorate along the northern coast, with the capital at Tetouan. Meanwhile, Tangier was made into a special zone under international administration.

It did not take long for colonial rule to give rise to tribal rebellions. In the Rif War (1921–26), the Berber leader Abd al-Krim led a revolt that seized Spanish fortifications and nearly pushed the occupiers completely out of the north. Although a combined French and Spanish force eventually quashed the rebellion, the European powers were never able to completely subdue the fiercely independent Berbers.

Spain finally withdrew from northern Morocco in 1956, after years of independence movements and nationalist uprisings. The exceptions were the *plazas de soberanía*,

the last vestiges of the Spanish empire, which spot the coastline (p187). In any case, the whole region still maintains a strong Spanish flavour, including the dominant foreign tongue, colonial architecture, and cuisine.

Climate

Weather along the coast is generally mild, with a tendency toward cool and wet. Average daily temperatures range from 12°C in winter to 25°C in summer. The mountains are colder, with temperatures reaching 0°C in winter. The north also has more rainfall than other parts of the country. Weather can be cloudy and rainy for days on end, as the clouds get trapped in the mountains. Only the summer months – especially July and August – are dry.

Getting There & Away

Tangier is easily the most convenient gateway into this region, as it is well connected by ferry to Europe and then by rail to the cities along the Atlantic coast. Several other cities along the coast, including Ceuta, Melilla, Nador and Al-Hoceima, have ferry connections to Spain, although some are seasonal. If you are making your way to the region from the south, Chefchaouen is accessible by road from Fez, Meknès and Rabat.

Getting Around

The northern coast is more difficult to get around than some other parts of Morocco. With the exception of Tangier, this region

TOP PICKS

- DARNA, the Women's Association of Tangier, Tangier, (p175). Profits support local women in need.
- Musée de la Fondation Lorin, Tangier, (p176). An intriguing photo museum in the Tangier Medina that also promotes cultural programs for local kids.
- Chaouen Rural, Chefchaouen, (p204). A joint Spanish-Moroccan effort aimed at developing the rural economy of the Chefchaouen region through tourism.
- Asociación Rif para el Desarrollo del Turismo Rural (Rif Association for the Development of Rural Tourism), National Park of Al-Hoceima, (p215). Another joint Spanish-Moroccan effort aimed at developing the rural tourism in the National Park of Al-Hoceima
- Gite Tagma, Beni-Snassen Mountains, (p225). A successful new rural hotel in the Beni-Snassen Mountains being used as a model for rural tourism development

is not connected by rail, so travellers are dependent on buses and taxis. Roads here weave and wind around the Rif mountains, so routes never seem to be as direct as they could be, and many feel the lack of investment and maintenance. Reaching smaller destinations can require long waits for grands taxis to fill – or hiring a vehicle yourself. Make sure you understand how long it will take to get back to your departure point.

WEST MEDITERRANEAN COAST

شاطيء البحر المتوسط

TANGIER

pop 1,000,000

The amazing thing about Tangier is that it is much closer to *Casablanca* – the movie – than you ever thought possible. The rich cultural stew, the chaotic street life, the constant wheeling and dealing, the idiosyncratic expats, the corrupt officials, the anything-goes cynicism, the sense of personal fates enmeshed in political change, and even the real model for Rick's Café are all there, waiting to be rediscovered. While construction cranes loom overhead, the city has a personality resistant to change, as if it were quite sure that all attempts at reform were doomed to failure. And that is the very source of its allure. Tangier is more than just a city, it is an ancient memory, a raw part of the human mind, alternately attrac-

طنجة

tive and repellent, but always fascinating, at least for a few days. As the omnipresent photos of the king will remind you, the *Arabian Nights* are still alive and well – and just a ferry ride from Spain.

Like the dynamic strait upon which it sits, Tangier is the product of 1001 currents, including Islam, Berber tribes, Western colonial masters, a highly strategic location, a vibrant port, and now, tourism. This grand mélange has suffused the city with a strange, mirage-like atmosphere, while filling it to the brim with alluring oddities, from its museums to its residents. The dominant theme is Darwinian commerce, of the most intense kind. Virtually everyone is on the make, which takes some adjustment. The call to prayer echoes amidst endless scams, while the rich rub elbows with the destitute. Anything still goes. But the astute traveller can avoid the hassles and discover ample rewards at any time of year – just remember that weather, crowds and prices all hit highs in summer.

For Westerners, Tangier has long been an alter ego, a place to retire from convention and explore the fringe, at least vicariously. After all, this was the city that attracted the founding members of the Beat Generation, that inspired Paul Bowles and William S Burroughs to write their twisted tales, and that has seen a succession of over-the-top personalities, from the Rolling Stones to Malcolm Forbes, pass through like shooting stars. While the cultural scene is long gone – this city of one million doesn't even have a public library – the aura remains, and still attracts. Meanwhile, those one million

Tangaouis face Europe, where many long to go – but cannot – keeping their back to ‘the interior’, the local term for the rest of Morocco. So, like the Roman God Janus, this is a city with two faces. Just don’t be fooled by either one. Ultimately, the Beaux-Arts façades and Moorish arches both hide a place that is neither Moroccan nor European, but a paradoxical blend of both, making the greatest oddity in Tangier...Tangier itself.

History

Tangier’s history is a raucous tale of foreign invasion, much of it driven by the city’s strategic location at the entrance to the Mediterranean. The area was first settled as a trading base by the ancient Greeks and Phoenicians (who brought the traditional Moroccan hooded robe, the jellaba, with them), and named for the goddess Tingē, the lover of Hercules, whose Herculean effort separated Europe from Africa to form the Strait of Gibraltar. Under Roman rule, it was the capital of the province of Mauretania Tingitana. The Vandals attacked from Spain in AD 429, followed by the Byzantines, and then the Arabs, who invaded in 705 and quelled the Berber tribes. Tangier

passed between various Arab factions before finally coming under Almohad rule in 1149. Then the Portuguese arrived, capturing the city on their second attempt in 1471, only to hand it to the British 200 years later as a wedding gift for Charles II. Its value is difficult to assess: the English diarist Samuel Pepys called it ‘the excrescence of the earth’. Moroccans regained control of the city under Sultan Moulay Ismail in 1679, destroying much of the city in the process. They remained in power until the mid-19th century, when North Africa once again piqued the interest of the European powers.

The modern history of Tangier begins here. While the rest of Morocco was divided between France and Spain, strategic Tangier was turned into an ‘International Zone’ of various sectors, similar to West Berlin in the Cold War. France, Spain, Britain, Portugal, Sweden, Holland, Belgium, Italy and the USA all had a piece of the pie, which was managed by the sultan, at least on paper. This situation lasted from 1912 until shortly after Moroccan independence, in 1956, when the city was returned to the rest of the country. During this famous Interzone period, expats flooded in, forming half the

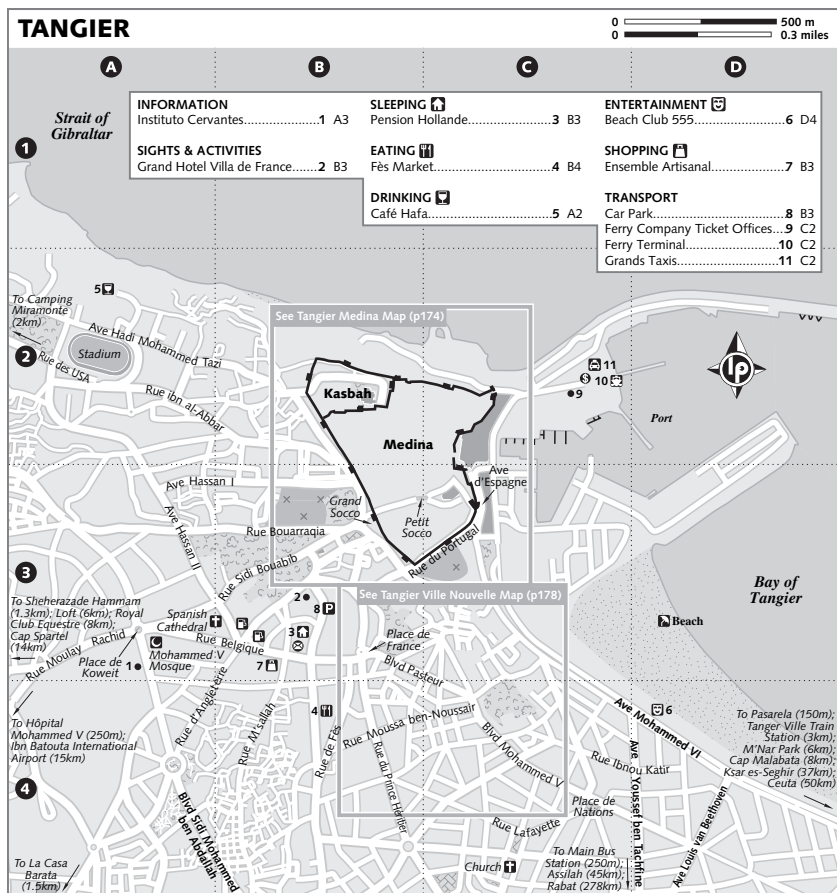
PAUL BOWLES IN TANGIER

Perhaps the best-known foreign writer in Tangier was the controversial American author Paul Bowles, who died in 1999, aged 88. Bowles made a brief but life-changing trip to Tangier in 1910, on Gertrude Stein’s advice, then devoted the next 15 years to music composition and criticism back home. In 1938 he married Jane Sydney Auer, but they were never a conventional couple – he was an ambivalent bisexual and she was an active lesbian. After WWII Bowles took her to Tangier, where he remained the rest of his life. Here he turned to writing amidst a lively creative circle, including the likes of Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs.

During the 1950s Bowles began taping, transcribing and translating stories by Moroccan authors, in particular Driss ben Hamed Charhadi (also known by the pseudonym Larbi Layachi) and Mohammed Mrabet. He was also an important early recorder of Moroccan folk music.

Thanks partly to Bernardo Bertolucci’s 1990 film, Bowles’ best-known book is *The Sheltering Sky* (1949), a bleak and powerful story of an innocent American couple slowly dismantled by a trip through Morocco. His other works include *Let It Come Down* (1952), a thriller set in Tangier; *The Spider’s House*, set in 1950s Fez; and two excellent collections of travel tales: *Their Heads Are Green* (1963) and *Points in Time* (1982). *A Distant Episode: the Selected Stories* is a good compilation of Bowles’ short stories.

There is a dark and nihilistic undercurrent to Bowles’ writing, which appears to have reflected his life. Fellow writer Joe Ambrose, who knew Bowles well, described him as ‘a murderer, a sadist, a voyeur, a poisoner, a polymath, a sexual exploiter of adolescent boys...Bowles was a great writer but his malevolence and debauchery informs that art and must not be ignored if his art is to be understood.’ Bowles’ autobiography *Without Stopping* (1972; nicknamed *Without Telling*) sheds little light on these matters.



population, and a wild, anything-goes culture broke out, attracting all sorts of people, for reasons both high and low. Socialites, artists, currency speculators, drug addicts, spies, sexual deviants, exiles, eccentrics – the marginalia of mankind all arrived, giving the city a particularly sordid reputation.

When the Interzone period ended, Tangier entered a long period of decline. As the economic base moved on, so did the cultural scene. The city became a dreary port, while retaining its criminality. Having taken a dislike to it, the king of Morocco, Mohammed V, cut off access to key funds. Street hustlers multiplied, turning off tourists. The numbers of expats dwindled, until there were only a few thousand left.

In 1999, however, Tangier's fortunes once again began to change. A new king, Mohammed VI, took charge, and quickly instituted a major tourism development plan for northern Morocco, with Tangier at its hub, managed by the man credited with the development of Marrakesh. Since then the port's container facilities have relocated to a new duty-free zone down the coast, freeing space for yachts and cruise ships; classic hotels are being revived, from the Rif (complete) to the Grand Hotel Villa de France (under restoration); the first riads have taken hold, a la Marrakesh; the classic entrance to the medina, the Grand Socco, has been redone; a new corniche lines the beach; wealthy expats are slowly returning, at least for a vacation

home; and foreign investment is pouring in from both Europe and the Gulf.

Beneath this new coat of make-up, significant problems remain: corruption afflicts all dealings; the population has quadrupled to a million inhabitants over the past 25 years, straining limited resources; unbridled development threatens historic properties and the environment; social progress is stymied by a lack of democratic institutions; cultural investment is negligible. Propelled by growing ambitions, Tangier made a bid to host the 2012 International Exposition and failed. But overall, the trend is definitely upward, and for the traveller, times are better than they have been in decades.

Orientation

Like many Moroccan cities, Tangier is divided into an old walled city, or medina, a nest of medieval alleyways, and a new, modern city, the ville nouvelle. The medina contains a kasbah, the walled fortress of the sultan, which forms its western corner; the Petit Socco (also known as Socco Chico, and officially as Place Souq ad-Dakhil), an historic, though barely noticeable, plaza in the centre; and of course, the souqs, or markets. The much more impressive Grand Socco (officially renamed Place du 9 Avril 1947), a large traffic circle with a central fountain, is the hinge between the two sides of town, and the postcard entrance to the medina.

Both the medina and the ville nouvelle flank the waterfront, which rings the Bay of Tangier. The heart of the ville nouvelle lies a few blocks to the west, in the area extending from the Place de France (which contains the French Consulate), down the Blvd Pasteur, and into the northern end of Ave Mohammed V (not VI). Here you'll find the main post office, banks, and many restaurants, bars and hotels. A further 1.5km south takes you to Place Jamia el-Arabia, where the main bus station and grand taxi rank are located.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Librairie des Colones (Map p178; ☎ 039 936955; 54 Blvd Pasteur; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat) Tangier's best bookshop, but still modest. Hardly any English-language books.

CULTURAL CENTRES

Galerie Delacroix (Map p178; 86 Rue de la Liberté; admission free; ☎ 11am-1pm & 4-8.30pm Tue-Sun) The exhibition hall of the Institut Français; hosts temporary exhibitions.

Institut Français (Map p178; ☎ 039 941054; info@iftanger.ma; 41 Rue Hassan ibn Ouazzane; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-7pm Tue-Sat) Offers a full program of films, concerts, theatre and other cultural events in French.

Instituto Cervantes (Map p171; ☎ 039 932001; www.tanger.cervantes.es, in Arabic & Spanish; 99 Blvd Sidi Mohammed ben Abdallah; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) The Spanish equivalent of Institut Français; offers language courses, cultural events and a library with varied material on Tangier.

EMERGENCY

Emergency Service (☎ 039 373737; ☎ 24hr)

INTERNET ACCESS

There are several net cafés in the Blvd Pasteur area.

Space Net (Map p178; 16 Ave Mexique; per hr Dh5; ☎ 9.30am-1am)

Euronet (Map p178; ☎ 039 933544; Rue Ahmed Chaouki; per hr Dh7; ☎ 10am-1am)

LAUNDRY

Most laundry in Tangier is priced by item, to include pressing. If washing is all you need, it is cheaper to find a place that charges by the kilo.

Pressing Detroit (Map p178; 10 Rue el-Jarraoui; wash/press pair of pants Dh8; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-8pm Mon-Sat)

Laverie Ouazzani (Map p178; ☎ 039 949683; 50 Rue Zeriabe; 5 kilos Dh50-70; ☎ 9am-9pm)

LEFT LUGGAGE

Consigne (Map p174; cnr Rue Dar Dbagh & Rue du Portugal; depending on size Dh5-15; ☎ 6.30am-noon) A convenient place to leave your luggage for the day. At the southeast entrance to the medina.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Clinique du Croissant Rouge (Red Cross Clinic; Map p178; ☎ 039 946976; 6 Rue al-Mansour Dahabi)

Hopital Mohammed V (☎ 039 930856; Rue Val Fleurie) On the road to the airport.

Pharmacy Anegax (Map p174; Rue as-Siaghin)

MONEY

Bldvs Pasteur and Mohammed V are lined with numerous banks with ATMs and *bureau de change* counters. Outside of working hours, try the exchange bureaus in the big hotels.

BMCE (Banque Marocaine du Commerce Extérieur; Map p178; Blvd Pasteur; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Sat & Sun) One of several in this area.

POST

Main post office (Map p178; Cnr Rue Quevada & Ave Mohammed V) Post restante is at the counter furthest to the right; parcel post is on the south side of the building.

TOURIST INFORMATION

ONMT (Délégation Régionale du Tourisme; Map p178; ☎ 039 948050; dttangier@yahoo.fr; 29 Blvd Pasteur; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) The recent investment in tourism infrastructure hasn't made it here. Verbal help, but hardly any printed material.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

The following all sell ferry, as well as flight, tickets.

Carlson Wagonlit (Map p178; ☎ 039 331024; 91 Rue de la Liberté)

Hispamaroc (Map p178; ☎ 039 932178; hispamaroc@mamnet.net.ma; 2 Rue el-Jabha el-Ouatania)

Dangers & Annoyances

Given the number of young men walking the street in groups, it's best to stick to the beaten path at all times, and to take cabs point to point at night. Solo women may be subject to being hassled after about 10pm, and should avoid the port area after dark. If you have a serious problem and need help of the authorities, contact the **Brigade Touristique** (Tourist Police; Map p174; Ave Mohammed VI, Tangier Port).

Many of the hassles of Tangier can be mitigated or avoided by hiring an inexpensive guide (p179). This is particularly recommended for first-time visitors; see the boxed text, below.

Don't be caught without cash. Most hotels, restaurants and shops do not accept credit cards, and you don't want to give out your card number here anyway.

Sights

GRAND SOCCO

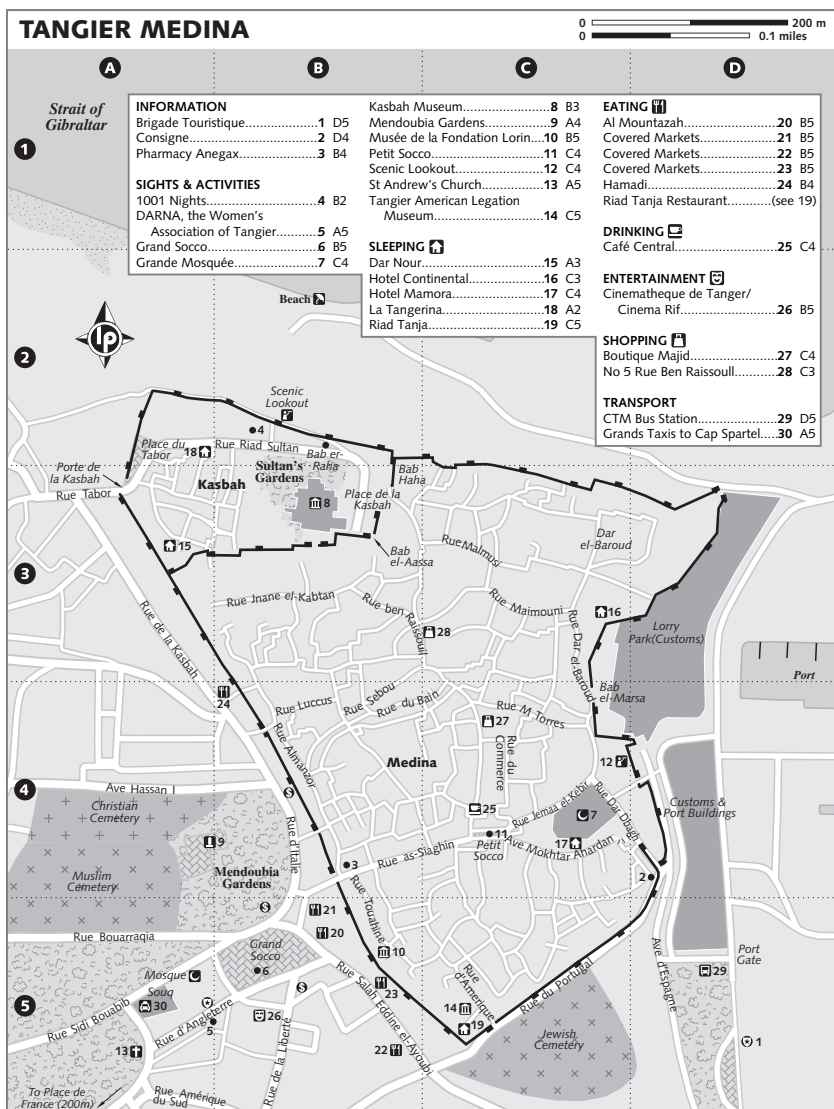
The newly renovated **Grand Socco** (Map p174) is the romantic entrance to the medina, a

FRESH OFF THE BOAT?

For many people Tangier is a first: first time in Africa, first time in an Islamic country, first time in a developing country, or some combination of the above. The most common profile is someone arriving from Spain for the day, drawn by the exotic scent from across the strait. If any of that describes you, consider the following:

- You will be approached by street hustlers. Their goal is to sell you a fake Rolex, take you to their uncle's rug shop, or become your guide for the day. They are not dangerous, just annoying. If you ignore them, they will typically go away. If not, a polite '*la, shokran*' – 'no thanks' – will help, particularly when repeated. For the persistent, '*déjame en paz*' ('DAY-hah-may en pahs'), Spanish for 'leave me in peace', works wonders. Be aware that if you encourage them, they will follow you until you either pay them to go away, or the sun sets.
- Hagglng can feel intimidating, but is only the local sport. The artistry that goes into it is impressive, and may involve several people, each saving you from the last. You know you have emerged victorious only when the sale takes place after the shopkeeper has trailed you down the street. Decline all offers to 'see my other store'.
- Attempts to cheat tourists are commonplace. Pay the exact amount in order to avoid being short-changed. Take a close look at anything you buy: the 'brass' is often tin, the 'fossils' are made of concrete, and those Nike sneakers, needless to say...
- Western cities tend to be segregated by income; here highs and lows exist side by side, with often abrupt transitions. A new world is often just one humble door away. Conversely, a low level of cleanliness does not necessarily mean a high-risk area.
- When dealing with cab drivers, make sure to arrange any fee up front. If a cabbie tries to elevate the fare after you have agreed on it, pay the agreed fare and walk away. If hiring a cab for sightseeing, be aware that cab drivers will often try to convince you to change your itinerary, in order to save themselves time/gas.

For more general information, see 'Dangers & Annoyances' p459.



large, sloping, palm-ringed plaza with a central fountain that stands before the keyhole gate Bab Fass. Once a major market, its cobblestone circle is now the end of the line for taxis, the point at which the modern streets narrow into the past. For the best ground-floor view, climb the steps at the highest point on the circle, across from the large

tan building (the police station), to what locals simply call *La Terrasse*. This is what you came for, one of those dreamy moments when you think you've entered a movie set. Alternatively, climb to the rooftop café Al Mountazah (p182), at the opposite end of the circle, and sit on the edge: a great place to while away an hour or two.

The Grand Socco is also the hub of several other sights, all visible from within it. First is the **Cinematheque de Tanger** (Map p174), also known as Cinema Rif, which stands on the circle. The brightest light on Tangier's cultural scene, it is the brainchild of artist and photographer Yto Barrada (see p176). A combination arthouse cinema, café and archive, it is the local focal point for anything having to do with film (see p184). Young Tangaouis come to soak up the ambience.

The yellow building opposite La Terrasse is **DARNA, the Women's Association of Tangier** (Map p174; lunch prix fixe Dh30-50; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-5pm), a small complex offering an inexpensive restaurant, a boutique shop with women's clothing and a sunny courtyard, making it a popular stop for lunch or just to relax. Since 2002, DARNA has served as a community house to help local women in need, such as those suffering the after-effects of divorce.

Across the Grand Socco from the Cinema Rif is the large **Mendoubia Gardens** (Map p174), a recently restored park full of strolling couples and children playing football. The gardens are flanked by an elegant line of colonial buildings, perhaps the most attractive of its kind in the city. At the top of the central hill is a monument flanked by cannons that contains the speech given by Mohammed V asking for independence.

A short walk down Rue d'Angleterre brings you to one of the more charming oddities of Tangier, **St Andrew's Church** (Map p174; services Sun 8.30am, 11am). Built from 1894 to 1905, on land granted by Queen Victoria, the interior of this Anglican church is in Moorish style, with no graven images, and the Lord's Prayer in Arabic. Behind the altar is a cleft that indicates the direction of Mecca; carved quotes are from the Koran. What were the local builders thinking?

Outside in the church graveyard, there are some fascinating wartime headstones, including the fighter pilot shot while escaping (which reads 'Good Hunting, Tim') and the moving sight of entire downed aircrews, their headstones attached shoulder to shoulder. For entrance call the caretaker, Mustapha Chergui (☎ 079 137583), who has rung the church bell over the Grand Socco for the past 45 years.

MEDINA

The medina is the top attraction of Tangier, a labyrinth of alleyways both commercial and residential, contained by the walls of a 15th century Portuguese fortress. Clean and well-lit, as medinas go, the place is full of traveller's treasures, from fleeting glimpses of ancient ways of living, to the more material rewards of the souqs. Seamlessly joined, its neighbourhoods are defined by five traditional services: a fountain, an oven, a mosque, a Koranic school and a hammam. The thing to do is to get lost and wander for a few hours, although there are a few sites you don't want to miss. Finding your way by map is often difficult, and the direct route is frequently not the best. It sometimes helps to walk around the medina before heading into it. Get as close to your destination as possible, then ask if you run into problems. Young people will be happy to take you anywhere (for a few dirhams).

From the Grand Socco, enter the medina opposite the Mendoubia Gardens, on Rue as-Siaghin, and follow the road downhill until it widens at Café Central (p183), on the left. This is the **Petit Socco** (Map p174), which would otherwise be hardly noticeable. In the past, this was the most notorious crossroads of Tangier, the site of drug deals and all forms of prostitution (rumour has it the brothels are still open). Today the facades are freshly painted, and tourists abound, but given its sordid past, it is still a somewhat eerie place to sit and drink your mint tea.

