

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

M O R O C C O



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



October 2006

Morocco

- International boundary
- - - Province or préfecture boundary
- ★ National capital
- ⊙ Province or préfecture capital
- Railroad
- Road or track

Province or préfecture names are the same as their capitals

0 50 100 Kilometers
0 50 100 Miles



A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on your invitation to become a Peace Corps Volunteer in Morocco and your decision to begin what will be one of the most rewarding and challenging experiences of your life. The people of Morocco, along with Peace Corps staff and Volunteers, look forward to meeting and working with you over the next two years.

All Volunteers in Morocco are assigned to locations outside the capital, and most thrive on the relatively simple lifestyle and greatly appreciate the people with whom they work. Still, adapting and contributing to a new society will require patience, good humor, maturity, and hard work. Volunteers who succeed in this process will gain invaluable understanding, new ways of seeing the world, empathy for the people of another country, and a greater sense of self-worth.

Volunteers receive excellent medical care, training, program support, and administrative services. The 11-week training program emphasizes mastery of language, introduction to the technical skills in your principal work activities, and the cross-cultural adaptation that is essential for a meaningful Volunteer experience. During most of the training period, you will live with a Moroccan family and learn about the culture first-hand. You will also learn how to maintain good health and reduce your safety and security risks.

The quality of your Peace Corps experience is largely in your hands. You should begin to prepare yourself now by learning about Morocco and its people and by studying your Volunteer assignment description and the information in this *Welcome Book*. Do not be daunted by how much there is to learn. Soon, you will face the challenges and share the rewards of Peace Corps service.

Bruce J. Cohen
Country Director



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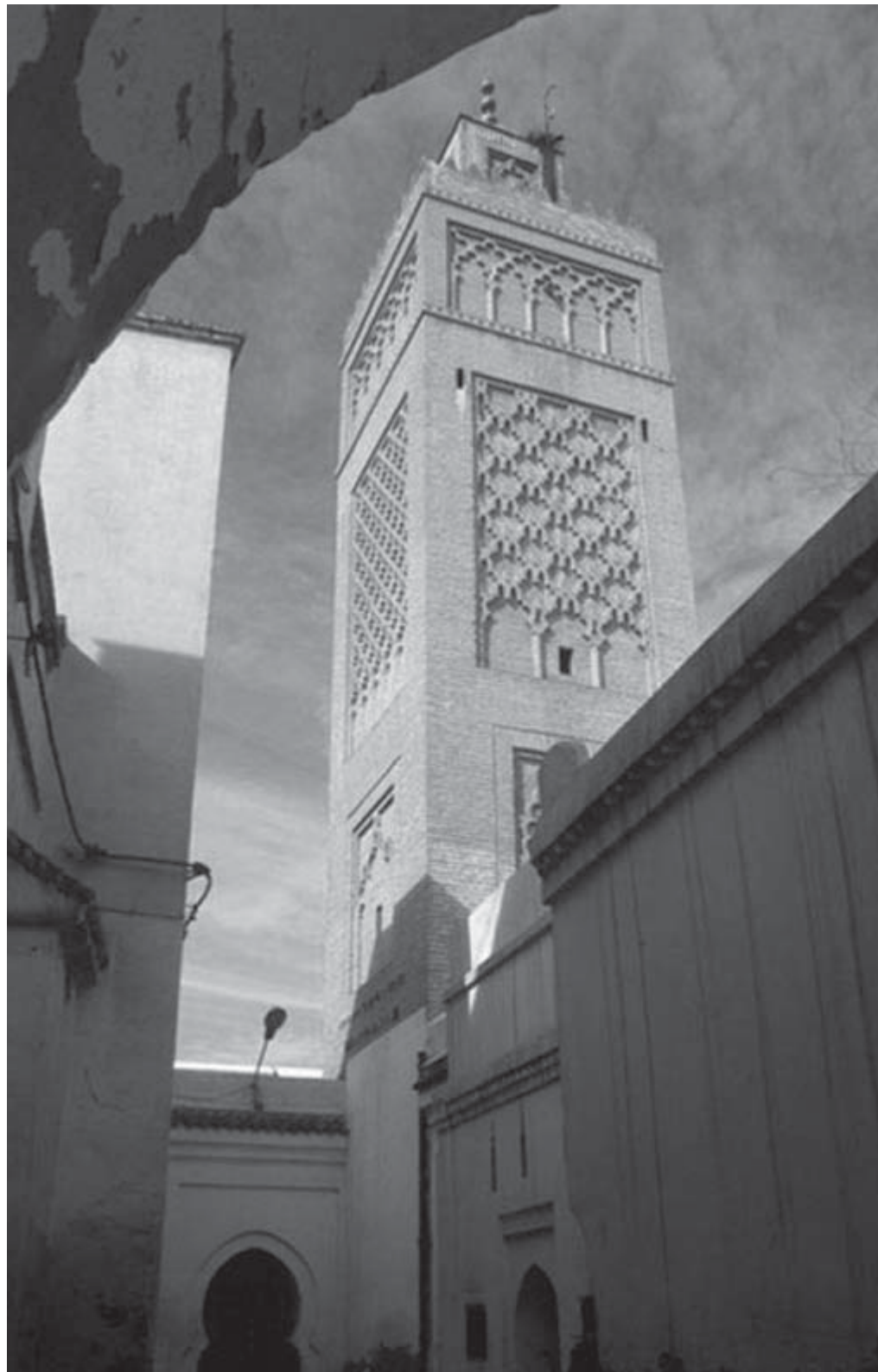
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PEACE CORPS/MOROCCO HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in Morocco

Morocco was among the first countries to invite the Peace Corps to assist in its development process. A group of 53 surveyors, English teachers, and irrigation supervisors arrived in Morocco in 1963 at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Since then, more than 3,800 Volunteers have served in the Kingdom of Morocco in areas such as lab technology, urban development, home economics, commercial development, education of the blind and deaf, rural water supply, vocational education, maternal child health, natural resources management, youth development, marine and inland fisheries, small business development, sports, beekeeping, architecture, and English language training.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Morocco

In collaboration with governmental partners, Peace Corps/Morocco works in four primary areas: youth development, health, environment, and small business development.

In 1995, education Volunteers began teaching English in community youth centers (Dar Chebab), enabling youth to practice the English they learned in school. While content-based English teaching is still widely used, the program today focuses on youth leadership, strengthening youth networks, capacity-building of professionals who work with youth, and promotion of girls' education. Volunteers work with local professionals and youth to promote volunteerism and youth

leadership through activities such as sports, study of world geography, libraries, exercise classes, environmental projects, project management training, thematic English teaching, and self-esteem activities for girls.

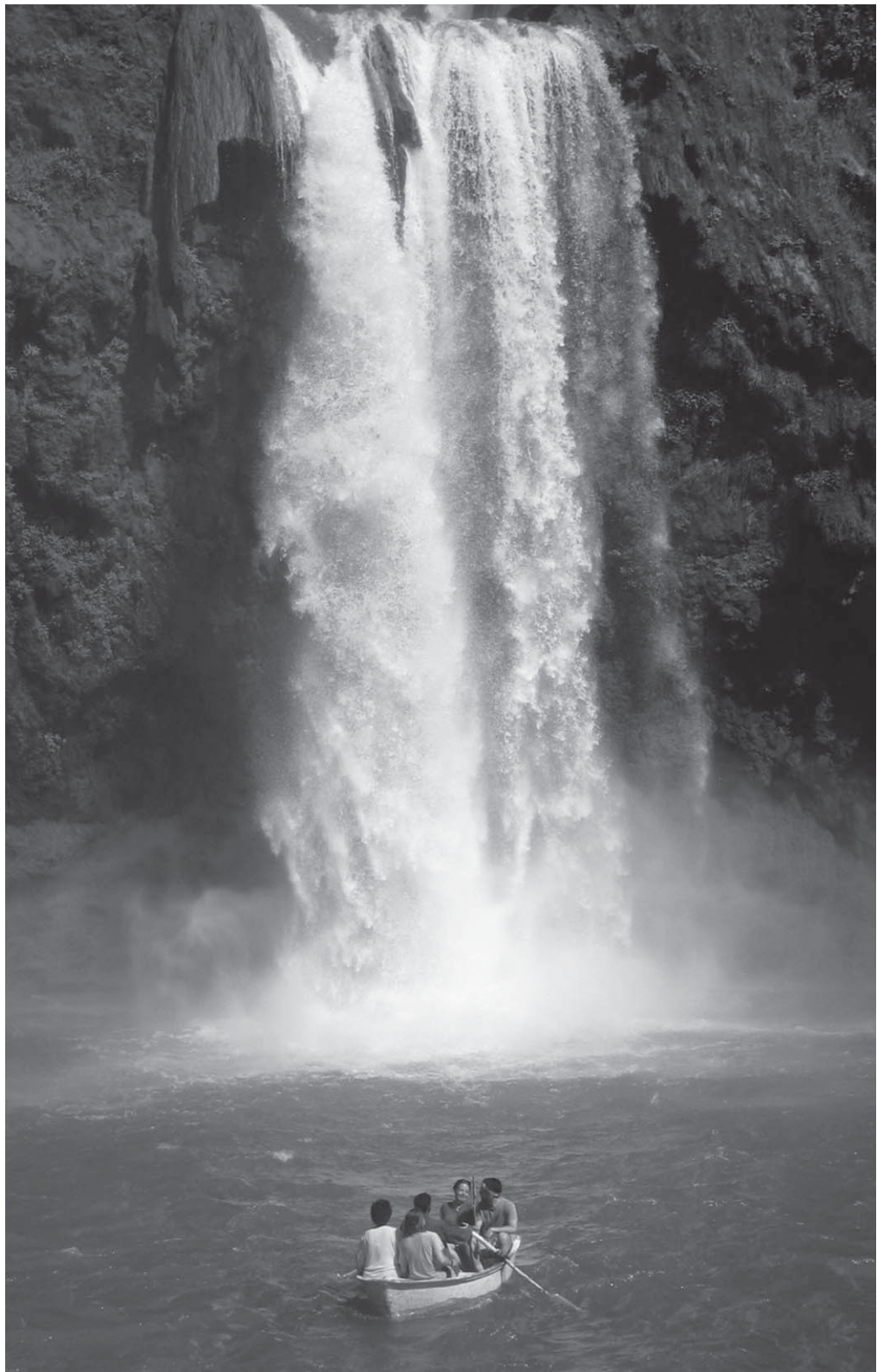
The Peace Corps/Morocco health project focuses on promoting health and hygiene practices through various activities, including: 1) educating individuals (men, women and children) on nutrition, vaccination, dental hygiene, hand-washing, water purification/disinfection, proper storage of drinking water, proper waste disposal, STD-HIV/AIDs awareness and prevention; 2) training health services providers (traditional birth attendants, nurses) to reinforce their ability to deliver quality service and improve their communication skills; and, 3) training and coaching local NGOs and development association leaders to build and sustain their capacity in assessing community needs, planning and writing health-related project proposals (e.g., water, sanitation, waste disposal, HIV/AIDs awareness), searching for funds, and training youth leaders in life skills. Health Volunteers work at the Ministry of Health and are assigned to rural communities throughout Morocco.

In 1985, the Government of Morocco invited Peace Corps to assist with environmental monitoring and management of Morocco's national parks and biological reserves. Today, Peace Corps/Morocco's environment sector collaborates with the Department of Water and Forests, the Ministry of Rural Development, and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They address natural resources management and rural development issues in Morocco as well as the needs of rural communities living in or near protected areas. Volunteers work with community leaders, local community groups (men's, women's or joint associations), and other counterparts and partners to initiate activities to sensitize the communities to the importance of their local environment.

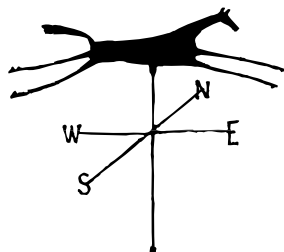
This is done by promoting environmental education programs and eco-tourism. They work on socio-economic projects such as improving arboriculture, potable water, and agriculture; developing aromatic and medicinal plants; decreasing the impact of erosion; and restoring habitat. Volunteers also promote the use of renewable energy sources and the use of appropriate technologies to improve living conditions. Support is provided to local women, in particular, through training opportunities, income-generating projects, educational opportunities, and literacy programs.

The small business development project began in 1999 in cooperation with Morocco's Ministry of Social Economy and Artisans (now the Ministry of Tourism, Artisans and Social Economy). Volunteers advise and train small-craft businesses, providing assistance with marketing, accounting, basic finance, quality control, and creating feasibility studies and business plans. In addition, Volunteers help NGOs develop and improve their organizational skills and fundraising techniques.

Peace Corps/Morocco will continue to work with Moroccan government partners to address the expressed needs of the Moroccan people. The program will increase its efforts to integrate gender activities across all sectors and continue to improve the effectiveness of pre-service training through closer integration of programming and training.



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: MOROCCO AT A GLANCE



History

The Berbers were the original inhabitants of Morocco, and were followed by Carthaginians and Romans. Arabs conquered Morocco in 683, but by the 11th century, a Berber empire ruled over all of northwest Africa and most of Spain. A succession of native dynasties then ruled the country. In 1904, French and Spanish colonists occupied parts of Morocco, establishing protectorates in 1912.

Morocco became a sovereign state in 1956 when France and Spain recognized its independence. It was ruled by King Mohammed V until his death on February 26, 1961. His son, Hassan II, then ascended the throne.

On April, 14, 1976, tens of thousands of Moroccans crossed the border into the Spanish Sahara to back their government's contention that the northern part of the territory was historically part of Morocco. Spain had withdrawn from the territory in February of the same year.

King Hassan II was the second Arab leader to meet with an Israeli leader and was active in promoting peace in the Middle East. The king died in July 1999, after reigning for more than 37 years. He was succeeded by his son, Mohammed VI. The young king, born in 1963, has taken courageous measures to improve political, economic, and social conditions in the country. Dubbed the "King of the Poor" by the French and the local press, King Mohammed VI is keen on improving the quality of life in rural areas, raising the social and legal status of women, and alleviating poverty. These reforms have

gained him great popularity among the people and made the country attractive to foreign investment. In April 2002, the king married Salma Bennani, a computer engineer, who is perceived as a force for the promotion of women's issues. Their child, Prince Hassan III, was born in May 2003.

