

£4.95

# OurTour guide to Motorhome Morocco



By Julie and Jason Buckley



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## ***What not to bring***

**A full tank.** In February 2012, diesel was around €1.35 a litre in Spain, and 7.5Dh (€0.75) a litre in Morocco.

**Jewellery.** We were told souk sellers look at you to see what you can afford before giving you a price for goods, so the more expensive items you have on you, the higher the price. We don't wear expensive jewellery so never encountered this, but it might be worth toning things down while there.

**GPS maps.** If you're watching the pennies, don't bother getting GPS maps for Morocco. We had the TomTom map, but it wasn't very accurate, complete or indeed useful.

**Moroccan currency.** You'll struggle to get any outside the country. When you get there, you can exchange currency at the ports or use the cash point.

**Revealing clothes.** If you're a woman don't bother with revealing clothes such as shorts, low cut tops or skirts. These will be seen as disrespectful and just attract unwelcome attention.

**Fresh fruit or vegetables.** These are widely available, cheap and good quality.



# Vehicle insurance

Legally, you need third party insurance in Morocco. Some UK insurers will include Morocco in their policies and will provide a document called a 'Green Card' to enable you to prove you have this cover.

As of February 2012, we knew of fellow travellers with Safeguard, Comfort and Saga who had been issued a Green Card. We heard that some insurers charge for the service, and some limit the length of stay.

Our policy did not include Morocco and our insurers refused to extend the cover, so we needed to get some.

The cheapest option we could find was to buy temporary insurance from German breakdown assistance



company ADAC, but they will only issue this if you appear in person at an office in Germany.

The next best option was to buy third party insurance in Morocco. A bit of



research showed that you can buy the insurance at a port, and Tanger Med definitely had an office.

We believe the office at Cueta has been shut for years, and it wasn't clear if there is an active

office at Tanger. You can buy insurance at towns close to the ports as neither customs or the police check for it at the border.




## Vehicle insurance continued

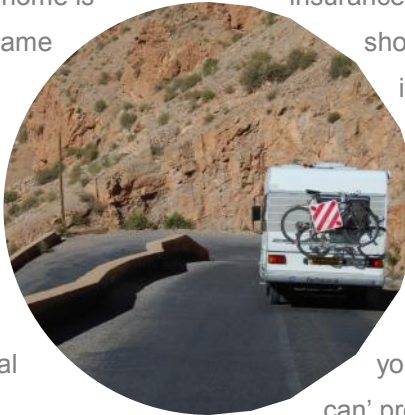
Not knowing what to expect when we got over there, we wanted to be covered immediately, so, we chose to get the ferry to Tanger Med and buy insurance at the port. The 'assurance' office is after you pass through customs, in a line of small cabin buildings along with banks where you can change currency.

Our insurance cost us €92 for a calendar month's cover. We made sure we left Morocco before it expired.

The assurance agent initially tried to charge us €260 for cover. When we challenged him he made a phone call and the price came down.

 <p>شركة تأمين النقل COMPAGNIE D'ASSURANCE TRANSPORT Société Anonyme au Capital de 162.456.000,00 Dirhams Entreprise régie par la loi n° 17-99 portant code des Assurances</p>		<p>laajjouk</p> <p><b>Conditions particulières du contrat</b> <b>&lt;&lt; CAT-Assurance automobile aux frontières &gt;&gt;</b></p>		<p><b>ATTESTATION D'ASSURANCE OBLIGATOIRE DES VEHICULES TERRESTRES A MOTEUR</b></p> <p>(Article 2 de l'arrêté du ministre des finances et de la privatisation n° 213-05 du 26 janvier 2005)</p> <p>شهادة التأمين الإجباري على العربات البرية ذات محرك (مادة 2 من قرار وزير المالية والموثقة رقم 213.05 الصادر بتاريخ 26 يناير 2005)</p>																															
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If you're buying insurance at the port, be sure to check who is covered to drive on it. Our motorhome is registered in Julie's name (cheaper insurance back home), and the insurance certificate for Morocco only stated Julie's name on it. We were never asked about additional drivers.