From the Petit Socco, Rue Jemaa el-Kebir (formerly Rue de la Marine) leads east past the **Grande Mosquée** (Map p174), which at one time housed a Portuguese church. Legend has it that it was built after a rich Arab Gulf sheikh sailing past Tangier noticed that St Andrew's spire overshadowed all the city's minarets. Shocked, he wrote a cheque. A little further on you reach a **scenic lookout** (Map p174) over the port.

Now to avoid getting lost, head out of the medina a moment, and circle down to its southernmost corner, where you will re-enter via the narrow gate to Rue D'Amérique/Zankat America. A dogleg brings you to a door in a covered passageway on your left. Here you will find another great local oddity, and must-visit,

YTO BARRADA

Local culture maven Yto Barrada gives her perspective on the changing identity of Tangier.

How did you end up in Tangier? I grew up here, and went to the American School. Then I moved away for 15 years, most of it in France, but also New York and Jerusalem. I've been here for years now.

How would you describe the cultural scene here? Morose, but with a glorious past. It's strange, people think there is a lot happening here when there isn't. It's all that Tangier mythology. But we're trying to bring it back. And all that mythology helps, in terms of attracting attention.

So it's improving? It has to improve. We've had a lot of infrastructure changes, but that's not enough. That's not what attracts visitors. The cultural infrastructure has to change, too. And people are starting to understand that. There's no economic development without cultural development, not when your economy is based on tourism.

What do you think of all the changes that have occurred since the new king took over? There's lots of incredible energy. Definitely. And there wasn't any before, so that's essential. But there has also been a lot of environmental damage. Our forests are going away. And we have to look out for our heritage. The developers are everywhere.

Is the old expat scene returning at all? It's hard to say. People are coming back to Tangier, and from all over the world, and that's very good to see, but I don't know how many. The ones who do come here are still quite special, though. They come for various reasons – some good, some bad – but they are all looking for that unique something we have – although we do get a lot of retirees now, too!

What's the identity of Tangier today, then? People see us as a bit rough and on the edge. This is the end of the world, a jumping-off place. Always has been. It's like *Camino Real*, which Tennessee Williams wrote here. There's a lot of fascinating characters from various places who have come to this far-away place, and strange things happen.

Sounds like the bar scene in *Star Wars*. Even better!

Does the anything-goes atmosphere of the past still exist? Yes – but it has moved to property development.

What's your favourite place to take visitors? La Casa Barata (p184). It's basically a huge junkyard. But if you like searching for treasures, that is the place. It is its own little world.

Yto Barrada is the artistic director and cofounder of Cinematheque de Tanger, the new arthouse cinema on the Grand Socco.

the **Tangier American Legation Museum** (Map p174;

☎ 039 935317; www.legation.org; 8 Rue D'Amérique; admission free, but donations appreciated; 🕒 10am-1pm & 3-5pm Mon-Fri, weekends by appointment). Morocco was, surprisingly, the very first country to recognise the fledgling United States, and this was the first piece of American real estate abroad (look for the letter of thanks from George Washington to Sultan Moulay Suleyman). It is also the only US National Historic Landmark on foreign soil, and undoubtedly the only one that contains an American flag in the form of a Berber rug. But you don't have to care about American history to visit the Legation. The elegant five-storey mansion holds an eclectic collection that, in classic Tangerine fashion, resists categorisation. An impressive display of paintings and prints is a dreamy trip through the Tangerine past through

the eyes of its artists, most notably the Scotsman James McBey, whose hypnotic painting of his servant girl, Zohra, has been called the Moroccan Mona Lisa – her eyes will follow you around the room, as he must have her. A special room is dedicated to Paul Bowles and the Beat Generation. The romantic map room upstairs contains walls lined with ancient parchments and diplomatic mementoes, including a hilarious letter from the US consul recounting his gift of a lion from the sultan in 1839. It is at this point you realise that you have entered the plot of an exotic historical novel.

Around the corner from the Legation is the **Musée de la Fondation Lorin** (Map p174; ☎ 039 930306; fondationlorin@gmail.com; 44 Rue Touahine; admission free, but donations appreciated; 🕒 11am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Sun-Fri), which is another eclectic stop. Here you will find an open two-storey

room with an engaging collection of black-and-white photographs of 19th and 20th century Tangier on the walls. Meanwhile there is likely a children's theatre going on in the centre, as the museum doubles as a workshop for disadvantaged kids, bringing life to the static display.

Now continue along Rue Touahine to Rue as-Siaghin, and exit the medina from where you started. Follow the perimeter all the way to the western end, to the highest part of the city, enter the Porte de la Kasbah, and follow the road to the **Kasbah Museum** (Map p174; ☎ 039 932097; Place de la Kasbah; adult/child Dh10/3; ☒ 9am-4pm Wed-Mon). The museum is perfectly sited in Dar el-Makhzen, the former sultan's palace (where Portuguese and British governors also lived) and has recently been completely redone. The new focus is on the history of the area from pre-historic times to the 19th century, most of it presented in seven rooms around a central courtyard. Placards are in French and Arabic, but English brochures are available. Some highlights are an enormous flint tool

about the size of a human head; a crushed wine container with scenes of a bacchanalian feast (there must be something in the local water supply...); an extraordinary floor mosaic from Volubilis; and a fascinating wall map of trade routes past and present, superimposed on the map of 12th century cartographer Al-Idrisi (it's upside down). Before you leave, don't miss the exotic Sultan's Garden off the main courtyard, opposite the entrance.

VILLE NOUVELLE

With its Riviera architecture and colonial ambience, the area around Place de France and Blvd Pasteur still hints at the glamour of the 1930s. It's a popular place for an early evening promenade, or a few hours sipping mint tea in one of the many streetside cafés – particularly the landmark Café de Paris (p183), whose retro facade is screaming to be captured on canvas. Where is that Tangier expat Matisse when we need him?

Next door is the aptly named **Terrasse des Paresseux** (Idlers' Terrace; Map p178), which provides

YOU CAN'T BEAT TANGIER

The Beat Generation was a post-WWII American counterculture movement that combined visceral engagement in worldly experiences with a quest for deeper understanding. It reached its apotheosis in Tangier. Many Beat artists – writer Jack Kerouac, and poets Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso – were just passing through, while writers William Burroughs and Paul Bowles, and the multitalented Brion Gysin, spent significant parts of their lives here, further inspiring a coterie of local artists. The result was a mixed bag, from the heights of artistic creativity to the lows of moral depravity. Today Beat history can still be found throughout the city:

Hotel el-Muniria (p181) William Burroughs wrote *The Naked Lunch*, his biting satire of the modern American mind, here. Originally titled 'Interzone', the book was written in the cut-up technique developed by Brion Gysin. Ginsberg and Kerouac also shacked up here in 1957.

Tanger Inn (p181 & p184) Photos of Beat customers abound on the walls of this bar below the el-Muniria.

Café Central (p183) Burroughs' principal hangout on the Petit Socco, where he sized up his louche opportunities.

1001 Nights (Map p174) A legendary café in the kasbah established by Brion Gysin, also known for his Dreamachine, a kinetic work of art that induces a trance-like condition. The café was famous for its house band of trance musicians, the Master Musicians of Jajouka, who released a record produced by the Rolling Stones' Brian Jones. It has been 'closed for renovations' for years.

Tangier American Legation Museum (opposite) Houses a room dedicated to Paul Bowles and the Beat artists of Tangier, including the talented John Hopkins, whose overlooked *All I Wanted Was Company* deserves rediscovery.

Hotel Continental (p180) Scenes from the movie version of Paul Bowles' *The Sheltering Sky* were filmed here.

Café Hafa (p183) Paul Bowles and the Rolling Stones came here to smoke hashish.

Café De Paris (p183) The main literary salon during the Interzone, it also drew Tennessee Williams and Truman Capote.

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sweeping views of the port and, on a clear day, Gibraltar and Spain. A set of ancient cannons faces the bay, symbolically warding off usurpers.

TOWN BEACH

The wide **town beach** (Map p171) has been improved in recent years, although it's not as clean in the off-season as it is in the bustling summer. In any case, locals advise that it is not clean enough for swimming, particularly the section closest to the port. It works well for a seaside stroll, however, and the new corniche makes walking easy. It's not a great place late in the day, when muggings aren't unknown. Remember there are plenty of attractive beaches down the nearby Atlantic coast.

Activities

SPAS & HAMMAMS

Pamper yourself at the luxury spa **El Minzah Wellness** (Map p178; ☎ 039 935885; www.elminzah.com; 85 Rue de la Liberté; fitness room Dh150), where there's a fully equipped gym (with superb views to sea), sauna and Jacuzzi, as well as a range of both massage and therapeutic treatments.

Sheherazade Hammam (☎ 039 372828; serenity@serenityspa.ma; Rue Adolfo Fessere, in Quartier California) is a chance for women to escape the all-too-male world of Morocco, at least for a few hours, and indulge the body in luxurious surroundings. This female-only hammam gets high marks from local customers. Located west of Place de Koweit, on the road to the golf course; take a cab.

HORSE RIDING

Along the road to Cap Spartel, the **Royal Club Equestre** (☎ 039 934384; Rte Boubana Tangier; half-hr Dh75, 1hr Dh150, both incl guide; 🕒 8am-noon & 2-6pm, Tue-Sun) is set in the midst of forested hills, a pleasant place to explore on horseback. All riders must be accompanied by a guide, which is included in the price of the horse hire.

Tangier for Children

For kids, **M'Nar Park** (☎ 039 343829; www.mnarparc.ma; Cap Malabata; aquapark adult/child Dh100/50; 🕒 8am-6pm, pool 15 Jun-15 Sep) is heaven, and the only game in town. Located south of Cap Malabata, with great views across the Bay of Tangier, this cliffside resort offers a water

park, an electronic game park, karting, a small train, a mini-football field, restaurants, a café and 38 residential bungalows for families.

Tour Guides

If your appetite for adventure allows it, this is one place where it makes sense to hire a local guide. Virtually all the hassles go away, as the street hustlers will leave you alone; navigation becomes effortless, saving you valuable time; you'll learn more, to include gaining access to places you might not otherwise see; and it's cheap. If you have the inclination, it is quite possible to find a young, English-speaking guide who will take you all over Tangier for Dh100 a day – a bargain for navigation alone. For more information see the Directory, p461.

To find a reputable guide, you can inquire at any hotel or the tourism information office, but this can take time. If you want to plan ahead, an excellent choice is **Said Nacir** (☎ 071 045706; www.d-destination.com). An English-speaking national guide with 20 years experience, he specialises in private tours of Tangier for small parties, from individuals to families, and at low rates, thanks to the discounts he commands from vendors. For Dh800, he offers a complete day trip from Spain including ferry tickets, pick-up, entry fees, lunch and guide services – a bargain. Itineraries can also be customised to personal taste.

Festivals & Events

The place to go for listings of events and local info is *Tanger Pocket*, a French-language brochure available at most hotels and online (www.tangerpocket.com). Also see www.maghebarts.ma/festivals, in French.

Salon du Livre (☎ 039 941054; Institut Français, 41 Rue Hassan ibn Ouazzane) Annual week-long book festival with varying themes, held in late February/March.

Le Festival International de Théâtre Amateur (☎ 039 930306; Fondation Lorin, 44 Rue Touahine) A week of Arabic- and French-speaking theatre, traditionally held every May, run by Fondation Lorin.

TANJazz (www.tanjazz.org) Usually held in the last week of May, this ever-popular festival hosts concerts by local and international jazz musicians, including some leading names.

Carnaval (☎ 039 321271; Association Tanger Med) Begun in 2007, this is Tangier's humble, if growing, attempt to follow in Rio's footsteps.

Festival du Court Métrage Méditerranéen (International Mediterranean Short Film Festival) Week-long festival of short films from around the Mediterranean, held end of June.

Sleeping

Tangier's sleeping options cater to all budgets and styles, spanning the spectrum from the ultracheap pensions near the port to the chic hotels along the oceanfront. Most budget accommodations are clustered around the medina and close to the port gate. They're cheap but only occasionally cheerful, so it can pay to hunt around. In addition to those listed below, you can find plenty of choice in the streets around Ave Mokhtar Ahardan and the Rue Magellan. Off-season travellers should get a reduced rate, which may even be negotiated further (like everything here). Before accepting your room, however, make sure that it has not grown musty from the sea.

MEDINA

Budget

Hotel Continental (Map p174; ☎ 039 931024; hcontidental@iam.net.ma; 36 Rue Dar el-Baroud; s/d incl breakfast Dh310/396) Nothing appears to have been touched here for decades, making this piece of faded grandeur a fascinating bit of archaeology. A seemingly endless succession of dimly lit spaces is cluttered with more antiques than a pharaoh's tomb; one is tempted to explore with a gas lamp. The rooms are bare bones. The manager, Jimmy, also dabbles in retail, as a dated sign on the way in reveals: 'Jimmy's World Famous Perfumerie, patronised by film stars and the international jet set'. How the mighty have fallen.

Hotel Mamora (Map p174; ☎ 039 934105; www.hotelmamora.site.voila.fr; 19 Rue des Postes; low season s/d with sink Dh60/120, with toilet Dh100/150, with shower Dh200/230) With a variety of rooms at different rates, this is a good bet. It's a bit institutional, like an old school, but clean, well run, and strong value for the money. The rooms overlooking the green-tiled roof of the Grande Mosquée (such as Room 39, at Dh200) are the most picturesque, if you don't mind the muezzin's call. Prices are negotiable in off-season.

Midrange

our pick La Tangerina (Map p174; ☎ 039 94 773119; www.latangerina.com; Riad Sultan Kasbah; d incl breakfast

Dh400-1000) This is easily the best midrange choice in Tangier, a perfectly renovated riad at the very top of the kasbah, with 10 rooms of different personality, easily accessible by car (a rarity), fairly priced and with highly attentive hosts. Bathed in light and lined with rope banisters, it feels like an elegant, Berber-carpeted steamship cresting the medina. The meticulous attention to detail shows in the old radios in each room which play relaxing music. The roof terrace overlooks the ancient crenellated walls of the kasbah, while below, neighbourhood washing hangs from abandoned coastal cannons, proclaiming the passage of history. Reserve early. Dinner is available on request.

Riad Tanja (Map p174; ☎ 039 333538; www.riadtanja.com; Rue du Portugal, Escalier Américain; d Dh800-1000; ☎) On the edge of the medina, the Tanja combines modern Spain with a traditional riad to form a stylish mix. Rooms are exceedingly comfortable, with huge bathrooms, brick floors and decorations drawn from Tangier's artistic heritage. Some look over the city while the terrace (with an excellent restaurant, serving alcohol) offers grand views over the strait to Spain. However, the riad has lost some of the finer points at this price level, with evident moisture problems, and halls full of rugs that look jumbled and worn. Follow the signs from the stepped gate to the medina on Rue Portugal.

Dar Nour (Map p174; ☎ 062 112724; www.darnour.com; 20 Rue Gournia; d/tr incl breakfast from Dh650/1200). With no central courtyard, rooms here branch off two winding staircases, creating a maze of rooms and salons and terraces that threaten your navigational skills. The effect is dark romance, like exploring a cave. Once you get to the top, there is an impressive view over the roofs of the medina. The location is authentic, but a dense residential neighbourhood without a tourist in sight may not be to everyone's liking. Beware of moisture/mould issues.

VILLE NOUVELLE

Budget

Many of the unrated hotels and pensions along Rue Salah Eddine el-Ayoubi and Ave d'Espagne are little better than the cheapies in the medina. This Salah/Espagne area can be dodgy at night, and questionable

for women travelling alone. Following are some alternatives.

our pick **Hotel El-Muniria** (Map p178; ☎ 039 935337; 1 Rue Magellan; s/d Dh150/200) This is your best low-end option in the ville nouvelle, and an important cut above the gloomy and often dirty competition, not to mention chock-full of Beat-generation history (see the boxed text, p177). French windows and bright, flowery fabrics set it apart, revealing the careful touch of a hands-on family operation. Room 4 is a great hideaway, a quiet corner double with lots of light, as is Room 8, a quiet double with a harbour view. Noise from the bar below is the only drawback.

Pension Hollande (Map p171; ☎ 039 937838; 139 Rue de Hollande; s/d low season Dh200/250, high season Dh300/350) Tucked away in a quiet street a short walk from Place de France, this former hospital has sparkling whitewashed rooms and high ceilings, though the bathrooms can be claustrophobic. All rooms have sinks; doubles come with a shower. Hot water can be an issue – reception may ask you to give notice, to put on the heater. Of the main rooms, Room 11 and Room 6 are your best bets, but for a budget steal, don't miss the loft rooms up the hidden spiral staircase (single/double Dh100/150, shared bathroom).

Hotel de Paris (Map p178; ☎ 039 931877; 42 Blvd Pasteur; s/d with bathroom low season Dh280/350, high season Dh320/400, incl breakfast) This reliable choice in the heart of the ville nouvelle has a classy, old-world aura in its lobby, although the breakfast area is dim. There are a variety of room types and prices depending on bathroom arrangements and balconies. All are clean and modern, but those overlooking Blvd Pasteur can get noisy. The helpful front desk makes for a pleasant stay.

Midrange

Nicer hotels line the Ave Mohammed VI, offering spectacular views over the Bay of Tangier and close proximity to the attractions of the city, with a couple of options right in the centre.

Hotel El Djenina (Map p178; ☎ 039 922244; eldjenna_hotel@caramail.com; 8 Rue al-Antaki; s/d low season from Dh294/356, high season Dh357/463, breakfast Dh30; 🍷) This hotel is basically a half-step below the Marco Polo, with a suitable reduction in price. The rooms are still bright and modern, albeit smaller, and the facilities less

impressive, although a cosy bar/restaurant with patio views to the sea, under construction at time of research, will definitely close the gap.

Marco Polo (Map p178; ☎ 039 941124; www.marco-polo.ma; 2 Rue al-Antaki; s/d low season from Dh330/400, high season Dh420/560, breakfast Dh35) This newly renovated hotel is the perfect choice if you aren't looking for local atmosphere. Lots of light, sparkling marble floors and pastel walls make this a bright and welcoming, though generic, space. An excellent, central location across from the beach provides easy access to both the ville nouvelle and the medina, and its popular restaurant is also convenient. All 35 rooms are brand new, as is the huge fitness centre and hammam.

Hotel Rembrandt (Map p178; ☎ 039 937870; hotelrembrandt@menara.ma; Ave Mohammed V; s/d Dh500/640, high season Dh600/760, sea view add Dh100, breakfast Dh80; 🍷 🍷) Asylum-like doors provide a strange institutional ambience to the upper floors of this hotel, where plastic caramel baths don't match the rooms – in marked contrast to the downstairs lobby, with its classic elevator and spiral staircase. However, the glassed-in restaurant (set menu Dh150, alcohol served) is a welcome addition, the green garden café is a tranquil spot to relax, and the swank Bleu Pub, which overlooks the pool, is a popular night spot (beer from Dh20, wine from Dh70).

Top End

El-Minzah (Map p178; ☎ 039 935885; www.elminzah.com; 85 Rue de la Liberté; s/d incl breakfast from Dh1300/1700, high season from Dh1700/2100; 🍷 🍷) The classiest five-star hotel in Tangier proper, and a local landmark, this beautifully maintained 1930's period piece offers three excellent restaurants, three equally good bars, a fitness centre, a spa, pleasant gardens and even a babysitting service. Shaped like an enormous hollow square, with a tremendous Spanish-Moorish courtyard, it has history oozing from its walls. Portside rooms offer beautiful views, but can be noisy when the wind is blowing. The owner is currently restoring its sister ship, the Grand Hotel Villa de France.

Eating RESTAURANTS

Medina

Hamadi (Map p174; ☎ 039 934514; 2 Rue de la Kasbah; mains Dh40-70; 🍷 9.30am-3.30pm & 7.30-11pm) This

is one of the best 'palace restaurants' offering multicourse local cuisine, uniformed staff, live music and perhaps belly-dancing, all of it aimed at the next tour bus. But the price is right, the decor bright and the location pleasant. Avoid the rush hour at lunch, when they try to move tables at 25-minute intervals.

Populaire Saveur de Poisson (Map p178; ☎ 039 336326; 2 Escalier Waller; prix fixe Dh150; ☎ 12.30-4pm & 7-10pm Sat-Thu) This charming little seafood restaurant offers excellent, filling set menus in rustic surroundings. The owner, a self-described Popeye lookalike, serves inventive plates of fresh catch with sticky *seffa* (sweet couscous) for dessert, all of it washed down with a homemade juice cocktail made from 15 kinds of fruit (have a look at the vat in back). Not just a meal, a whole experience.

Riad Tanja Restaurant (Map p174; ☎ 039 333538; www.riadtanja.com; Rue du Portugal; prix fixe Dh300) With a reputation for some of the best food in the city, and a romantic view of the ville nouvelle climbing up the opposite hill, this is a great place to splurge, particularly with that special someone. The bi-level dining area feels more like a well-designed living room, with a dozen tables, high ceilings and international decor.

Ville Nouvelle

our pick Anna e Paolo (Map p178; ☎ 039 944617; 77 Rue de Prince Heretier; mains from Dh60) This is the top Italian bistro in the city, a family-run restaurant with Venetian owners that feels like you have been invited for Sunday dinner. Expect a highly international crowd, lots of cross-table conversations about the events of the day, wholesome food and a shot of grappa on the way out the door. Watch your head on the way upstairs.

Casa de España (Map p178; ☎ 039 947359; 11 Rue el-Jabha el-Ouatania; mains from Dh60, lunch set menu Dh60) With its attractive minimal style, this contemporary Spanish bar/restaurant is a breath of fresh air after so many mosaic interiors. Snappily dressed waiters serve up classic Spanish dishes, with some wonderful specials like lamb with summer fruits, and there's free tapas with drinks.

Number One (Map p178; ☎ 039 941674; 1 Ave Mohammed V; mains from Dh65; ☎ noon-3pm & 7-11pm) The rose walls and white windows in this renovated apartment provide the feel

of a holiday cottage, while the red lighting, background jazz and exotic mementoes lend it an intimate, sultry allure. The Moroccan/French cuisine gets high marks from locals, who have been coming here for 45 years.

Le Pagode (Map p178; ☎ 039 938086; Rue al-Bous-siri; mains from Dh80; ☎ Tue-Sun) If you're tired of tajines and pasta, this realistic bit of Asia is the answer. An intimate and classy dining area, with lacquered furniture, white tablecloths and low lighting is mated with a classic Chinese menu.

Restaurant el-Korsan (Map p178; ☎ 039 935885; El-Minzah Hotel, 85 Rue de la Liberté; mains around Dh130; ☎ 8-11pm) One of Tangier's top restaurants, this chic and classy place inside the El-Minzah offers a smaller, more intimate version of the palace restaurant theme – without the bus tours. Well-presented Moroccan classics are served to soft live music, and often traditional dancing. Reservations are necessary, including one day prior notice for lunch. Dress well.

San Remo (Map p178; ☎ 039 938451; 15 Rue Ahmed Chaouki; pizzas around Dh50, mains from Dh150; ☎ noon-3pm & 7.30-11pm) An international menu, long on Italian and with a slant towards fish, tables with bright cloths facing the street, Moroccan background music and a mix of clientele – expats, tourists, local businessmen – make this a lively spot with a great cultural crossroads feel.

CAFÉS, PATISSERIES & ICE-CREAM PARLOURS

Tangier's 800-plus café's are a study in local culture, and can be characterised many ways, beginning with old versus new. The former are almost exclusively male, and often shabby, while the latter (such as those listed below) are bright, modern and design-conscious, with light food, high ceilings, lots of light, and – gasp! – women. Coffee purists should see Drinking (opposite).

Pâtisserie La Española (Map p178; 97 Rue de la Liberté; ☎ 7am-10.30pm winter, 7am-12.30am summer) A heavily mirrored tea room, this café tempts people off the street with its pretty arrangements of cakes and pastries. Everyone seems to come here – locals and foreigners, businessmen and courting couples.

Al Mountazah (Map p174; Grand Socco; ☎ winter 7am-10pm, summer 7am-1am) While it seems more Floridian than Moroccan, you can't

beat this rooftop perch for observing the activity on the Grand Socco: sip your morning coffee and watch the square come alive from the great terrace. Offers breakfast for Dh12 (7am to 10am) and ice cream in summer.

La Giralda (Map p178; ☎ 072 744941; 1st fl, 5 Blvd Pasteur; breakfast from Dh12; ☎ 6am-10pm; ☺) The young and beautiful adore this chic and quiet café overlooking the Terrasse des Paresseux, with its plush furniture and intricately carved ceiling. Huge windows give great sea views.

Champs Élysées (Map p178; 6 Ave Mohammed V; breakfast from Dh18; ☎ 6am-10pm) This enormous café-in-the-round is high on opulence, with a huge central chandelier and red velvet upholstery. The lack of a dress code is the big surprise. Great sticky pastries.

QUICK EATS

In the medina there's a host of cheap eating possibilities around the Petit Socco (Map p174) and the adjacent Ave Mokhtar Aharidan, with rotisserie chicken, sandwiches and brochettes all on offer. In the ville nouvelle, try the streets immediately south of Place de France, which are flush with fast-food outlets, sandwich bars and fish counters.

Fast Food Brahim (Map p178; 16 Ave Mexique; sandwiches Dh15-18; ☎ 11am-midnight) Great made-to-order sandwiches. You can't go wrong here with half a baguette filled with *kefta* (spicy lamb meatballs) and salad to eat on the hoof.

Mix Max (Map p178; 6 Ave du Prince Héritier; meals Dh20-45; ☎ noon-2am) One of the newer and trendier fast-food joints, with great paninis, shawarmas and other creative fast fare.