Government

The Kingdom of Morocco (*Al Mamlakah al Maghribiyah*) is a constitutional monarchy with executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The Constitution, which dates from 1972, was revised in 1996 to create a bicameral legislature, which is organized under a parliamentary system.

Since 1999, the head of the executive branch has been King Mohammed VI, who holds the titles of chief of state and Commander of the Faithful. The head of government is Prime Minister Driss Jettou, who has held that position since 2002. The legal system is based on Islamic law and both the French and Spanish civil law systems. Judges are appointed on the recommendation of the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, which the king also presides over.

There is a wide variety of political parties in Morocco, and Moroccans are eligible to vote once they are 21 years of age.

Economy

Tourism plays a large part in the Moroccan economy, and visitors seek out classic Moroccan handicrafts such as carpets, ceramics, and silver jewelry. Minerals such as bauxite are found in certain parts of Morocco and are mined for export. Oil reserves have been discovered, but the industry is still in the fledgling stages of development. Morocco has a temperate climate, and citrus fruits and vegetables are grown for export to Europe.

Morocco faces challenges typical of many developing countries: restraining government spending, reducing constraints on private activity and foreign trade, and keeping inflation within manageable bounds. In 2005, the unemployment rate was 19 percent. Although the government has made reforms in the financial sector and state enterprises are gradually being privatized, agriculture still plays a key role in the economy. Moroccan agriculture, largely rain-dependent, has, unfortunately, suffered over the past 9 years due to continuous drought conditions. A long, wet winter in 2005-06, is expected to have a positive impact on agricultural activity, however, with grain harvests (e.g., wheat, barley), expected to surpass previous records. Long-term challenges for Morocco include servicing external debt, preparing the economy for freer trade with the European Union, improving education and living standards, and finding jobs for its youthful population (about 60 percent of Moroccans are under age 25). Effective January 1, 2006, the Moroccan government implemented a free trade agreement (FTA) with the U.S., consolidating the two countries' existing good ties.

People and Culture

Morocco has a population of almost 30 million and an annual growth rate of just over 1.4 percent. The country's birthrate is 22.8 per 1,000 people, and the death rate is 5.7 per 1,000 people. The average life expectancy is just under 68 years for men and just over 72 years for women.

More than 99 percent of Moroccans are Sunni Muslims of Arab, Berber, or mixed Arab-Berber ancestry. The country's Jewish minority numbers between 3,000-5,000. Most of the 60,000 foreign residents, many of them teachers or technicians, are French or Spanish. Arabic is the official and principal language of Morocco, but various Berber dialects

are also widely spoken. As a remnant of Morocco's colonial history, French is the predominant second language and Spanish is widely spoken in northern Morocco.

There is not a lot of interaction between men and women in public, so it may take some time to get to know the people in your community. However, once you do, you will find Moroccans to be warm, generous, and hospitable.

Environment

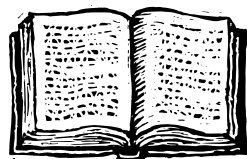
Morocco has a total area of 172,000 square miles. With an abundance of sand, sea, and snow, the country is bordered on the north by the Mediterranean Sea and on the west by the Atlantic Ocean and extends to the edge of the Western Sahara in the south. The majority of Morocco's population lives in the foothills of the often snowcapped Atlas Mountains in the north. Between the mountains and the Atlantic coast are plateaus and fertile, well-watered plains. In the extreme south, at the edge of the Anti-Atlas Mountains, river gorges gradually fade into the endless sands of the vast Sahara.

The "coolest of the hottest countries," Morocco has a climate that is rather un-African. In the higher elevations, in particular, winter conditions can be positively arctic. In summer, the mountains are hot during the day and cool at night. The rainy season is normally from November to April, and the amount of rainfall will vary depending on the region.

NOTES



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Morocco and also to connect you to returned Volunteers. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee this.

A note of caution: as you surf the Internet, you may find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to express opinions about the Peace Corps based on their own experiences, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government, and we hope you will keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About Morocco

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations

Visit this site for general travel advice about almost any country in the world.

www.state.gov

The U.S. State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Morocco and learn more about its social and political history.

www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information, and each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, which contain comprehensive historical, social, and political background information.

<http://lexicorient.com/morocco/index.htm>

This guide to travel in Morocco offers city-specific descriptions, photos, and sound clips.

www.morocco.com

This site operated by Virtual Countries presents business, cultural, and travel information on Morocco.

www.arabinfo.org

This site features the latest news from Arabic newspapers around the world.

<http://www.maroc.ma/PortailInst/An/home>

Gateway officially launched by the Moroccan Government in April 2006 to introduce Moroccan institutions, society and culture to net surfers as well as offer online public service to Moroccan citizens and expats in country.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

www.friendsofmorocco.org

This is a membership organization for Americans, mostly returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) with experience in Morocco, and Moroccans living in the U.S. The site has a wealth of articles and information on Morocco and features a weekly update on Morocco-related events and news clippings.

www.rpcv.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, composed of RPCVs. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the “friends of” groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups who frequently get together for social events and local volunteer activities.

www.peacecorpswriters.org

This site is hosted by a group of RPCV writers. Designed to be a monthly online electronic newsletter, this site presents essays and accounts of Peace Corps Volunteers' service.

Online Articles/Current News About Morocco

www.map.ma/

The site of Morocco's official national news agency, Maghreb Arab Press.

<http://www.moroccotimes.com/>

This is the first electronic English language newspaper to be issued in Morocco (2005). It is hosted by a private press agency and is updated regularly.

www.moroccdaily.com

A news site on Morocco as well as other parts of the world.

www.north-africa.com

This journal offers commentary and in-depth analysis of political, economic, and business issues in North Africa. Available by subscription only.

International Development Sites About Morocco

<http://www.tanmia.ma> (english version available on homepage)

The first gateway that aims to bring together local, Moroccan development NGOs, providing an interactive site for discussion of development-related issues and sharing of information.

www.pnud.org.ma

United Nations Development Programme (in French)

<http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco.html>

Statistical data from the United Nations' Children's Fund

Recommended Books

Nearly all of these books are available in the Peace Corps/Morocco Resource Center. Those that are out of print may be available through a consortium of booksellers called Bibliofind or through a university library.

1. Ardizzone, Tony. *Larabi's Ox: Stories of Morocco*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1992.

This collection of loosely connected stories about Americans in Morocco, which grew out of the author's stay there as a Fulbright scholar, presents many interesting aspects of the culture.

2. Baker, Alison. *Voices of Resistance: Oral Histories of Moroccan Women*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.

Baker chronicles the involvement of women leaders and working-class activists in Morocco's struggle for independence from France.

3. Ben Jelloun, Tahar. *The Sand Child*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

This book won France's prestigious Goncourt Prize for literature. It questions gender in an interesting way, though some may not like the postmodernist style.

4. Bowen, Donna Lee, and Evelyn A. Early (eds.). *Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East* (2nd ed.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.

5. Bowles, Paul. *The Sheltering Sky* (2nd ed.). Echo, 1998.

Bowles was an American writer and composer who spent much of his life in Morocco; he died in Tangier in 1999. This novel describes the impact of Arab life on three jaded Americans in the mid-20th century. A film of the same name by Bernardo Bertolucci shows the gorgeous fortified villages in the south.

6. Brett, Michael. *The Berbers*. Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1997.
7. Hargraves, Orin. *Culture Shock! Morocco*. Portland: Graphic Arts Books, 2006.
8. Hart, David M. *Tribe and Society in Rural Morocco*. London: Frank Cass & Co., 2000.
9. Lowerre, Susan. *Under the Neem Tree*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993.
10. Maxwell, Gavin. *Lords of the Atlas: The Rise and Fall of the House of Glaoua, 1893-1956*. Guilford, CO: Lyons Press, 2000.

A lively account of the colorful leader who held parts of the High Atlas Mountains against the sultan early in the 20th century.

11. Mernissi, Fatima. *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

This book contrasts the views of Sigmund Freud and al-Ghazali, a famous 11th-century Islamic philosopher, on sexuality, discussing conflicts in this area for modern Moroccans.

12. Moran, Michael. *Younger Than That Now: A Peace Corps Volunteer Remembers Morocco*. Full Court Press, 1994.
13. Nydell, Margaret K. *Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Modern Times*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 2005.
13. Pennell, C.R. *Morocco Since 1830: A History*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.
14. Ponasik, Diane Skelly. *Tangier; A Novel*. Booksurge.com, 2006.
15. Porch, Douglas. *The Conquest of Morocco*. Cincinnati: Forward Movement, 1986.

A lively account of the French takeover of Morocco in the early 1900s, described by the author as “a story of people, of chaos, villainy, glory, misery, violence, greed, avarice, and maladministration.”
16. Wagner, Daniel A. *Literacy, Culture and Development: Becoming Literate in Morocco*. Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960's*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, CA: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, NY: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, NY: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine (ed.). *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

During pre-service training, you will receive mail at the Peace Corps/Morocco office, which will forward mail to the training site at least once a week. Please do not have packages sent to you during training. After you are assigned to your permanent site, you will receive mail at a local post office or at your workplace. Packages should be sent directly to your site after training. Depending on the distance to your site from Rabat, mail may take anywhere from three days to three weeks to get to you.

Your mailing address during training will be:

“Your Name,” Trainee
s/c Corps de la Paix
2, rue Abou Marouane Essaadi
Agdal, Rabat 10100, MOROCCO

It normally takes 10 to 12 days for an airmail letter to arrive from the United States. Surface mail takes from one to four months. Mail that goes through the Moroccan post office is subject to customs inspection, censorship, and currency control. Advise your friends and relatives that mail delivery is sporadic and that they should not worry if they do not receive your letters regularly. Also, they should never send cash through the mail, as it will seldom reach you. Please check the U.S. Post Service website at www.usps.com for the latest updates on how best to send your letter or package. Currently, the USPS recommends air Parcel Post (not surface mail) for packages, or airmail for letters.

Although having packages sent from home is not recommended because of the unreliability of mail service and the customs fees, if you do have packages sent, brown padded envelopes work well. Make sure they have the green customs label and are marked as gifts, which should prevent the imposition of fees. It is best to wait to have packages sent until you know your permanent address. Again, please do not have your family send you packages during pre-service training.

Telephones

Telephone and telegraph services are available in all parts of the country. Volunteers in larger cities may have a telephone in their home. Many Volunteers purchase inexpensive cellphones in Morocco, an expense that is not covered by the Peace Corps. Public telephones (called *teleshops*) suitable for making direct-dial international calls exist in most towns. Collect calls can be made only at a post and telecommunications office, and you should anticipate a wait. AT&T and MCI calling cards work in Morocco.

The Peace Corps office in Morocco can be reached by direct dialing from the United States. During normal working hours, the office number (from most states) is 011.212.3.768-3780, and a duty officer monitors calls for emergencies after office hours. Volunteers are not permitted to use telephones at the Peace Corps/Morocco office to call family or friends unless the call pertains to an emergency and is approved in advance by the country director.

Computer, E-mail, and Internet Access

Volunteers, typically, are able to access e-mail and the Internet at cybercafes. Cybercafes are affordable, generally reliable and can be found in increasing numbers in just about any town or city. Most Volunteers do not have a cyber café at

their site, but most are within a few hours' travel from one. The Volunteer lounge at the Peace Corps office in Rabat is equipped with two computers, both with Internet access, and a printer reserved for Volunteer use. Volunteers are not allowed to use staff computers.

Some Volunteers bring their laptop computers, but they are responsible for insuring and maintaining the computers themselves. The Peace Corps will not replace stolen computers and strongly encourages those who bring them to get personal property insurance.

Housing and Site Location

You will be assigned to your permanent site towards the end of pre-service training. After your site announcement, you will visit your assigned site to meet your counterparts and other members of your community. Once you move to the site, you will spend your first two months living with a host family that has been chosen by the Peace Corps. This family has prepared for your arrival and will provide you with a safe and secure place to live while you continue to learn the language and adapt to the culture. An additional objective of this period is to help you integrate more effectively into the community.

After the mandatory two-month stay with a Moroccan family, you are free to change your housing, in accordance with the Peace Corps' safety and security criteria (see the chapter on Health Care and Safety). The Peace Corps will give you a modest settling-in allowance to purchase household necessities such as a stove, dishes, and furniture. Peace Corps will provide additional items, such as a carbon monoxide detector and water filter, if necessary. Volunteers in areas that experience unbearably cold winters can be reimbursed for the purchase of an appropriate heater. Depending on the site,

Volunteer housing generally consists of two or more rooms and private bath and latrine facilities. Some Volunteers live in family compounds with one or two private rooms for their use.

While many Volunteers in Morocco have running water and electricity, you may not have these amenities and may collect your water from an outside faucet or well and spend your evenings reading by candle or lantern. You need to be very flexible in your housing expectations, as there are no guarantees of continuous electricity or water.

Depending on your program and assignment, you may be placed in a community that ranges from a large, semi-urban town to a very small rural village. Some Volunteers share a site, while others are quite a distance from other Volunteers. Peace Corps staff members visit all sites to ensure that they meet the Peace Corps' safety and security criteria. Staff also visit all Volunteers intermittently to provide personal, medical, and professional support.

Living Allowance and Money Management

As a Volunteer in Morocco, you will receive four types of allowances. The first is a one-time settling-in allowance, currently five thousand Moroccan dirhams (MAD 5000), that is used to buy basic household items when you move to your site. This amount is reviewed once a year through a "settling-in survey" to ensure that the allowance is sufficient. You will receive a monthly living allowance, currently MAD 2000, to cover your basic expenses, i.e., food, utilities, household supplies, clothing, recreation and entertainment, communications costs (e.g., cell phone cards, internet access), transportation, reading material, and other incidentals. Your monthly rent will be covered separately by

the Peace Corps. The living allowance is paid in local currency and is sent to Volunteers during the third week of each month for the following month. The living allowance is reviewed once a year through a market survey to ensure that it is adequate. You may find that you receive more remuneration than your counterpart or supervisor.

You will also receive a vacation allowance of \$24 (currently MAD 220) per month and a travel allowance to cover the cost of work-related trips (pre-approved work-related leave, official Peace Corps events, etc.). The current travel allowance policy is under review.

