DARTMOUTH IN FEZ
A PRACTICAL FIELD GUIDE TO THE FASSI EXPERIENCE
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This guide is a product of the 1995 Dartmouth Foreign Study Program in Fez, Morocco and has been revised by the participants in the 2002 program. It is intended to guide and enhance the experience of future participants in the program.


Moustafa Boualone took the photographs on pages 4, 5, 6, 10, 14, 15, and 26 in 1995. All other photographs are property of the Moroccan National Tourist Board.

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A LITTLE HISTORY

Fez, the oldest of Morocco’s imperial cities, is an important religious, intellectual, and cultural center. It is renowned for its traditional crafts and, because of the extraordinary reputation of its religious university, it is known by many as the “Athens of Africa.” The population of Fez, which was 150,000 in 1940, currently stands at nearly a million. It is particularly dense in the medina, Fez el-Bali, and in Fez el-Jdid. The migration of the rural population into the city, combined with rapid population growth, has made Fez Morocco’s third-largest city.

The city has much to offer in terms of history and culture. There are treasures everywhere, from the newest cafés of the Ville Nouvelle to the oldest tanneries hidden in the heart of Fez el Bali. The city doesn’t yield its secrets easily and exacts a price for every treasure revealed. Fez is not quick and clean, nor is it easy to navigate. Its physical and social areas take time to discover and appreciate, and you must be patient and willing to adapt to often unfamiliar and slower-paced ways living.

City-dwelling Moroccans, led since 1999 by His Majesty King Mohammed VI, move from ultra-modern to ancient modes of doing things with the same ease and dignity that they shift from French to Arabic to Berber (and often English and Spanish). The country’s geographical location within eyesight of Europe, where hundreds of thousands of Moroccans work, and Morocco’s recent history have contributed to the cosmopolitan quality of the country and its people. Furthermore, it is a country of pronounced tolerance, where foreigners are normally held in high esteem and made to feel welcome.

Morocco, like many other countries in the region, is undergoing complex and often painful socio-cultural adjustments, the ramifications of which are exacerbated by economic strains, especially unemployment. On a psychological level, numerous Moroccans, especially the younger generation, are going through a kind of identity crisis in which they may be simultaneously attracted to and repelled by Western culture, which translates itself into uneven attitudes and, at times, moodiness. You are encouraged to show sensitivity and to avoid articulating too many comparisons between the United States and Morocco. Do not be surprised if many young
Moroccans seem to be pressing you for information about the possibilities of emigrating or finding work abroad.

**Linguistic Situation:**

The linguistic situation in Morocco is both fascinating and confusing. Although you will be studying colloquial, unwritten Moroccan Arabic, it is helpful to know what else to expect as far as language is concerned.

While both Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Colloquial Moroccan Arabic (CMA) derive largely from the same basic source (so-called Classical Arabic), they are in many ways two distinct languages. MSA is the language of the news media, written correspondence and documents, literature and formal speeches. As strange as it might sound, MSA is not a language spoken fluently by the majority of Moroccans. Though few educated Moroccans have difficulty reading Arabic and understanding Arabic news broadcasts, few of them feel truly confident in using it in oral communication. To further complicate matters for Dartmouth students wishing to practice their CMA outside of class, many Moroccan professionals have been educated in France or in a French mold, so that in discussing more intellectual or technical topics, they may have difficulty expressing themselves without resorting to French. It is not uncommon for a Dartmouth student trying to make conversation with a Moroccan in MSA to have unrealistic expectations about chatting in literary Arabic with the corner grocer—whose native language may in fact be Berber!

You should also be aware of the typical Moroccan attitude toward CMA: it is not regarded as a language in the formal sense of the word, and Moroccans may be quite bewildered by the fact that you are studying it in class. For them, only MSA is a written language with formal rules and conventions. They may express astonishment if they see you studying in ALIF CMA course books, and even make remarks suggesting that CMA is not “real” Arabic. In sum, educated Moroccans will speak CMA and French, and may be more comfortable in the latter. They will be able to read MSA and with effort converse in it. Some will know Berber. They may also know English. Less-educated Moroccans may have conversational French, English, Spanish, even Dutch, but will be most comfortable in CMA or Berber.
MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EXPERIENCE

The Moroccan sense of time has a qualitative side that easily frustrates American’s quantitative “time-is-money,” mentality. As a student with a full Dartmouth course load, you will need to learn to balance the tensions between time spent in course requirements, independent exploration of the city, and obligations to your host family. You must give yourself time to come to terms with your situation in a cultural setting that will undoubtedly cause some sense of confusion at the start. In this regard, you must be prepared for situations where you will not always be in control. You will not always get the best deal from a merchant, for example, or you may be startled or uncomfortable if someone starts scrubbing your back at the local hammam, or “Moorish” bath. Such experiences needn’t make you feel awkward or defensive, but can be taken as lessons to be mastered with time and practice.