SELF-CATERING

The covered markets (Map p174) near the Grand Socco are the best places for fresh produce, particularly on Thursday and Sunday, when Riffian women descend on the city in traditional hats and candy-striped skirts to sell their agricultural products. Fez market (Map p171), to the west of the city centre, is good for imported cheese and other treats.

Casa Pepé (Map p178; ☎ 039 937039 Rue ibn Rochd; ☎ 9am-10pm) One of several general stores in this area. You can stock up at the deli here, and buy dry goods and liquor.

Drinking

CAFÉS

For coffee purists, these are three legends. For pastries or more, see those listed under Eating (opposite).

Café de Paris (Map p178; Place de France; ☎ 6am-11pm) Gravity weighs upon the grand letters of the grand Café de Paris, reminding us of its age at the crossroads of Tangier. Facing the Place de France since 1927, this is the most famous of the coffee establishments along Blvd Pasteur, most recently as a setting in *The Bourne Ultimatum*. In the past it was a prime gathering spot for literati.

Café Hafa (Map p171; Ave Hadi Mohammed Tazi; ☎ 8.30am-11pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2am Sat & Sun) With its stadium seating overlooking the strait, you could easily lose an afternoon lazing in this open-air café, but you need good weather. Locals hang out here to enjoy a game of baggammon.

Café Central (Map p174; ☎ 033 079283; Petit Socco; ☎ 6am-11.30pm) The premier people-watching site in the medina, newly renovated. See the local Mafiosi arrive in his new Benz, watch odd specimens of humanity drift past, hear the strange shouts echo down the alleys, and wonder what is going on upstairs. It's the perfect place to sip your coffee.

BARS

Given its hedonistic past, it's no surprise that the drinking scene is firmly entrenched in Tangerine culture. It's equally unsurprising that bars are principally the domain of men, although there are a few more-Westernised places where women can take a drink. Many only get going after midnight.

Caid's Bar (Map p178; El-Minzah, 85 Rue de la Liberté; wine from Dh30; ☎ 10am-midnight) Welcome to Rick's Café, or at least the real model for the bar in *Casablanca*. Long the establishment's drinking hole of choice, this el-Minzah landmark is a classy relic of the grand days of international Tangier, and photos of the famous and infamous adorn the walls. Women are more than welcome, and the adjacent wine bar is equally good.

American's Pub (Map p178; Rue al-Moutanabi; ☎ noon-2am) Don't be fooled by the name: this pub is outfitted as an authentic part of the London underground, with white tiled walls, ubiquitous red trim and signage far more authentic than the Bobbies would appreciate. It's the perfect place to hide:

there's no street number, and the phone is out of order.

Ho!e in the Wall Bar (Map p178; ☎ 039 932424; Rue du Prince Heretier; beer from Dh14; ☎ 11am-midnight) For chuckles only, walk up Rue du Prince Heretier from the Terrasse des Paresseux one-and-a-half blocks and you will see a pair of swinging black doors, Old West style. Welcome to the smallest bar in Tangier, if not the world. Beer only.

Pilo (Map p178; cnr Ave Mexique/Rue de Fès) A party atmosphere pervades these two floors of local colour, underscored by some high-energy music ('mo-rockin'?) and festive lighting. Women can feel comfortable here, as the management has figured the rest of us out: ask them to show you the Freudian poster entitled 'What's On a Man's Mind'.

Entertainment

NIGHTCLUBS

Tangier's clubbing scene picks up in the summer, when Europeans arrive on the ferries. Discos cluster near Place de France and line the beach, appealing to a wide range of clientele, from grey-haired couples to sex tourists. Cover charges vary and may be rolled into drink prices. If leaving late, have the doorman call a taxi.

Loft (☎ 073 280927; www.loftclub-tanger.com; Route de Boubana) Easily Tangier's premier nightclub, this world class, state-of-the-art club holds 2000 people and feels like an enormous silver cruise ship, with upper-storey balconies, sparkling metal railings, billowing sail-like curtains, spot lights cutting through the artificial fog – and no cover. Go after midnight.

Beach Club 555 (Map p171; Ave Mohammed VI) You pass through airport-like security run by SWAT team guards, and find yourself on a faux tropical lagoon, replete with bridge and tiki huts. Inside, waiters dressed in white satin and fake afros serve visiting mafiosi. Unlike most anywhere in Tangier, the place is crawling with young women, known locally as geishas, who work freelance for the house.

Regine Club (Map p178; 8 Rue al-Mansour Dahabi; ☎ 10pm-3am Mon-Sat) Welcome to the 1980s. This disco has stayed the same so long it is a museum piece, replete with glass-reflecting ball, purple velour couches, movie posters from *Terminator* and a musty smell. Did we mention the clientele?

Pasarela (Ave Mohammed VI; ☎ 8pm-3am Mon-Sat, happy hour 8-11pm Sep-Jun; ☎) This Canadian-owned seaside venue is a large complex with several bars, an attractive garden, an outdoor swimming pool and a comfortable vibe. Music is mostly Western and fairly up-to-the-minute, with live music, although the coloured lights on the dance floor are screaming for an upgrade.

GAY VENUES

Tangier was once a gay destination, but that scene has long since departed for Marrakesh, leaving no establishments behind. Concierges report that the **Tanger Inn** (Map p178; Hotel el-Muniria, 1 Rue Magellan; beer Dh10; ☎ 10.30pm-1am, to 3am Fri & Sat) and some of the bars along the beach attract gay clientele, particularly late on weekends.

CINEMAS

Films are either in Arabic or dubbed in French.

Cinema Rif/Cinematheque de Tanger (Cinematheque de Tanger; Map p174; ☎ 039 934683; Grand Socco) Your first choice (see p176), here you'll find both indie and mainstream films, mostly American, Moroccan, Spanish or French (with Spanish and American films typically dubbed into Arabic).

Cinema Paris (Map p178; Rue de Fès; admission downstairs Dh12, balcony Dh18) Shows French, American and Bollywood films, the latter two dubbed into French or Arabic.

Shopping

VILLE NOUVELLE

La Casa Barata (Ave Abou Kacem Sebti at Ave Fayçal Ben Abdel Aziz; ☎ 9am-8pm Sat-Thu) Literally 'the cheap house', this large arena of dealers carries everything you can imagine, from vegetables to electronics to carpets. The best opportunity to find real treasure, and an experience unto itself.

Ensemble Artisanal (Map p171; cnr Rue Belgique & Rue M'sallah; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Sat-Thu) This government-backed arts-and-crafts centre is a good place to see the range of local crafts and watch the artisans at work. There's no haggling, as prices are fixed, but they are also much higher than in the souqs.

MEDINA

The souqs of the medina are a wonderful place to spend hours shopping. Just be

careful: there are many things of dubious quality and the novelty of exotica can get old after a while (do you really have a place for that tin lamp?). Following are some unusual places you might want to see.

Boutique Majid (Map p174; ☎ 039 938892; www.boutiquemajid.com; Rue Les Almohades) You can get lost for hours in this exotic antique shop, but the real gem is Majid himself. Straight out of central casting, to include his red fez, he will regale you with stories of the Rolling Stones and other luminaries while showing you his amazing collection of Moroccan doors. 'If you want a door,' he confides in his husky voice, 'you must talk to Majid!'

Bazaar of Silver Jewelry (☎ 039 336231; 13 Rue Jamaa Jadida) The name says it all: two floors of glass cases full of silver jewellery from throughout Morocco, both new and antique, and great staff, too. Located in an obscure alley near the Café Central (p183), ask there or call.

No 5 Rue Ben Raissoull (Map p174) This nameless hole-in-the-wall garment factory is noted for its fascinating combinations of traditional Moroccan dress and Western women's wear. Watch them winding threads in the street using a modified hair dryer.

Getting There & Away

Tackling anywhere unfamiliar after dark is always more traumatic, so try to arrive early in the day. Remember to change money to pay cab fare.

AIR

The Ibn Batouta International Airport (formerly 'Boukhalef'; TNG) is located 15km southwest of the city centre. Recently renovated, it is now attracting a number of budget airlines (including Easyjet from Madrid, ClickAir from Barcelona, and Atlas Blue from Amsterdam, Barcelona, Casablanca, London-Heathrow and Paris-CDG) as well as British Airways, Iberia and Royal Air Maroc. Check the internet for the latest service providers/schedules, as these are constantly changing.

BOAT

You have two options for crossing the Strait of Gibraltar: the fast ferries owned by FRS and Balearia, which look like futuristic catamarans (to Algeciras Dh440, one

hour; to Tarifa Dh320, 35 minutes); and the slow ferries, which take up to three hours (Dh320 to Algeciras). The former are more susceptible to weather delays, which can close the port for days, but they're lifesavers for those prone to seasickness. Tickets are available from the company ticket booths outside the ferry terminal building (Map p171), in the terminal itself, or from virtually any travel agency around town; be sure to pick up an exit form so you can avoid hassles later. The main destination is the Spanish port of Algeciras, with less frequent services to Tarifa and Málaga (Spain), Gibraltar and Sète (France; advance reservation required). The Tarifa service includes a free bus transfer to Algeciras (15 minutes). Book in advance during peak periods (particularly Easter and the last week in August), allow 90 minutes before departure to get tickets and navigate passport control, and remember the time difference with Spain (Morocco is two hours behind).

There is a left-luggage office (p172) just outside the port gates. For more details see p485.

BUS

The **CTM station** (Map p174; ☎ 039 931172) is conveniently beside the port gate. Destinations include Casablanca (Dh120, six hours), Rabat (Dh90, 4½ hours), Marrakesh (Dh210, 10 hours), Agadir (Dh300, 14 hours) Fez (Dh100, six hours), Meknès (Dh80, five hours), Chefchaouen (Dh40, three hours) and Tetouan (Dh20, one hour). Baggage is Dh5 (4kg to 10kg). Left luggage is Dh5 per day.

Cheaper bus companies operate from the **main bus station** (gare routière; ☎ 039 946928; Place Jamia el-Arabia), about 2km to the south of the city centre – the distinctly un-Moroccan-looking minarets are a useful nearby landmark. There are regular departures for all the destinations mentioned above, plus services to Al-Hoceima (Dh85, 10 hours) and Fnideq (Dh20, 1½ hours) – a small town 3km from the Ceuta border. The main bus station can be busy, but pretty hassle-free, thanks to the police office in the centre. It has a **left-luggage facility** (per item per 24hr Dh5-7; ☎ 5am-1am). A metered petit taxi to/from the town centre will cost around Dh8.

CAR

The major car rental agencies are located at the airport. The following have in-town locations:

Amine Car (Map p178; ☎ 039 944050; fax 039 325835; 43 Ave Mohammed V)

Avis (Map p178; ☎ 039 934646; fax 039 330624; 54 Blvd Pasteur; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun)

Hertz (Map p178; ☎ 039 322210; fax 039 322165; 36 Ave Mohammed V; ☎ 8am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 3-6pm Sat, 9am-noon Sun)

A reasonably secure and convenient **car park** (Map p171; 42 Rue Hollande; per hr Dh2, per night Dh15, per 24hr Dh25) is next to the Dawliz complex.

TAXI

The grand taxi rank for places outside Tangier is across from the main bus station. Grand taxis are the beige Mercedes sedans. The most common destinations are Tetouan (Dh30, one hour), Assilah (Dh20, 30 minutes) and Larache (Dh30, one hour). For Ceuta, travel to Fnideq (Dh40, one hour), 3km from the border. There are no direct taxis to the border (Bab Sebta). Grands taxis to Tetouan also frequently wait for arriving trains at Tanger Ville train station. For destinations in the outskirts of Tangier, such as the Caves of Hercules or Cap Malabata, use the grand taxi rank on the Grand Socco.

TRAIN

Tanger Ville, the new and sparkling Neo-Moorish train station, is hassle-free. Five trains depart daily for Sidi Kacem, Meknès, Fez, Rabat (Ville), Casablanca (Voyageurs) and Marrakesh, including a night service with couchettes, the famed *Marrakesh Express*, which should be reserved a day in advance (Dh269/176 for 1st/2nd class, Dh350 with couchette). If heading back to Spain, this train arrives in time for the morning ferry. From Sidi Kacem you can get connections south to Marrakesh or east to Oujda. Schedules are best checked at www.oncf.ma. Note that the **left luggage office** (per item Dh10; ☎ 7am-1pm & 2-9.30pm) only accepts locked bags. A petit taxi to/from Tangier centre should cost around Dh10.

Getting Around**TO/FROM THE AIRPORT**

From the port, a grand taxi takes 30 to 40 minutes and costs Dh150 for the entire car,

but if you find the cab beyond the port, the price falls to Dh100. If you want to pick up a local bus from the airport, Bus 17 and Bus 70 run to the Grand Socco, but you'll need to walk 2km to the main road.

BUS

Buses aren't really necessary for getting around Tangier, but two potentially useful services are Bus 13, which runs from the train station via Ave Mohammed VI to the port gate, and Bus 17, which links the train station and the main bus station. Tickets cost Dh5.

TAXI

Distinguishable by their ultramarine colour with a yellow stripe down the side, petits taxis do standard journeys around town for Dh7 to Dh10; they charge 50% more at night.

AROUND TANGIER**Cap Spartel**

رأس سبارطيل

Just 14km west of Tangier lies Cap Spartel, the northwestern extremity of Africa's Atlantic coast. It is a popular day trip with locals and tourists alike. A dramatic drive takes you through La Montagne, an exclusive suburb of royal palaces and villas, and over the pine-covered headland to the **Cap Spartel Lighthouse**. This is normally closed, but the caretaker might be convinced to let you in for a few dirhams. The beaches to the south are clean and quiet outside the summer season, so you can find your own private cove.

Below Cap Spartel, the beach **Plage Robinson** stretches off to the south – a great place for a bracing walk. Five kilometres further you reach the **Grottes d'Hercule** (admission Dh5; ☎ 8am till dark), next to Le Mirage hotel, the mythical dwelling place of Hercules. Since the 1920s these caves have been quarried for millstones, worked by prostitutes and used as a venue for private parties by rich celebrities from Tangier. A much-photographed view of the Atlantic from within resembles a map of Africa. Camel rides are available here, just before the entrance to the caves on the right. A beach ride is a special treat.

SLEEPING & EATING

Camping Achakkar (☎ 039 933840; camping per person Dh20, plus per tent/car/camper Dh20/10/45) Inland from the grotto, this shady site has

THE LAST PIECES OF EMPIRE

Some of the most fascinating places in northern Morocco are not Moroccan at all, they are Spanish. When Spain recognised Moroccan independence in 1956, it retained a collection of historical oddities that had predated the Spanish Protectorate. Known by the euphemism *plazas de soberanía* (places of sovereignty), they have a population of 145,000, and are divided into two groups.

The *plazas mayores* (greater places) contain virtually all the people, and include the coastal cities of Ceuta and Melilla. Politically these are 'autonomous cities', with governmental powers placing them somewhere between a city and a region of Spain.

The *plazas menores* (lesser places) are only inhabited by a handful of Spanish legionnaires, if that. These include three islands in the Bay of Al-Hoceima: Isla de Mar, Isla de Tierra (both deserted, apart from Spanish flags) and El Peñón de Alhucemas, a striking white fortress home to some 60 soldiers. El Peñón de Velez de la Gomera, at the end of a long canyon in the National Park of Al-Hoceima, is another ancient rock fortress, connected to the mainland by a narrow spit of sand – and a guardhouse, one of the oddest national borders you'll ever see. The Islas Chafarinas, 3km from Ras el-Mar, have three small islands: Isla del Congreso, Isla del Rey, and Isla Isabel II, the latter with a garrison of 190 troops. Spain also owns the tiny Isla Perejil, near Ceuta, which was the cause of one of the world's smallest conflicts, when Spanish troops evicted a handful of Moroccan soldiers in 2002; and the Isla de Alborán, about 75km north of Melilla, which has a small navy garrison.

While the two fortress *peñones* are must-sees, none of the *plazas menores* can be entered, as they are military sites. Morocco claims them all, making their defence necessary. Otherwise, their strategic importance is more elusive than the Mediterranean monk seal, the last of which disappeared from the Islas Chafarinas in the 1990s.

clean facilities, but no hot water (electricity Dh25). It has a café with simple meals and a shop that stocks essentials.

Le Mirage (☎ 039 333332; www.lemirage-tanger.com; d from Dh2400, May–Nov from Dh1800; 🍷 🍷) This is one of the finest hotels in the Tangier area, with a dramatic location perched on the cliff beside the grotto, offering a view of miles of broad Atlantic beach. The bungalows are exquisite, as the price suggests. Nonguests can get a taste of the opulence in the immaculate restaurant (meals from Dh200), or just stop by for a drink beneath the pergola. From the sunny terrace you can see the Roman ruins of Cotta, where fish oil was processed.

Restaurant Cap Spartel (☎ 039 933722; Cap Spartel Rd; salads Dh40–60, mains from Dh70) This seafood restaurant next to the lighthouse is popular on weekends.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Grands taxis from Tangier are the best way of getting to Cap Spartel. A one-way charter should cost around Dh50, and slightly more than double for a round trip including waiting time. Taxis leave from the rank in front of St Andrew's Church in Tangier. Petits taxis are reluctant to make the trip one way

only – the price isn't much different to a grand taxi.

Road to Ceuta

The scenic road from Tangier to Ceuta is worth taking: green patchwork fields, alluring mountain roads, rolling hills, rocky headlands and cul-de-sac beaches reveal a different side to Morocco, now under siege by development. A complete grand taxi will cost Dh200.

The road begins at Cap Malabata, the headland opposite Tangier, which is undergoing extensive reconstruction; cranes and roadwork are everywhere. For an off-the-beaten-track moment, visit the unsigned **Casa Italiano**, the obvious coastal ruin soon after you crest the hill. While apparently an old castle, it is actually the remains of an unfinished home, c 1900. Follow the path beneath the 'Tanger–Cap Malabat' road sign to the white house of the caretaker, **Banyahim Abdelsalam** (☎ 063 593078), whose door faces the road. It's the perfect place for a picnic, with great views of passing ships.

Ksar es-Seghir, 25km further around the coast, is a small fishing port dominated by the remains of a Portuguese fort, itself surrounded by a serious fence, preventing

entry. The beach here is popular with locals in summer, and there are some decent seafood restaurants, but otherwise head on. Just beyond you'll spot **Port Tanger Mediteranéa**, the new container facility relocated from Tangier proper, and an interesting bit of engineering.

The best view along the way is the great crag of **Jebel Musa**, one of the ancient Pillars of Hercules (the Rock of Gibraltar being the other), which rises 10km or so further on.

CEUTA (SEBTA)

pop 75,000

Ceuta is one of a handful of Spanish possessions on the coastline of Morocco (see p187), and a real gem. Located on a peninsula jutting out into the Mediterranean, it offers a compact dose of fantastic architecture, interesting museums, excellent food, a relaxing maritime park and bracing nature walks, with A-plus traveller support at every turn. The city is particularly beautiful at night, a skyline of artfully lit buildings and bursting palms.

If entering from Morocco, Ceuta is also an eye-opener. Like the former West Berlin, it comes across as a grand social experiment concocted by rival political systems. Leaving the beggars and street hustlers behind, you cross over a grim border zone, a 100m no-man's-land of haphazardly placed barricades, part of a €30 million fence erected by the EU to prevent illegal immigration, to find yourself blinking in the light of Spanish culture, a relaxed world of well-kept plazas, beautiful buildings and tapas bars bubbling over until

the wee hours. This experience alone is worth the trip and lingers thereafter.

This cultural-island phenomenon is the essence of Ceuta. It explains the heavy Spanish military presence, the Moroccan immigrants, the duty-free shopping, the shady cross-border commerce, the tourism and the local caution towards foreigners. Many people simply pass through here to avoid the hassles of Tangier, but this small piece of Spain has more than enough charms of its own, and is the perfect weekend getaway. Don't miss it.

History

Ceuta served as one of the Roman Empire's coastal bases (its Arabic name, Sebta, stems from the Latin *Septem*). After a brief stint under the control of the Byzantine Empire, the city was taken in AD 931 by the Arab rulers of Muslim Spain – the basis for Spain's claim of historical rights to the land. For the next 500 years, however, this city at the tip of Africa was like a prized possession, fought over and ruled successively by Spanish princes, Moroccan sultans and Portuguese kings. Things began to settle down when Portugal and Spain united under one crown in 1580, and Ceuta passed to Spain by default. When the two countries split in 1640, Ceuta remained Spanish, and has been ever since.

Recent history has been focused on problems with Spain over immigration and political sovereignty. In 2002 there was a bizarre conflict over the tiny nearby isle of Perejil, after half a dozen Moroccan

SURVIVAL SPANISH

■ Hello/Goodbye	¡Hola!/¡Adios!	■ a double room	una habitación doble
■ Yes/No	Sí/No	■ How much is it?	¿Cuánto cuesta?
■ Please/Thankyou	Por favor/Gracias	■ What time does the next... leave?	¿A qué hora sale/llega el próximo...?
■ Where is...?	¿Dónde está...?	■ boat	barca
■ hotel	hotel	■ bus	autobús
■ guesthouse	pensión	■ I'd like a...	Quisiera un...
■ camping	camping	■ one-way ticket	billete sencillo
■ Do you have any rooms available?	¿Tiene habitaciones libres?	■ return ticket	billete de ida y vuelta
■ a single room	una habitación individual	■ beer	cerveza
		■ sandwich	bocadillo

soldiers tried to reclaim it from Spain. In 2006 youths set fire to several mosques in Ceuta, after a number of local Muslims were arrested on the Spanish mainland in connection with the Madrid bombings. In 2007 the king of Spain visited the city for the first time in 80 years, sparking protests from the Moroccan government. So far none of this has closed a single tapas bar.

Orientation

Ceuta has three distinct areas. García Aldave, a large piece of the mainland covered by forest and dilapidated military installations; the city centre, a narrow isthmus that contains most of the attractions; and Monte Hacho, the tall, rounded end of the peninsula.

The heart of the city centre is the Plaza de Africa, while its backbone is the Paseo de Revellin, a popular pedestrian street. Tourist information, paths and signage are all done very well, although little English is spoken, even among tourist staff.

Information

To phone Ceuta from outside Spain, dial ☎ 0034. Remember that Ceuta is two hours ahead of Morocco during April and May and one hour ahead at other times, and that most businesses are closed on Sunday.

INTERNET ACCESS

Cyber Ceuta (☎ 956 512303; Paseo de Colón; per hr €2.40; ☎ 11am-2pm & 5-10pm Mon-Sat, 5-10pm Sun)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Instituto Gestión Sanitario (Ingesa) (☎ 956 528400; ☎ 24hr) Two locations, one next to the Royal Walls, another east of the fishing port.

MONEY

Euros are used for all transactions in Ceuta. ATMs are plentiful; outside banking hours you can change money at the more expensive hotels. There are informal moneychangers on both sides of the border, although it's technically illegal to take dirhams out of Morocco.

POST

Correos (Post Office; 59 Calle Real; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Main Tourist Office (☎ 856 200560; www.ceuta.es, in Spanish; Baluarte de los Mallorquines; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm

Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat & Sun) Very friendly and efficient, with good maps and brochures.

Plaza de Africa Kiosk (☎ 956 528146; ☎ 10am-1pm & 5-8pm 15 Sep-31 May, 10.30am-1.30pm & 6-8pm 1 Jun-14 Sep) A smaller satellite office.

Estacion Marítima Kiosk (☎ 956 506275; ☎ 9am-9pm) Another satellite office.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Avenida Muelle Cañonero Dato and the approach to the estación marítima are lined with agencies selling ferry tickets to Algeciras.

Viajes Eideres (☎ /fax 956 524656; eideres@teleline.es; Plaza de Africa)

Sights & Activities

Ceuta's history is outlined by the *ruta monumental*, a series of excellent information boards in English and Spanish outside key buildings and monuments.

PLAZA DE AFRICA

This is the charming heart of Ceuta, with manicured tropical plantings, a square of cobblestone streets and some of the city's finest architecture. Moving clockwise from the oblong **Comandancia General**, a military headquarters closed to visitors, you encounter the striking yellow **Santuario de Nuestra Señora de Africa** (☎ 9am-1pm & 5-9pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 6.30-9pm Sun & holidays) an 18th-century Andalusian-style church; the 19th-century **Palacio de la Asamblea**, with its elegant dome and clock, a combination palace and city hall; and finally the 17th century, twin-spired **Catedral Santa Maria de la Asuncion** (☎ 956 517771; ☎ 9am-1pm & 6-8pm Tue-Sun) whose museum was under renovation at time of research. The centre of the plaza contains a memorial to soldiers lost in the Spanish-Moroccan War of 1860, a conflict over the borders of Ceuta.