Most Volunteers find they can live comfortably in Morocco with these allowances. Volunteers are strongly discouraged from supplementing their income with money brought from home, as they are expected to live at the economic level of their neighbors and colleagues. Nevertheless, credit cards are handy for vacations and travel and can be used in several establishments in the larger cities. Traveler's checks can be cashed for a small percentage fee. ATM machines can be found at most major banks in large cities.

Food and Diet

A wide variety of fruits and vegetables are available year-round, and all meats except pork are readily available. Dairy products like yogurt and milk can usually be obtained. Although maintaining a vegetarian diet should not be difficult, you will be confronted with cultural issues when visiting Moroccan families, as they will offer you, and expect you to accept, traditional foods. Thus vegetarians need to be flexible about sharing the Moroccan diet when visiting friends and neighbors.

Fresh bread is widely available and is an important part of the Moroccan diet. Pastries are available in larger towns, and pasta is available in almost any small shop.

Mint tea is Moroccans' favorite drink. It is traditionally very sweet and is served throughout the day. The numerous cafes in Morocco, which are mostly frequented by men, also serve coffee and fresh orange juice. Because Morocco is a Muslim country, beer and wine are not usually available in rural areas.

Transportation

Most Volunteers travel within the country in commercial buses or long-distance taxis (*grand taxi*). Local taxis (*petit taxis*) are available in all medium and large cities. If required for their work, Volunteers are issued bicycles with bicycle helmets. To reduce safety risks, Peace Corps/Morocco prohibits Volunteers from driving or riding on any two- or three-wheeled motorized vehicle (such as a motorcycle) for any reason. Nor are Volunteers allowed to own or drive private cars. Violation of these policies may result in termination of your Volunteer service.

Geography and Climate

Morocco is sometimes referred to as the cold country with the hot sun. The sun shines most of the year, but the cold can penetrate straight to your bones. The country has a varied geography, with beaches, mountains, desert, and agricultural land. The north tends to receive more rain than the south, so the majority of agriculture occurs in the north. Moving southward, the landscape changes to desert, turning into the Sahara in the deep southeast. Morocco boasts a popular ski resort in the Atlas Mountains outside Marrakech,

and on either side of the mountains are flat, hot, and dry plains. Summer is hot all over Morocco, with coastal areas experiencing greater relative humidity than inland areas.

Social Activities

Morocco is more tolerant than many other Muslim nations toward Western cultural norms. But while people in large cities tend to dress in Western clothing, those in rural communities are still very traditional. Most Volunteers live in small towns or rural settings and need to conform to local customs. Men have more external freedom than women do in that they can circulate freely outside the home. Cultural norms do not allow men and women to mix freely outside the home, and women tend to spend more time in the home, taking care of domestic affairs and socializing with other women. Moroccans are known for their hospitality, and you should expect invitations to dinner, weddings, and other social functions.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

The people of Morocco take pride in their personal appearance. To gain their acceptance, respect, and confidence, it is essential that you dress and conduct yourself professionally. Dress standards for Volunteers are generally conservative. Women may wear pants with long-sleeved shirts for normal work-related activity, but are expected to wear long, casual skirts or dresses for more professional activities (e.g., meetings and/or workshops with Ministry representatives). Men are expected to wear long trousers for most activities.

Adhering to the conservative dress codes in Morocco is a test of your motivation and commitment to adapt to your new environment. If you have reservations about this, you should consider the amount of sacrifice and flexibility required to be successful and reevaluate your decision to become a Volunteer.

The Peace Corps expects Volunteers to behave in a way that will foster respect within their communities and reflect well on the Peace Corps and on the United States. You will receive an orientation to appropriate behavior and cultural sensitivity during pre-service training. As a Volunteer, you have the status of an invited guest, and thus you need to be sensitive to the habits, tastes, and taboos of your hosts.

Certain behaviors can jeopardize the Peace Corps' mission in Morocco as well as your personal safety and thus cannot be tolerated by the Peace Corps. Engaging in these behaviors may lead to administrative separation, a decision by the Peace Corps to terminate your service. The *Volunteer Handbook* provides more information on the grounds for administrative separation.

Personal Safety

More information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is outlined in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (often alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as wealthy are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts

and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help Volunteers reduce their risks and enhance their safety and security. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Rewards and Frustrations

Although the potential for job satisfaction is quite high, like all Volunteers, you will encounter numerous frustrations. Because of financial or other challenges, collaborating agencies do not always provide the support promised. Moreover, the pace of work and life is slower than what most Americans are accustomed to, and some people you work with may be hesitant to change practices and traditions that are centuries old. For these reasons, the Peace Corps experience of adapting to a new culture and environment is often described as a series of emotional peaks and valleys.

You will be given a high degree of responsibility and independence in your work—perhaps more than in any other job you have had or will have. Often you will find yourself in situations that require an ability to motivate yourself and your co-workers with little guidance from supervisors. You might work for months without seeing any visible impact from, or without receiving feedback on, your work. Development is a slow process. Positive progress most often comes only after the combined efforts of several Volunteers over the course of many years. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results.

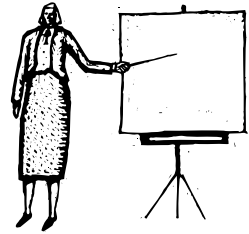
To overcome these difficulties, you will need maturity, flexibility, open-mindedness, and resourcefulness. The Peace

Corps staff, your co-workers, and fellow Volunteers will support you during times of challenge as well as in moments of success. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the peaks are well worth the difficult times, and most Volunteers leave Morocco feeling that they have gained much more than they sacrificed during their service. If you are able to make the commitment to integrate into your community and work hard, you will be a successful Volunteer.

NOTES



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

Training is an essential part of Peace Corps service. The goal is to give you enough skills and information to enable you to live and work effectively in Morocco. In doing so, we build upon the experiences and expertise you bring to the Peace Corps. We anticipate that you will approach training with an open mind, a desire to learn, and a willingness to become involved. Trainees officially become Volunteers after successful completion of training.

The 11-week training program provides you the opportunity to learn new skills and practice them as they apply to Morocco. You will receive training and orientation that integrates components of language, cross-cultural communication, area studies, development issues, health and personal safety, and technical skills pertinent to your specific assignment. Trainees work together as a group and have a chance to experience local culture and customs on their own during a stay with a host family and community-based technical training.

When you arrive in-country, you will spend the first four days in Rabat and then travel to a sector-specific seminar site. While in Rabat, you will be welcomed by the Country Director and receive an overview of Peace Corps in Morocco, be introduced to your program's training staff, receive vaccinations, and participate in introductory sessions on safety and security, cross-culture, and technical aspects of your sector program. Next you will travel overland to your seminar site where you will begin learning one of three Moroccan languages and Arabic script. After the first week, you will leave the seminar site and begin community-based training (CBT). During this phase of training, groups of

5-6 trainees learning the same language will be assigned to continue training in a pre-selected village. At your CBT site, you will live with a host family. Staying with a host family will bring to life some of the topics covered in training, giving you a chance to practice your new language skills and directly observe and participate in Moroccan culture. Throughout the training period you will be spending some time at the seminar site (approximately 30 % of your time) and the majority of your time at the community-based training (approximately 70% of your time). Bring a small travel bag so that you don't have to bring all of your luggage, each time you move from the seminar site to the CBT site. For the final week of training, all trainees will be brought together at a common training site where, upon completion of the final sessions, you will be sworn in as a Volunteer.

At the onset of pre-service training, staff will outline your goals and the criteria that will be used to assess your progress. Evaluation of your performance during training is a continual process of dialogue between you and the training staff. Staff will work with you toward the highest possible achievement of training goals by providing you feedback throughout training. After successfully completing pre-service training, you will make the final preparations for departure to your site.

Technical Training

Technical training prepares you to work in Morocco by building on the skills you already have and by helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, Moroccan experts, and current Volunteers will conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training includes sessions on sector-specific trends and how to translate and use your skills to work effectively in your community. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Moroccan agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated by staff throughout training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

Training can be intense and is sometimes stressful. The best advice we can give you is to maintain your sense of humor while trying to get as much out of pre-service training as possible. The Peace Corps believes that all of the information and experience you gain are crucial to your success as a Volunteer.

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, they help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Moroccan language and culture facilitators teach formal classes six days a week in small groups of five or six people.

In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to have basic social communication skills so that you can practice and develop language skills further on your own. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your two years of service. After you settle in at your

site, the Peace Corps will provide funds for a language tutor. As Nelson Mandela has said, “If you talk to a man in a language that he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.”

Four major languages are spoken in Morocco: Moroccan Arabic (Derija) and the Berber dialects Tashelheit, Tamazight, and Tarifit. For the most part, Moroccans who work for the government have pursued their secondary and university studies in French. Moroccans may also use French at their jobs. The Peace Corps therefore highly recommends that Volunteers begin studying or reviewing French before coming to Morocco.

Cross-Cultural Training

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Moroccan host family. This experience will ease your transition to life at your site. Families have gone through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of pre-service training and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Morocco. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. You will learn the social and behavioral skills needed to enter your community and function in a culture significantly different from your own. You will be exposed to topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, nonformal and adult education strategies, and political structures.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive health care and to take responsibility for your

own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in Morocco. Setting up a safe living compound, bicycle maintenance, fuel safety, nutrition, water treatment, mental health, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also covered.

Safety and Security Training

During the safety training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies to cope with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service.

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides trainees and Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During your service, there are usually three training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- *In-service training*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences with fellow Volunteers and Moroccan counterparts.
- *Mid-service conference*: During mid-service physical exam time, Volunteers will have the opportunity to meet together, reflect on their first year in Morocco, and start planning the second year of service.

- *Close of service conference*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service. Training is planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.

NOTES



YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN MOROCCO



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. The Peace Corps in Morocco maintains a health unit with two full-time medical officers, who take care of Volunteers' primary health-care needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in Morocco at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to an appropriate medical facility in the region or to the United States.

Health Issues in Morocco

Major health problems among Volunteers in Morocco are rare and are often the result of a Volunteer's not taking preventive measures to stay healthy. The most common illnesses in Morocco are minor ones that are also found in the United States: colds, diarrhea, sinus infections, skin infections, headaches, dental problems, minor injuries, STDs, and emotional problems. These problems may be more frequent or compounded by life in Morocco because certain environmental factors in the country raise the risk or exacerbate the severity of illnesses and injuries.

The most common major health concern is amoebic dysentery, but it can be avoided by thoroughly washing fruits and vegetables and either boiling your drinking water or using the water purification tablets issued in your medical kit. You will be vaccinated against hepatitis A and B, meningococcal meningitis, tetanus/diphtheria, typhoid, rabies, MMR (mumps, measles and rubella), polio and regular flu.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in Morocco, you will receive a medical handbook. At the end of training, you will receive a medical handbook and a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first-aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this chapter.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as we will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available here and it may take several months for shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at midservice and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the Peace Corps medical officer in Morocco will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Morocco, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept a certain amount of responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The old adage “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in Morocco is to take preventive measures for the following:

Rabies is prevalent throughout the region, so you will receive a series of immunizations against it when you arrive in Morocco. If you are exposed to an animal that is known to have or suspected of having rabies, inform the Peace Corps medical officer at once so that you can receive post-exposure booster shots.

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, tapeworms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Morocco during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV and other STDs. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will receive more information from the medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, and that you let the medical officer know immediately of significant illnesses and injuries.

Women's Health Information

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions which require medical attention but also have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps' medical and programmatic standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

Some female Volunteers have found that disposable tampons and pads are rather expensive and bothersome to dispose of in Morocco, and have found that bringing cloth sanitary napkins and other reusable feminine products is much more convenient. If you are interested, here are a few websites that offer such products:

www.gladrags.com/

www.pandorapads.com/

www.thekeeperinc.com/

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with a medical kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

Medical Kit Contents

Ace bandages

Adhesive tape

American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook

Antacid tablets (Tums)

Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)

Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)

Band-Aids
Butterfly closures
Calamine lotion
Cepacol lozenges
Condoms
Dental floss
Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)
Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)
Lip balm (Chapstick)
Oral rehydration salts and Gatorade
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)
Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)
Scissors
Sterile gauze pads
Tetrahydrozoline eyedrops (Visine)
Tinactin (antifungal cream)
Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

To avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in Morocco.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, we will order refills during your service.

While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but these may come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you — a pair to use and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. We discourage you from using contact lenses during your service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless an

ophthalmologist has recommended their use for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over the age of 50, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in health-care plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary health care from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service health-care benefits described in the *Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or preexisting conditions might prevent you from reenrolling in your current plan when you return home.

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 84 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2004 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey say they would join the Peace Corps again.

The Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you. This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety. All of these sections include important safety and security information.

The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest and most secure way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify and manage the risks you may encounter.

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control.

Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2004, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

- Location: Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings). Specifically, 43 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites.
- Time of day: Assaults usually took place on the weekend during the evening between 5:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.— with most assaults occurring around 1:00 a.m.
- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 82 percent of the sexual assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied and in 55 percent of physical assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Forty percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or assailants.

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so that you can reduce the risks you face. For example, here are some strategies Volunteers employ:

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

- Know the environment and choose safe routes/times for travel
- Avoid high-crime areas per Peace Corps guidance
- Know the vocabulary to get help in an emergency
- Carry valuables in different pockets/places
- Carry a “dummy” wallet as a decoy

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk
- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Make local friends
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don't draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing
- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors
- Travel with someone whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption

Support from Staff

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to “foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps’ safety and security efforts.” The new office is led by an Associate Director for Safety and Security who reports to the Peace Corps Director and includes the following divisions: Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security; Information and Personnel Security; Emergency Preparedness, Plans, Training and Exercise; and Crime Statistics and Analysis.

The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps’ safety and security officers who are located in various regions around the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers conduct security assessments; review safety trainings; train trainers and managers; train Volunteer safety wardens, local guards, and staff; develop security incident response procedures; and provide crisis management support.