We have read on forums that a number of people drive in Morocco without insurance. We were never asked to show any evidence of insurance at the port or anywhere else. However, we've also read that the Moroccan police will immediately place you in custody if you have an accident and can't produce evidence of insurance.

## ***Breakdown cover***

We couldn't find anyone who offered this service.

There are lots of garages in Morocco, but these tend to be small, fix-it-in-the-street type affairs and we doubt many would have diagnostic equipment for engine management system faults. We did see one motorhome being towed from a campsite and the campsite owner had helped sort out the recovery vehicle.



If you really don't want to have to deal with a breakdown yourself, it may be better to use a guide company.



## Money stuff

Morocco uses the Dirham (Dh), and only a few places will accept Euros. At the time of writing (March 2012), you get roughly 12Dh to £1, and 10Dh to €1. If you're in a hurry (or rubbish at maths like Julie) divide the number of dirhams by ten for a rough idea of the UK cost.

You can't obtain dirhams outside of Morocco, but you can exchange cash for them at the ports, or use the cash machine in the port or in any sizeable town to withdraw notes.

We had €80 in cash with us which we changed at the border, and then used our normal UK bank debit card to withdraw money. Using our UK card incurred costs (about £4 for every £250 worth of dirhams we withdrew), so we tended to take out large amounts at a time and then spread the money between us.

Unless we were going to make specific purchases, such as fuel or a big supermarket shop, we made sure we only carried less than 300dh on us.

We didn't use cards to pay directly for any purchases; mainly because cards are not widely accepted but also to avoid risking our card details being copied.

In all examples we've used  
exchange rates of

€1 = £0.85

£1 = 12Dh



We found that availability of coins in Morocco was limited, especially away from the big cities and the coast. When paying for anything, shop, campsite and restaurant owners would struggle to find small notes (20Dh) and coins (10Dh, 5Dh, 2Dh and 1Dh). We initially thought this was a scam, but it was far too common and we were left believing coins are scarce.

As well as needing change for paying bills, you'll need it for tips and, if you pay them, beggars. We asked for coins when changing money at the port, and we were also careful to hang onto coins whenever possible during our visit.

During our 30 day trip, we spent €1500 (£1275) . Some of the larger costs were as follows;



- Ferry tickets: €180 (£153)
- Vehicle insurance: €92 (£78)
- Internet access: €18 (£15)
- Diesel: €200 (£170) - 1830 miles
- Campsite fees (including laundry): €250 (£212)
- Eating out most days, with the odd alcoholic drink: €300 (£255)

This worked out at €50 (£42) per day. We know of fellow travellers who did a similar trip to us while we were there on €30 (£25.50) a day.

For a full breakdown of costs see our website [www.ourtour.co.uk/home/spending\\_morocco](http://www.ourtour.co.uk/home/spending_morocco)







## Driving in Morocco

Once you're in the country, the next challenge you'll face is driving around. As we discovered, it's not that difficult. Morocco drives on the right, and all speed signs are in kph. In this section you'll find information on :

- ⇒ Road types
- ⇒ Finding your way around
- ⇒ Driving hazards
- ⇒ Fuel
- ⇒ LPG

### Road types

We used the Michelin 742 Morocco map. On the whole it served us very well for our trip. However, there were times when a lack of road signposting caused us to question if we were on the right road (specifically around Risanni).

In the next section, beside the type of road and in brackets, we've explained how they're shown on the Michelin 742 map.



## Motorways (red with a yellow centre)

There are long sections of motorway in the east of Morocco, mainly up the Atlantic coast but also running from Rabat to Fes. Moroccan motorways are dual carriageways, with the odd section of three or four lanes.

We've heard stories of people encountering donkeys and people going the wrong way on them, but we saw nothing of this.

The road surface was in general very good, allowing you to easily average 100kph. Having said all of this, you still need to keep your wits about you. For example, we came across a set of roadworks with speed restrictions of 80kph, 60kph and 40kph posted. The

problem was these signs were not spread up the motorways but were within a few meters of each other, so you effectively got no notice of the roadworks. We also saw a few sections of roadworks on the stretch from Casablanca up to Tanger, which were indicated by a man waving a little flag at the side of the road.