ROYAL WALLS

The most impressive sight in Ceuta is the medieval **Royal Walls** (☎ 956 517770; Avenida González Tablas; free admission incl gallery; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-8pm). These extensive fortifications, of great strategic complexity, have been beautifully restored, with information boards in English. The beautifully designed **Museo de los Muralles Reales**, a gallery that houses temporary art exhibitions, lies within the walls themselves. It's a most atmospheric space, worth visiting regardless of what's on show – although

INFORMATION		Museo de la Legión.....17 C2	Central Market.....32 C1
Correos.....1 D3	Museo de los Murallas	El Angulo.....33 A4	El Puente Cafeteria.....34 C1
Cyber Ceuta.....2 C2	Reales.....18 A4	Gran Muralla.....35 C1	La Jota.....36 C1
Estacion Marítima Kiosk.....3 A2	Palacio de Asamblea.....19 B2	La Marina.....37 C4	Mesón el Bache.....38 D2
Instituto Gestión Sanitario (Ingesa).....4 E3	Parque Marítimo del Mediterráneo.....(see 11)	Mesón el Cortijo.....39 D2	Supersol.....40 A3
Instituto Gestión Sanitario (Ingesa).....5 A4	Playa de la Ribera.....20 A2	Supersol.....41 C2	
Main Tourist Office.....6 A3	Playa del Chorrillo.....21 A4		
Plaza de Africa Kiosk.....7 B2	Plaza de Africa.....22 B2		
Viajes Eideres.....8 B2	Plaza de los Reyes.....23 D2		
	Santuario de Nuestra Señora de Africa.....24 B2		
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES			DRINKING ☑
Baños Arabes.....9 E1	SLEEPING ☑	Café Central.....42 D1	Dublin.....43 D1
Casa de los Dragones.....10 D2	Hostal Central.....25 C1	Tokio Pub.....44 C1	
Casino.....11 C3	Hostal Plaza Ruiz.....26 D2		
Cathedral Santa María de la Asuncion.....12 B2	Hostal Real.....27 D2		
Comandancia General.....13 A1	Parador Hotel La Muralla.....28 A1		
Iglesia de San Francisco.....14 D2	Pensión Charito.....29 E1		
Museo de Ceuta.....15 C2	Pensión La Bohemia.....30 C1		
Museo de la Basílica Tardorromana.....16 B2	EATING ☑		
	Cala Carlota.....31 B3		
			TRANSPORT
		Buses to Border.....45 A3	Buses to Border.....(see 47)
		Estacion Marítima.....46 A2	Local Bus Station.....47 C1
		Renfe Office.....48 C2	

if you're lucky enough to catch local artist Diego Canca, don't miss his work.

BEACHES

Easily overlooked, the two town beaches, **Playa del Chorrillo** and **Playa de la Ribera**, lie to the south of the isthmus, beneath Avenida Martínez Catena. They are well kept and conveniently located, although the sand is a bland grey.

MUSEO DE LA LEGIÓN

This intriguing **museum** (☎ 606 733566; Paseo de Colón; admission free, donations appreciated; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 4-6pm Mon-Fri, 4-6pm Sat & Sun) is dedicated to and run by the Spanish Legion, an army unit set up in 1920 that played a pivotal role in Franco's republican army. Loaded to the gills with memorabilia, weaponry and uniforms, not to mention glory, pomp and circumstance, it is a fascinating glimpse into the military culture that shaped the north, from the imperious statue of Franco, to the explanation of how the legion's intrepid founder, Millan Astray, lost his right eye, to the history of the legion in cinema. They even check your passport at the door. Alternatively, you can enlist at <http://lalegion.es>. There are guided tours in English.

MUSEO DE CEUTA

This ageing city **museum** (☎ 956 517398; 30 Paseo del Revellín; admission free; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun mid-Sep-May, 10am-2pm & 7-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat Jun-mid-Sep) has a small

collection showing the peninsula's pre-Spanish history, with all labels in Spanish.

PLAZA DE LOS REYES

With its green triumphal arch (inscribed 'a monument to coexistence') and fountain, this plaza borders the twin-towered yellow **Iglesia de San Francisco**. But the real treasure lies across the street: the **Casa de los Dragones** (House of Dragons) a fantastic dream that has entered the real world. Recently restored to perfection, this former home is an extraordinary example of eclectic architecture, with Moorish arches, polished brick facades, Mansard roofs, fabulous balconies, and the *pièce de résistance*, four enormous dark dragons springing from the roof. The intricate anagram of the Cerni Gonzalez Brothers, the builders, is emblazoned on the corner. Tip your hat.

MUSEO DE LA BASÍLICA TARDORROMANA

This superbly executed underground **museum** (☎ 10am-1.30pm & 5-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1.30pm Sun) is integrated into the architectural remains of an ancient basilica discovered during street work in the '80s, including a bridge over open tombs, skeletons included. The artefacts become a means of branching out into various elements of local history. In Spanish, but definitely worth a lap through. Enter via c/Queipo de Llano.

PARQUE MARÍTIMO DEL MEDITERRÁNEO

This creative **maritime park** (admission Mon €3, Tue-Fri €4, Sat, Sun & hol €5; ☎ 10am-7pm, pool Apr-

Se) is one of several versions developed by the brilliant artist and architect Cesar Manrique of the Canary Islands. The architect borrowed the city walls theme to construct a huge pool deck on the sea, including a grand lagoon and two other saltwater pools, surrounded by 10 bars, pubs, restaurants and cafés. A central island holds a fortress **casino** (☎ 9pm-4am Sun-Thu, 9pm-6am Fri & Sat). A pictorial display of Manrique's work lies just inside the entrance, 50m to the right. This is a real hit in the summer, and perfect for families.

BAÑOS ARABES

Accidentally discovered during street work, these ancient **Arab baths** (Calle Arrabal 16; ☎ 11.30am-1.30pm & 5-7pm Mon-Fri, 11.30am-1.30pm Sat & Sun), sit on a main road, an incongruous sight. There are two of them, with barrel-vaulted roofs originally covered with marble – the high-tech spa of its time.

MONTE HACHO

A walk around Monte Hacho is an option on a nice day; maps are available at the tourist office or you can wing it and follow the coast. Since it's an uphill slog from town, a good option is to start by taking a cab (€10) to the **Mirador de San Antonio** two-thirds of the way up, which offers magnificent views over Ceuta and north to Gibraltar. The summit of the peninsula is crowned by the massive Fortaleza de Hacho, a fort first built by the Byzantines, and still an active military installation. No visitors are allowed.

Back down at the main road, you keep going clockwise until you reach the **Castillo del Desnarigado** (☎ 956 511770; admission free; ☎ 11am-2pm Sat & Sun) a small fort on the southeastern tip of the peninsula, which houses a small military museum. There is a lighthouse above, and a secluded beach, **Playa Torrecilla**, below.

GARCÍA ALDAVE

If you've done everything else, the García Aldave can be crossed from coast to coast along the N354, either by car or on foot (a hiking map from the tourist office will help). The route contains a series of circular neomedieval watchtowers, closed to visitors. Several of these are visible from the excellent **Mirador de Isabel II**, which offers great views across the isthmus to Monte Hacho.

On 1 November, the Day of the Dead, there is a mass pilgrimage here to remember the deceased.

The road ends at Benzú, a small town on the northern coast, which faces the grand sight of Jebel Musa rising across the border. The mountain is known here as the Dead Woman, as it resembles one, lying on her back. Contemplate mortality here over a cup of mint tea.

Sleeping

Ceuta isn't overrun with sleeping options, so if you're arriving late in the day an advance reservation can be a good idea.

BUDGET

Most cheap places are *pensiónes* (guest-houses), some of which are identifiable only by the large blue-and-white 'CH' plaque.

Pensión La Bohemia (☎ 956 510615; 16 Paseo del Revellín; s/d €25/35) This well-run operation, one flight above a shopping arcade, offers a bright and spotless set of rooms arranged around a central court, with potted plants, shiny tile floors and a surfeit of pictures of Marilyn Monroe. Bathrooms are shared, with plenty of hot water, and communal showers. Rooms have small TVs and fans.

Hostal Real (☎ 956 511449; fax 956 512166; 1 Calle Real; s/d/tr €34/45/60; ☎) Not quite as cosy as La Bohemia, but good, clean rooms are available. Just check to see what you're getting: Room 7 is a good streetside quad, and Room 6 an equally good triple, but others have no windows and can get musty. Guests are welcome to use the laundry facilities if vacancy is low, and the popcorn machine is a perennial favourite.

Pensión Charito (☎ 956 513982; pcharito@terra.es; 1st fl, 5 Calle Arrabal; s/d €15/20) This place is poorly signed – look for the green and cream building above the bar/café Limité. Though a bit aged, the inside is clean and homey with hot showers and a small, well-equipped kitchen. If rooms are full the staff may not be present.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

our pick: Hostal Plaza Ruiz (☎ 956 516733; www.hostalesceuta.com; 3 Plaza Ruiz; s €34-45, d €44-60, tr €54-76, q €64-80; ☎) Sister hotel to the Central, this place has a similar, welcoming style and a charming location. Rooms are

airy, with nice pine furniture; the best have wrought-iron balconies overlooking the cafés of the plaza. Bathrooms and fridges are standard.

Hostal Central (☎ 956 516716; www.hostalesceuta.com; Paseo del Revellín; s/d/tr €34/44/54; 🏠) This good-value, centrally located two-star hotel is the next step up from a pension, but has the same cosy charm. Bright rooms are small but spotless, and all come with bathroom and fridge. Low-season discounts can tip this place into the budget bracket.

Parador Hotel La Muralla (☎ 956 514940; ceuta@parador.es; 15 Plaza de Africa; s/d from €65/90; 🏠 🏠) Ceuta's top address is this spacious four-star hotel perfectly situated on the Plaza de Africa. Rooms are comfortable, but not luxurious, with simple wooden doors and plain ceramic tile. Balconies overlook a pleasant garden overflowing with palm trees. A bar/café and gym add value, but the best asset is the bargain price.

Eating

RESTAURANTS

In addition to the places listed here, the Pablado Marinero (Seamen's Village) beside the yacht harbour is home to a variety of decent restaurants.

La Marina (☎ 956 514007; 1 Alférez Bayton; mains from €12, set menu €8; 🍷 Mon-Sat, closed Feb) This smart, friendly restaurant is often crowded at lunch time. It specialises in fish dishes, but also does a great-value three-course set menu of the chicken/fish and chips variety.

Gran Muralla (☎ 956 517625; Plaza de la Constitución; mains from €5) If you've had enough local food, you'll find hearty portions of Chinese standards here. Window tables have views over the plaza and out to sea. Be careful during off-hours, as yesterday's rice will be waiting.

El Angulo (☎ 956 515810; 1 Murallas Reales; mains from €15; 🍷 noon-4pm & 8.30pm-midnight Mon-Sat) Here's your chance to eat inside the Royal Walls. The local meats and seafood are as good as the unique atmosphere. White tablecloths and stone fortifications work surprisingly well together.

Cala Carlota (☎ 956 525061; Calle Edris; set menu from €7) This simple restaurant has a prime location in the Club Náutico overlooking the yacht harbour, with outdoor seating in season. The three-course *menú del día* (daily set menu) is a popular choice, while

the luscious fish dishes will set you back the same amount on their own.

TAPAS BARS

The best place to look for tapas bars is in the streets behind the post office and around Millán Astray to the north of Calle Camoens. In addition to tapas, they all serve more substantial *raciones* (a larger helping of tapas) and *bocadillos* (sandwiches).

Mesón el Bache (☎ 956 516642; Sargento Mena Algeciras; tapas €1.50; 🍷 9am-3pm & 8pm-midnight Mon-Sat) Have your tapas in a rustic hunting lodge. The locals love it. Just downhill from Plaza Real, looking towards the port.

Mesón el Cortijo (☎ 956 511983; 14 Calle Cervantes; tapas from €1; 🍷 10.30am-4.30pm & 7.30pm-2.30am Mon-Sat) A classic neighbourhood gathering place heavy on tapas, *cerveza* (beer) and friendliness. Catch up on football, gossip, and practice your Español.

DESSERT

La Jota (6 Calle Méndez Nuñez; breakfast €1.80, tapas €0.60) Offers a delightful array of cakes and ice creams, although the scoops are less than generous. A good place to start – or end – a day of exploring the city.

QUICK EATS

our pick El Puente Cafeteria (Plaza de la Constitución; breakfast/sandwiches from €1.50) Opening up onto a plaza made for people-watching, El Puente is a trendy and modern café-bar with great sandwiches. It's an ideal stop for breakfast. It gets busy, so work hard to catch the eyes of the staff.

SELF-CATERING

The **Supersol supermarket** (Avenida Muelle Cañonero Dato) is the best place to stock up on essentials and treats alike; there's a smaller branch in the city centre on Dean Navarro Acaña.

The cavernous **Central Market** (🍷 8am-3pm Mon-Sat) is the local spot for fresh meat and produce, and a vibrant experience as well.

Drinking

Café Central (☎ 956 510393; 3 Calle Millán Astray; 🍷 3.30pm-4am) Conviviality reigns in this sophisticated bar/coffee lounge, with subdued music and an art-deco entrance. The bronze statue of an arm lifting a tankard over the bar – a working beer pull – is an

eccentric touch. An excellent place for coffee, brandy or ice cream (or all three) at any time.

Dublin (Delgado Serrano; pints until 10pm from €3, thereafter €5; ☎ 3.30pm-3am Mon-Sat) It's like every other Irish pub you've ever been in, but if you need that Guinness fix, this is the place. If the volume gets to you, you can escape to the tables outside. Go down steps where Calle Delgado Serrano takes a 90-degree bend.

Tokio Pub (Plaza Ruiz; ☎ 4pm-3am) A sticky-floor bar worthy of a frat party, although it mellows during the day.

Getting There & Away

MOROCCO

Buses and grands taxis to Ceuta often terminate at Fnideq, rather than at the border (Bab Sebta). If so, the border is a further 1km walk, or Dh3 by taxi. Although the border is open 24 hours, public transport is sparse from 7pm to 5am.

On the Moroccan side, you'll either fill out a departure form at the passport window, if on foot, or at the vehicle registration window (ignore any hustlers trying to sell you these free forms). If you're driving a hire car, you will be required to show proof of authorisation to take the vehicle out of the country. The 100m crossing is surprisingly disorganised, with multiple people asking for your passport. Pedestrians must frequently walk in the car lanes.

Coming the other way, there is a large grand taxi lot next to Moroccan border control. Departures are plentiful to Tetouan (Dh30, 40 minutes), from where you can pick up onward transport. Taxis to Chefchaouen or Tangier are rare, and you'll most likely have to bargain hard to hire a vehicle yourself (Chefchaouen Dh300, 90 minutes; Tangier Dh180, one hour). A good alternative is to take a grand taxi to Fnideq (Dh5, 10 minutes), just south of the border, from where transport to Tangier is more frequent (Dh30, one hour).

MAINLAND SPAIN

The unmissable **Estación Marítima** (ferry terminal; Calle Muelle Cañonero Dato) is west of the town centre. There are several daily high-speed ferries to Algeciras (p485). Ticket offices are around the corner. Much flashier (and far more expensive) is to take the helicop-

ter service **Helicopteros del Sureste** (Málaga airport ☎ 952 04870; www.helisureste.com) from Ceuta to Málaga Airport.

You can purchase train tickets to European destinations at the **Renfe office** (☎ 956 511317; 17 Plaza Rafael Gilbert), or at a travel agency. Several agencies in the ferry terminal also sell Enatcar (the main Spanish coach company) bus tickets.

Getting Around

Bus 7 runs up to the border (*frontera*) every 10 minutes or so from Plaza de la Constitución (€0.60). If you arrive by ferry and want to head straight for the border, there's a bus stop on Avenida González Tablas opposite the entrance to the ramparts. There's also a taxi rank outside the terminal building.

If you have your own vehicle, street parking is restricted to a maximum of two hours (€1) during the day. If you are staying longer, use the **car park** (per hr €0.50, per 12hr €4) on Calle O'Donnell or near the Poblado Marinero.

THE RIF MOUNTAINS

جبل اريف

TETOUAN

pop 320,000

Tetouan occupies a striking location at the foot of the Rif mountains, and just a few kilometres from the sea. From 1912 until 1956 it was the capital of the Spanish Protectorate, which encompassed much of northern Morocco. This and the town's long relationship with Andalucía have left it with a Hispano-Moorish character that is unique in Morocco, as physically reflected in the Spanish part of the city, known as the *Ensanche* ('extension'), whose white buildings and broad boulevards have recently been restored to their original condition.

Tetouan is also unlike Tangier or the Imperial Cities in that it has not been discovered by foreign tourists. There is an air of authenticity here that adds great value to a visit. The ancient medina, a Unesco world heritage site, looks like it has not changed in several centuries. There have been some recent upgrades – a new bus station, restorations to the medina wall, some public gardens – but nothing like the towns along

تطوان

the coast. This is partly because the city has been greatly mismanaged, leaving it disconnected from the world. But to the savvy traveller, this spells opportunity.

History

The history of Tetouan is mainly the story of its long relationship with Spain. From the 8th century onwards, the city served as the main point of contact between Morocco and Andalusia. In the 14th century the Merenids established the town as a base from which to control rebellious Rif tribes, and to attack Ceuta, but it was destroyed by Henry III of Castille in 1399. After the Reconquista (the reconquest of Spain, completed in 1492), the town was rebuilt by Andalusian refugees. It prospered due in part to their skills, and to thriving pirate activity.

Moulay Ismail built Tetouan's defensive walls in the 17th century, and the town's trade links with Spain improved and developed. In 1860, the Spanish took the town under Leopoldo O'Donnell, who extensively Europeanised it, but upon recapture two years later the Moors removed all signs of European influence.

At the turn of the 20th century, Spanish forces occupied Tetouan for three years, claiming it was protecting Ceuta from Rif tribes. In 1913 the Spanish made Tetouan the capital of their protectorate, which was abandoned in 1956 when Morocco regained independence. Lately the Andalusian government has provided a great cultural boost to the city by sponsoring the restoration of the Ensanche.

Orientation

The Ensanche is centred on Place Moulay el-Mehdi and the pedestrian stretch of Ave Mohammed V, which runs east to Plaza al Jala. Here you'll find hotels, banks and places to eat. The entrance to the medina is off the grand Place Hassan II, which faces the Royal Palace. The rest of the sprawling town has little to offer the visitor.

Information

CULTURAL CENTRES

Institut Français (☎ 039 961212; institutfrancais@iftetouan.ma; 13 Rue Chakib Arsalane; ☎ 8am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Fri) Puts on films, concerts and exhibitions, as well as offering a library and café. Popular with locals, especially youth.

La Casa de España (Rue Chakib Arsalane, behind church; ☎ bar/restaurant noon-3pm & 7-11pm) The Spanish version of the above, but more of a club. Has a TV room, café, bar/restaurant and disco. Very well done and worth a visit.

INTERNET ACCESS

Imex Media (☎ 039 961533; 19 Ave Mohammed V; per hr Dh5)
Remote Studios (☎ 039 711172; 13 Ave Mohammed V; per hr Dh9; ☎ 9am-midnight)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Clinique du Croissant Rouge (Red Cross Clinic; ☎ 039 962020; Place al-Hammama, Quartier Scolaire)
Dépôt de Médicaments d'Urgence (☎ 039 965902; 7 Rue al-Ouahda; ☎ 9pm-9.30am) Nighttime pharmacy.
Main hospital (☎ 039 972430; Martil Rd) About 2km out of town.
Pharmacie Derdabi (☎ 039 991109; Fendak Najjar-Sakiat Foukia; ☎ 9am-7pm) Daytime pharmacy in medina.

MONEY

There are plenty of banks with ATMs along Ave Mohammed V.
BMCE (Place Moulay el-Mehdi; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4-8pm) Change cash and travellers cheques outside regular banking hours.

POST

Post office (Place Moulay el-Mehdi; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

TOURIST INFORMATION

ONMT (Délégation Régionale du Tourisme; ☎ 039 961915; fax 039 961914; 30 Ave Mohammed V; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-4.30pm Mon-Fri) With several employees and no written information on the history of the medina, this place defies common sense. The 1951 mural of northern Morocco on the 2nd floor is the only reason to visit.

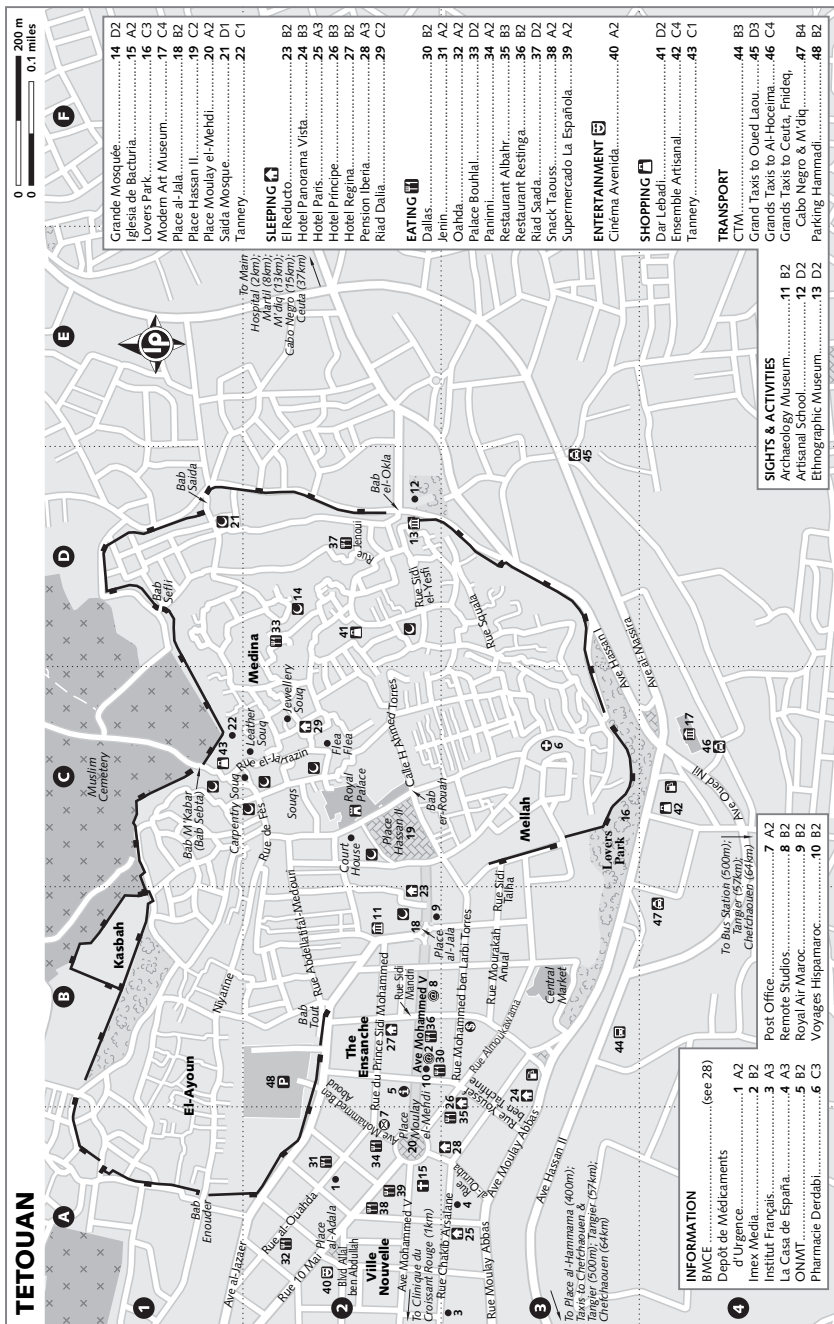
TRAVEL AGENCIES

Royal Air Maroc (☎ 039 961577; 5 Ave Mohammed V; ☎ 9am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat)
Voyages Hispamaroc (☎ 039 713338; 23 Ave Mohammed V; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 3-7pm, closed Sat morning & Sun)

Sights

MEDINA

The whitewashed medina of Tetouan is an authentic time machine, and very traveller-friendly, with wide, moped-free lanes, few



street hustlers, amiable residents and a general lack of congestion, particularly in the large residential areas. In the commercial spaces, the sights and sounds of traditional life are everywhere: craftsmen pound gold, silk merchants offer thousands of spools of multicoloured thread and bakers tend the public ovens. There are some 40 mosques as well, of which the **Grande Mosquée** and **Saida Mosque** both northeast of Place Hassan II, are the most impressive, although non-Muslims are not allowed to enter. If you get lost, a few dirhams in local hands will get you to any doorstep.

Just inside the picture-perfect eastern gate, Bab el-Okla, is the **Ethnographic Museum** (admission Dh10; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) which is worth a visit for the terrace views of the Rif (ask the caretaker to open it for you, if necessary), its pleasant garden with old cannons and the display of silk wedding gowns. Otherwise, you'll see some of the same decorative features in the palace restaurants.

Just outside Bab el-Okla is the **Artisanal School** (☎ 039 972721; admission Dh10; ☎ 8am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri) the best artisan centre in northern Morocco. This is a fascinating opportunity to see masters teaching apprentices traditional arts, including ornamental woodwork, silk costumes, carved plaster, intricate mosaics and decorative rifles. A fantastic central treasury holds the best of the best – don't miss the ceiling. Staff will open it upon request. The building itself is of interest, set around a large courtyard, with fine doors upstairs.

The medina is bordered to the south by newly renovated **Lovers Park** a pleasant escape. At the time of research the old train station just south of here was being transformed into the **Modern Art Museum** projected to open by 2009.

PLACE HASSAN II

The broad and empty **Place Hassan II**, which is mostly roped off for security reasons, links the medina to the Ensanche. It looks like it houses the Wizard of Oz with guards standing in front of the long flat facade of the royal palace, and four fountains with central columns towering all around. These are not minarets, as one might suppose, but art-nouveau light towers designed by a student of Gaudí. The large decorations

on the opposite wall are abstract Hands of Fatima, a common symbol used to ward off the evil eye. There are a few nondescript cafés which are good for a rest, particularly on the 2nd floor, which allows a grander view.

THE ENSANCHE

Take in the Ensanche by walking along Ave Mohammed V from **Place al-Jala** to **Place Moulay el-Mehdi**. The broad boulevard is lined by bright white Spanish colonial architecture, with a few art-deco elements, reminiscent of styles found elsewhere (eg Cuba, the Philippines) and recently restored by the Andalusian government. A few blocks from the Place al-Jala there is an **Archaeology Museum** (Ave al-Jazaer; admission Dh10; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri) with an excellent collection of artefacts from the Roman ruins at Lixus (p138). However, during research the published hours were not being adhered to; the museum had been closed for a week, and it was not clear when it would reopen. The Catholic **Iglesia de Bacturia** (Place Moulay el-Mehdi; ☎ Sunday mass 11am open to visitors at 7pm), was built in 1917 and is still active.