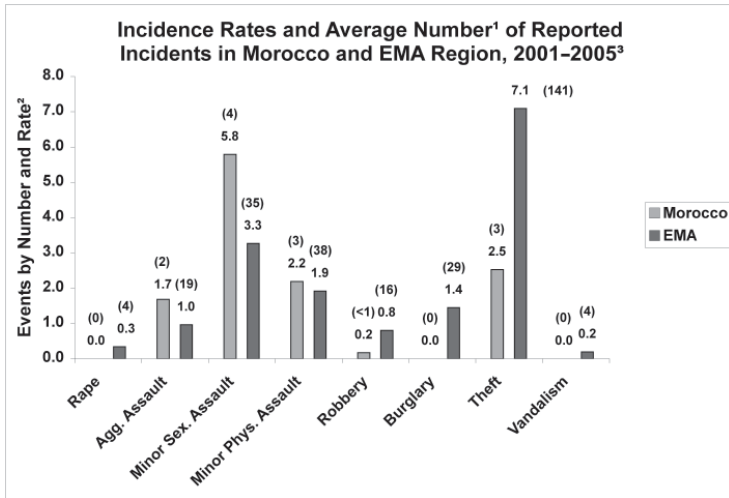
If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provide support by reassessing the Volunteer’s work site and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not

only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in Morocco as compared to all other Europe, Mediterranean and Asia region programs as a whole, from 2000–2004. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

To fully appreciate the collected data below, an explanation of the graph is provided as follows:

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T years, which is a measure of 12 full months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way to compare crime data across countries. An “incident” is a specific offense, per Peace Corps’ classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.



¹The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 2001–2005.

²Incident rates equal the number of assaults per 100 Volunteers and trainees per year (V/T years). Since most sexual assaults occur against females, only female V/Ts are calculated in rapes and minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

³Data collection for Morocco began as of 2001

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS) and Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS); the information is accurate as of 07/27/06.

The chart is separated into eight crime categories. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking something by force); minor physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); minor sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout

your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas including safety and security. Once in-country, use the tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

What If You Become a Victim of a Violent Crime?

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of violent crimes. The Peace Corps will give you information and training in how to be safe. But, just as in the U.S., crime happens, and Volunteers can become victims. When this happens, the investigative team of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is charged with helping pursue prosecution of those who perpetrate a violent crime against a Volunteer. If you become a victim of a violent crime, the decision to prosecute or not to prosecute is entirely yours, and one of the tasks of the OIG is to make sure that you are fully informed of your options and help you through the process and procedures involved in going forward with prosecution should you wish to do so. If you decide to prosecute, we are here to assist you in every way we can.

Crimes that occur overseas, of course, are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities in local courts. Our role is to coordinate the investigation and evidence collection with the regional security officers (RSOs) at the U.S. embassy, local police, and local prosecutors and others to ensure that your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country. OIG investigative staff has extensive experience in criminal investigation, in working sensitively with victims, and as advocates for victims. We also, may, in certain limited circumstances, arrange for the retention of a local lawyer to assist the local public prosecutor in making the case against the individual who perpetrated the violent crime.

If you do become a victim of a violent crime, first, make sure you are in a safe place and with people you trust and second, contact the country director or the Peace Corps medical officer. Immediate reporting is important to the preservation of evidence and the chances of apprehending the suspect. Country directors and medical officers are required to report all violent crimes to the Inspector General and the RSO. This information is protected from unauthorized further disclosure by the Privacy Act. Reporting the crime also helps prevent your further victimization and protects your fellow Volunteers.

In conjunction with the RSO, the OIG does a preliminary investigation of all violent crimes against Volunteers regardless of whether the crime has been reported to local authorities or of the decision you may ultimately make to prosecute. If you are a victim of a crime, our staff will work with you through final disposition of the case. OIG staff is available 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week. We may be contacted through our 24-hour violent crime hotline via telephone at 202.692.2911, or by e-mail at violentcrimeline@peacecorps.gov.

Security Issues in Morocco

When it comes to your safety and security in the Peace Corps, you have to be willing to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target of crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in Morocco. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions, for instance, are favorite work sites for pickpockets. The following are some safety concerns in Morocco.

Motor vehicle accidents. These represent the single greatest risk to your safety in Morocco. Volunteers are strongly encouraged to wear seat belts when available and to avoid riding in overcrowded taxis, buses, or vans. Because of the high safety risk, Volunteers in Morocco are restricted from traveling at night. If you have to travel for official business, the Peace Corps will reimburse expenses for the safest mode of transport.

Robbery/burglary. Although such crimes have not been a serious problem in Morocco, you will need to take the same precautions you would take in the United States. The Peace Corps requires locks on all Volunteer homes.

Harassment. One of the greatest challenges for Volunteers in Morocco, especially females, is harassment. Normally this comes in the form of unwanted attention, but Volunteers have reported incidents such as having small stones or objects thrown at them by children, especially in large cities where they are not known. Strategies for dealing and coping with harassment will be discussed during pre-service training.

Alcohol abuse. Alcoholism is not a significant problem, but it is best to avoid frequenting non-hotel bars, particularly at night. Alcohol use can impair judgment, and Volunteers who drink must do so responsibly. Peace Corps/Morocco has a stringent alcohol-free policy at all Peace Corps events and training sites.

Sexual assault. Volunteers in Morocco have rarely been targets of sexual assault. Those who take seriously the training provided on dealing with assaults, which are often associated with alcohol consumption and cross-cultural differences in gender relations, can minimize their risk. The Peace Corps urges Volunteers to report all assaults and threats of assault to the medical officer so that staff can respond with appropriate support.

Community integration is key to the success of a Volunteer. Investing time in your site demonstrates your commitment to the community and, in turn, your community will consider you a part of them, and not a tourist. Peace Corps requires that each Peace Corps country have an “out-of-site” policy and that you, as a Volunteer, comply fully with this policy. Peace Corps/Morocco has developed an out-of-site policy that encourages Volunteers to invest time in their sites, but at the same time realizes that “down time” is also important for Volunteers. The current policy, for example, does allow you to leave your site twice a month for two non-work days with an overnight. There will also be times that you will be out of your site for work-related purposes. You will be expected to follow established procedures any time you contemplate leaving your site by requesting approval and/or providing notification of your travel prior to leaving your site. The complete “out-of-site” policy will be explained in greater detail during your in-country training. Although this policy will put limitations on your travels, something you need to recognize, it will lessen any risks that you may face while traveling around the country. Most importantly, it will enable Peace Corps/Morocco to locate you at any time should there be an emergency either relating to family back in the States or natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes.

Sex outside of marriage is illegal in Morocco and may jeopardize your safety or your ability to develop mutually respectful relationships in your community and at your job. In addition, homosexual behavior is also illegal in Morocco, and gay and lesbian rights are not protected under the Moroccan Constitution. Moreover, some Moroccans are homophobic, and there have been instances of violence toward individuals who are openly gay. Gay and lesbian Volunteers therefore will have to practice discretion. The Peace Corps is committed to providing support for all Volunteers regardless of sexual orientation.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on a large responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your house is secure, and develop relations in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. In coming to Morocco, do what you would do if you moved to a large city in the United States: be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Morocco may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention both in large cities and at their sites, but they are likely to receive more negative attention in highly populated centers where they are anonymous, than at their sites, and in smaller towns, where “family,” friends, and colleagues look out for them. While unwanted attention is fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, avoid eye contact, and do not respond. In addition, keep your money out of sight; do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs; and always walk with a companion at night.

Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in Morocco

The Peace Corps' safety program takes a five-pronged approach to helping you stay safe during your two-year service: information-sharing, Volunteer training, site selection

criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. Morocco's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Morocco office will keep Volunteers apprised of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates are offered in Peaceworks, the Volunteer newsletter, and in memoranda from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network.

Volunteer training will include sessions on specific safety and security issues in Morocco. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risks in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout your service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural, health, and other components of training.

Site selection criteria are used to determine viable work assignments and safe sites for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure host family homes and work sites. Site selection is based in part on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, appropriate housing and markets; and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/Morocco's detailed **emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive

at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, Volunteers in Morocco will gather at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers **immediately report** any security incident to the Peace Corps medical officer. The Peace Corps has established *protocols for addressing safety and security incidents* in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling the Peace Corps' mandate to share the face of America with our host countries, we are making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent years. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcomed among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other despite our many differences.

Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal. In other ways, however, it poses challenges. In Morocco, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyle, background, and beliefs are judged in a cultural context very different from their own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in Morocco.

Outside of Morocco's capital, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What people view as typical American behavior or norms may be a misconception, such as the belief that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Morocco are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to cultural differences that you present.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in Morocco, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

Overview of Diversity in Morocco

The Peace Corps staff in Morocco recognizes the challenges and adjustment issues that come with diversity and endeavors to provide meaningful support and guidance. Peace Corps/Morocco has a working group of Volunteers representing American diversity tasked with sharing, documenting and presenting their experiences to Peace Corps staff and Volunteers in order to increase awareness and understanding of the challenges that they have faced. This group is also developing materials that can be used by all Volunteers to educate Moroccans about the diversity of Americans.

During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, and sexual orientations, and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who take pride in supporting one another and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

With more and more people from other countries visiting Morocco, people in your community may initially think you are a tourist. It will take time and patience to help people in your community understand who you are, why you have come and that you plan to stay for more than a few days. Many Moroccans find it hard to believe that Americans would altruistically and voluntarily donate two years of their lives to assist the people of another country. Because the concept of volunteerism is not readily understood, you may be suspected of being an agent for the intelligence-gathering community. Alternatively, you may be perceived as someone who is still doing research to complete a degree rather than someone who is already technically competent.

Another potentially problematic area is politics. Any public expression of opinion by Volunteers on issues considered political or controversial in Morocco could seriously compromise their effectiveness and that of the Peace Corps program. Whatever your views, for instance, with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict or the political status of the Western Sahara, the Peace Corps' policy is that you should not make public statements of any kind on these or similar matters during your service in Morocco.

The information below is intended to stimulate thought and discussion and may or may not be relevant to your own Volunteer experience. It is included here to make all Volunteers aware of issues that one group or another may have to deal with. As you read, you might ask yourself, "How would I feel if that happened to me?" and "How could I help a Volunteer if it happened to him or her?" Each section concludes with comments by individual Volunteers on their experience in Morocco.

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Morocco has a traditional, patriarchal culture. While Moroccan women are gaining more authority in society, there are still few women in top positions in government or in the private sector. Women tend to live with their families until they get married. Thus, female Volunteers can play an important role in modeling to their communities behavior that demonstrates the additional capabilities of women. Indeed, gender and development activities are an integral part of the Peace Corps' programming in Morocco.

Female Volunteers may find that a single woman living alone goes against the cultural norms of her community. Besides receiving more unwanted and inappropriate attention from Moroccan men than American men, female Volunteers may also have to work harder than male Volunteers to gain the professional respect of colleagues in the workplace. Finally, the Peace Corps encourages female Volunteers to keep a low social profile and practice discretion in public (e.g., not smoking in public or drinking in bars) to avoid developing an undesirable reputation.

Volunteer Comments

“What is it like being a female Volunteer in Morocco? Here is a taste: *'Bonjour! Ca va, ca va gazelle!*’ (“Hello! How are you, how are you, gazelle?”) You may experience daily verbal harassment such as this and perhaps occasional physical harassment. You may receive marriage proposals from men whom you have just met. You may be treated differently because you are a woman. People, men and women, may view you as *muskeena* (a poor thing) because you are alone in a foreign country. Although this may sound daunting, I have learned to adjust and filter the positive and negative aspects of being a woman here. Being a woman

allows you into the female world here, which is a powerful place. Through this experience, you can form endearing friendships and begin to understand women's roles in Morocco.”

“Being a female Volunteer in Morocco is a challenge. Because of the economic situation, many young men are without jobs and university educations. Since female Volunteers have both a job and a university education, we are often resented by local men. We are independent, living on our own in a foreign country, and doing many things that these men wish they could do. As a result, we are often harassed and face challenges in the workplace.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Moroccans are a diverse people in many ways, including appearance. The socio-cultural relationships among Moroccans of lighter and darker hue ranges from apparent tolerance and integration to overt, although non-threatening, racism. As a result, it is impossible to predict what a Volunteer of Color may experience, initially, in their community. Once the Volunteer becomes established, however, undesirable attitudes and behaviors tend to subside and acceptance and a very positive experience is the norm.

As a Volunteer of Color, you may be the only minority trainee or Volunteer within a particular project. You may feel that you do not receive the personal support you need from other Volunteers, or you may not find minority role models among the local Peace Corps staff. All Volunteers do, however, participate in diversity training as part of their pre-service training and Peace Corps/Morocco staff are prepared to do all they can to provide support to all Volunteers.

Volunteer Comments

“In the beginning, a few Moroccan people looked at me with caution, skepticism, or disgust, like I was ugly or dirty because I have a caramel complexion. I thought to myself, ‘This is Africa, right?’ As in America, oftentimes the lighter you are, the better people accept or treat you. Also, when I go to the *hammam* (steam bath house), the women tend to scrub me harder than usual, as if to help me out. I want to tell them to stop, that the dead skin is gone and I will always be this color. However, once people have the opportunity to know me, my heart, and my goals, they accept me as one of the family. Living in Morocco makes me even prouder to be an American. At home I am called an African American; here I am just the ‘*Amerikanica*’ (American)”

“I’m Hispanic and Moroccans at first doubt my nationality. They are puzzled when I introduce myself and they hear my name for the first time. ‘That’s not American,’ they tell me. I explain to them how I was born in the States but my entire family emigrated from Cuba. In some ways, they can relate because many Moroccans immigrate to France, Canada, and other countries. As a whole, you will find that Moroccans are diverse, too. They are a mix of Berber and Arabic people and dress differently depending on where they live. They have different physical features as well as various shades of skin color.”

“You have to laugh. As a half-Japanese female in Morocco, I face unique challenges and a multilayered role as a Volunteer. As a female, you will be harassed. As an Asian-American female, you will be greeted by children shouting ‘kung fu!’ and ‘Bruce Lee, Bruce Lee!’ and you will be called ‘*Chinois*’ (Chinese) and possibly even my favorite: ‘sporty Chinese girl.’ With each of these comments—all meant to

engage my attention rather than necessarily insult me—I keep my poker face until I’m out of view and then I break out laughing. Most Moroccans’ knowledge of Asians and Asian culture barely stretches beyond made-in-China dishware and kung fu movies. It is a lack of exposure that allows these comments to proliferate, and offering this exposure is part of our role as Volunteers. I represent not only Americans but also Asian-American females to Moroccans. After explaining the variety of Asian cultures that exist and patiently repeating, ‘*Ana Amerikania*’ (‘I am American’), I slowly get the point across. Little by little, both Moroccans and I realize how it really is a ‘small world after all.’”

