

Tanger: a board between different cultures in Morocco



Going to Tanger was a totally unplanned trip. A friend of mine told me: I've found airplane tickets to Tanger at 36 euros from Madrid. Wanna come next weekend? Sure I've wanted!

Tanger is a big city in Northern Morocco, in the Strait of Gibraltar. It has an impressive history, due to the numerous people that were here at a certain moment in the past, impregnating their cultures: Muslim, Jewish and Christian. Being a border city between Europe and Africa, Tanger still keeps vestiges from the French, Spanish and British civilizations who passed through here.

Travelling in Morocco

I've never been to Morocco, so it was a new experience to me. I searched for some trip advice and I wrote down the most important of them, for my safety:

If a local offers you a cup of mint tea, you can enjoy it. It's a sign of hospitality and you'll be considered impolite if you refuse it.

Avoid eye-contact with men. Avoid physical contact. It's a matter of cultures.

If anyone bothers you, tell them you call the police. They will go away.

Wear long trousers and long sleeve shirt

Do not smile to men. For them, a woman smiling is an invitation to conversation and more.

Wear sunglasses. So you can observe things without anyone notices where you look.

Do not trust the men that spontaneously declare you their love, promise you things and propose you! (funny, but real)

Do not drink alcohol in public, it is forbidden!

A crazy ride from the airport to the Old City

Arriving in Tangier's Airport Ibn Battouta was pretty awkward. The airport was so modern and clean, totally different to what I was expecting to see.

But once we left from there, the chaos started: we needed a taxi and no one would let the price down. So we paid 25 euros for a crazy ride that scared me so much. I was seriously thinking that I'll never get fine to the hostel.

Medina's maze

We booked a 4 beds room at a hostel in Medina. And Medina is that king of Old City that is made up to protect against invaders and against the scorching sun in the summer. So, the sunshine arrives on the streets only 2 hours at midday. The taxi let us at the big gate of entering in Medina. That moment I felt like a time traveler: returning in 1993 in my country, Romania: crowded, dirty, noisy and full of cheap jacks.

We were tourists and anyone could see this. So, different men tried to "let me be your guide", especially when we obviously were lost in that city with no-way-out streets. It was very complicated to get to the hostel, although we had a map from the airport.

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Insistent illegal guides

Tanger is full of people pretending to be guides just to make some money. Guides or not, those men spoke Spanish, French, English and Turkish, so they followed us everywhere! They were trying, in an annoying way, to convince us that we need a guide. Those people were just repeating in different languages the same thing. After all, we made it to the hostel and there, the receptionist told us that they were very poor and if we do not want a guide or anything to buy from them, is better not to argue, so just ignore them.

 Marruecos (157)

Interesting Places

Although the first impression was a little bit shocking, we adapted very quickly, just to feel good in our two days vacation. I tried to wear something on my hair during our walks so not being noticed so fast and everything was alright.

The first place we went was the seaside, where some locals expected the tourist for a camel ride. It was incredibly nice to me and he was so happy with those 5 euros I gave him! For that money, he would like to offer me a 20 minutes ride, but I preferred just a 5 minutes one because the camels did not seem so happy with that.

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Attention, the camels bite, so do not try to pet them if they don't have a muzzle!

After the ride, we visited some outstanding places:

Dar-el-Makhzen - an ancient beautiful palace that was the residence for the Sultans of Morocco, built in the 17th century. I loved those details on frontage. Here is the Museum of Moroccan Arts and Antiquities or Kasbah Museum.



Corina Matei

I am a journalist. And a dreamer. And I live for travelling around the world. By this I mean not just the fact of going on a holiday, but also doing my best to learn, interact with people and cultures, visit museums, get lost on some city's streets. I like to visit city-symbols, yet I love to see non-touristic places. I spend a lot of time at the museums because I consider that some history, tradition and culture of the visited place make the difference in my experience. Besides, I am always curious to taste the food recommended by locals and that's why I try to avoid eating at touristic restaurants in the center. I love to travel „in depth“, but I also have that willing to see as much as I can in a short time. It depends on the region and state of mind. I can't keep all my travel stories just for me, so I need to share them. I write for two print magazine. But you can also find me online, on <http://educatedbytravelling.com/> and <http://corinamatei.ro/>

Gran Mosque - I saw it from outside, it's really impressive and recently reconditioned, making a big contrast with the Medina, which is very old and not so clean.

Old American Legation Museum - is a beautiful traditional building that was the first American public property outside the US. It was converted to an important cultural center, with a library and a museum. I was pretty impressed about the yard.

Jardins de la Mendoubia and the Grand Socco (or Place du Grand 9 Avril 1947 - name linked to Moroccan independence) is the place than we admired the colonial buildings. In the market, there is a big pastry with so small prices. I bought 14 different kinds of cakes and cookies and those were the best sweets I ate in my whole life!

Where to stay?

I stayed 2 nights at the the Melting Pot Hostel. It's nice, cozy and has a traditional architecture. And you find here everything you need!

What to eat?

Every place in the world deserves the chance to try it's traditional food, so you taste their cultures. So, I recommend you the following: chicken tagine (usually a spicy meal), harrira (soup), couscous (a special dish of pasta with meat and vegetables) and makouda (fried potatoes with spicy sauce).

I also ate at a restaurant on the seaside a large serving of baby shark with french fries and some sweet sauce. My friend tried a seafood omelette and both of us were very excited about the taste. And sincerely, I was so surprised about the prices: 5 euros per meal, Coca Cola included!

Marruecos (150)

Also, I recommend you to drink the Moroccan tea whenever you get the chance. Outside Morocco, I've never found a tea that had that particular taste and smell, because it is not just a mint tea!

Do not forget about the sweets, please. So, your experience will be complete!

Marruecos (253)

A piece of advice:

If you are a woman, try not to travel alone. Not that it would be impossible, but having a friend or some friends with you, makes you feel more comfortable and secure and it's easier to communicate with locals. For example, I needed an ointment from the pharmacy for a little infection that I had. If it hasn't been for my friend, it would be very difficult to buy something because of a man waiting in line wanted, suddenly, marry me! :))

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