Sleeping

Due to the rapid development of the nearby coast the first question one must now answer is whether to stay in town or not. Tetouan's port, Martil, is only an inexpensive 10 minute cab ride away; M'Diq, the classiest option, is twice that. The contrast could not be greater between the ancient medina and these modern Floridian beachfronts, and can be either jarring or a relief.

If you choose the city, your next decision is whether to stay in the medina or not. A night or two within the ancient walls is an unforgettable adventure if you have not done so elsewhere, but longer stays can be taxing.

BUDGET

Our pick **Pension Iberia** (☎ 039 963679; 5 Place Moulay el-Mehdi; s/d/tr Dh50/80/120) This is the best budget option, with classic high-ceilinged rooms and shuttered balconies that open out to the Place Moulay el-Mehdi – book Room 11 if possible. Views of the white city flowing over the hills and the fountain in the Place – better observed from here than the street – add a dash of romance.

Baths are shared, and hot showers an extra Dh10. Conveniently located, with public parking (Parking Hammadi; Ave al-Jazaer) 100m away.

Hotel Principe (☎ 033 113128; 20 Rue Youssef ben Tachfine; s/d/tr without shower Dh70/80/140, s/d/tr with shower Dh90/120/180) Another aesthetically challenged budget option, where all floor tiles, bedspreads and wallpaper appears deliberately chosen to assault the senses. The visual noise is matched by the audio from the boisterous male café below. Furniture is worn, paint is peeling, though staff are accommodating. Pay up for a room with a shower.

Hotel Regina (☎ 039 962113; 8 Rue Sidi Mandri; s/d Dh150/175) One of the larger budget choices, the Regina initially feels a bit tired, but the whitewashed walls and crazy 1970s fabrics manage to wake you up. While the attached bathrooms are sometimes worn, and cleanliness is iffy, it's decent value for the price.

Hotel Paris (☎ 039 966750; 31 Rue Chakib Arsalane; s/d Dh207/250, breakfast Dh35 summer only) Not your honeymoon suite, but performs the basic functions. The simple, uninspiring rooms are clean, but the bathrooms are small, and with no separation between shower and toilet. Institutional hallways accelerate you outdoors.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Riad Dalia (☎ 018 025049; www.riad-dalia.com; 25 Rue Ouessaa; s/without bathroom Dh150, small ste Dh400, master ste Dh600) The first riad hotel in the medina, this funky, family-run option is an eclectic adventure. The 300-year-old former Dutch consul's house has been transformed into a hotel without much renovation, so it feels like the consul may turn up at any moment. In fact, the proprietor has his ancient letters in a scrapbook at the front desk, not to mention his stamp collection. The master suite is immense and fit for royalty. In the upper levels, students smoke sheesha (a flavoured tobacco) or court furtively amid a romantic mystery-novel ambience. The mixed pricing allows a room for every budget, but do be careful of the suicide stairs to the roof, especially when wet.

Hotel Panorama Vista (☎ 039 964970; Ave Moulay Abbas; s/d incl breakfast Dh307/404; 📶) This is the best bet outside the medina. The rooms are chain-hotel style, without any local ambience, but clean and with dramatic views

over the Rif. The popular café, with its wall of glass, offers a strong Moroccan continental breakfast. In the unpopulated off-season there is no heating – a challenge cured with piles of blankets. The 10 minute explanation as to why all the stoppers have been removed from the hotel baths is added entertainment value – until you want a bath.

El Reducto (☎ 039 968120; www.riadtetouan.com; Zanqat Zawya 38; s/d incl breakfast Dh425/550, half-board Dh500/700) This is the premier place to stay in Tetouan if you want an upscale medina experience at a very reasonable price. The spotless, palatial rooms are truly fantastic with big baths (one has a Jacuzzi for two), the highest quality antique furniture and beautiful silk bedspreads. Marble staircases and elegant tiled walls complete the royal ambience, the product of a two-year restoration completed in 2006. So you always wanted to be a sultan?

Eating RESTAURANTS

Tetouan is not known for its restaurants. Aside from two excellent palace options (popular with tour groups, so reserve ahead) you are restricted to grilled food and sandwiches.

Restaurant Restinga (21 Ave Mohammed V; fish dishes from Dh50, beer Dh18; ☎ noon-9pm) The open-air courtyard covered by a canopy of eucalyptus is this charming restaurant's primary attraction – along with the rare alcohol license. It's a great place to duck out of the crowded boulevard for a rest and a beer, as well as some seafood from the coast.

Restaurant Albahr (☎ 066 689675; 21 Rue Almkawama; mains from Dh30; ☎ noon-9pm) Nothing fancy here – fried foods, burgers and fish and chips – but they do it well and the price is right. Salads a plus.

Riad Saada (☎ 061 299846; 18 Rue Jenoui; set menu Dh100; ☎ 8am-late) This is a classic Moroccan experience, from the endless plates of food (soup, couscous, tajines, salads, kebabs, grilled cakes) to the entertainment (belly dancing, traditional musicians) to the superb setting, including a spectacular open ceiling with an enormous pendulum lamp, two golden throne chairs for weddings and beautiful carved plaster walls. Enter via Bab el-Okla, turn right immediately, take second left at Optique Seffar, and you will see the entrance, a very long tiled corridor.

Palace Bouhhal (☎ 039 998797; 48 Jamaa Kebir; set menu Dh100; ☎ 10am-4pm) Another sumptuous palace option with plush couches, wall rugs, intimate dining spaces (especially upstairs), gurgling fountains and a grand Moorish arch complementing the usual four-course meal. Follow the lane north around the Grande Mosquée and look for signs directing you down a tiny alley. Be sure to duck into Les Secrets des Plantes first, on the right just before the entrance, where 670 spices line the walls.

CAFÉS & PATISSERIES

ourpick Jenin (☎ 039 962246; 8 Rue al-Ouahda; coffee Dh8; ☎ 6am-9.30pm winter, 6am-11pm summer, closed Fri afternoon) This sparkling, modern café is the trendiest in town. The 10 blends of different fruit juices are the highlight, along with the presence of courting couples and groups of young women. A world away from the smoky male cafés on the same block.

Oahda (☎ 039 966794; 16 Rue al-Ouahda; ☎ 7am-9pm, closed Fri afternoon) Another female-friendly café, not as nicely appointed as Jenin but just as popular with locals. A bit claustrophobic on the upper floor.

Dallas (☎ 039 966069; 11 Rue Youssef ben Tachfine; ☎ 5am-10pm) Yes, named after the TV show, but otherwise the name has no bearing on this place, a patisserie stacked to the rafters with plates of pastries. This is where local families come to load up on sweets. One block off Ave Mohammed V.

QUICK EATS

Snack Taouss (☎ 061 231158; 3 Rue 10 Mai; burgers Dh18; ☎ 7am-10pm) Known for its burgers and chips, this little snack bar also does decent, inexpensive pizzas, salads, *harira* (lentil soup), tajines and more. There's a small seating area upstairs (handy if you're waiting for a pizza), or you can eat on the move. If it's full, there's a similar place, 10 Mai, next door.

Paninni (☎ 039 700654; 5-6 Ave Mohammed Ben Aboud; paninni Dh18; ☎ noon-11pm) Made to order sandwiches make this a standout option. Choose from a smorgasbord of ingredients both normal and exotic.

SELF-CATERING

There's loads of fresh fruit and veg for sale in the medina on the road leading east to

Bab el-Okla. The central market (closed Friday) around the corner from Lovers Park puts on a good display, with fish brought in from the coast. **Supermercado La Española** (Rue 10 Mai; ☎ 10am-9pm) is small but easy to find. It sells alcohol and other staples.

Drinking

As is the Moroccan norm, Tetouan's drinking establishments are firmly in the male sphere. The more welcoming cafés are listed under Eating (left); for a drop of the hard stuff, head for the dark and smoky bars along Rue 10 Mai, northwest of Place Moulay el-Mehdi. If you just want a beer, Restaurant Restinga (opposite) is the place.

Entertainment

Apart from a palace meal, **Cinéma Avenida** (Place al-Adala; admission Dh20-30; ☎ film times 3.30pm, 6pm, 8pm & 10pm) is the only game in town. Films are usually in French, with some Spanish.

Shopping

Wood and leatherwork are the local specialties; for the latter go straight to the source at the small **tannery** (Bab M'Kabar) in the north of the medina.

Dar Lebadi (☎ 039 973856; Jenoui section) The shopping palace of the medina, this 200-year-old building, a former governor's house, has been meticulously restored, and is now a clearinghouse for Berber artisans, with friendly staff. Worth a stop just to see the building, but be careful: you may be there for hours.

Ensemble Artisanal (Ave Hassan II; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) This government-sponsored emporium is a hive of activity, with carpet weavers, leatherworkers, jewellers and woodworkers all plying their trades. Prices are fixed.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The Tetouan Airport opens for occasional charter flights from Paris (eg Club Med) but has no scheduled service. Persistent rumours that a full-fledged airport is coming may be inspired by efforts to sell foreigners real estate.

BUS

Tetouan is now blessed by a new **bus station**, which replaces its seedy predecessor. The

scrolling electronic timetable is so high-tech it's jarring. The bus touts are still in place, though – just walk past them and read the departure times on your own. You can get to any town in the north from here. The left luggage office had not yet opened during research.

CTM (☎ 039 711654) has its own station a five minute taxi ride away from the main bus station. It is a better bet for quality reasons and for any long-haul destinations. All the usual suspects are served from here, including Essaouira (Dh270, 13½ hours), Fez (Dh93, five hours), Marrakesh (Dh235, 11 hours), Rabat (Dh110, four to five hours) and many more. Buses for Martil (Dh4, 25 minutes), M'diq (Dh8, one hour), Fnideq (Dh10, 1¼ hours) and other local destinations also depart from here. Left luggage is Dh5/kg/day.

TAXI

Grands taxis to Fnideq (for Ceuta; Dh30, 30 minutes), Martil (Dh5, 10 minutes), Cabo Negro and M'diq (Dh10, 20 minutes) leave from Ave Hassan II, near Lovers Park. Occasional grands taxis to Al-Hoceima (Dh150, five hours) wait on a dusty lot 100m further east behind the new Modern Art Museum.

The taxi rank on Place al-Hammama, 2km west of central Tetouan, is the place to pick up grands taxis to Chefchaouen (Dh30, one hour) and Tangier (Dh25, one hour). If you are arriving from either of these places, the taxi driver may drop you closer to the town centre.

Grands taxis to Oued Laou are located underneath the Ave al-Massira overpass – which is easily missed.

Getting Around

Petits taxis are canary yellow but don't have meters; a ride around town should be around Dh10. If you have your own vehicle, you can keep your car at the guarded **Parking Hammadi** (Ave Al Jazaer; per 4hr daytime Dh10, per night Dh10).

AROUND TETOUAN

Martil

مارتيل

Tetouan's port of Martil is a rapidly growing, modern beach town with a broad mountain view and a long corniche paralleled by streets full of cafés, ice-cream shops

and restaurants. It has year-round visitors, and heaves in the summer. It's a viable base if you don't mind the 8km/10 minute cab ride to Tetouan.

SLEEPING & EATING

Camping al-Boustane (☎ 039 688822; fax 039 689682; Corniche; camping per person Dh15, per tent/car/campervan Dh30/15/30, electricity Dh20; 🏠) This secure camp site one block from the beach has excellent facilities, including a surprising gem of a restaurant and a pool in summer, but serious drainage problems in rain. Turn off corniche at fountain.

Hotel Etoile de la Mer (☎ 039 979058; Ave Moulay al-Hassan; s/d Dh176/231 summer, Dh150/177 winter) With its funky design – a central atrium crisscrossed by stairways – and central location one block from the beach, this is Martil's top sleeping option. The best rooms have balconies overlooking the sea, and the remodelled restaurant serves alcohol.

Restaurant al-Boustane (☎ 039 688822; mains from Dh50; ☎ 12.30-4pm & 7-11pm) Don't be put off by the location – this Mediterranean bistro in the back of the camper park (above) serves a tasty array of omelettes, fish, meat and tajines, and is full of talkative campers recounting their adventures.

Piccola Roma (☎ 042 353167; 202 Miramar; pizza from Dh18; ☎ 11am-3pm & 6pm-midnight) A local institution since 1992, this is your place for pizza, burgers and shawarma. Located one street back from corniche, across from the blinking ice-cream sign.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Local buses to Tetouan (Dh4, 25 minutes) leave from the bus station near the water tower at the south end of the beach. You'll find grands taxis (Dh4, 15 minutes) near the big new mosque.

Cabo Negro & M'diq

الرأس الأسود و مضيق

About 5km up the coast from Martil, the headland of Cabo Negro juts out into the Mediterranean and is clearly visible from Martil. Tucked into the lee of its north side is the surprising town of M'Diq. Once a small fishing village, it has rapidly grown into the classiest resort on the coast, with a grand entrance, excellent hotels and restaurants, a fine beach and a yacht club. There is really little to separate this place from

Florida, but if you are suffering from medina fatigue, it's the perfect stop, and only 20 minutes from Tetouan.

SLEEPING & EATING

M'diq's sleeping options tend to cater to the summer tourist trade and ignore the lower end of the price bracket. Ask for discounts outside the summer months. Given the number of new apartments, it is worth inquiring about rentals on site. There's a string of cafés and cheap eateries along the seafont, where women are more prevalent in summer.

Hotel Narijiss (☎ 039 975841; Ave Lalla Nezha; s/d Dh150/250; 🏠) This decent hotel is 200m up the hill rising from the seafont to the Tetouan road. It's a bit nondescript, but rooms have bathrooms and satellite TV, and there's a café tucked outside.

Golden Beach Hotel (☎ 039 975077; www.goldenbeachhotel.com; 84 Rte de Sebta; s/d incl breakfast Dh370/540 low season, Dh540/750 high season; 🏠) This four-star right on the beach is worth the splurge – short on charm, but well run, well-maintained and with great facilities, including a pool by the corniche and a piano bar with a most clever bar top: piano keys in marble.

Las Olas Restaurant and Café (☎ 039 664433; Corniche; mains from Dh40; 🕒 11am–midnight) You can't miss this waterfront landmark dressed up as a lighthouse, with a hopping downstairs café and an upstairs seafood restaurant. The decor is snappy, the rooftop views superb, and they don't have to go far to get fresh catch. Located directly on the corniche parking lot.

Royal Yachting Club de M'diq (☎ 039 663887; meals from Dh90) This classy place, with a pleasant outdoor terrace overlooking the port, is a private club, but the well-dressed tourist is more than welcome. Seafood is the specialty here, of course. Alcohol is also served.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Grands taxis and buses travelling between Tetouan and Fnideq (3km short of the border with Ceuta) pass through M'diq. Grands taxis to Tetouan (Dh5, 20 minutes) depart from a stand near the Narijiss Hotel. Those for the border (Dh10) gather on the north side of town beside the Banque Populaire.

CHEFCHAOUEN

شفشاون

pop 45,000

Beautifully sited beneath the raw peaks of the Rif, Chefchaouen is one of the prettiest towns in Morocco, an artsy, white-washed mountain village that feels like its own world. While tourism has definitely taken hold, the balance between ease and authenticity is just right. The old medina is a delight of Moroccan and Andalucian influence with red-tiled roofs, bright-blue buildings and narrow lanes converging on busy Uta el-Hammam square and its restored kasbah. Long known to backpackers for the easy availability of kif, the town has rapidly gentrified, and offers a range of quality accommodation, good food, lots to do and no hassles to speak of, making it a strong alternative to a hectic multi-city tour. This is a great place to relax, explore and take day-trips in the cool green hills. Families take note.

History

Chefchaouen was originally known as Chaouen, meaning 'peaks'. Under Spanish occupation the spelling changed to Xaouen, and in 1975 the town was renamed Chefchaouen ('Look at the Peaks'). These days, the names are used interchangeably.

Moulay Ali ben Rachid founded Chaouen in 1471 as a base for Rifian Berber tribes to launch attacks on the Portuguese in Ceuta. The town expanded with the arrival of Muslim and Jewish refugees from Granada in 1494, who built the whitewashed houses, with tiny balconies, tiled roofs and patios (often with a citrus tree in the centre), that give the town its distinctive Spanish flavour. The pale-blue wash prevalent today was introduced in the 1930s by the Jewish refugees – previously windows and doors had been painted a traditional Muslim green.

The town remained isolated and xenophobic – Christians were forbidden to enter on pain of death – until occupied by Spanish troops in 1920. When the Spanish arrived they were surprised to hear the Jewish inhabitants still speaking a variant of medieval Castilian. The Spanish were briefly thrown out by Abd al-Krim during the Rif War in the 1920s, but they soon returned and remained until independence in 1956.

Orientation

Chefchaouen is split into an eastern half (the medina), and a western half (the *ciudad nueva*, or new city). The heart of the medina is Plaza Uta el-Hammam, with its unmistakable kasbah. The principal route of the ciudad nueva is Ave Hassan II, which stretches from Plaza Mohammed V, past the western gate of Bab el-Ain, around the southern medina wall, and into the medina itself. Here it dead-ends at Place el-Majzen, the main drop-off point, which faces the kasbah. The bus station is a 1km hike southwest of the town centre. The falls of Ras-el-Maa lie just beyond the medina walls to the northeast.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Librairie Al-Nahj (☎ 039 986945; Ave Hassan II; ☹ 8am-10pm) Small, but with a decent selection of international periodicals, and a few English translations of local authors. English dailies available after 11.30am.

INTERNET ACCESS

IRIC (Institut Raouachid pour l'Information et le Commerce; Ave Hassan II; per hr Dh6; ☹ 9am-midnight)
Saadoune.net (Plaza Uta el-Hammam; per hr Dh10; ☹ 9am-2pm & 3pm-midnight)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Hospital Mohammed V (☎ 039 986228; Ave al-Massira al-Khadra)
Pharmacie Chefchaouen (☎ 039 986158; Ave Moulay Driss; ☹ 9am-1pm & 3-8pm)

MONEY

Banque Populaire medina (Plaza Uta el-Hammam; ☹ 9.30am-1pm & 3.30-9pm Mon-Fri) ATM; ciudad nueva (Ave Hassan II)
BMCE (Ave Hassan II; ☹ 8.15am-3.45pm Mon-Fri). ATM.

POST

Post office (Ave Hassan II; ☹ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat-Sun)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Due to open by 2009 in the new building next to Hotel Parador.

TRAVEL AGENT/CAR RENTAL

Preference Voyages Agency (☎ 039 987913; 39 Ave Hassan II) This extremely helpful travel agency – the first in Chefchaouen – also operates the town's only rental-car com-

pany. English-speaking and with reasonable rates.

Sights & Activities

MEDINA

Chefchaouen's medina is one of the loveliest in Morocco. Small and uncrowded, it's easy to explore, with enough winding paths to keep you diverted, but compact enough that you'll never get too lost. Most of the buildings are painted a blinding blue-white, giving them a clean, fresh look, while terracotta tiles add an Andalusian flavour.

The heart of the medina is the shady, cobbled **Plaza Uta el-Hammam** which is lined with cafés and restaurants, all serving similar fare. This is a peaceful place to relax and watch the world go by, particularly after a long day of exploration. The plaza is dominated by the red-hued walls of the **kasbah** and the adjacent **Grande Mosquée**. Noteworthy for its unusual octagonal tower, the Grande Mosquée was built in the 15th century by the son of the town's founder, Ali ben Rachid, and is closed to non-Muslims. The **kasbah** (☎ 039 986343; admission incl museum & gallery Dh10; ☹ 9am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Wed-Mon, 9-11.30am & 3-4.30pm Fri) is a heavily restored walled fortress that now contains a lovely garden, a small **Ethnographic Museum**, and an even smaller **Art Gallery**. The ethnographic museum contains some fascinating views of old Chefchaouen, including the Plaza and the kasbah; the gallery promotes the work of talented local artists.

RAS EL-MAA

Just beyond the far eastern gate of the medina lie the falls of **Ras El-Maa**. In season there is a popular café on the right, just before the bridge. The sound of the water and the verdant hills just beyond the medina wall provide a sudden, strong dose of nature. Continuing over the bridge, you can walk to the ruined mosque in the distance. It was built by the Spanish, but abandoned during the Rif War in the 1920s. From here you'll have a grand view of the entire town sprawling over the green hills below. The mosque is a popular destination, but women may not feel comfortable there by themselves.

SPAS & HAMMAMS

The **Centre Viva Form** (☎ 039 986002; Rue Sidi Abdelhamid BP 13; ☹ noon-9pm) is a sophisticated,

CLIMBING JEBEL EL-KELAA

Looming over Chefchaouen at 1616m, Jebel el-Kelaâ might initially appear a daunting peak, but with an early start and a packed lunch, it can easily be climbed in a day if you're in reasonably good shape.

The hike starts from behind Camping Azilane, following the 4WD track that takes you to the hamlet of Aïn Tissimlane. Rocks painted with a yellow and white stripe indicate that you're on the right path. The initial hour is relatively steep as you climb above the trees to get your first views over Chefchaouen, before cutting into the mountains along the steady *piste*. You should reach Aïn Tissimlane within a couple of hours of setting out, after which the path climbs and zigzags steeply through great boulders for nearly an hour to a pass. Turn west along the track, which leads to the saddle of the mountain, from where you can make the final push to the summit. There's a rough path, although you'll need to scramble in places. The peak is attained relatively quickly, and your exertions are rewarded with the most sublime views over this part of the Rif.

It's straightforward and quick to descend by the same route. Alternatively, you can head north from the saddle on a path that takes you to a cluster of villages on the other side of the mountain. One of these villages, El-Kelaâ, has 16th-century grain stores, and a mosque with a leaning minaret. From here, a number of simple tracks will take you back to Chefchaouen in a couple of hours.

full-service spa located at the Atlas Riad Chaouen hotel. Prices range from a foot massage (Dh50) to the 50-minute slimming massage, which will trim your wallet of Dh400.

A traditional, and far less expensive, option is local hammam **Douches Barakat** (shower Dh6, hammam Dh8; ☎ men 8am-noon, women noon-8pm).

TREKKING

There are numerous trekking opportunities of various durations in the Chefchaouen area, including the vast 60,000 hectare **Talassemtane National Park**, which begins just outside town (p440). Some popular destinations include the small villages of Kalaa and Akchour, and the Bridge of God, a natural formation that looks like a stone arch. The duration of these excursions depends on how much you wish to drive versus walk. For information on guides and organised tours, see below.

Tours

There are two organisations competing for travellers interested in exploring the natural environment around Chefchaouen. One is the local **Association des Guides du Tourisme** (☎ 062 113917; guiderando@yahoo.fr; half-day tour Dh120) which is run by Abdeslam Mouden, an English speaker with a wealth of local knowledge and guide experience. This

group is connected to the new Tourist Information office.

The other is **Chaouen Rural** (☎ 039 987267; www.chaouenrural.org; 3 Rue Machichi; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri) a local company sponsored by the government of Catalonia that is developing the rural tourism potential of the region. This well-run operation specialises in package trips into Talassemtane National Park that include staying in rural houses and interacting with the local culture. Prices are a very reasonable Dh150 to Dh180 per person per day, including transport, guide and half-board. The website is French/Spanish, but some English is spoken, and brochures are available in English.

Festivals & Events

The active cultural association **Rif el-Andalus** (☎ 039 986800) organises two events in July. One is a large open-air art exhibition, and the other is the Alegria Chamalia, an international music festival.

Sleeping

Chefchaouen has a large number of accommodation options, but few hotels have heating. You will be sleeping beneath plenty of blankets during cold winter nights. Some hotels also have deadly staircases, with slick stone steps – steep, tall, curving and of alternating height – under low ceilings.

It pays to be alert on that tired slog to the rooftop terrace for breakfast.

MEDINA Budget

Most of the budget options are in the medina. The best of these are cheerful, tiled houses with interior courtyards and superb roof terraces. Facilities are mostly shared, but toilets are generally Western-style and hot showers are often included in the price.

Hotel Mouritania (☎ 039 986184; 15 Rue Qadi Alami; s/d Dh45/80) Rooms are simple here, but staff are helpful, there's a comfy courtyard lounge ideal for meeting other travellers, and the breakfasts (Dh20) are great.

Hostal Yasmina (☎ 039 883118; yasmina45@hotmail.com; 12 Zaida Al-Horra; r per person Dh70) For the price bracket, this place sparkles. Rooms are bright and clean, the location is a stone's throw from Plaza Uta el-Hammam, and the roof terrace is very welcoming. This bargain doesn't have many rooms, though, so it can fill up quickly.

Hotel Barcelona (☎ 039 988506; 12 Rue Targui; r per person Dh70 without bathroom, s/d with bathroom Dh200/300) A friendly budget option in bright Chefchaouen blue. Fixtures and fittings are pretty basic, but the hotel has recently been repainted, and the roof terrace is great.

Hotel Koutoubia (☎ 068 115358; Calle Andalouse; s/d Dh150/200) This brand new hotel does budget accommodation perfectly, with friendly and attentive management, a central location, traditional decor, spotless rooms and an open roof terrace with breakfast (Dh15) in good weather.

ourpick **Hostal Guernika** (☎ 039 987434; 49 On-sar; r Dh200) This is a warm and charming place, with a very caring and attentive owner, not too far from the Plaza Uta el-Hammam. There are several great streetside rooms – large and bright, facing the mountains – but others are dark. All have showers. Reserve in summer, Easter and December.

Dar Terrae (☎ 039 987598; darterrae@hotmail.com; Ave Hassan I; s/d/tr incl breakfast Dh250/350/450) These funky, cheerfully painted rooms are individually decorated with their own bathroom and fireplace, and hidden up and down a tumble of stairs and odd corners. The Italian owners prepare a fantastic breakfast spread every day, and other meals on request. It's poorly signed – if in doubt ask for the 'Hotel Italiano'.