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

During training and at their sites, senior Volunteers may face challenges solely due to age. Since the majority of Volunteers are in their 20s, you will work and live with individuals in the Peace Corps community who may have little understanding of or respect for the lives and experiences of seniors. Your interactions with Peace Corps staff may also be different from that of younger Volunteers. You may be reluctant to share personal, sexual, or health concerns with the staff. You may also find that younger Volunteers look to you for advice and support. While some seniors find this to be a very enjoyable part of their Volunteer experience, others choose not to fill this role. The logistics of dealing with family emergencies, maintaining lifelong friendships, and managing financial matters from afar may be more problematic for older Volunteers than younger Volunteers.

Training may present its own special challenges. Older trainees may encounter a lack of attention to their specific needs for an effective learning environment. You may need to be assertive in developing an effective individual approach to language learning.

There are benefits to being older. Respect comes with age in Morocco, and a younger Volunteer is likely to have to work much harder than an older colleague to be accepted as a professional.

Volunteer Comment

“I don’t refer to myself as an older Volunteer but as a ‘more experienced’ one. But since mathematically I qualify as ‘older,’ I will try to share a few thoughts. My pre-departure nightmare was that in a group of 80 Volunteers, 79 would be 23 years old, and they would all be laughing at me. What I found was that they weren’t all 23 and nobody was laughing. From the first moment, I found acceptance among my fellow Volunteers, and that carried me through the entire three months we spent together. I truly felt like just another member of the group. I think the fact that I don’t think of myself as older helped a lot. I worked hard on being nonjudgmental, on participating in as many activities as possible, and on not ‘acting my age.’ The truth is, you will need the young Volunteers a lot more than they will need you, because they represent the majority and it can get awfully lonely if you don’t make friends. If you can build relationships with people who may be young enough to be your grandchildren, you will do just fine.”

“I am a 67-year-old Asian-American Volunteer and I find it annoying to receive unsolicited verbal attention from Moroccan males, including marriage proposals from men in their 30s!”

Possible Issues for Married Volunteers

While married couples come with a built-in support system, they may face challenges that single Volunteers do not face. If you are a married couple, you will be training in the same Community Based Training site and living with the same host family. Couples should consider how varying degrees of enthusiasm about Peace Corps service, adaptation to the physical or cultural environment, or homesickness will affect their lives. A husband and wife may also face changed marital roles resulting from Moroccan societal expectations. A married man may be encouraged to take on a more dominant public role in the relationship, while a married woman may find herself in a less independent role than she is accustomed to. This can create tensions for a couple both at work (e.g., a wife being expected to perform traditional domestic chores instead of working) and at home (e.g., a husband being ridiculed for performing domestic tasks or for refusing to have extramarital affairs). Finally, coping with competition (e.g., one spouse learning faster than the other) or differences in job satisfaction may also be challenging.

Volunteer Comments

“A real advantage of being married is that I have a built-in sounding board. I think I also encounter less harassment than single female Volunteers do. I do get a lot of questions as to why we don’t have children, but I explain that that is Peace Corps policy. People like to compare our language skills, and some days I am *mazeeyan* (excellent) and my husband is *shweeya* (pathetic); and other days I am *shweeya* and Dave is *mazeeyan*. We try not to take it personally! One more thing, public affection is taboo, especially in more rural areas.”

“As to being a married couple, we have spent more time together during our Peace Corps service than in over 30 years of marriage. It is a challenge, but I have one suggestion. This year we have some separate areas. As a result, we have some new and different topics to share with each other. We are both in education.”

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Although homosexual acts are considered immoral according to local norms and Islam and are illegal according to the law; homosexuality is present in Morocco. There is no visible gay community, and finding local gays who live openly is unlikely. A majority of homosexual Moroccans have probably migrated to larger cities, where there may be more tolerance and anonymity, or to neighboring countries. Since most Volunteers in Morocco live in rural areas and conservative communities, it is less likely that homosexual Volunteers will encounter individuals of their sexual orientation. Relationships with host country nationals and other Volunteers do occur, but it may not be easy to sustain a viable relationship. You should be prepared for some feelings of isolation at home and in the workplace.

If you are accustomed to being open about your sexual orientation, you need to be aware that to be identified in your host community as a homosexual could impact your effectiveness as a Volunteer and possibly compromise your ability to integrate into your community. Styles of hair and dress (such as earrings on men) considered acceptable in the U.S. may be viewed by your community with suspicion and even disdain. In Morocco, suspected homosexuals can encounter harassment on the streets and/or at local venues and have basic civil liberties ignored. According to Moroccan

law, if caught, sexual acts between members of the same sex are a crime punishable by 8–12 months in jail.

Homosexual Volunteers typically deal with the same constant questioning in their communities as heterosexual Volunteers. Lesbians have to deal with questions about boyfriends, marriage, and sex. Wearing an “engagement ring” may help. Gay men have to deal with machismo; talk of conquests, girl-watching, and dirty jokes.

Peace Corps staff and medical officers are available for support issues as well as a contracted professionally trained counselor who is sensitive to issues of sexuality. In addition, there is a GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender) Volunteer support group that meets periodically to share experiences and discuss coping strategies.

Volunteer Comment

“I told myself when I joined the Peace Corps I would have to put my love life on hold until I got back to the States. To my surprise, I met someone in my training group, and we have maintained a relationship ever since. Gender segregation is the norm in Morocco, so we are able to spend a lot of time together. I wear a ring to keep the ‘boyfriend’ questions at bay.”

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Moroccans are generally very tolerant of religious and ethnic differences, and may or may not ask you about your religious beliefs. Since Morocco is a Muslim country, public profession of one’s Jewish faith, such as wearing a yarmulke, could result in tension with Moroccan counterparts. Volunteers should also be aware that the Jewish community in Morocco is small and there are very few synagogues at which to worship.

Volunteer Comment

“In general, Moroccans are tolerant of other religions. However, because of the world climate, Jewish Volunteers may hear negative statements or see negative images.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities

As a disabled Volunteer in Morocco, you will face a special set of challenges. There is very little infrastructure to accommodate people with disabilities in Morocco. There are no ramps in public places, and roads and sidewalks are uneven or otherwise in poor condition. Nevertheless, the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable of performing a full tour of Volunteer service in Morocco without unreasonable risk to yourself or interruption of your service. Peace Corps/Morocco will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations in training, housing, and job sites to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

NOTES



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Morocco?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds this allowance. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The authorized baggage allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 80 pounds total with a maximum weight allowance of 70 pounds for any one bag.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not permitted to take pets, weapons, explosives, mace, radio transmitters, automobiles, motorcycles, or motor scooters to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, or aerosol containers.

What is the electric current in Morocco?

If you have electricity and it works, the current is 220 volts, 50 cycles. Since there are surges and cuts in power that put a strain on voltage converters and appliances, bring good-quality items. The Peace Corps does not provide transformers. We recommend CD or tape players that use “D” batteries because “C” batteries are a little harder to find. “AA” as well as watch and calculator batteries are easy to find, but their quality is sometimes questionable.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. They are given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover their expenses. Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and ATM cards

are preferable to cash and traveler's checks. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects. Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers are cautioned not to ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Morocco do not need to get an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating any motorized vehicles while in Morocco. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to trucks and lots of walking. If you rent a car while on vacation outside Morocco or any other Peace Corps country, however, you will need the appropriate driver's license.

What should I bring as gifts for Moroccan friends and my host family?

As you will be staying with two different homestay families, gifts for the children are greatly appreciated but should not be large or elaborate. Some gift suggestions include pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes, souvenirs from your state, hard candies that will not melt or spoil, games, or photos to give away.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until the last few weeks of Pre-Service Training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with ministry counterparts. Many factors influence the site selection process and the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers live in small towns or in rural villages and are usually less than an hour from another Volunteer. Some sites require more than a 15-hour drive from the capital. Come with the attitude that you are here to serve Morocco and not a particular geographic region.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, you should instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580; select option 2, then extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Special Services duty officer can be reached at 202.638.2574. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from the Morocco desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580, extension 2421 or 2422.

Will there be e-mail and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?

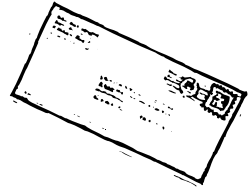
There are businesses that offer Internet access in most towns in Morocco. Because of weaker telephone and electrical infrastructure in outlying areas, however, Volunteers posted to rural sites may be limited to sending and receiving e-mail on their occasional visits to larger towns or regional hubs. Before leaving the United States, many prospective Volunteers sign up for free e-mail accounts, such as those offered by Yahoo or Hotmail, which they can access worldwide.

Because of the high value of laptops, owners significantly increase their risk of becoming a victim of crime. Additionally, you will not find the same level of technical assistance and service in Morocco as you would at home and replacement parts can take months to arrive. Also note that gaining Internet access via a laptop is only a remote possibility because very few Volunteers have telephone lines in their home or adequate lines at their workplace. If you bring a laptop, be sure to bring a high-quality surge protector, as electrical lapses and surges are common.

NOTES



WELCOME LETTERS FROM MOROCCO VOLUNTEERS



Welcome to Small Business Development Trainees!

Salam Aleikoum, or Bixir Hamdullah.

In Morocco we have a language that is spoken, more than written. I have found that different language instructors will teach me the “hello” greeting in a variety of ways and with a variety of spellings. One thing is always consistent here (in this, my new favorite culture): I will be warmly welcomed and given *En Sallah* (God willing) that I will return.

I didn’t think that I wanted to serve my Peace Corps experience in Morocco. In fact, “Where in the world is Morocco?” was in my thoughts when I received my invitation. I had a sailboat, I wanted to go to some exotic sailing location, “isn’t Morocco somewhere near a large desert?”

In my 63 years of living, I have learned that life is short and full of surprises, so I try to “go with the flow” and this seemed to be the direction of movement. So I climbed on board. After all, after 10 years of thinking I wanted a Peace Corps experience, and one year of waiting for a nomination, this had to be the right course. So, I got out a map and found out that Morocco is not Monaco and that it is also by a large body of water and not just the desert. Starting to be better.

Eight months later, I am in love with Morocco: The country, for sure, (I just spent a weekend in Oulidia—seashore—amazing!) but the people, now they are in my heart and soul. My life has changed forever.

You have to get to know the people, go with them in their grand taxis and their tutmobiles. Spend hours sitting on the floors in their dars (houses) and eating their couscous (a semolina grain dish with meat and vegetables) with your fingers. You get a golf ball-sized piece of the tiny pasta and you roll it in your hands until you get a ball, then you “plop”

it into your mouth and go for more. Takes a while to get used to everybody eating from the same big bowl, but the kitchen work afterward is kept at a minimum with this custom.

You have to be with the people, holding their napping child while shopping for hours in the *souq* (market). Stifling your fears as they choose a hunk of lamb that has a few flies going over the surface. Haggling for a two-cent banana or a nice mess of fresh green beans. Anticipating that these items will produce a culinary delight that your stomach isn't going to forget, ever.

You have to let the people watch you and listen to you and see "your strange ways." If you know a lullaby, you can bring it to life for a sleepy child, or kick a soccer ball back to the kid in your neighborhood that spends his day on the street. You will not feel repulsed at that floor toilet after a long ride on the bus, you will be so glad that there is a wall around it and a bucket of water beside it. You will relish the lock that actually locks the door, or the broom that actually sweeps the floor, or the light that actually lights the room. Simple functions will impress you and delight you.

You can be a part of this noble way of life for a few months. You can do without all that "stuff" stateside. You can live closer to life and find it a bonus. You can be glad that you got to taste this, maybe even decide to embrace it, but no matter how long you live, you can never forget it or get it out of your head. You have been changed and it is for the better. It has made you a different person. One you'll like a whole lot better.

I am changing. I can feel the cells moving in my brain, the strings sharpening in my heart. I am glad I am here and life is good. Golf courses and cruise ships can wait, I got a culture to embrace and a people to adore. I got Morocco!

Hugs,

—Shauna Steadman

.....

Dear future Peace Corps Volunteers,

One of the mantras that exists in Morocco is *swiea b swiea* (little by little). These small words speak volumes about how life is conducted in Morocco. The mantra can be used

as a diplomatic way to excuse yourself from the unintended cultural mistakes made by us foreigners to this culture. When I make the occasional cultural *faux pas*, my embarrassment is usually quickly replaced with a feeling of relief that I live among such patient, genuinely kind, and accommodating people. My Moroccan friends and acquaintances will smile and never hold the mistake against me. Instead, I will be told that I am *swiea b swiea* becoming “*Mahgrebia*” (Moroccan).

Patience is a revered virtue in Morocco, and is a great help when dealing with communication problems. No matter how many times I have to ask what the same word is in *Deresia* before I finally remember it, no one seems to mind my constant questioning. My work counterparts and host family deal with communication issues as if we are on a team together. I constantly encounter people who will stop and use all of their capacities to understand what I am saying to them and help me to understand what they are saying to me. Often times when I ask directions from someone, the person will end up just walking me to my destination, just to make sure that I arrive without getting lost.

New residents to Morocco should realize that they must also embrace the *swiea b swiea* mantra when coping with the time it will take to accomplish work initiatives and generally getting things done in a timely manner. Life is conducted at a slower pace here—often there is no lightning-speed Internet connection at the workplace, things are not always on time, and people do not feel the need to work against constant deadlines. However, meeting these challenges with persistence and a good attitude will go far in eventually accomplishing set goals. As is the case with many things in life, the process could well be just as important as the end result.

Living in Morocco will not only open your eyes to an amazingly beautiful country, it will also teach you how to live a new lifestyle. Adjusting is not always easy, but one thing is sure, you will have friends that will help and support you all along. Sit back, accept an offered glass of mint tea, and realize that things will happen *swiea b swiea*.

—Jessica DeVreeze

Welcome Health Trainees!

Future Volunteers,

Marhababikoom! Welcome to the “cold country with the hot sun”—a place as full of mystery and intrigue as you might expect, though maybe not in the ways you expect it! You are coming into a program that has lived through more than 40 years of friendship with its host country and countless successes. It is a complex time to be serving in a Muslim country, but I believe the best time. You will find that your job as a Volunteer in Morocco will expand past your sector’s requirements and into the real work of diplomacy and cross-cultural understanding. Take another look at the three goals of Peace Corps as outlined by JFK—that is why you are coming to Morocco and why we are needed now more than ever.