All sections of motorway are toll with the charges marked as you enter the pay booths. Motorhomes and caravans pay the higher of the two prices shown. The booths are manned and there are no fancy electronic auto-pay options. The toll fees were cheap, Casablanca to Tanger cost us 193Dh (£16), which we were very happy to pay.





## **Fuel**

There are plenty of modern petrol stations in Morocco - even in remote places like Erg Chebbi - selling unleaded petrol (green) and diesel (black). We used Shell and Afriqua stations and had no problems with fuel quality.

All stations we used were attendant service: you slowly drive in and they indicate a pump to go to. You pull up, stop the engine and hand over the keys. Ask for 'Plein' (pronounced plen), which means 'full' and they will squeeze in as much fuel as they can. In February 2012, we were paying around 7.5Dh a litre (62p). As at UK stations, the total price is on the pump and you pay the attendant directly (if paying in cash), and they'll give change. A tip of 2 or 3Dh is normal.



## **LPG**

Our van is fitted with an LPG tank for the heating, fridge and hob. However, LPG is not available anywhere in Morocco (this was confirmed by a campsite owner in Marrakech).

There are Moroccan gas bottles available everywhere, but as we didn't use them we didn't check if they were propane or butane, the gas bottle sizes or the type of fittings. Whether you have LPG or swappable gas tanks, we'd suggest the easiest option is to fill up before entering Morocco.

We stayed on campsites most of the time, so we used an electrical heater overnight and ran the fridge on mains electricity. We used campsite showers where possible (and we didn't shower every day). We ate out most days, and found that our 30 litre LPG tank was almost full when we left. It would have easily lasted up to three months.

# Camping in Morocco

Morocco has a reputation for 'anything goes' in terms of being able to free camp where you like, but this appears to be an out of date perception. We saw no free camping at all, every motorhome was either in a campsite or one of the other types of official overnight location. In this section you'll find information on :

- ⇒ **Finding campsites**
- ⇒ **Arrival at campsites**
- ⇒ **Campsite facilities**
- ⇒ **Other overnight locations**

## *Finding campsites*

Most towns have either a single campsite, or no campsites, so you don't have to worry about picking the right one. It's best to plan your route though, as the towns tend to be a few hours driving apart, and driving in the dark isn't a good idea.

We noticed that people get up and leave campsites much earlier in Morocco than in Europe. If we left at 8.30am we were one of the last ones to go, this is probably due to the fact that they wanted to visit somewhere without a campsite, then make it to



the next town with a campsite at a reasonable hour.

Some towns have a campsite and one or more guarded parking areas, so you do have some choice on where you want to stay. Only the cities have more than one campsite and they tend to be located several kilometres from the centre.

# Shopping and eating in Morocco

Making almost any purchase is an experience in Morocco. Local grocery stores are so small only the owner fits in, nothing is priced and they speak no English. Butchers hang carcasses outside their shops, and cut off bits on request. Souk stall owners shout you to 'look, no buy' and roadside sellers ask 35Dh for a box of dates; is that a good price? Should you haggle? In this section you'll find information on :

- ⇒ **Bartering and haggling**
- ⇒ **Supermarkets**
- ⇒ **Local grocery shops**
- ⇒ **Buying meat and fish**
- ⇒ **Souks**
- ⇒ **Eating out**

## *Bartering and haggling*

We decided it's best not to take yourself too seriously. Unless you're a skilful negotiator and are aware of local prices, you will pay over the odds from time to time. The increased fee will probably only be a few pence or pounds. Given the fun, learning and satisfaction of the experience; ask yourself: do you really care?

The Moroccans have learned to keep their wits about them during transactions; a skill which many Europeans, including us, have lost. They are generally honest, but if you



fail to follow the haggling tradition, you may pay seriously over the odds. Make sure you have an idea of how much something is worth to you in dirhams before entering into a transaction.