Midrange & Top End

ourpick **Dar Meziana** (☎ 039 987806; www.darmeziana.com; Rue Zagdud; s/d/tr from Dh475/650/950; ☎) Beautifully decorated, and in a class by itself, this new boutique hotel is an artful creation, with a unique angular courtyard, lush plantings, lots of light, the highest quality furniture and extraordinary ceilings. On the edge of the medina but otherwise perfect.

Casa Hassan (☎ 039 986153; www.casahassan.com; 22 Rue Targui; s/d/tr with half-board from Dh500/650/800; ☎) A large hotel with a boutique-hotel feel, this long-established upmarket choice is showing its age a bit, but still has sizable rooms with creative layouts, including beds tucked into coves, and an in-house hammam. The terrace provides an elegant lounge, and the cosy Restaurant Tissemlal a warm hearth.

Dar Zman (☎ 039 987598; darterrae@hotmail.com; Ave Hassan II; s/d incl breakfast Dh350/450) A brand new, finely done guest house with eight brightly painted rooms and a lovely rooftop breakfast area, created by some ambitious young hoteliers. The faux artefacts revealed in the walls are a clever touch.

Hotel Parador (☎ 039 986136; parador@iam.net.ma; Place el-Majzen; s/d/tr Dh394/526/681; ☎) This aging four-star reflects a time when aspiring to be Western was chic. Now its soulless rooms are lacking what you came for: local culture. Perks include a good restaurant, a pool in summer and one of Chefchaouen's few bars.

AROUND THE MEDINA Budget

There's another cluster of budget hotels on Ave Hassan II, which runs south of the medina alongside the old city walls. These places are a step up from the pensions in the medina, in that they offer private bathrooms and have restaurants on site. They also offer great Rif views from one side of the building.

Hotel Salam (☎ 039 986239; 39 Ave Hassan II; s/d/tr Dh80/140/180) Another out-of-medina experience, the freshly painted Salam has perked up its bright courtyard rooms. Shared facilities are adequate, but sinks in all rooms are a bonus, as is the espresso machine in the ground-floor café.

Hotel Rif (☎ 039 986982; hotelrif@hotmail.com; 29 Ave Hassan II; s/d incl breakfast Dh150/180, with bathroom & breakfast Dh180/240; ☎) Just below the medina

walls, it has some good rooms with great views, and adequate rooms without. Suffering from dark and jumbled aesthetics, it's nevertheless popular with tour groups, so advance booking is a good idea. The restaurant has the bonus of an alcohol licence.

Hotel Marrakesh (☎ 039 987774; Ave Hassan II; s/d incl breakfast Dh150/220, with shower Dh300/360) Set downhill from the action, the Marrakesh is a hotel with a bit of soul. Bright pastel rooms invite the fresh air in, the common room attracts with its central fireplace and carved plaster ceiling, and the roof terrace offers fine views over the valley. The seven-jet showers, however, are as mysterious as any medina alley.

Hotel Madrid (☎ 039 987497; Ave Hassan II; s/d/tr from Dh300/357/429; ♿) With its jumbled rugs on floors and stairways, this hotel appears ready to trip up your visit, but the old-world lobby is cheery, and the cosy rooms a pleasant surprise, with wrought-iron canopy beds and well-appointed bathrooms packed with complimentary toiletries.

Camping Azilane (☎ 039 986979; camping per adult Dh15, plus per tent/car/campervan Dh15/20/35) A shady setting with great views makes this site popular, even if it is a stiff 20-minute walk from the medina. A small restaurant opens during the summer, and a shop sells some essentials, but otherwise facilities are pretty basic (hot showers Dh10).

Midrange & Top End

Atlas Riad Chaouen (☎ 039 986002; www.hotelsatlas.com; s/d/tr incl breakfast Dh600/750/1125; ♿ ♿) This is the top hotel in Chefchaouen; its three-star rating only serves to lower taxes. Unmistakeably perched on the hills overlooking the town, it doubles as a decent art museum, with some fantastic works by local artist Zaidi Mohammed, including a wall-length painting of the medina. All the amenities of a European four-star are present, including a huge lobby, a full-service spa, a pool with gorgeous mountain views, the only nightclub in the area, a high-end restaurant and a jazzy bar (where a beer will set you back a record Dh40).

Auberge Dardara (☎ 061 150503; aubergedardara@gmail.com; Rte Nationale 2; s/d Dh490/790; ♿ ♿) This is an authentic French auberge in the Moroccan countryside offering large rustic suites with Moroccan touches. The 10 hectare complex includes an active farm

and gardens, pool, craft shop, hammam, fitness centre, horses and the most sophisticated kitchen in the Chefchaouen area. Guest programs include crafts, gardening and more. It's a 10-minute taxi ride (Dh5) to Bab Taza.

Eating RESTAURANTS

A popular eating option in Chefchaouen is to choose one of about a dozen **Plaza Café-Restaurants** (Plaza Uta el-Hammam; breakfast from Dh15, mains from Dh25; ☎ 8am-11pm) on the main square. Menus are virtually identical – continental breakfasts, soups and salads, tajines and seafood – but the food is generally pretty good and the ambience lively.

La Lampe Magique (☎ 065 406464; Rue Targui; mains from Dh45, set menu Dh75; ☎ 11am-11pm) This magical place overlooking Plaza Uta el-Hammam serves delicious Moroccan staples in a grand setting. Three bright-blue floors include a laid-back lounge, a more formal dining area and a roof-top terrace. The menu – featuring favourites like lamb tajine with prunes and some great cooked salads – is better than average, but this place is really about atmosphere.

Auberge Dardara Restaurant (☎ 061 150503; aubergedardara@gmail.com; Rte Nationale 2; mains from Dh40; ☎ noon-4pm & 7-11pm; ♿ ♿) This is the best kitchen in the area, and worth the 10-minute drive from town (to Bab Taza, Dh5). The Tangerine owner forgoes the tajine and couscous routine for cosmopolitan spice and the freshest ingredients, most grown on site, and others, like the anchovies, imported from the coast that day. The succulent goat cooked with sweet figs is a marvel.

Assaada (☎ 066 317316; Bab el-Ain; set menu Dh40) This reliable cheapie tries hard to please. Located on both sides of the alley just prior to Bab el-Ain, it offers the usual menu *complete*, but also great fruit shakes, and a funky graffiti rooftop terrace that exudes an urban charm. The staircase is not for the faint-hearted.

Restaurant Les Raisins (☎ 067 982878; www.france.com/lesraisins2001; 7 Rue Sidi Sifri; tajines Dh20, set menu from Dh40; ☎ 7am-9pm) A bit out of the way, this family-run place is a perennial favourite with locals and tourists alike, and known for its couscous royal. Late, lazy lunches are the best, with the front terrace catching the afternoon sun.

Garozim (☎ 039 988352) This is an inexpensive spot that manages to combine its setting above a medina alley, its rustic decor, and Edith Piaf crooning in the background into a single charming experience. The usual local fare is offered, but you may need to wake the waitress. Located next to Hostal Guernika (p205).

CAFÉS, PATISSERIES & ICE-CREAM PARLOURS

It's hard to get past the cafés on Plaza Uta el-Hammam for a long juice or a relaxing mint tea. From mid-afternoon, hawkers do the rounds of the cafés carrying trays laden with sticky pastries for sale. In the back rooms, local men play cards and smoke kif – worth a look, although women won't feel particularly welcome.

Bab el-Ansar Café (Bab el-Ansar) Just outside the medina, this café has a great location overlooking the falls of Ras el Maa, with three terraces tumbling down the hill. Views are particularly nice in the late afternoon, with the sun catching the mountains opposite.

Pâtisserie Aziz (Ave Hassan II) For a great selection of pastries, make your way here. They squeeze a mean juice and make good coffee too, for a quick breakfast on the run.

SELF-CATERING

The market off Ave Hassan II is excellent for fresh fish, meat, fruit and vegetables, and gets particularly busy on Monday and Thursday, when people come from outside Chefchaouen to sell produce.

Several local specialities are worth checking out, particularly the fragrant mountain honey and soft ewe's cheese – both served up at breakfast. Add fresh *dial makla* (a type of bread) and you have your picnic.

Drinking

While it's easy to find kif in Chefchaouen, it's hard to find a beer. There's just one free-standing, and very masculine, option, **Bar Oum-Rabiá** (Ave Hassan II; ☎ 10am-10pm). The small bar at the **Hotel Parador** (Place el-Majzen; beer from Dh20; ☎ 2-11pm), is better, while the jazzy bar at the **Atlas Riad Chouen** (beer Dh40; ☎ 2pm-late) is the nicest but pricey and farther away.

Entertainment

The disco at the **Atlas Riad Chouen** (☎ 039 986002; www.hotelsatlas.com) is the only night-

club in the area. Hotel residents are the clientele during the week, joined by locals on weekends.

Shopping

Chefchaouen remains an artisan centre and, as such, an excellent place to shop – especially for woven rugs and blankets in bright primary colours. Many shops have looms in situ, so you can see the blankets being made. Previously silk was the material of choice: the mulberry trees in Plaza Uta el-Hammam are a legacy of these times. Most of the weaving nowadays is with wool, one of the area's biggest products.

The largest concentration of tourist shops is located around the Uta el-Hammam and Place el-Majzen.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Many bus services from Chefchaouen originate elsewhere, so are often full on arrival. Where possible, buy your ticket a day in advance to secure your seat. The bus station is 1.5km southwest of the town centre at the far end of Ave Mohammed V (Dh10 in a petit taxi from Place el-Majzen). CTM and all other buses use the same station.

CTM (☎ 039 987669) serves Rabat (Dh90, five hours), Kenitra (Dh80, 5½ hours) Ouezzane (Dh20, 1½ hours), Tetouan (Dh20, 1½ hours), Fez (Dh70, four hours), Tangier (Dh40, three hours), Al Hoceima (Dh75, six hours), Nador (Dh125, nine hours) and Casablanca (Dh120, eight hours).

Other companies run a number of cheaper services to the same destinations, including a daily departure for Oued Laou (Dh18, two hours).

TAXI

The fixed price for a grand taxi from Tangier Airport to Chefchaouen is Dh750. Unless you can find several people to split the fare with you, it is far cheaper to go to Tangier first, then hop to Chefchaouen via Tetouan. Even if you buy two places, you will save over Dh500 and add less than an hour.

Grands taxis north leave Chefchaouen from just below Plaza Mohammed V. Most just run to Tetouan (Dh30, one hour), where you must change for Tangier or Ceuta – direct taxis are rare. From Ave

Allal ben Abdallah you can catch a grand taxi to Dar Ackoubaa (Dh15, 20 minutes) from Ave Moulay Abdesalam, the junction for Oued Laou.

Grands taxis headed south gather below the central market. Catch one to Ouezzane (Dh30, 75 minutes), where you can pick up onward transport to Fez and Meknès. There is very little transport heading east to the coast. The best option is to take a grand taxi to Dardara junction (Dh8, 15 minutes) or Bab Taza (Dh15, 30 minutes) and hope for the best from there.

Getting Around

Blue petits taxis congregate on Place el-Majzen and near the market. They're unmetered; most fares shouldn't top Dh10. The safe and convenient Hotel Parador **car park** (Place el-Majzen; per night Dh10) can be used by non-guests.

OUEZZANE

pop 53,000

Ouezzane is a sprawling, scruffy, industrial town of concrete construction with little to offer the traveller, although that may be changing a little. Part of the medina is under reconstruction, and it is fascinating to see what a little mortar and white paint can do. If you are driving through, it is worth it to stop and have a look at the work being done, but there is no reason to stay here unless you run out of petrol. Police checkpoints are common both entering and leaving the town.

Orientation

The centre of town is a large triangle known as Place de L'Indépendance. There are a few restaurants and rough hotels across the street, and behind them, the medina. The reconstruction includes the tiled Green Mosque, with its interesting octagonal minaret, though is closed to the public. Uphill are several streets that form a commercial area, with numerous stalls, which are worth a walk around.

Sleeping & Eating

If you do suffer a thrown piston, you have two acceptable choices for sleeping:

Hotel Bouhal (☎ 037 907154; Hay el-Haddadine Qu; s/d/tr Dh80/120/150, air-con an extra Dh10-20; ♿) This is your best budget option, although

located in a nondescript industrial side street with nothing nearby. Inside, the rooms are clean, and the roof terrace a welcome oasis, but shared bathrooms have cold showers and squat toilets. Staff can rustle up breakfast with a little warning, but otherwise head to the Motel Rif for a meal.

Motel Rif (☎ 037 907172; r Dh250; 5-person apt Dh700; ♿) This odd, sprawling blue-and-white complex on the outskirts of town – on the way to Chefchaouen, and 3km before the road to Fez – fancies itself as a drive-in resort, with tiki umbrellas by the pool, camper parking (Dh50 for two), a cavernous restaurant (set menu Dh80) and a 35 hectare farm to provide it with produce. The large proportions of the concrete block buildings makes it feel like a factory converted to hotel use.

There are several other budget hotels across from the Place de L'Indépendance, all of which seem to be competing for the bottom rung of a short ladder. **Restaurant des Négoçiants** (Place de l'Indépendance), in the Grand Hotel, is the most popular eatery, but given the flies, you may end up staying in Ouezzane longer than you wish.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Two dusty lots on Rue de la Marche Verte, 50m northwest of the main square, function as the bus station and grand-taxi stand. Get an early start when trying to leave Ouezzane, as there are virtually no buses after 5pm.

CTM has buses to Fez (Dh45, two hours, two daily) and to Tetouan (Dh40, three hours, one daily) via Chefchaouen (Dh25, 1½ hours). There are frequent non-CTM buses before 5pm to Meknès (Dh40), Fez (Dh40), Tetouan (Dh35), Chefchaouen (Dh20), Kenitra (Dh25, 2½ hours), Casablanca (Dh65, five hours) and Tangier (Dh50, four hours). Most non-CTM buses for Chefchaouen actually stop at Dardara junction, on the main road, from where you can pick up a grand taxi (Dh10) for the final 10km into town.

TAXI

There are grands taxis to Chefchaouen (Dh30, 75 minutes) and Fez (Dh60, 2½ hours). For longer-distance destinations (such as Rabat or Tangier) you may have to take a taxi to Souk el-Arba-du-Rharb

وزان

(Dh20, 45 minutes) or Ksar el-Kebir (Dh25, one hour), and change.

NORTH & EAST OF CHEFCHAOUEN

Oued Laou

واد لاو

With its dusty main street lined with slapdash construction, small but growing Oued Laou looks like a Wild West town on the sea. Waterfront budget rooms, cheap beer and food, internet cafés and a very long, empty beach make it a backpacker paradise, especially in summer. There's nothing to do aside from watching the fishermen haul their boats in the morning.

INTERNET CAFÉS

Cyber Costa (per hr Dh5; ☎ 9am-midnight) Opposite the Rais Restaurant.

SLEEPING & EATING

our pick **Hotel Oued Laou** (☎ 039 670249; Blvd Mas-sira; s/d/tr from Dh120/130/150) There are several new budget hotels to choose from, but this is the best. Located on the beach, it has a pool room, one of the better café/restaurants and an energetic young manager. Get a room with views to the sea.

Mare Nostrum (☎ 022 312218; bungalow Dh700 Sep, Dh1000 May, Dh1500 Jun-Aug; 🍷) If you are backpacking on a trust fund, this is the perfect getaway. Located 3km from town on the road to Tetouan, this small, self-contained and newly constructed resort consists of a series of bungalows hanging on the cliffs overlooking the sea, with a pool, an upscale restaurant (mains from Dh100), a charming lounge and its own private cul-de-sac beach far below. The bungalows are large, with canopy beds and offer magnificent views towards the rocky headland. Reserve ahead in summer.

Rais Restaurant (Corniche; mains from Dh10) Facing the fishing boats, this place has great sardines fresh from the boat, and filling meals of chicken and chips.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

If you're driving from Chefchaouen turn off the main Tetouan road at Dar Ackoubaa, 11km north of Chefchaouen. It's a wonderful drive past the large hydroelectric dam and through rolling hills and the stunning Laou Gorge. Coming from Tetouan, S608 hugs the dramatic coastline for 140km all the way to El-Jebha.

Three buses a day connect Tetouan and Oued Laou (Dh21, two hours). There's also one bus from Chefchaouen (Dh18, 90 minutes), which continues along the coast to El-Jebha (Dh25, five hours); the return service leaves El-Jebha early in the morning. However, at Oued Laou it dumps you out by the souq, leaving you a 45-minute walk or Dh5 grand-taxi ride to town.

Grands taxis run from beside the mosque in Oued Laou to Tetouan (Dh30, one hour) via Dar Ackoubaa (Dh15, 20 minutes), where you can pick up a passing taxi for Chefchaouen.

Targa to El-Jebha

من تركة إلى الجبهة

This stretch of the coast is very dramatic, and still remote – at least until 2010, when the coastal highway linking Tetouan to El-Jebha should be complete.

Seventeen kilometres southeast of Oued Laou, **Targa** is a little village with a history of piracy. High atop an outcrop of black rock, a stone fort overlooks the village, built during the Spanish Protectorate. The 13th-century mosque is associated with a local saint.

About 18km southeast of Targa, in the wide valley of Oued Bouchia, are the twin villages of **Steha** (an administrative centre) and **Bou-Ahmed**. Set back from the coast, the latter is the end point for a long-distance trek from Chefchaouen (see p443). There's an interesting souq every Tuesday, and a basic camping area in summer.

From here the road follows the coast on a splendid roller-coaster ride to the blue and white town of **El-Jebha**, 52km to the south-east. The rugged coastline forms a number of breathtaking and secluded bays – worth exploring if you have your own transport. Each Tuesday, the local souq draws Rif farmers from the surrounding villages. El-Jebha is the last stop before the road climbs up through the Rif to Issaugen.

Issaugen (Ketama)

دازكان

pop 5000

Heading southeast out of Chefchaouen, the road N2 plunges into the heart of the Rif, running about 150km along the backbone of the mountains. The roads are rough, and the endless twists and turns make the going slow. There are few petrol stations.

The small town of Bab Berret marks the unofficial entry point to kif country, which is regarded as the largest hashish production area in the world. Marijuana fields carpet the hills in all directions, fed by the huge stacks of chemical fertiliser on sale in the markets.

Issaguen, known locally (and on many maps) as Ketama, appears unexpectedly from the middle of the pine forests. A scruffy frontier town, it is the commercial centre of kif cultivation and smuggling. Traffic moves haphazardly down its pitted dirt main street, where gutted sheep hang by the roadside and hooded men walk furtively about.

To the southeast, Jebel Tidiquin (2448m), the highest peak in the Rif Mountains, dominates the skyline.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Issaguen has a notorious reputation. This is an area beyond the law, harbouring people who can no longer show their faces in other parts of Morocco. People will wonder what you are doing here, and naturally assume you are buying hashish. There is nowhere to turn if you get into trouble, and little to hold anyone back who wants some. Travellers are advised to pass through and not spend the night.

SLEEPING & EATING

The great anomaly of Issaguen is the **Hotel Tidighine** (☎ 067 255171; r from Dh300-500; ♿ ♿), which has recently undergone an extensive renovation into a three- or four-star hotel. At the time of research it was about to reopen. With 68 modern rooms, it dwarfs all the other buildings in town, and is several steps above in quality as well, with a fully equipped hotel kitchen, a large pool and 12 bungalows set in the woods. The local economy must be booming. The only other options are a few seedy cafés on the main road that offer simple food and a bed out back.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There is no bus station in Issaguen. Passing buses simply stop on the main road by the T-junction (next to the petrol station). The main destinations from here are Tetouan (Dh44, five hours, around six daily) via Chefchaouen (Dh38, three hours), Al-Hoceima (Dh36, three hours, at least nine daily) and Fez (Dh42, four hours, seven daily).

Almost all grands taxis are for local transport only. Occasional grands taxis leave for Al-Hoceima (Dh45) and Tetouan (Dh75), otherwise you're looking at hiring *collectif*.

THE CANNABIS INDUSTRY

The Rif is home to the largest acreage of cannabis cultivation in the world, an estimated 134,000 hectares, or 42% of global production. Cultivation has expanded rapidly since the 1980s, in part due to increasing European demand. The cannabis trade is now the region's main economic activity, involving an estimated 800,000 people, and probably Morocco's main source of foreign currency, although rural farmers reap little from it. The annual per capita income generated by cannabis production was estimated at US\$267 in 2002.

Cannabis cultivation started around Ketama in the 15th century. In 1912 the right to cultivate cannabis was granted to a few Rif tribes by Spain. In 1956, when Morocco gained independence, cannabis was prohibited, but Mohammed V later condoned cultivation in the Rif after the prohibition led to conflict there.

Most large shipments of Moroccan hashish (a concentrated form of marijuana) are smuggled into Europe by boat, including small speedboats that can make a round trip to Spain in an hour. The primary departure points are Martil, Oued Laou and Bou Ahmed, although the bigger ports of Nador, Tetouan, Tangier and Larache are also used. Traffickers also export hashish concealed in trucks and cars embarked on ferries leaving from the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla or from Tangier.

Not surprisingly, of all hashish seizures worldwide, half are made in Spain. Recent seizures of cocaine and hashish packed together suggests that Colombian drug traffickers have gotten involved. Traffickers have also branched out into human smuggling, to include smuggling hashish and migrants into Europe together.

AL-HOCEIMA

الحسيمة

pop 113,000

Al-Hoceima is a great place to spend a few days, and perhaps more. Quiet, safe, relaxing and hassle-free, this modern seaside resort is full of proud and genial Berbers with a surprisingly independent, Western outlook, far more than any other town in the north. In fact, if the northern Berbers had their own country, this would be its capital. There is far more of the Berber tongue, Tarifit, spoken than Spanish (see boxed text, below).

Founded by the Spanish as Villa Sanjuro, the town was built as a garrison after the Rif Wars in the early 20th century; rebel Abd al-Krim operated nearby. Moroccan independence brought the name-change to Al-Hoceima, but Spanish influence remains strong in language, architecture and business.

In recent years many of Al-Hoceima's émigrés have returned and have ploughed money into the town, particularly into its booming tourism industry. Now a major government-sponsored facelift is underway as well. During research the large Place de la Marche Vente was being transformed into a new cliffside park named – surprise! – Plaza Mohammed VI. A new corniche was being built along the coast.

SURVIVAL TARAFIT

Hello/Goodbye	<i>salam/beslama</i>
Yes/No	<i>naam/alla</i>
Please/Thankyou	<i>minfadlak/shoukran</i>
Where is...?	<i>fin...?</i>
hotel	<i>hotel</i>
camping	<i>el moukhayam</i>
Do you have any	<i>wash kayan shi</i>
rooms available?	<i>bit khawi?</i>
a single room	<i>bit dyal wahad</i>
a double room	<i>bit dyad jouje danas</i>
How much is it?	<i>beshhal?</i>
What time does	<i>foukash yamshi...?</i>
the next... leave?	
boat	<i>en babour</i>
bus	<i>el car</i>
I'd like a...	<i>bghit</i>
one-way ticket	<i>warga aller</i>
return ticket	<i>warga aller retour</i>
beer	<i>bira</i>
sandwich	<i>cascrout</i>

The Hotel Quemado had been taken down, freeing up the beachfront, and the future of the landmark Hotel Mohammed V was in doubt. The Place du Rif is slated to be turned into a pedestrian zone. Best of all, the wonderful National Park of Al-Hoceima has been carefully opened to rural tourism – an opportunity not to be missed.

Orientation

Al-Hoceima sits atop high cliffs overlooking two coves, one a beach (Plage Quemado) and the other a commercial port. Blvd Mohammed V parallels the edge from the Spanish College at one end to Place du Rif at the other. Most of the banks, hotels and restaurants are along or close to here, with budget options clustered around Place du Rif. The flat grid of wide streets is easy to walk and navigate. The three other town beaches lie further south, along with El Peñón de Alhucemas, one of the last bits of the Spanish Protectorate.

Information**INTERNET ACCESS**

Cyber Club On-line (103 Blvd Mohammed V; per hr Dh5; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4pm-midnight)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Pharmacie Nouvelle (Calle Moulay Idriss Alkbar; ☎ 8.30am-9.30pm Mon-Sat, 3pm-12.30am Sun)

MONEY

Bld Mohammed V has several banks with ATMs, including branches of BMCE, BMCI and Banque Populaire.

POST

Post office (Calle Moulay Idriss Alkbar; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat)

TOURIST INFORMATION

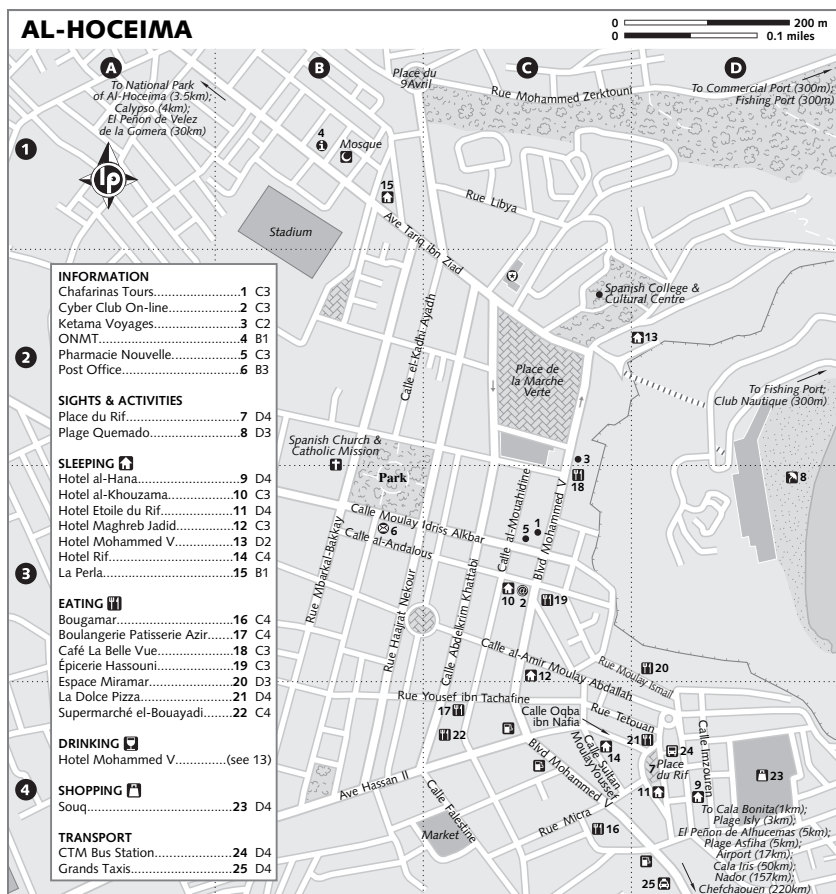
ONMT (Délégation Régionale du Tourisme; ☎ 039 981185; Ave Tariq ibn Ziad; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri)

TRAVEL AGENCIES

All sell ferry tickets from Al-Hoceima in season, and from Nador year-round.