My best advice to you is to relinquish your expectations and be open to the unknown. Morocco has lush green mountains, stark brown desert mountains, coastal villages, huge rolling sand dunes, desert oases, snow-capped mountains, flat farmland, rocky plains, metropolitan cities, and tiny Amazigh (a Berber tribe) villages connected only by donkey path. Don’t expect one Morocco because you may end up in any of these places, or somewhere in between. However, do pack for cold weather. The nights and indoors (even in summer months) can get cold and the winters are harsh. Remember to bring good layering clothes, fleece, hats, and silk long underwear. Don’t stress too much about packing, but do not forget to bring special things from home, items full of emotional significance (pictures, a special pillow or sheet, letters, and books). You can find what you need here—it will take some searching, but that is part of the fun! Another bit of practical advice for women: bring the Keeper (reusable feminine hygiene product; for more information go to www.thekeeperinc.com). Pack a mix of pants and skirts—not just skirts. While it is true you will want to wear long skirts in the *bled* (rural) areas, pants are comfortable and acceptable in many settings.

I am a maternal and child health Volunteer in the Eastern High Atlas near the Ziz Valley. I work in conjunction with the *sbitar* (local clinic) to educate women about family planning, nutrition, disease prevention, and hygiene. I recently participated in a vaccination drive in the mountains near my site, talking to women in the nomad populations as they vaccinated their babies and got their tetanus shots. I am currently finishing my first six months as a Volunteer, which means I am concluding a needs assessment done in my community. This will show me the target areas of concern and guide me in my project planning for the next year and a half.

A typical day goes like this: I go to the *sbitar* from nine to two, eating a delicious *tajine* (stew) with my counterpart for lunch. Afterwards, I might go to a family's house for a while or go to my *souk* (market) town for tutoring and to buy fresh vegetables and supplies. I usually see many people I know and am invited to "come drink tea now!" I come home, cook, read, study language, do yoga, and relax. The pace of your life will slow here, so expect "down time" and be creative in trying to fill it. Also, realize that gender separation is normal in *bled* areas.

I was in the group of trainees that was evacuated in April 2003. This should tell you how much I love this country and see that I have a life and purpose here. Being here is hard. The world opinion of America is low at the moment and there are many people here who will equate American people with our government and the injustices of war. Expect controversy. While I find that these moments occur, I never feel unsafe or threatened. These are peaceful people, protective of my work and me. There is a lot of unwanted attention directed at lone foreign women. Most of this is curiosity and an overexposure to money-wielding tourists and imported television. I find that simply confronting people, telling them I live here and can speak their language stops this quickly. Speaking Tamazeght (Amazigh, a Berber dialect) instantly opens doors and earns immense respect. Even a few words will endear you to anyone within earshot.

Morocco is full of hospitality so never fear being lonely!
Know you have a resource in current Volunteers.

—Amanda B. Richey

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Drums pound. Our hands clasp. Our bodies unite in one melodious motion. Fifty Soussi men and I move in a pulsating dance, thrusting our shoulders in circles forward, toward an empty village. The swelter of the Saharan night sends rivulets of sweat streaming down my sunburned face. Our stomping feet stir sand into a strident blur of music and dust. My eyes squint under the blue Toureg turban that wraps my face and head. An uneasiness of events to come brings our dance to an abrupt halt. The drums stop and silence deadens the body. The last of daylight slices the canyon ridge and a shadow casts the canyon wall leaving us in an opaque abyss. I am blinded by the darkness. A voice suddenly bursts into a cacophonous poem piercing the soul like the fire that simultaneously bursts forth. Another fifty flame-lit black faces appear in front of us. They are draped in long white robes; their heads are tied with turbans and faces share a stolid expression. Their poet finishes his diatribe and our poet steps forward to contend in this competition of lyrics. What began a dance now seems like the anticipation of a battle about to commence. Our poet finishes with a joke and the drums beat again. The silence and the darkness are broken and the intense antipathetic stress is lifted. Faces smile in recognition, and we dance to unite the villages. I am befuddled by the ebullience. Angry faces are contorted with exaggerated smiles, large round noses, shattered or missing teeth, and sunken eyes. Confused, I am pushed up a steep, narrow, crowded incline. I am the first to arrive at a house atop a dark precipice. The elders greet me with laughs and kisses as an old friend, an elder, an equal, and the first foreigner to celebrate with them in the dance that unites the villages.

The dance was an amazing cultural experience, but Peace Corps/Morocco has its tough days. Volunteers are forced to cope with cultural and linguistic isolation. They must contend

with the limitations of their idealism, resources, abilities, and then fulfill the mission of peace under the most dire of situations. They are expected to spread American values, even in countries where American values are not understood. I have had my doubts in my service. Some mornings I would lie on my rug-mat wondering if I could face another difficult day. Then I would. I would not give in to the lethargy or pessimism that invades an anxious mind. I had to realize my insecurities, find them hidden under a falsehood of arrogance, and confront them. I woke up hungry, not complacent. I felt the effects of the sun, of illness, of the fragility of my own existence. I suffered from a daunting anxiety and an honest compassion. Faced with so many mixed emotions, self-doubt and fear, I persevered—not only determined to complete my service and duty to the greatest extent of my abilities, but also to carry on this duty to humanity every day of my life.

It took me six months to understand the basics of Tashelheet, the ancient Moroccan Berber language. I could not use English. Communication, by any means, was necessary. This meant using Tashelheet, French, Moroccan Arabic, pictures, and body language to communicate with my Moroccan host family. Since I knew only high school French and a little Moroccan Arabic, pictures, Tashelheet, and body language became my main methods of communication. As time went on I grew confident. The locals said, “You don’t know anything,” fewer times. They began to say, “You speak Tashelheet. Have some tea.” Studying and consistency earned me respect in the village. People appreciated that I learned the local language that so few foreigners even knew existed. My confidence in my communication abilities facilitated the work I came to accomplish.

It was working in a small village addressing health issues one person at a time that has made the most lasting impression on my experience. I would work with my local association daily in order to bring them to a sustainable capacity. I taught project design, development, education methods, and computer skills. Through my work with my local association, we built nearly one hundred latrines in four villages. The project greatly

improved the sanitation of the villages. Their continued efforts for community health led us to host the first rural HIV/AIDS conference in my province.

Serving in the Peace Corps presents a battle within oneself, a battle with traditions set for thousands of years, and a battle of understanding cultural differences and compassion for humanity. The most joys you will feel are from accomplishments that only one or two other people know about. This is the modest reward you will receive throughout your service. The Peace Corps experience is realizing the limitations of an impoverished people trying to work toward development, the limitations set upon you, and the change one person can implement.

—Paul L. Negley Jr.

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Dear Future Volunteers,

Wow! You made it to Peace Corps/Morocco! First of all, I want to say congratulations to you for making this commitment. It will certainly be a life-changing 27 months and I hope you have come here with an open mind and willingness to experience just about anything! I am glad we were given the opportunity to write to you all because I definitely have a few thoughts to pass on to you. When I think back to my arrival here in Morocco, I am amazed at how much I have experienced. Now don't get me wrong...it's been a journey full of ups and downs but the good has definitely outweighed the bad.

Your first three months in-country are extremely stressful and busy. You are basically learning a new culture, a new language, and all of the policies/procedures of Peace Corps/Morocco. My advice during pre-service training is to take it one day at a time and remember that there is an end to it! Language learning is hard and stressful but absolutely necessary for survival. But like anything else, developing your language takes ALOT of time and everyone goes at a different pace. Don't get discouraged if you are not a master right away

or even nine months down the road...it will come (and believe me...I am the worst at language and if it can happen for me... it will happen for you!). The only way that I have found to learn language is to throw yourself into things, make a million mistakes, and learn as you go. The real learning starts when you get to your final site and you are on your own! It's kind of a sink-or-swim situation and you will be amazed at how your language skills will improve! My one piece of advice through training, aside from trying to study your language, is to make time for yourself...training is stressful enough and making time for yourself is crucial...whatever it is that you do to de-stress or whatever it is that you do for yourself...you need to make sure you make time for those things during and even after training....for me, it's my music and writing in my journal and going for long walks. Being good to yourself mentally, physically, and spiritually is crucial for every phase of your service.

As funny as it sounds, training does fly by as does your first six months....try and enjoy the ride, both the good and bad! The greatest support you have in-country comes from other Volunteers and from your programming staff....don't be afraid to reach out for help if you need it! The first six months are the hardest but once you get through it, it's smooth sailing from there. The challenge is just to get through homestay, introduce yourself to your community, and start looking at the needs of your community. It's all about networking and working on communication during the first six months and believe me....that is enough work! You do have a lot of down time during those first six months, but that is completely normal. We all went through it! And the best tip I could ever offer any of you is this: be flexible and laugh a lot! So many things about this culture and it's people are completely different from anything you have probably ever experienced before...you will definitely go through your own share of frustrations but it's up to you as to how you handle them. If I had known then what I know now, I would have told myself to relax, laugh, and let things flow...it's all part of the ride, ya

know? This truly is the toughest job you'll ever love and I am so happy to have you in our Peace Corps/Morocco family...

Marhaba and good luck with everything!

—Stacey Ferguson

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Salam Alaykum (peace be with you), (Just a quick note, memorize that phrase, it will come in handy.)

So you're on your way to Morocco? Welcome to "the cold country with the hot sun." A country full of contradictions, some which you will learn to love and some that you will not. This is a country with so much diversity it's extremely hard to sum up in one letter. I just completed my first year as a maternal/child health (MCH) Volunteer in the Kelaa M'Gouna region of the Ouarzazate Province. I have never felt so welcomed and part of another community but, at the same time, completely baffled by some of the things that make Morocco, well, Morocco.

When I first learned I would be doing my Peace Corps service here, I was pretty sure I would be in the desert, riding a camel. (I hate riding live animals, but I figured I could compromise). (One more note: learning to be patient and compromise are invaluable skills in this country.) And, sure enough, I was placed somewhere that was nothing like my preconceived notion of what the next two years of my life would be like. I was placed in this amazing valley where two rivers converge, which is also known as the Valley of the Roses. And thankfully, camels are not the preferred mode of transportation. Instead, we pack nine people in a taxi made for six. But you will also quickly learn to forget you have a personal bubble.

I could have been placed near Essaouria, just a short taxi ride from a windswept beach or I could have been placed just a few hours north just over the High Atlas that loom above my current site and found myself immersed in the green lushness of the Azilal Province. I guess this is the time to note again another aspect of Morocco's diversity, and that is significant weather differences. Mid-summer days are blazing hot here, the sun is intense (conservative clothing is a must so I suggest

bringing synthetic clothes as they are lightweight and easy to wash; be prepared to wash everything by hand) but at night it can really cool off. It is key to pack layers. I'll say it again—layering is good, fleece, silk long underwear, hats, gloves, and good socks. And winters, winters are cold. Once you leave America, say goodbye to central heating, your little mud hut or cement apartment will never warm up in the winter.

As a MCH Volunteer, I work closely with the local *sbitar* (clinic), which has one nurse and one doctor for approximately 14,000 people. Despite the daunting number (not all sites are like this), my main objective here is to increase health awareness for women and children. The topics are as diverse as the country. One day I will do informal sessions about birth control to nomad women who have stopped our driver while on a vaccination drive. Another day I will work with one of the local associations to organize a TB awareness day in honor of World TB day. (This was a fun one. It was a day filled with education, done by my nurse about proper hand-washing as well as the importance of keeping a clean house and going to the clinic if you show symptoms. We also handed out a lot of soap.) Another day I will work with my site mate to give out AIDS information in my *souk* town (the place where you can buy all of the fresh vegetables and other supplies you could want) at the annual rose festival. Again the recurring theme is diversity.

There is a lot of work to be done here; however, life is not always busy. Morocco operates on a completely different time frame. Most things you will need mid-day, like shops, cybercafés, and banks, will be closed during the lunch “hour,” which is actually from 12 noon to 3 p.m.. You will have down time, sometimes more time than you will know what to do with. But this gives time for studying language, visiting with neighbors (while you consume massive amounts of tea), and, of course, personal growth time and the chance to take up knitting, yoga, or whatever else you have always wanted to do but never had the time. My personal remedy to this was to reach outside of the MCH boundaries and begin teaching a beginners’ English class for local girls, as well as the above-mentioned activities.

Morocco is difficult to sum up, but, please remember this: Morocco is diverse. You will find an extremely helpful taxi driver and around the corner a *souk* vendor who will try to charge you double for your couscous pot. You may speak a single sentence that includes a French noun, an Arabic verb and Tamazight adjective. You will be sweating mid-day in Ouarzazate, but freezing at night near Azrou. You may be a health Volunteer, but find that what your community really needs is some environmental education. You will find joy in having your Berber name yelled out when someone invites you for tea, and you will find frustration when you can't quite communicate what you want. You will have such a rollercoaster ride of emotions but that is part of what makes it an adventure. It's a hard country to prepare for but, bring an open mind, be ready to compromise, and pack layers.

Ar membad (until later). Here's to testing yourself and immersion in the moments, both amazing and not!

—Christi Jele

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Welcome Youth Development Trainees!

I am an youth development Volunteer in Tighassaline, a larger-sized village in the Middle Atlas of Morocco, 300 kilometers from Marrakech and 192 kilometers from Fez. The beauty that surrounds me never ceases to amaze. The natural landscape of the mountains, the rivers, and green fields full of life, never lose their appeal. I live on the top floor in a two-family home and the view from our roof is spectacular. If I weren't afraid of lizards and geckos, I would spend more time up there, but what am I to do? Let me tell you that I am ridiculously afraid of the creatures. People ask me all the time why I joined Peace Corps if I am so afraid. I think to myself and tell some, "I sure didn't join to make friends with geckos." I work in the *dar chebab* (youth center), the village association Asodet, and the Neddi (women and girls' center). I teach boys, girls, and women English and I lead three aerobics classes. What makes my service so fulfilling thus far is that I can be creative and do many different things. I never get bored

with just teaching English. If I find myself doing so, I can just change activities and try something new with my students.