## Scams and nuisances

The vast majority of people we met in Morocco were pleasant and honest people. Many wanted to sell us something, but were in no way dishonest. That said, there are common scams. We've listed below the ones we experienced, or were experienced by others we were with, so you can either steer clear or go in with your eyes open. In this section you'll find information on :

- ⇒ **Guides**
- ⇒ **Sellers and beggars**
- ⇒ **Paying scams**
- ⇒ **Vehicle scams**

### *Guides*

**Fake/faux guides.** These are locals who offer a guide service, but are not officially licensed to act as guides, therefore they're breaking the law. It's probably best to avoid them as we found them to be a bit useless; but, if you do want to use one, be sure to agree a price up front.

We only found out how bad our fake guide was after we used an official guide in Fes, (that's him being weighed

in the souk). Organised through the campsite he was great, full of facts and figures and kept us interested and entertained for over five hours!





## Our Tour, places we stayed

In this section we list the places we visited, why we chose to go there, what we did when we were there, where we stayed and our overall opinion of the place.

All costs are for a motorhome, two adults and electrical hook-up unless otherwise stated.

Stops 10 and 13 were both at Ouarzazate.



# 1. Martil

## Why did we go there?

We needed a rest stop after the journey into Morocco, and the culture shock on arriving. Martil is about 90 minutes from the Tanger Med port (faster if you use the motorway). We could have headed for Tanger but were worried about driving through the town. Having driven from Tanger to Tanger Med on the way back, we found Tanger would have been an easier destination to get to on our first night, with only wide modern roads to navigate once in the town.

## Where did we stay?

Camping Complexe Touristique  
Alboustane, 93150 Martil, for one night.  
GPS co-ordinates:  
N35.64083, W5.28566.

## How did we get to our overnight stop?

We headed east from Tanger Med port on the N16 before turning south on the N13. We hit a police roadblock quite early on the N16, but they waved us through. We also hit a very short steep section of road, which may have grounded out a longer vehicle. A better route may have been to take the N16 east to the motorway, then exit the motorway at M'Diq. Tolls would have been around 15Dh.

## How did we rate the overnight stop?

The campsite was an average quality Moroccan site. The toilets and showers were old and we didn't use them. The site was full, mainly with French retirees, as we found throughout



Morocco. The restaurant served good quality food, but was too cold to sit in in comfort and we ate and left quickly. We ran our 800W heater and fridge on hook-up all night with no problems.

## How much did it cost?

100Dh a night.

## What is there to see and do?

Martil is a modern town by Moroccan standards, but was an interesting first stop. The streets a block or two back from the beach have a good range of shops and you get to see how Moroccan trades spill out from the shops onto the street. Look out for the mechanics working on cars in the street, and also for the fishermen pulling in nets in a man-versus-fish tug-of-war on the beach. We also found an official Maroc Telecom shop in Martil for our 3G Internet dongle.

## Our recommendation

If you're new to Morocco, want a first night's stop which isn't too far from the ports, and intend on travelling east first rather than west, Martil and it's campsite are a good option. However, the campsite at Tanger is closer, easier to get to and Tanger is a more interesting Moroccan town.



## About the Authors

We're Julie and Jason Buckley, a normal married couple who decided to take a break from our corporate lives in the UK and travel. We were both 39 when we set off on OurTour, and will turn 40 while we're on the road.



**Our mode of transport:** Dave, the 1993 Hymer B544 on a Fiat Ducato chassis and over 170,000Km on the clock.

**Our companion:** Charlie, our Cavalier King Charles Spaniel.

**Our travelling philosophy:** go slowly, talk to the locals where we can, head off the beaten track when it makes sense to, avoid big cities unless they're motorhome and dog friendly (which very few are) and don't spend much. - because when the money runs out, we'll have to go back to England and look for work.

Thanks very much for buying our ebook, we really appreciate it and hope it inspires you to head off and enjoy the big wide world.

As we travel, we take it in turns to keep a daily blog of what we've been up to. We upload photos and, when we have good Internet access, video clips. We love reading and responding to the emails we receive and the comments on our blog posts, it keeps us going. You can read the blog at:

[www.ourtour.co.uk](http://www.ourtour.co.uk)

And you can email us at:

[julieandjason@ourtour.co.uk](mailto:julieandjason@ourtour.co.uk)