Chafarinas Tours (☎ 039 840202; 109 Blvd Mohammed V)

Ketama Voyages (☎ /fax 039 982772; 146 Blvd Mohammed V)



Sights & Activities

BEACHES

A pretty steep-sided bay protects the town beach, **Plage Quemado**. The beach is clean enough, but the seaside resort atmosphere is marred by the port to the north and the massive buildings towering over the cliffs.

In the summer, a better option is one of the three white sandy beaches that begin 5km south of town: **Cala Bonita**, **Plage Isly** and **Plage Asfiha**. Off-season they tend to be strewn with rubbish. Plage Asfiha has several ramshackle restaurants right on the beach serving sardines and chips, and feels the most remote. The best way to reach these beaches is by grand taxi. For the entire taxi, reckon on about Dh49 to Cala Bonita

and Dh72 to Plage Asfiha. Local buses to Ajdir and Imzouren, which pass the turn-offs for these beaches (Dh2 to Dh3), leave from beside the Mobil petrol station at the south end of Blvd Mohammed V.

EL PEÑÓN DE ALHUCEMAS

One of the plazas de soberanía (see boxed text, p187) this extraordinary white island fortress can be seen a few hundred metres off Playa Asfiha, along with the uninhabited islets Isla de Mar and Isla de Tierra, which fly the Spanish flag. Spanish rule dates back to 1559, when the Saadi dynasty gave it to Spain in exchange for military assistance. In 1673, the Spanish military established a garrison there, and never left. Today, the

fort hosts 60 soldiers, and cannot be visited. Spanish sovereignty has been contested by Morocco since independence in 1956.

THE PORT

The port is mainly used for a large commercial fishing operation. It is a great place to watch the catch being unloaded, and to find dinner: take your selected fish to the Club Nautique (right) for cooking.

Sleeping

The streets between the Place du Rif and the souq are packed with ultracheap hotels. Some are pretty dingy, so look around before committing.

Hotel Rif (☎ 039 982268; 13 Calle Sultan Moulay Yousef; s/d Dh40/80) If your budget is really maxed-out, you'll end up in this long hallway lined with simple rooms. Bathrooms are shared, with cold showers and squat toilets, but you do get your own sink. Keep your door locked: the staff sleeps during the day.

Hotel al-Hana (☎ 039 981642; 17 Calle Imzouren; s/d/tr Dh50/60/75) At the lower end of this price range, this simple hotel is tucked into the tiny streets east of Place du Rif. All facilities are shared, including the clean squat toilets (hot showers cost Dh10). It's well kept, but insects like the kitchen.

our pick **Hotel Etoile du Rif** (☎ 039 840848; Place du Rif; s/d/tr Dh159/185/239) This curvaceous art-deco hotel, an island in the Place du Rif, has hardly changed since 1920, and is undoubtedly the local bargain. Spotless rooms have bathrooms and satellite TV, and most have a balcony too. There's a handy café downstairs, and the hotel could hardly be better placed for buses. No need to look elsewhere.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Hotel al-Khouzama (☎/fax 039 985669; Calle al-Andalous; s/d/tr Dh274/353/447; 📶) Just off Blvd Mohammed V, this three-star hotel is a long-time favourite for business travellers, and is suitably comfortable, with spacious rooms (though those facing away from the street are a bit dark). All come with bathroom and satellite TV, and the guys at reception are friendly and helpful.

Hotel Maghreb Jadid (☎ 039 982504; fax 039 982505; 56 Blvd Mohammed V; s/d Dh264/333; 📶) This is a reliable standby if the other hotels in

this price range are booked. Rooms are spacious, and most have enclosed balconies, but the lack of any division between shower and toilet is a step down. Putting out home flags for visitors is a nice touch.

Hotel Mohammed V (☎ 039 982233; fax 039 983314; Place Mohammed VI; s/d Dh352/466; 📶) Once Al-Hoceima's top option, this hotel occupies a series of low-rise concrete blocks perched above Plage Quemado – modern and bland. Rooms are comfortable enough and come with balconies giving lovely views over the bay. However, at the time of research, it was unclear whether the hotel was to be renovated or taken down.

La Perla (Ave Tariq ibn Zaid) This modern mirrored-glass high-rise luxury hotel was on the verge of opening during research. Expect three or four stars.

Eating RESTAURANTS

Cheap restaurants cluster around Place du Rif, serving up filling tajines, brochettes and a bit of seafood to the bus-station crowd from about Dh25 per head. There are also many snack shops around town.

Espace Miramar (☎ 039 984242; Rue Moulay Ismail; mains from Dh20) It's hard to go wrong at this 5000 sq metre complex with pizzeria, two cafés, a grill and restaurant, all of it perched on the cliffs overlooking the sea, and with occasional live music as well. The nice view is marred by the strip-mined hill opposite, but this is the place to start.

Club Nautique (☎ 039 981461; Port d'Al-Hoceima; mains Dh60-90) This is the main restaurant at the port, and a good one. Buy your fish fresh off the boat and have them grill it for you. The 2nd floor overlooks the whole port and is a great place to relax and have a beer.

La Dolce Pizza (☎ 039 984752; Place du Rif; pizza from Dh27; 🕒 5.30-11pm) This cute Italian bistro thrust out into the chaos of Place du Rif has just four tables, but lots of charm. Service is appallingly slow, and the cook is a microwave, but the decor makes it a pleasant place to sit and have some pizza, hamburgers or salads.

CAFÉS & PATISSERIES

Boulangerie Patisserie Azir (☎ 061 177142; 14 Rue Yousef Beni Tachafine; 🕒 5am-8pm) This new patisserie is already the town favourite, with

great home-baked bread and tons of different sweets.

Café La Belle Vue (131 Blvd Mohammed V; ☎ 6am-8pm) This café gets its name from the terrace at the back overlooking the bay. There are several similar cafés on this stretch of Mohammed V with great views.

SELF-CATERING

Many small general food stores are dotted around town, including **Épicerie Hassouni** (Blvd Mohammed V) and **Supermarché el-Bouayadi** (Calle Abdelkrim Khattabi).

For alcohol try **Bougamar** (near cnr of Rue Mira), the local liquor store, where bottles are dispensed from behind the counter pharmacy-style.

Drinking

Hotel Mohammed V (Place Mohammed VI) This has an inviting bar, particularly as the terrace has some excellent views over Plage Quemado. A beer here will set you back Dh20.

Club Nautique (Port d'Al-Hoceima; beer Dh15) A more atmospheric option, and the bar here usually attracts quite a crowd.

Entertainment

Calypso (☎ 039 841601; Plage Tala Youssef; admission Dh80) This nightclub at Chafarina Beach Resort is the only option if you're carrying your dancing shoes; a lively place in the summer months, partly due to the professional female company.

Shopping

There is a weekly market Monday and Tuesday in the **souq**.

Getting There & Away

AIR

From June to September, Atlas Blue airlines flies from Amsterdam and Brussels twice a week to the small local airport (AHU) located 12km (Dh100 by taxi) from town. Royal Air Maroc offers sporadic service from Paris and various parts of Spain, as well as Casablanca. Otherwise the best option is a flight to Nador, 150km east.

BOAT

From June to September, Comarit runs a daily ferry to Almeria in Spain (seven to eight hours). Fares are around Dh450 each way. A new service, **Reduan Ferry** (www

.reduanferry.com) keeps threatening to connect Al-Hoceima to Málaga, but at the time of research had not yet done so. Out of season the alternative remains a ferry to Nador, 150km east.

BUS

All the bus companies have offices around Place du Rif. **CTM** (☎ 039 982273) runs one daily bus to Oujda via Nador (Dh60, 3½ hours), two direct to Nador (Dh55, three hours) and three to Tetouan (Dh80, seven hours) via Chefchaouen (Dh65, six hours). There's also one evening departure for Casablanca (Dh170, 11½ hours) via Taza (Dh60, four hours), Fez (Dh90, six hours), Meknès (Dh105, 7½ hours) and Rabat (Dh140, 10 hours). This bus is timed to arrive in Taza in time to connect with the night train headed for Marrakesh.

Several small companies also serve the aforementioned destinations. There are at least three buses a day to Tetouan and Tangier (Dh80 to Dh90, nine hours). These stop in Chefchaouen only if there's enough demand. Otherwise, they'll drop you on the main road at Dardara, from where you can share a grand taxi into Chefchaouen (Dh8, 15 minutes). Heading east, there are also a couple of buses a day to Nador (Dh39, three hours) and Oujda (Dh58, seven hours).

TAXI

Grands taxis line up on the road at the southern end of Blvd Mohammed V. The most popular destinations are Taza (Dh60, 2½ hours) and Nador (Dh55, 2½ hours), although occasional taxis do go to Fez (Dh120). Taxis go through Nador to Melilla, not direct.

AROUND AL-HOCEIMA

National Park of Al-Hoceima

المنتزه الوطني للحسيمة

The undiscovered National Park of Al-Hoceima is the hidden jewel of this region. Its great mesas and dry canyons are reminiscent of the American southwest, except that they border the sea, where the limestone cliffs resemble Mallorca. Its isolation has helped preserve several at-risk species, from its tuya forests to an important colony of fishing eagle. The park's 310 sq km are spotted with Berber settlements and criss-crossed by dirt roads, making it an ideal

trekking and mountain-bike territory. While a 4WD opens up your options, a 2x4 will get you through the main tracks.

While the park offers several remote and scenic beaches, the highlight is the fantastic sight of El Peñón de Velez de la Gomera, one of the plazas de soberanía (see boxed text, p187). After a long trek through a canyon, the fortress looms on the edge of a striking scythe of beach below high walls of rock. Attached by a spit of sand that ends at a guardhouse, this tiny piece of Spain is one of the world's strangest national borders. A few stone walls nearby are all that is left of Bades, a city wiped out by a flood in ancient times. This is an exhilarating travel destination, awash with the scope of human history and the flux of time.

The best way to experience the park is to go through **Asociación Rif para el Desarrollo del Turismo Rural** (Rif Association for the Development of Rural Tourism; ☎ 039 981833; www.parquencionalal hucemas.com; riftourisme@yahoo.fr; Calle Ajdir 19) a local organisation with Spanish backing that is developing the park's rural tourism potential, to include new signage to keep you from getting lost. This energetic and helpful group will lay out an itinerary that will involve inexpensive stays in one or more rural homes (including all meals and transport) providing exposure to the unique Berber culture in the region, beaches, wildlife and more. Burros are available to help get you around in certain areas. Prices vary from Dh200 to Dh300 half-board per person depending on size of party and length of stay.

Alternatively, you can walk to El Peñón de Velez de la Gomera along the coast from Cala Iris (see below) in 1½ hours. Without your own transport, you'll need to hire a grand taxi to get there. In summer there may be enough people to share one, otherwise expect to pay Dh130 one-way. Facing inland from the beach, there is an unsigned, concrete-block rural house on the left, 100m from the sea, that rents out simple rooms with a shared bath and optional meals. Ask for the 'casa rural'. The price is Dh75 with breakfast, Dh150 with two meals, and Dh200 with three.

Cala Iris & Torres de Alcalá

كالا إيريس و نهر الكالا

Cala Iris is a poor fishing village that is about to be changed forever. At the time

of research the construction of a huge 10,000-bed tourist development was about to begin, with completion aimed for 2012. The previous camp ground has been closed. The scruffy port remains, and is full of sardine boats that fish at night with lamps. Locals will take you with them for Dh100. There is also a rough-looking, nameless restaurant behind the Cooperative des Marins Pecheurs that serves typical Berber food. The port is flanked by attractive beaches: Yellich (to the east) faces an island that you can walk out to; Oued Sahfa lies to the west, and an hour's hike over the hill lies Mestaza.

There are a couple of very basic shops at Torres de Alcalá, 5km east. Three semi-ruined Spanish towers stand sentinel over this village, set back from a shingle beach caught between two rocky headlands. Better to focus your efforts on the adjacent National Park of Al-Hoceima.

EAST MEDITERRANEAN COAST

MELILLA

مليلية

pop 65,000

Who would expect to find 900 Modernist buildings, the second largest such collection outside Barcelona, in North Africa? Yet here they are, along with one perfectly preserved medieval fortress, several fascinating museums and nearly 50 tapas bars. The result is Melilla, a nirvana for architecture and history buffs, as well as a great place to spend the weekend.

Along with Ceuta, Melilla is one of two autonomous Spanish cities on the Moroccan coast, known as the *plazas mayores* (see boxed text, p187). These cultural islands have much in common: their economies are rooted in cross-border commerce, their societies are strongly multicultural and there is a significant military presence, the result of strained relations. Melilla is nearly equally divided between Christian and Muslim, with the latter being predominantly Berber. Various forces – immigrants trying to get in, Moroccan claims to sovereignty, local employment issues and more – have caused headaches in the past. In 2005 thousands of sub-Saharan immigrants tried

to force their way in, and six died. One result was the construction of a €33 million fence that stretches from one side of the enclave to the other. Another was the reassuring visit of the king and queen of Spain in 2007, the first royal visit in 80 years, to great local acclaim.

Apart from a certain caution with strangers, Melilla is very easy on the traveller, and tourist infrastructure is excellent. While ferry-loads of visitors pour in during summer, in the off-season you'll have plenty of breathing room.

History

Melilla oozes with history, but it is neither as broad nor as deep as you might expect. While the area has been inhabited for more than 2000 years, the old city wasn't begun until after Spanish conquest in 1496, then built up in four stages. Up until the end of the 19th century, virtually all of Melilla was contained within a single impregnable fortress. Current borders were fixed by several treaties with Morocco between 1859 and 1894, the last following an unsuccessful siege by rebellious Rif Berbers. The method involved shooting a cannonball and seeing how far it went. More fighting with rebel Berbers broke out several times in the ensuing years, until the Spanish Protectorate consolidated its grip in 1927. In 1936, Franco flew here from the Canary Islands to launch the Spanish Civil War. Local politics still tip to the right.

Orientation

Melilla is a semicircle of 12 sq km carved out of the Moroccan coastline. The old town, Melilla la Vieja, is a highly complex, multilevel fortress that juts out into the sea. It contains numerous museums, as well as some small residential areas. The port and major beaches lie to the south, with the ferry terminal directly east.

The 'new town' is a broken grid of streets with an attractive commercial centre full of Modernist buildings. While compact, it is deficient in street signs. The heart is the long triangular Parque Hernandez, which ends at the circular Plaza de España, forming a huge exclamation point. Most of the hotels, banks and restaurants are located to the north. Like neighbouring Morocco, 4km to the south, you'll find few locals wearing shorts in the city, even when it is hot.

Information

To phone Melilla from outside Spain, dial ☎ 0034. Melilla is one hour ahead of Morocco during summer and two hours in April and May. Most shops and businesses are closed on Sunday.

INTERNET ACCESS

There are numerous internet cafés downtown.

Locutoria Dosmil (Calle Ejercito España, local 14-25; per hr €2; ☎ 9am-2pm & 4-9pm)

MODERNISME & MELILLA

Like many of the movements from which it drew its inspiration (eg the English Arts & Crafts Movement) Modernisme was a broad reaction to the material values of an industrial age, which suffused culture with a machinelike spirit. Centred in Barcelona, it was the Catalan version of art nouveau. Modernist architecture is characterised by the use of curves over straight lines, the frequent use of natural motifs (especially plants), lively decoration and rich detail, asymmetrical forms, a refined aesthetic and dynamism. Its chief proponent was Antoni Gaudí, the architect of Barcelona's famous Sagrada Família cathedral. But in Melilla, Modernisme is synonymous with Enrique Nieto.

Nieto was a student of Gaudí, who worked on his Casa Milà in Barcelona. Wanting to escape his master's shadow, however, he left for booming Melilla in 1909, in his late twenties, and stayed the rest of his life. He became the city architect in 1931, retired in 1949, and died four years later. During his long career he took part in over 1000 projects and finished 457, forever changing the face of his city. His work drew on many styles, including art deco. He also helped found one, known as Sgraffito Architecture, a blend of art deco and aerodynamic forms. His work included Melilla's main synagogue, the main mosque and several buildings for the Catholic Church, representing the diversity of the city's culture. Perhaps due to the distant location of his canvas, however, this great painter in concrete is not well-known outside of Melilla.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Urgencias Sanitarias (☎ 956 674400; 40 Alvaro de Bazan; ☎ 5pm-9am Mon-Sat, 24hr Sun & public holidays) Night pharmacy.

Hospital Comarcal (☎ 956 670000) South side of Río de Oro.

MONEY

Euros are used for all transactions in Melilla. You'll find several banks (with ATMs) around Avenida de Juan Carlos I Rey. Most will buy or sell dirham at an inferior rate to the Moroccan dealers hanging around the ferry port or the border.

On the Moroccan side of the border you can change cash at the *Crédit du Maroc*. There's also a *Banque Populaire* with an ATM 200m further into Morocco; walk straight ahead to the crossroads and it's on your left on the road to the port.

POST

Main post office (Correos y telégrafos; Calle Pablo Vallescá; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Oficina del Turismo (main) (☎ 952 976151; www.melillaturismo.com, in English; 21 Calle Fortuny; ☎ 9am-2pm & 5-8pm Mon-Fri) Offers special tours of religious sites. Website contains a comprehensive history and architectural tour.

Oficina del Turismo (kiosk) (☎ 952 976151; www.melillaturismo.com, in English; Plaza de España; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Mon-Fri). Faces the Palacio de Asamblea.

Fundación Melilla Ciudad Monumental (☎ 952 976201; www.melillamonumental.org, in English; C/Miguel Acosta, 13;) In-depth information on local architecture.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Viajes Melilla (☎ 952 679352; 1 Ave Duquesa de la Victoria)

Sights & Activities**MELILLA LA VIEJA (OLD MELILLA)**

The fortress of Old Melilla has been restored to perfection. The main entrance is **Puerta de la Marina**, fronted by a statue of Franco, from where you ascend to the summit, passing several small museums. The first is the **Museo de Arqueología e Historia** (☎ 952 976216; Plaza Pedro de Estopiñán; admission free; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4-8.30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun winter, 10am-2pm & 5-9.30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun summer) which has a nifty little

collection of architectural drawings, ancient ceramics and coins, and numerous models and archaeological finds, signed in English. The small door across the courtyard leads into the cavelike **Aljibes de las Peñuelas** (admission free; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-9.30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-2pm & 4-8.30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun Oct-Mar), an other-worldly cistern that is still flowing. The new Berber museum across the way is due to open by 2010.

The Calle de la Concepción continues up to the 17th-century **Iglesia de la Purísima Concepción** (Parish of the Immaculate Conception; ☎ 952 681516; ☎ 10am-3pm & 4-9pm Tue-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun) worth a stop for its resplendent nave – and on to the adjacent **Cuevas del Convento** (Caves of the Convent; ☎ 952 680929; admission €1.20; ☎ 10.30am-1.30pm & 4.30-8pm Tue-Sat, 10.30am-2pm Sun). These extensive and well-restored caves were used as a refuge during sieges, and pop out at a small beach below the cliffs. The guided tour (in Spanish) is excellent.

Finally you reach the summit of the fort, with its panoramic views, and the **Museo Militar** (☎ 952 685587; admission free; ☎ 10am-2pm Tue-Sun). The history of the Spanish Protectorate is dominated by military history, and this museum is the one place where you can feel the grand sweep of that violent drama, with martial music playing in the background. Don't miss the antique photographs room, where biplanes, legionnaires and Berber horsemen all fuse into a dreamy adventure novel, or the 'do not touch the cannonballs' sign, which is straight from *Dr Strangelove*.

NEW TOWN

At the turn of the 20th century, Melilla was the only centre of trade between Tetouan and the Algerian border. As the city grew, it expressed itself in the architectural style of Modernisme, the Catalan version of art nouveau (not to be confused with the cultural movement of modernism), which was then in vogue. Inspired by the Catalan architect Enrique Nieto, a disciple of Gaudí who made Melilla his home, this trend continued locally even after it went out of fashion elsewhere. The result is a living museum of some 900 Modernist and art-deco buildings. Unlike Ceuta, many of these treasures have yet to be dusted off, but the overall architectural wealth is greater.

The best way to appreciate this heritage is to stroll the area to the north of Parque



Hernandez, known as ‘the golden triangle’. Several fine examples are on the **Plaza de España**, including Nieto’s art deco **Palacio de Asamblea**, whose floor plan depicts a ducal crown; his **Casino Militar**, whose facade still depicts a republican coat of arms; and the **Banco de España**. Architecture fans seeking more detailed information should see the resources listed under Tourist Information, p217.

While the Palacio is an operating town hall, the staff at the entrance are willing to show tourists around upon request. Worth seeing are two rooms on the upper floor, Salon Dorado, which contains a large painting of the arrival of Spaniards in Melilla in 1497, and the Sala de Plenos, where the local congress meets.

With its central fountain, the Plaza is a pleasant place to sit. At the centre is an art-deco military monument to campaigns in Morocco. In the distance you can see Melilla’s most striking contemporary building, the new courthouse, which looks like a flying saucer has landed on the roof. This observation deck is now closed to visitors.

From the Plaza you can take a pleasant stroll down the long, palm-lined **Parque Hernández**. There is a nameless café midway that serves up mint tea. At the end, turn left down Calle Sotomayor. The **Plaza De Toros** the only operating bull ring in Africa, lies straight ahead.

On the other side is the **Gaselec Museum** (☎ 952 671902; admission free; 🕒 6-9pm Mon-Fri,

INFORMATION		Palacio de la Asamblea.....14 C2	Café Rossy.....27 B2
Locutoria Dosmil.....1 B2	Parque Hernández.....15 B2	Café Toga.....28 C2	
Main Post Office.....2 B2	Playa de la Ensanada de los Galápagos.....16 C2	Casa Marta.....29 B2	
Oficina del Turismo.....3 A3	Plaza de España.....17 C2	La Cervecería.....30 B2	
Oficina del Turismo Kiosk.....4 C2	Plaza de Toros.....18 A3	La Pèrgola.....31 C2	
Viajes Melilla.....5 A3	Puerta de la Marina.....19 D2	Parnaso.....32 A3	
		Real Club Marítimo.....33 C2	
		Supersol.....34 A4	
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		SLEEPING 	
Aljibes de las Peñuelas.....6 D2	Hostal La Rosa Blanca.....20 A1	DRINKING 	
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Gaselec Museum.....10 B3	Hotel Rusadir.....24 B2	Estación Marítima.....37 D2	
Iglesia de la Purísima	Parador de Melilla.....25 C1	Trasmediterránea.....38 B2	
Concepción.....11 D1			
Museo de Arqueología e Historia.....12 C2	EATING 		
Museo Militar.....13 D1	Antony Pizza Factory.....26 A3		

11.30am-1.30pm & 6-9pm Sat & Sun) This intriguing oddity, the passion of the president of the local gas and electric company, houses a museum of Ancient Egypt completely composed of reproductions, including King Tut's mask and sarcophagus. Future plans include faux exhibitions on entirely different subjects. While many of the artefacts look fake, the unusual concept works in its own way, and could well be – ahem – reproduced elsewhere.

BEACHES

The one distressing sight in Melilla is the state of its coastline, which is everywhere strewn with plastic bottles and bags. While efforts are made to clean certain beaches, it is hard to escape this problem, particularly out of season, making you fear for the future of the Mediterranean.

There is one large beach south of the port, divided into four sections. During research there was a plastic bag visible in the water on average every 10m. The foul Rio de Oro empties into this area as well. Needless to say, stick to sunbathing.

An intriguing alternative is the secluded **Playa de la Ensanada de los Galápagos**, which is reached by taking a tunnel under the fort. It is open May to September.


Sleeping

There aren't many hotels in Melilla, so they tend to fill up even in the off-season. Prices rise 15% to 20% during peak periods.

BUDGET

Hostal La Rosa Blanca (☎ 952 682738; 7 Calle Gran Capitán; s/d €20/32) A very basic option, the


rooms are clean but vary in quality, so make sure to look before you buy, and beware those tattered bedspreads. Rooms have sinks and shared baths.

our pick Residencia de Estudiantes y Deportistas (Residence of Students and Athletes; ☎ 952 670008; Calle Alfonso X; s/d incl breakfast €23/36, half-board €28.50/47, full-board €34/58; ) This is the best budget choice if you don't mind being away from the town centre. Imagine a well-run college dormitory and you get the picture: 87 sparkling rooms, internet access, cafeteria, library and TV lounge. Rooms above the 2nd floor have balconies. Take local bus 3, which stops near Plaza España on Calle Marina every 10 minutes. The trip takes 10 to 15 minutes.

Hostal Residencia Cazaza (☎ 956 684648; 6 Calle Primo de Rivera; s/d €26/36) While the rooms here are beat up, this old building with its high ceilings and small balconies manages to be charming, and has a central location in the golden triangle. Management is friendly.