I think that what makes me so happy and enthusiastic about living and working in Tighassaline is because I am well-integrated. It wasn't easy winning the hearts of people, and it is something that I work at every day for my safety and sanity. I make a conscious effort to spend a lot of time visiting family after family, including my students' houses. When doing so, I drink a lot of tea and eat a lot of food and pastries so I don't insult them. To this day, when I am out and about, I speak and smile to people as I pass by and that makes a big difference. Integration is a continuous process in my eyes. People where I live can see that I truly am here to help them, no strings attached.

When I am not teaching English or doing aerobics, I paint vases, take care of my flowers, read, and organize other events for youth and adults. One event that I planned at the spur of the moment was an activity the day before Morocco was to play Tunisia in the African Cup. I was appalled that my community wasn't doing much to celebrate this amazing accomplishment. I went to a local city, bought some red/green garland, a banner with the Moroccan flag, red and green tape, and permanent markers. I hung the banner from my kitchen window to my neighbor's roof and hung the garland from the kitchen window. People passed by and gave me thumbs up. Kids started coming by asking for me to give them something to celebrate with. I wrote on two children's hands with a red marker and was approached by 10 more. I told those few kids to come to the dar chebab the following day.

Little did I know that it would be such a wonderful turnout! When I arrived, I was amazed to see that my *modeer* (counterpart) and a co-worker had transformed the gym into a movie theater for the children to watch the soccer match. They had taken my idea and run with it. They had made sheets into bandannas and drew stars on them to tie around the kids' heads. I set up my table and word here traveled fast as the 15 kids turned into more than 200. I drew on the kids' foreheads, arms, etc. and gave them garlands to make

bracelets. When the garlands ran out, we used red and green tape. Before I knew it the gym was filled with more than 250 kids. My *modeer*, who tried to end the activity early because the kids wouldn't be quiet, was soon passing out tape for bracelets and writing on kids' faces. Both co-workers, and at least nine other people, were all helping to make sure no child was left out. In the end, every child had something. The game started two hours later, I was tired, out of tape, garland, markers, and I left the rest of the partying up to them and went home.

The day was amazing and I will never forget the smiles and laughs on the children and the adults' faces. I never heard my name being called so many times. They thanked me and I felt proud that such a small idea made such a big difference. Who knew the power of tape, garland, and markers! To this day, little girls scream my name and run up to me to give me a kiss. The guys just call my name and try to speak a little English or mimic me in a make-believe tongue. It is a good feeling when you make others feel good.

—Danielle Pinkston

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The life of a Moroccan youth development Volunteer is, if anything, exciting. What do I do? you might ask. Anything and everything! For fun, I like to visit friends. We dance and trade recipes. I go to the café with my tutor and talk with the other teachers. I share a passion for Bollywood movies with the four girls who live across the street and often watch those films with that family. They treat me like another sister. I go for long walks and am often accosted by small children intrigued by my appearance and the rumors that they've heard about me.

"Are you from America?" "Do you speak Arabic?" They bombard me with questions and dare each other to touch me or my clothes. The bolder ones ask for money, while I smile and begin to ask them questions: What's your name? Why don't you come to the *dar chebab*? And in this way my free time becomes fun work!

In my opinion I have one of the best jobs in the world because I am free to be as creative as I want and also because I can see the fruit of my work almost immediately. I teach English to youth and adults at a youth center, women's center, and an orphanage. These are the people I see almost every day. I feel and see their kisses, smiles of encouragement and words of appreciation each time I explain, help, and encourage them. I have also led AIDS awareness seminars, led activities at camps, had student teas, and inspired numerous development projects in the town of Tiflet. I never do anything on my own; I let my enthusiasm for the projects spill over into my community until it becomes their own.

I was with my tutor discussing my work at the orphanage when his wife asked me what kind of conditions the kids live in. I described to her the clean but humble surroundings, filled with kids who were well taken care of, but often dirty and wearing threadbare clothing. The boys all come from impoverished or broken homes, and their bare necessities are all that is covered by the orphanage. My tutor's wife organized a food and clothing drive with the students at the private school where she teaches because she said I inspired her to be a part of the development in her town. I was happy and surprised to be there as her students shyly distributed clothes, food, and candy to the equally shy and appreciative boys of the orphanage. I was even more surprised when everyone turned to thank me at the end of the visit! Sometimes doing work here means being an inspiration to a community in need.

I also support my community by attending events planned by other people. Listening to their thoughts and opinions as well as spending quality time at other homes is important to my integration, and probably the main reason I have been successful here. People call out to me in the street and ask me where I'm going and where I've been. I have been invited to people's homes so many times for lunch that I would not ever have to cook lunch for eight months if I chose to do so! This country is full of some of the most welcoming and kind people I have ever met. But everytime I say they are nice, they always respond that my behavior is what enabled them to treat

me this way. There has never been a greater incentive to treat others as you would like to be treated!

As a result of my integration, I hear my name shouted by kids and adults all day. It is a little annoying sometimes, but I love the fact that they know me or want to know me because of the work I do. I have overcome so many boundaries here, and I have the courage to wave and shout, “*Salaam*,” right back. With a lot of time and hard work I have earned the love and respect of my community. I am a Peace Corps Volunteer—and I can do anything....

—Tia Tucker

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Many of my friends thought I was crazy when I announced I was ending a 20-year journalism career to join the Peace Corps. I reasoned that I was actually coming to my senses. Having originally abandoned the idea shortly after graduating from college, I reacquired the taste after working with at-risk youth on a volunteer basis. I didn't know where I would end up or what language I would be speaking, I just knew that I wanted the experience of working with youth in an atmosphere that was totally foreign to me. Putting my house and many of my household possessions on the market and saying goodbye to family and longtime friends was difficult, but the rewards have far outweighed the sacrifices.

After three months of training, I was assigned to live and work in El Menzel, Morocco. A beautiful village known for its olive trees, El Menzel is about 50 miles southeast of one of the country's largest cities, Fez, in Morocco's mid-Atlas Mountains. It is nestled within a valley surrounded by rolling hills. I have my own self-designated rock at the top of one such hill south of my apartment, where I often take a midday jaunt and settle down to enjoy a book and the amazing view overlooking my village.

As a youth development Volunteer, I work at a *dar chebab* (youth center), where my duties include teaching English to “kids” typically ranging from age 6 to 23. I even have a 45-

year-old primary school teacher who comes periodically with one of his 8-year-old students. Hearing a third-grader correct his teacher's English pronunciation is quite amusing, but the teacher takes no offense since the same 8-year-old often corrects my mispronounced Arabic.

I also lead various clubs at my *dar chebab* and the neighboring *Lycee* (high school), ranging from a running club that involves just two Moroccan teens who regularly outpace me on our runs into the mountains, to a large American flag football club that has attracted as many as 30 youth at a time. The football club was launched shortly after a trip to Morocco's capital. In December 2005 I stood near a storefront window in Rabat, contemplating whether to spend 500 dirhams (about 50 U.S. dollars) for the only American football I had seen in Morocco or to use the money to help furnish my apartment in El Menzel. Fortunately, the child in me won and I bought the pigskin.

Inevitably becoming one of my most valued possessions in Africa, the football has been used to help break down a communication barrier and bring smiles to the faces of many in the community. While it has been difficult to convince the players that American football isn't rugby, I've made headway and have since benefitted from a flag football kit sent by former Peace Corps Volunteer Michael McCaskey, president of the Chicago Bears. Upon first seeing my football, three Moroccan teens playfully took turns at pretending to peel the ball and eat it like a watermelon before I showed them how to pass it. More kids began to encircle us and adults from a neighboring *hanut* (market) would join in until there were upwards of 20 of us standing on a dusty narrow alley tossing the ball. They looked on in disbelief as I spun the ball on the ground until it would stand on its end and everyone insisted upon taking a try at the trick. I laughed and talked with the adults as the kids continued to toss and kick the ball around and more friends were made.

I have since become a fixture in El Menzel. The odd looks some of the villagers would direct my way upon my arrival have been replaced by the long warm greetings that are

standard in a Muslim community. Making sure to frequently visit the local *hanuts* and cafes when I first arrived in El Menzel, I quickly came to know many of the vendors and fellow customers. I still recall a gentleman who would walk by one of my favorite cafes as I sat with a cup of tea. He would stop and stare at me for minutes, perhaps attempting to determine if I was some wayward tourist who had gotten lost on the way to Fez. Finally, after seeing him stop for the third or fourth time, I called out to him in my broken Arabic, inviting him to sit and have a cup of tea with me. He is now one of many Moroccan friends who sit and joke with me, sharing stories about our two native countries.

In the wake of 9/11, Peace Corps' two latter goals (to help promote a better understanding of the American people on the part of the peoples served; and to help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of the American people) appear to hold even more value in a Muslim community. Like many Americans, I was largely uneducated about the Muslim faith upon leaving the U.S. and, sadly, much of what continues to be heard about the Arab world is limited to the violence that makes its way to television.

Immediately upon arriving in Morocco, I was welcomed without restraint. A Berber family of 11 in the village of Boulemane would serve as my host for six of my first eight weeks in the country and introduced me to Moroccan hospitality. Constantly saying "*kul, kul*" (eat, eat) to me as I sat with them around a table that came to our knees, they insisted that the largest portion of couscous or other traditional Moroccan fare be pushed my way.

I lived with that host family during Ramadan, marking the complete abstinence from food and drink from daybreak to sunset for an entire month. Immediately following Ramadan is the "little feast," with everyone staying up late in the hopes of hearing the announcement from the mosque that the new moon has been sighted to signal the end of fasting. My host family gave me a *jellaba* to wear the following day as we

walked the village and congratulated others on breaking the fast. We would spend the day sharing cookies, dates, and other sweets, accompanied by the ever-present Moroccan tea.

I learned about the value Moroccans place upon relationships. They welcomed me as a member of the family and always made sure to include words of blessing for my family in America.

Using the marvel of the Internet, I have told those at home about how warmly I have been received, attempting to help fulfill the Peace Corps goal of helping Americans understand more about those being served. There have been obstacles along the way, including the task of adjusting to a turkish toilet after over 40 years of sitting on a Western stool. There was the language blunder that found me ordering *kebda* (goat liver) on a piece of pizza instead of *kefta* (lamb meat). There were the winter nights when I would huddle under three blankets, wearing two layers of clothes and a stocking cap as I watched my breath in the near freezing air, grumbling to no one in particular, "Isn't Africa supposed to be hot?" There was the ankle I turned during a game of soccer that Moroccans obviously play much better than I. There was the time I was chased onto a high wall by two wild dogs as they nipped at my feet before two Moroccan teens came to my rescue with rocks in hand. There were the initial bouts of diarrhea, a rash and an upset stomach that initially refused to adjust to food without preservatives.

There continues to be the bantering for goods at the local *souk* (open market) and the nighttime cackling of roosters who still haven't figured out that they need to save those vocal cords for the morning. There are also the *hammams* (public bathing houses) where one walks to take a bucket bath due to the absence of heated plumbing in one's home. However, the children's smiles highlight the many positives that continue to push aside any obstacles.

Some Volunteers look upon Peace Corps as an opportunity to enhance a resume or delay their pursuit of a career, which is fine, but many more go to another country because they

truly believe in the three Peace Corps goals. Inevitably, there are those who become homesick and find themselves counting the days to when their service will come to an end. Meanwhile, I find myself valuing the days I have remaining in what has become my second home—Morocco.

—Mark Huffman

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Welcome Environment Trainees !

So you signed up for an adventure. A big unknown. And soon you'll be shipping off to Morocco, a place you probably know little about. If I could tell you something to prepare you, to make the transition cleanly and the work easy, I would. But unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on your perspective) there are no magic words or Cliff Notes that can bring the realities of your future Peace Corps experience into your life at this moment.

When you arrive in Morocco, the first three months will be spent in pre-service training (PST; get used to acronyms), a crash course designed to prepare you for service. You will discuss everything from tree-planting to hygiene to understanding Moroccan gestures to dealing with stress. You will study language intensively—about four hours a day. And you will spend much of your time with a family in a small village to become accustomed to life here. It is a good training program and will introduce you to many skills that are needed for effective service. The format of PST includes: hands-on/ experiential training, lectures, discussions, small group work, individual exercises, interviews, homestay and more. The three months are full—most days begin at 8 a.m. and go until 6 p.m. or later in the evening, six days a week. There will be much new information to absorb and many new experiences on which to reflect. You will also be getting to know a new group of interesting people. Think about it—who would leave everything in the U.S. to spend two years in Morocco? You and who else? It is a very intense period and if you get through it you'll be eager to start things on your own in your site.

But don't think that at the end of training you will be fully prepared to accomplish "your mission." Peace Corps experience is one long adventure with unexpected turns from beginning to end. Just when you think you understand something—the something changes. Or more accurately, you didn't understand it in the first place. When you think your project is a great success, it falls apart. Then your other project (the one you dropped because it fell apart) comes back to life and is a success. The meeting that you've been planning for weeks doesn't happen, but the next day a spontaneous gathering yields more than you had hoped for. Prepare to be stretched. Prepare to feel aimless. Prepare to open your mind. Don't assume anything and don't expect too much.

Language, whether you will learn Arabic or Berber, will likely become one of your biggest challenges. In most sites, the new language will be vital for you to fit in and be effective, but it will take months before you are conversational. Anything you can do now, such as learning the Arabic alphabet or starting to memorize greetings, will be a great help. In addition, try and read a few books from the reading list, especially, *Culture Shock: Morocco, and Understanding Arabs*. Also check out the Morocco Peace Corps discussion group at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pcvmorocco/>. There you can contact current and former PCVs who served in Morocco. It is full of discussions on packing lists, things to expect, and stories from the field. But before posting, spend some time reading the archives; your questions may have been answered before.

Another issue to consider is the travel restrictions that have come about due to post 9/11 security concerns and other reasons. Essentially, in addition to the two vacation days per month, you are allowed to be out of your site for one night twice a month. Other than that (and infrequent medical or work-related travel), you are expected to be in your site at all times. From many sites it takes considerable time to get to the closest city, and thus it can be difficult to travel very far. For some current Volunteers this is a challenging restriction. If you are concerned, now is the time to consider if you will be able to make these sacrifices.

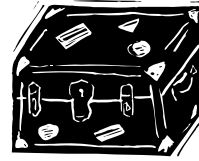
If you have read the above challenges and are still excited about coming to Morocco, then there are a few things you can expect when you get here. Do expect generous hospitality and to be treated like family. Do expect to make some great friendships among PCVs and Moroccans. Do expect to explore mysterious cities and beautiful countryside. Do expect to surprise yourself by mastering new skills (such as bargaining and hand-washing your clothes). Do expect to miss your home and family, but also expect to be a part of a community and create a home different from anything else you've experienced. Expect to play a part in your community's ongoing dialogue to help them help themselves. Expect challenges. Expect rewards.