Camping de Rostrogordo (☎ 956 685262; camping per adult €4, plus per tent/car/campervan €4/5/6) With the cramped streets of Melilla, this is a decent option if you have a vehicle, 2km north of town. It's well run with good facilities; prices take a 15% hike in summer.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Hotel Nacional (☎ 956 684540; fax 956 684481; 10 Calle Primo de Rivera; s/d €35/55; ) This hotel offers similar amenities to the Cazaza, but is more expensive. The compact rooms, with quaint iron furniture and modern bathrooms, can be quite snug. Those facing inside are dark and glum, so get one looking to the street. Corner room 104 is a strong choice.

Hotel Anfora (☎ 956 683340; fax 956 683344; 8 Calle Pablo Vallescá; s/d incl breakfast €46/72; 🍷) This rather industrial-feeling two-star hotel offers standard-fare rooms with TV, fridges and balconies. The highlight is the roof terrace, offering vistas of Melilla La Vieja and the sea beyond.

Parador de Melilla (☎ 956 684940; Avenida Cándido Lobera; s/d €94/118; 🍷 🍷) This is a very classy choice with large, grand rooms, warm use of wood throughout, a high level of quality furnishings and balconies with great views to sea. The circular dining room overlooking the city is an elegant touch. The adjacent Parque Lobera is great for kids.

Hotel Rusadir (☎ 956 681240; 5 Calle Pablo Vallescá; s/d incl breakfast €66/88 low season, €86/102 high season; 🍷) This three-star hotel has been completely renovated to excellent effect, including an impressive lobby and design-conscious rooms with TV, minibars and balconies. The restaurant puts out an impressive breakfast buffet.

Eating

Many of Melilla's restaurants are associated with hotels (like the Rusadir or the Parador), but there are plenty of others around Avenida de Juan Carlos I Rey.

RESTAURANTS

Parnaso (☎ 952 684184; 30 Avenida Duquesa de la Victoria; sandwiches from €2.50; 🍷 7am-1am Mon-Sat) This hopping bistro with outdoor seating on a tree-lined avenue offers inexpensive but tasty sandwiches and tapas. Popular during lunch and with the after-work crowd.

our pick La Périgola (Calle General Marcias; 🍷 noon-midnight) A waterfront terrace, white tablecloths and café music make this classy spot a very pleasant place for a meal, or just a late afternoon drink. The speciality is seafood, and at €10 the prix fixe menu cannot be beaten.

Antony Pizza Factory (☎ 952 671505; Avenida de la Democracia; pizza €4-6, pasta from €5.50; 🍷 8pm-late) Less factory than cosy brasserie, its staff still works hard to dish out heavily loaded pizzas and some rich pasta sauces. Popular with Melilla's young, it has a sunken snug area for quiet dining.

La Posada de Paco Benitez (☎ 952 681629; mains from €10; 🍷 1-3.30pm & 8.30-midnight Tue-Thu) This charming restaurant is decked out like a rural Spanish cottage. The focus is on seafood and

meats, Iberian-style, complemented by a strong wine menu. Following Ave Duquesa, take the second right before the bridge, and the restaurant is on your right.

Los Salazones (☎ 952 673652; Calle Conde de Alcaudete; 15; mains from €12; 🍷 1.30-4.30pm & 9pm-late) Another local favourite, this meat and seafood restaurant is located a block from the beach, and is the perfect place to end a day in the sun. Sit at the marble-topped barrels and enjoy the grilled fish.

CAFÉS

Real Club Marítimo (Yacht Harbour; 🍷 9.15am-1pm) This is a private yacht club but travellers are welcome to come and sample a croissant and coffee by the sea.

Café Rossy (5 Calle General Prim; sandwiches from €1.70; 🍷 7am-1pm & 4.30-10pm) Another reliable place to grab a quick eat or while away an hour with a book and a coffee. The *bocadillos* are a perfect lunchtime snack.

Café Toga (☎ 952 680533; Plaza y Benarroch; sandwiches €1.50; 🍷 6.30am-11pm Mon-Sat) This small bar on a broad plaza dishes out tapas and sandwiches throughout the day. Located beneath the sign for 'Academia Vetonia'.

TAPAS BARS

Casa Marta (Calle Justo Sanchez; 🍷 noon-5pm & 8pm-2am) This is a rockin' tapas bar that brims with people of all ages both inside and out: outdoor seating is under a tent in the street. Each beer comes with free tapas, so three beers gets you a free dinner. Don't miss the *filetillo*, thin strips of meat with gravy.

La Cervecería (Calle de General O'Donnell; tapas from €1.50; 🍷 12.30-4pm & 8.30pm-midnight) High on decoration, this one-room bar is a green explosion of decorative tile on all surfaces, including the furniture.

SELF-CATERING

There are plenty of small grocery shops in the streets around Parque Hernández. For the complete supermarket experience, go to **Supersol** (Calle General Polavieja; 🍷 10am-10pm, closed Sun) on the road to the frontier.

Drinking

Look no further, **Puerto Deportivo Nasoy** is Melilla's bar zone, with 12 different options grouped side by side on the waterfront. Enter through the parking lot next to the courthouse.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air Nostrum (Iberia) (✈ 902 400500; Melilla Airport; www.airnostrum.com) offers 12 daily flights between Melilla and Málaga, as well as two daily flights to Almería, Barcelona and Madrid, and one daily flight to Granada. The airport is a 10-minute (€5) taxi ride, and has no ATM.

CAR

Melilla is a duty-free zone, so if you're driving it's worth filling up here. Petrol is about one-third cheaper than in Morocco or Spain.

FERRY

Acciona (Transmediterranea) (✈ 956 690902; Plaza de España; ⏰ 9am-1pm & 5-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) serves Melilla from Málaga and Almería. Tickets are also available for purchase at the **estación marítima** (ferry port; ☎ 956 681633).

The ferry for Málaga departs Melilla Monday through Saturday at midnight and arrives in Málaga at 4pm. On Mondays it also leaves Melilla at 9am. From Málaga it departs Monday at 11pm and arrives in Melilla at 9pm Tuesday. From Tuesday to Saturday it departs Málaga at 2pm and arrives at 9pm. Prices begin at €35.

The ferry to Almería departs Melilla on Monday at 10am and from Tuesday to Sunday at 2.30pm. It departs Almería Monday at 5.30pm and Tuesday to Sunday at midnight.

BORDER CROSSING

To get to the border, you'll need to either take a taxi (€8) or catch local bus 2 (marked 'Aforos'), which runs between Plaza de España and the Beni Enzar border post (€0.60, every 30 minutes from 7.30am to 11pm). From where the buses stop, it's about 50m to Spanish customs and another 200m to Moroccan customs.

Before entering Morocco, fill in a white form and get your passport stamped at the booth. Touts may approach trying to charge you for these forms, or ask a fee to fill them out for you. If you're driving into Morocco, remember to retain the green customs slip, which you must present when you (and your vehicle) leave the country. Large queues of vehicles entering Morocco are frequent and time-consuming; procedures for foot passengers are quick and easy.

On the Moroccan side of the border, bus 19 (usually unmarked) runs hourly to Nador (Dh23, 25 minutes). Frequent grands taxis (Dh5, 15 minutes) to Nador are tucked away on a lot to the right of this crossroad.

When entering Melilla from Morocco, fill in a yellow form and get your passport stamped. Some nationalities require visas to enter Spain: if they don't stop you here, they will when you try to move on to the mainland. Bus 43 goes to Plaza España (€0.60).

Getting Around

The centre of Melilla is compact and easy to walk around. Buses ply the route between Plaza de España and the border. The local **taxi service** (☎ 956 683621) is also useful.

NADOR

pop 150,000

الناظور

There is a new road from Al-Hoceima to Nador that is a delight to travel, even when squashed into a grand taxi. It passes through red cliffs, verdant gorges and, midway, an enormous sculpture of deeply eroded hills.

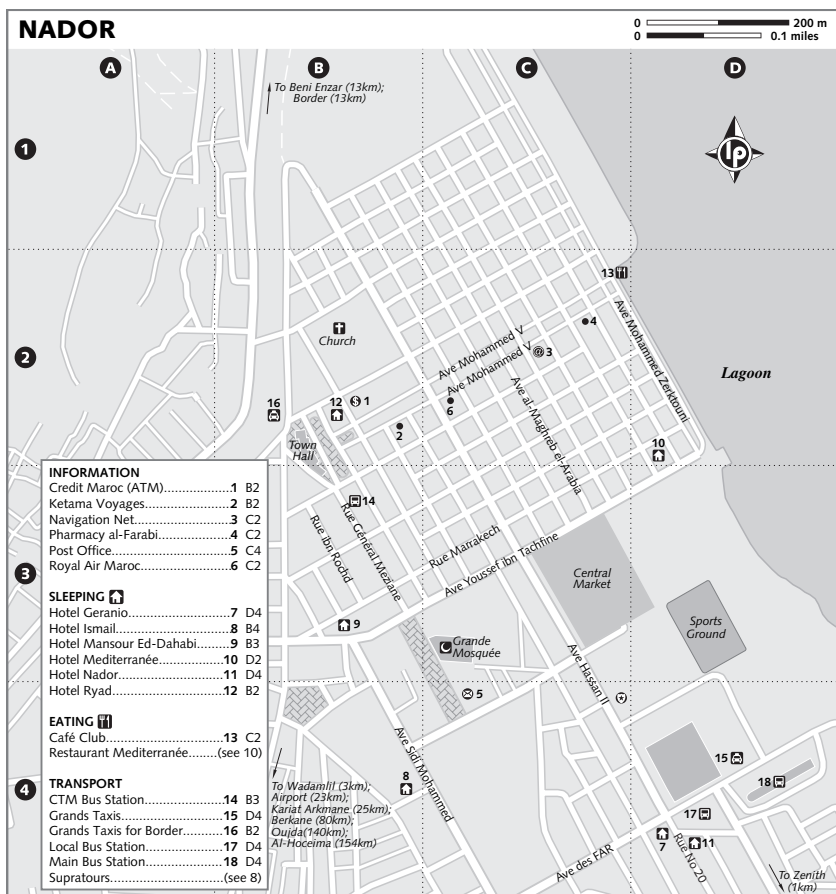
Unfortunately Nador itself offers little when you arrive, regardless of its size. Apart from Marchika, its pretty lagoon, there are no sights or attractions in this endless sprawl of concrete blocks. The city serves more as a transport link, with a major airport, active ferry port and sleek new train under development (with service to Fez by 2010). Like the rest of the coast, this situation is changing, with the requisite corniche and palm-lined boulevards under construction, and new hotels, restaurants and a marina coming, but for now it is best to press on.

Orientation

The centre of Nador is built on a strict grid system. The main north-south axis is Ave Hassan II, with the main bus station and taxi stand at its southern end. It is bisected by the promenade Ave Mohammed V, which runs east to west from the waterfront to the town hall. The needle-thin minaret of the Grande Mosquée is a useful landmark.

Information

Credit Maroc (64 Ave Mohammed V) One of several banks on Mohammed V with foreign-exchange services and ATM.



Ketama Voyages (☎ 036 606191; ketama-nador@iam.net.ma; 56 Ave Mohammed) Sells ferry tickets to Almería.

Navigation Net (Ave Mohammed V; per hr Dh8; ☎ 9.30am-11pm) Internet café.

Pharmacy al-Farabi (☎ 036 606011; Ave Mohammed V)

Post Office (☎ 8am-4.15pm Mon-Fri) Located next to Grande Mosquée.

Royal Air Maroc (Ave Mohammed V; ☎ 8.30am-12.15pm & 2.30-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 3-6pm Sat)

Sleeping

There's no shortage of hotels of all classes in Nador. The cheaper places are near the bus and grand taxi stations.

Hotel Geranio (☎ 036 602828; 16 Rue No 20; s/d Dh70/120) Just away from the chaos of the bus station, streetside rooms here can be noisy,

but a drop in prices has made this the top budget option. Clean rooms come with tiny bathrooms. There's a ground-floor cafeteria as well.

Hotel Mansour Ed-Dahabi (☎ 036 606583; 105 Rue Marrakech; s/d Dh288/348) A pleasant central location and quiet atmosphere are the advantages of this three-star hotel. It's a bit bland, but the rooms are comfortable and fully equipped, with carved plaster ceilings. Off-season discounts can be generous.

ourpick Hotel Méditerranée (☎ 036 606495; fax 036 606611; hotel.mediterranee@gmail.com; 2-4 Ave Youssef ibn Tachfine; s/d Dh227/276) This is easily your best option in Nador. Recently renovated, with classy spaces all united by varnished trim, it occupies an excellent location overlook-

ing the corniche and the lagoon beyond. The corner rooms have the best views and are full of light, and the restaurant is one of the best in town (below). If you need some downtime you can sleep, eat and beach right here, in high style, and at a bargain price.

Hotel Ryad (☎ 036 607717; hotelryad@hotmail.com; Ave Mohammed V; s/d incl breakfast Dh500/600; ☹) Beautiful handmade wooden furniture makes this hotel's plush modern rooms stand out. Those on the top floor have views over the lagoon. The two hotel bars and disco also make this the centre of local nightlife, which is more hopping than one might expect.

Eating & Drinking

There are numerous cheap eats around the CTM bus station, serving up quick brochettes, sandwiches and tajines. Ave Mohammed V is the place for a lazy coffee – street cafés line the road under shady orange trees.

Zenith (☎ 036 332298; 33-35 Rue 72; mains from Dh40; ☹ 8am-midnight) The new face of Nador, this swank and ever-popular café on two downtown floors is where all those construction plans are being discussed over coffee. There's a fine pizzeria upstairs, and burgers and pasta too.

Wadamilil (☎ 036 606260; 39 Rue Tawima; ☹ 8am-4am) Simple paper-covered tables on a main road disguise one of Nador's most popular restaurants, which is open nearly around the clock. Choose your own assortment of seafood and meat from a glass case and have it cooked to order. Expect a meal to run approximately Dh70 per person.

Restaurante Méditerranée (☎ 036 609494; Ave Youssef ibn Tachfine; dishes from Dh65; ☹ noon-3pm & 7-10pm) The Hotel Méditerranée's restaurant is a swish dining room, with prompt service, an international menu and views to sea.

Café Club (Ave Mohammed Zerktouni; ☹ 6am-11pm) Jutting into the lagoon at the far end of Mohammed V, this island café is a good breakfast option and a welcome bit of maritime focus in an otherwise concrete forest.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The airport is 23km south of Nador. Royal Air Maroc operates numerous flights to Europe and Casablanca. Iberia connects Nador with Spain. Budget carriers Ryanair

and Clickair have recently begun service from Marseille and Barcelona.

BOAT

Acciona has opened a new fast ferry service to Almeria. It leaves Almeria Tuesday to Saturday at night, arrives Nador early in the morning, then turns around and leaves within three hours. Comarit has a slow ferry that leaves Nador for Almeria at 10pm every day, and leaves Almeria for Nador at 10am every day. The trip takes five to six hours. Comanav also offers a service four days a week to Almeria, and services to Sete, France on Sunday.

The port of Beni Enzar is 7km from the city but traffic makes it feel much further. The quickest way to get there is by grand taxi (DH8, 15 minutes).

BUS

From the **CTM office** (☎ 056 600136; Rue Général Meziame) there are departures to all the usual suspects: Casablanca, Rabat, Meknès, Fez, Tangier, Larache, Sidi Kacem, Al-Hoceima, Chefchaouen and more. In the evening, several slightly cheaper Casablanca-bound coaches run by other companies leave from the same area.

The main bus station is southeast of the centre. There are frequent departures for Tetouan (Dh130, 10 hours) between 9am and 9pm. Some of these services go via Chefchaouen (Dh130, nine hours). There are hourly buses to Oujda (Dh25, three hours) via Berkane (Dh16, one hour) from 6am to 5pm, and every two hours to Al-Hoceima (Dh35, three hours) throughout the day. Buses also leave for Fez (Dh74, seven hours) every 30 minutes or so in the morning.

Other useful services include buses to Ras el-Maa (Dh15, two hours, three daily), and Saïdia (Dh22, two hours). Buses leave every hour between 7am and 7pm for Beni Enzar (the Melilla border) from outside the main bus station (Dh3, 25 minutes). In theory it's bus 19 but in practice they're usually unnumbered.

Unlike elsewhere, CTM has a small office in the main bus station in addition to its main office.

TAXI

The huge grand-taxi lot next to the main bus station serves plenty of destinations

including Oujda (Dh50, three hours), Al-Hoceima (Dh55, three hours), Berkane (Dh25, one hour) and Taza (Dh55). Less frequent taxis go to Fez (Dh110, five hours) and other points south. Grands taxis to Beni Enzar (the Melilla border; Dh5, 15 minutes) leave every few minutes from here and also from a junction north of the town hall.

TRAIN

Nador was nearing completion of its new rail link during research. If that proves insufficient, **Supratours** (☎ 056 607262; Ave Sidi Mohammed) runs a daily early evening bus to Taourirt (Dh40), connecting with trains to Casablanca.

EAST OF NADOR

East of Nador, on the opposite side of the lagoon, the coast is a mix of salt marsh and sand dunes, which attract a wide-variety of birdlife, including the greater flamingo. There are two scruffy towns here, **Kariat Arkmane** and **Ras el-Maa**, each with basic camping facilities in summer, that can be reached by bus, but unless you want to see birds, there is insufficient reason to make a special trip. If you are passing through anyway, stop at Ras el-Maa and walk up to the lighthouse, from where you can see the *Islas Chafarinas*, the last bit of Spain on the northern coast (see boxed text, p187).

BERKANE

pop 80,000

بركان

Berkane is a dusty modern town about 80km southeast of Nador on the road to Oujda. It's most useful to travellers as a transit point, including the gas smugglers who blow through town like bats out of hell on their nightly runs to Algeria. It can serve as a base for exploring the Beni-Snassen Mountains, but there is also better lodging closer by.

The town is easy to navigate as it's stretched along Blvd Mohammed V, which leads from the green and white Grande Mosquée in the west (don't miss the many stork nests in the trees) to the large roundabout at the other end, dominated by a large pink courthouse. You'll find the post office and plenty of ATMs here. Halfway between is the main square, with the CTM station on the south side and a petrol station opposite.

Sights & Activities

The only site of interest in Berkane is the **French Church** (☎ 036 610289; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6pm Mon-Sat, closed Wed afternoon). Built in 1909, it was the life project of a single priest with a very broad view of religion. The interior contains a strange amalgamation of alchemy, signs of the Zodiac and Biblical scenes transplanted to Morocco, all painted by the priest himself. From the Grand Mosquée, head down Blvd Mohammed V and turn left at Maroc Telecom. The church is straight ahead.

The church is now home to the Association Homme et Environment (Man & Environment Association), a dedicated, and rare, local environmental group. Ask for its president, Nadjib Bachiri, who speaks fluent English and enjoys giving tours. Entrance is free, but donations to the association are most welcome.

Sleeping & Eating

The main options for sleeping and eating are strung along or near Blvd Mohammed V. In addition, a new upscale hotel, the Rosalina, was slated to open on Mohammed V soon after time of research, with double rooms around Dh400.

Hotel Mounir (☎ 036 611867; 54 Blvd Mohammed V; r per person Dh50-70) This reasonable cheapie is next to the Grande Mosquée. You get a clean, self-contained room with hot shower and an early morning wake-up call from the muezzin.

Hotel Zaki (☎ 036 613743; 27 Rte d'Oujda; s/d incl breakfast Dh360/420; ☎) This three-star hotel is 400m east of the main roundabout. The 2nd floor is like a designer showroom, with each room tastefully decorated in its own style, but careful of dangerous carpets jumbled on the stairs, which have been there for years.

Café du Jardin (Blvd Mohammed V; ☎ 5am-8pm) Located in a garden opposite the main square, this place has the closest thing to atmosphere in Berkane, although the clientele is decidedly masculine.

Café Royal (Blvd Mohammed V) Near the square, this is the local place for pizza.

Getting There & Away

Berkane's bus and taxi stands are scattered all over town. The **CTM office** (☎ 056 613992) is next to Café Laetizia on the west side of the

main square. There is just one early evening departure for Fez (Dh100, six hours), Meknès (Dh110, 7½ hours), Rabat (Dh150, 10 hours), Casablanca (Dh17, 11 hours) and Oujda (Dh15, one hour). Long-hauls to Spain also leave from here.

Most other long-distance buses gather in the streets behind the CMH petrol station, and serve the above destinations. The buses to Nador (Dh18, one hour) stop immediately behind the petrol station, and run hourly until mid-afternoon.

Local buses for Taforalta (Dh8, 30 minutes) depart from beside Hotel Mounir twice a day, while grands taxis for Taforalta (Dh10, 25 minutes) and Nador (Dh25, one hour) use the lot on the opposite side of the road, between the Shell petrol station and the bridge.

Grands taxis for Oujda (Dh17, one hour) leave from near the bus station; for Saïdia (Dh8, 15 minutes) or Ras el-Mar (Dh8, 15 minutes) from the square in front of the pink courthouse at the end of Blvd Mohammed V; and for Nador from the lot opposite the Great Mosque.

BENI-SNASSEN MOUNTAINS

جبال بني سناسن

Far more alluring than Berkane are the beautiful Beni-Snassen Mountains that border it to the south. While technically termed a 'site of biological and ecological interest', they are for all intents and purposes a national park. This is a verdant area of scenic gorges that few imagine when they think of Morocco, and even fewer visit.

From Berkane, take the national road to **Taforalta** (Tafoughalt) which passes through beautiful mountain scenery. Taforalta is a somewhat haphazard settlement that arose around a former French military installation, but the northern end, which you come upon first, contains a charming strip of cafés and restaurants, and an excellent new hotel, **Auberge de Taforalta** (☎ 062 045119; <http://taforaltclub.com>; d/tr Dh300/400, Berber tents 2-people Dh300, 4-people Dh500). This wonderfully creative boutique hotel has rooms in the form of caves surrounding a well-lit central lodge, and a snazzy kitchen. For kids, or for the kid in you, there are also five Berber tents on the roof for rent as rooms.

Guests at the Auberge also receive free admission to the classy **Club Taforalta** (☎ 062

045119; <http://taforaltclub.com>; entrance Dh10, pool Dh50; ☎ Apr-Sep; ☎) across the street. The humble entrance to this public facility gives way to an elegant swimming pool with breathtaking mountain views. There is also a floral garden, a children's play area and a charming stone restaurant, all of it under the boughs of the forest. If you are coming to this area to explore the park in season, the combination of the Auberge and the Club Taforalta (which have the same owner) constitutes a full-service mountain resort that is far preferable to staying in Berkane.

An equally alluring place to stay is **Gîte Tagma** (☎ 036 610289; r/per person incl full-board Dh200) It doesn't get any more authentic, or tranquil, than this remote, 300-year-old rural lodge midway up the mountains, with its small working farm. Five simple bedrooms surround a common compound, with wonderful views of pine-dotted canyons. From here you can easily trek to the postcard Sidi Ali Oussaidi Mosque, standing against the mountains like a Bavarian chapel, and the romantic town of Tagma, which sits in the valley below like a small Berber fortress. Or you can just kick back with a book and dream. The *gîte* ('sjeet' in French) is a joint project between the owner and Association Homme et Environment (opposite), and the model for rural tourism development in this region. It is signposted about 15km on the national road from Berkane to Taforalta, but don't miss the chance to be taken up by a donkey; ask the owner.

Soon after you enter Taforalta from Berkane, turn left at the post office, then immediately turn left again and follow signs to the Infokiosk, which has a small but well-done display on the natural history of the park, and an observation platform with heavenly views of a distant mesa. If you're lucky you will catch sight of a big-horned Barbary sheep from the adjacent reserve. They generally arrive around 4pm, when it is cooler.

About 2km back down the national road is a right turn signposted for two *grottes* (caves). The **Grottes des Pigeons** (1km) is the site of an active excavation by Oxford University that has revealed human remains from the Pleistocene era, including some of the earliest human jewellery (80,000 years old). Another 5km brings you to the **Grottes de Chameau**, a multistorey cave complex with

three entrances that has been closed for years due to flooding damage. Three kilometres more brings you to the pretty **Zegzel Gorge** and a beautiful serpentine drive. Don't miss the chance to sample the kumquats, a local industry. Even the Romans remarked upon them.

The source of the **Charaâ River** provides a worthwhile detour. Follow signs to the tiny hamlet of Zegzel, 2km up a side road. At the end there's a popular picnic spot near where the river gushes out of the cliff. Not far from here, a spectacular ridge road cuts east to Oujda. You'll need a 4WD vehicle, a good map and an early start.

If you don't have your own vehicle, the easiest way to access the park is to hire a grand taxi from Berkane. The minimum fare will be in the region of Dh200 for two hours, although not all drivers will be willing to take their vehicles along the poor roads near the hamlet of Zegzel. A cheaper alternative is to take a bus or grand taxi to Tatoralt and walk down. Two buses each morning make the journey from Berkane

(Dh8, 30 minutes), with return services in the afternoons. Grands taxis cost Dh10, and are most frequent on market days (Wednesday and Sunday).

SAÏDIA

pop 3000

السعيدية

At time of research most of Saïdia was in flux. Fadesa, a Spanish construction company purchased by Moroccan owners, was in the process of transforming this sleepy backwater into a large resort town, similar to those at M'Diq and Martil (not to mention the Costa del Sol). It will be fed by the new road to Nador, due to open by 2009. The town has a fine beach and several pre-existing hotels now surrounded by empty boulevards of new tarmac. Hopefully it will not end up looking like the new developments west of town, which are horrific. A meaningful review will have to wait until the cranes have departed.

The adjacent border with Algeria remains closed. While Morocco would like to reopen it, Algeria has so far refused to agree. However, there is no active conflict.