—Adam Wilson

NOTES



PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Morocco and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything we list, so consider those items that make the most sense personally and professionally. One of the most difficult tasks in preparing for Peace Corps service is deciding what to pack and what to leave behind. This generally involves a gradual whittling-down process as more and more items shift from the “Necessities” list to the “If There’s Room” list. Remember that you can get almost everything you need in Morocco and can always have things sent to you later.

General Clothing

Remember that Morocco gets very cold in the winter and layering is important!

- Lightweight, waterproof jacket (e.g., a windbreaker)
- Heavy jacket or waterproof shell to wear over layers
- A few sweatshirts, fleece tops, or sweaters for cool evenings
- Bathing suit
- Bandannas or handkerchiefs (indispensable for dusty road trips)
- Several long skirts/dresses or pairs of khaki trousers (though it is acceptable for women to wear trousers, it is not the norm to teach or attend professional meetings in them)
- Long-sleeved shirts

- Knee-length dressy shorts
- Athletic shorts (for sports or leisure time at home only)
- Several pairs of jeans
- One dressy outfit
- Sweatpants or leggings to wear under long skirts (not Lycra, which is hot and inappropriate)
- T-shirts (without controversial slogans on politics, drugs, or sex)
- A favorite hat
- Wool or fleece scarves and gloves
- Thermal underwear

Shoes

- Sturdy sandals
- All-purpose shoes (which you can walk, run, or bike in)
- Sneakers or hiking boots
- For women, one pair of dress shoes, preferably flat

Miscellaneous

- Two lightweight towels
- Water bottle (e.g., Nalgene)
- Coleman camp shower
- Hand wipes
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- One or two sets of double-sized bedsheets and pillowcases
- Compact umbrella (can be bought in Morocco)
- Backpack for day trips
- Swiss Army knife, Leatherman, or the equivalent
- Travel alarm clock (battery-operated)
- Bicycle gloves (if you use them at home)

- Duct tape (you would not believe all of its uses)
- Pocket-size dictionary and thesaurus
- Maps (good for traveling and wall hangings)
- Plenty of pictures of your home, family, and friends
- Money belt or other means to conceal your passport and valuables when traveling
- Favorite music, CDs or tapes
- Frisbee, hacky sack, and travel-sized games (Yahtzee, cards, Uno, etc.)
- Sleeping bag and pad
- Art supplies
- Lightweight exercise equipment (e.g., jump rope, yoga items)
- Sticky tack to attach photos and artwork to walls
- Incense
- Journals
- Postcards from home to share

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

All of the following items are available in Morocco, but they are sometimes expensive and may not be of the quality you are used to.

- Razors
- Shaving cream
- Contact lens solutions (Bausch & Lomb's Renu brand is available in the capital; if you require a special brand, bring a two-year supply because the Peace Corps does not provide contact lens supplies)
- Makeup
- Scissors or other hair-cutting device (there is usually at least one Volunteer in a group who can cut hair)
- Lotion (Lubriderm is provided by the Peace Corps upon

request, and Vaseline Intensive Care and Nivea are available locally)

- Lip balm (Chapstick comes in the medical kit, but you may want to bring a different brand)
- Tampons (available in large cities for a price)
- Three-month supply of any prescription drugs you take (to last until the medical unit at the Peace Corps can order them)
- Two pairs of prescription eyeglasses, if you wear them; also consider bringing a repair kit
- Any favorite brands of personal hygiene products (shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, deodorant, etc.)

Kitchen

You can easily buy most kitchen supplies—dishes, pots, glasses, and utensils—in Morocco. There are, however, a few items we highly recommend bringing:

- Plastic food storage bags (freezer bags are best)
- Favorite spices
- French coffee press (if you drink coffee)
- Favorite cookbook (you can purchase a Volunteer-produced cookbook filled with recipes using locally available ingredients in-country)

Miscellaneous

- Laptop computer (be sure to insure it, and bring a good surge protector and backup disks to fix any software problems); a flash drive is optional but very useful for carrying large files.
- Good-quality adapter for electronic gadgets (Morocco uses 220 volts)
- Electric or solar-powered battery charger and rechargeable batteries

- Camera supplies (a variety of film types is available in the large cities, but the quality of film processing may vary)
- Shortwave radio, for listening to programs on the VOA and the BBC
- Discman with speakers (can be bought in Morocco for about the same prices as in the United States)
- Flashlight (a small Maglite is great, but bring extra bulbs; or an LED flashlight, the bulbs last longer and take less energy)
- Hand-held tape recorder (to record language lessons or tapes of your voice to send home).

Sector Specific Suggestions

Small Business Development Volunteers (SBD):

While SBD sites range from small villages to larger cities, almost all SBD Volunteers have electricity and running water. If you have an iPod or portable CD player, bring it with you. CD players can be purchased here, but the quality is not always good. Electrical appliances can be charged with an adapter, which you can buy in the States or here in larger towns. Most SBD Volunteers bring laptops with them. Laptops are great not only for personal entertainment, but also can save lots of time sitting in the cybercafe. SBD Volunteers often create business cards, brochures, and other promotional materials as part of their jobs, and having your own computer is a great help. Surge protectors can be purchased here.

It may be useful to bring any examples of work you have done, such as cards, brochures, or anything related to small business. When creating these materials for your Moroccan counterparts, it helps to be able to show samples to people. Also, bringing some home decor magazines, craft magazines, etc. can be helpful when dealing with product development.

You may want to bring a few simple office supplies with you, although most can be purchased here. Paper, pens, markers, and even something like a hole-punch can come in very handy.

Don't stress too much about the business casual clothing suggestion. Although you do want to look presentable, business casual here is not necessarily the same as in the U.S. Khakis, long, loose-fitting skirts, and light blouses and shirts are great for the warmer months. Although women do not wear shorts and rarely wear short-sleeved shirts, don't leave all of them at home, as you will definitely want to be cool and comfortable around the house in the summer.

Do bring lots of warm clothes, and things that are easily layered. You may find yourself wearing all your sweaters at once during the colder months! Homes are not well insulated, and most often not heated, so the temperature inside is the same as outside (sometimes colder). Clothes do take a beating here, so the more durable the better. Hiking boots or shoes, and Chacos or Tevas in the summer are invaluable.

Bring a few things that will make you feel at home. Pictures, favorite books and/or music, and things like playing cards can be lifesavers. Also, bring a good supply of any toiletries you really need, particularly specialty items. Packages almost always get here, but remember they usually take a month to arrive, which can be a long wait for your favorite toothpaste. Most things can be bought here, but if you have something you can't live without, bring some with you.

Health Volunteers:

Health sites in Morocco are all over the spectrum, from being on a main road, having hot water, satellite TV, and DSL in the house to being a few hours away from a main city on limited transportation, with no running water or electricity. For the most part, health sites tend to be more rural and in small

villages. All but a handful of the sites have electricity. Some sites only have running water for a few hours a day; some have to rely on wells or public fountains.

Many health Volunteers have laptops, DVD players, iPods and speakers, camera equipment, and many other electronic gadgets. These things make life easier and help pass the time, but are not necessary. Some Volunteers buy CD players or speakers here (quality may not be as good) and just bring CDs with them. It is a good idea to bring some simple art supplies, too (construction paper, colored pencils, markers, etc.).

Bring clothing that is comfortable but keeps you covered. Some sites are very conservative; generally T-shirts are ok, but shorts are not. Women in small villages almost always wear long skirts, although this is not a must for female Volunteers. Pants (as long as they are not tight) are fine. It is a good idea to bring one nice outfit for special occasions, like your swearing-in ceremony, or if you just want to get dressed up and head into a city, where people are much less conservative.

The most important thing to remember is not to stress too much about packing. Most Volunteers rush out and buy a lot of new clothes and gadgets to take with them, and it's not necessary. Pack the basics, and any specialty items you know you'll want (certain toiletries, a favorite sweater, etc.), and the rest you can almost certainly get here. Best of luck and see you in Morocco!

Youth Development (YD) Volunteers:

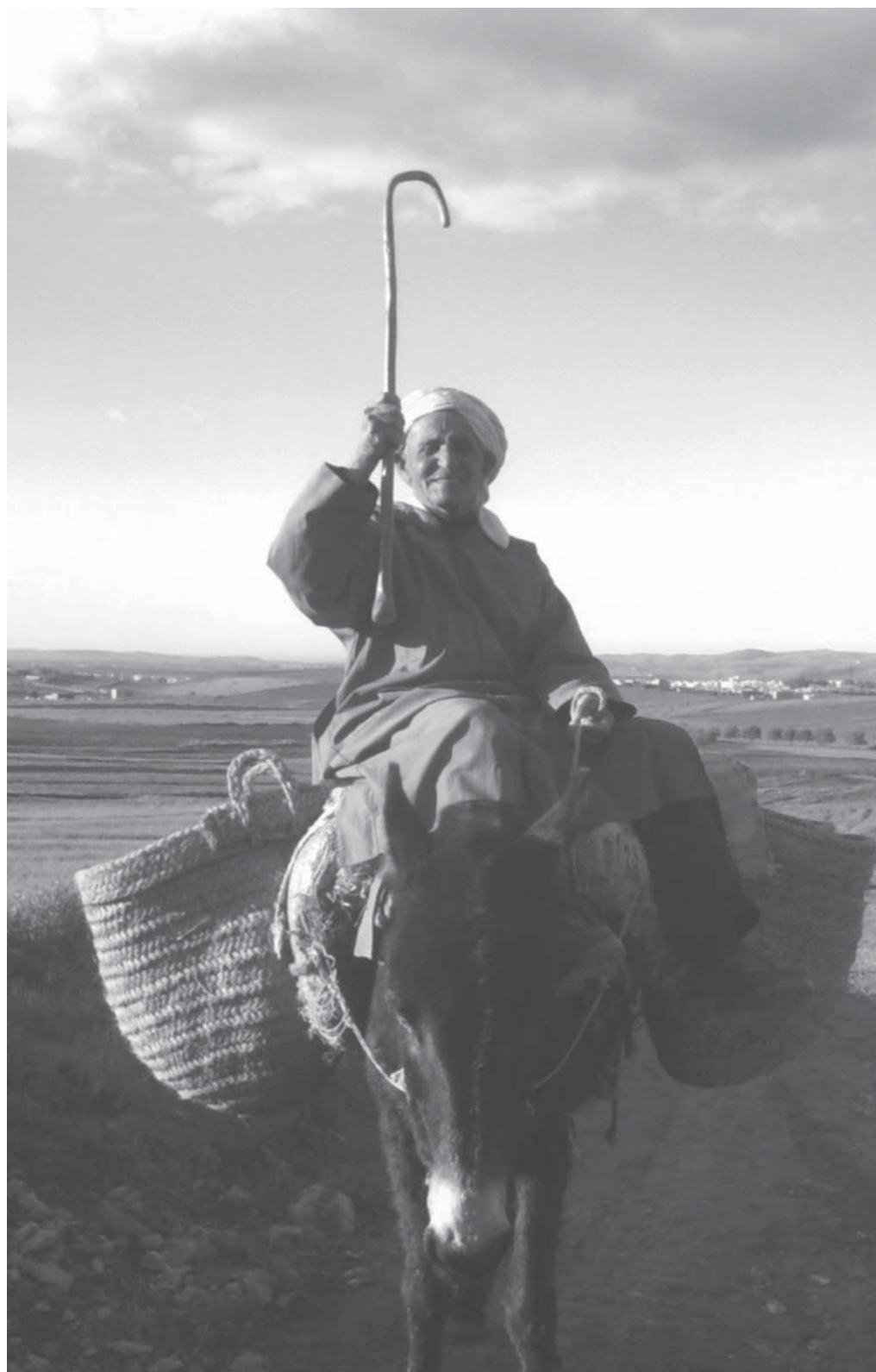
First, you will almost certainly have electricity and running water. Most of us are placed in fairly large sites with many amenities including cybercafes, post offices, and shops to buy most everything we might need for our houses and everyday lives. Many YD Volunteers choose to bring a computer with them, as it is helpful for typing monthly reports and

lesson plans, and if it has a DVD player, it can provide hours of entertainment during downtime. More and more, YD Volunteers have started to get Internet access in their houses, which can be a great way to keep in touch with friends and family back in the States, as well as to work more comfortably and conveniently. If you do decide to get Internet in your house, it will come out of your monthly living allowance and is not covered by Peace Corps, but it is something to consider when deciding whether or not to bring your computer.

In terms of clothing, you can wear jeans (not too tight) to almost any event, including teaching at the dar chebab, but it is nice to have a pair of pants/skirt for dressier occasions. As mentioned earlier, Morocco is deceptively cold in the winter and many evenings, so be sure to bring warm clothes and good layers. You might want to bring some basic supplies for teaching/activities, including art supplies, index cards (invaluable), markers, plays (if you're interested in doing theatre projects), music, cards, books, and either a CD player or iPod with small speakers (for playing music in class).

The most important thing to remember is not to stress too much about packing. Most Volunteers rush out and buy a lot of new clothes and gadgets to take with them, and it's not necessary. Pack the basics, and any specialty items you know you'll want (certain toiletries, a favorite sweater, etc.), and the rest you can almost certainly get here. Best of luck and see you in Morocco!

NOTES



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone, and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470; after-hours duty officer: 202.638.2574).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

- Forward all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas to the Peace Corps travel office.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while you are away. (Although the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have preexisting conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

Personal Papers

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

Voting

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

Personal Effects

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

Financial Management

- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.

- ❑ Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.
- ❑ Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- ❑ Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.



CONTACT PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



The following list of numbers will help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps toll-free number and extensions with your family so they have them in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

Peace Corps Headquarters

Toll-free Number:

800.424.8580, Press 2, then
Ext. # (see below)

Peace Corps' Mailing Address:

Peace Corps
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia Region	Ext. 1875	202.692.1875
Programming or Country Information	Desk Officer E-mail: morocco@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2421	202.692.2421
	Desk Assistant E-mail: morocco@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2422	202.692.2422

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 9-5 EST 202.638.2574 (after-hours answering service)

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