Go with the flow, watch, and learn. Be aware that you are a foreigner and keep an open mind. You are in Fez to experience a unique sense of history, religion, and social world. Your values and sense of expectations are not the standards by which to judge your hosts. The people of Morocco have a distinct and age-old cultural-religious heritage of which they are proud. They cherish deep-rooted values and norms that may not coincide with your own, so it’s important to inform yourself about Moroccan culture. While you are not expected to agree with all of the culture’s attitudes and conventions, you will do well to express appreciation or to reserve judgment or at least avoid critical comment.
Urbanized Moroccans typically don’t open their doors without repeated contact. This gives them time to size you up. In fact, the Moroccan who approaches you in a friendly way in the street is, more often than not, some sort of hustler who wishes to sell something or make a commission on you from someone who has something to sell.

Generally speaking, Moroccans without a hidden commercial agenda are those you meet through your host family, friends of friends, or the American Language Center garden. Remembering this rule can spare you a lot of headaches and leave you more time to cultivate truly rewarding relationships.

Other Pointers:

Meet Moroccans. If you take the time and effort to get yourself to Morocco, use more time meeting Moroccans and less time chatting with other Americans. Be proactive: ask family members to take you to the medina, to show you places of significance to them, or to talk about particular issues. Find people to talk to who have some sense of perspective—there were lots of graduate students at the American Language Institute (ALIF) in 1995 who had great tales to tell and problem-solving experiences to share.

Speak up. Expect to have troubles, physical and emotional, and be willing to address them quickly. If you suspect that there’s something off-base in how your host family treats you, bring up the issue with ALIF and the program leader immediately. This includes family life where there is very little conversation or interaction—hardly an ideal language-learning environment! Living abroad is a challenge, and you don’t want to remain in disadvantageous situations for long. You also should avoid taking an illness or eating disorder over there with you (or picking one up while there). You don’t have to go through culture shock alone, but remember that you don’t have access to support that you would find on campus. Inform others about problems you are going through, but don’t complain. There is a balance to be struck between speaking up and complaining. Keep in mind that fatigue and culture shock reduce your body’s ability to deal effectively with stress.

Keep a journal. For the Fez FSP, keeping a daily journal of observations, questions, and thoughts is a course requirement. While sometimes tedious and time-consuming, journal keeping
will not only help you adjust to your experience abroad more quickly but will also be invaluable a few years down the line. It may be that the semi-public nature or the particular requirements of the field-notes journal make it less “therapeutic” than a regular diary. In that case, keep a private diary as well. But make the commitment to yourself before you get on the plane: Write. Write a lot!

**TRAVEL TO MOROCCO**

If you’re leaving from the U.S., Royal Air Maroc offers the easiest and most direct flight from New York’s JFK airport to Casablanca. From there you can take a short one-hour flight into Fez, or the train, with one connection from the airport. They take about five hours and are more of a hassle. We advise you to make your reservation with the other students in your group. It’s safer and more fun. Usually we arrange a van to pick up the students who arrive in Casablanca on a pre-arranged day.

If you’re planning to travel through Europe before the FSP, flights depart from London, Paris, Brussels, Frankfurt, and Madrid.

Given that the FSP is a rather rigorous program, it is probably best to travel in Morocco at the end of the term and not before. You need to be in good shape when you arrive in Morocco, or it will be difficult to keep up. Since minor stomach problems often occur in the first week, those who are well rested and prepared for the trip recover more quickly.
You will obviously need a passport and often a visa if you’re not a U.S. citizen. If you don’t have a passport or you need to renew it, do so right away. It takes a couple of months to get a new passport, so don’t wait until the last minute. You will not need any vaccinations to get into the country, but a vaccination against hepatitis is advised. If you can find it, a one year Hepatitis-A vaccination is safer than the kind that is valid for only ten weeks. Dick’s House offers a comprehensive medical guide sheet for students going abroad. The CDC website is also a valuable resource: http://www.cdc.gov/travel/

**WHAT TO PACK**

The basic rule of thumb is to bring nothing more than you can fit into a backpack. (The 2002 group agreed that you can get away with a wheeled suitcase, though it is inconvenient on cobbled streets.) We would suggest carrying everything on your back, rather than by tote or pull cart.

If a suitcase is what you have, just try to pack light. Don’t count on smooth, regular pavement or wheelchair-friendly curbs. In Fez, you need to keep hills in mind as well as distance, potholes, and mule droppings. You will find speeding cars and taxis, crazy motorcycle drivers, and horse-drawn carriages all on the same road. In this sense, the roads are a bit perilous. For your own safety, you’ll want to keep your eyes on the road, not on your luggage. Basically, you will need to carry luggage when you arrive, when you travel independently, on the group program travels, and when you depart. Also keep in mind that you might want to bring things back from Morocco, so leave a little space. You will be able to fit everything you need in a pack. Trust us. Library selections at the American Language Center are basic, but local bookstores carry some cheap books published in French. (There is also an English text bookstore and a little street market that sells used books near the American Center. If you’re a Spanish speaker, there is a Spanish center, El Instituto Cervantes, which has a useful library.)

**Books.** Make room for your course books first. These can be shipped back to the U.S. at the end of your stay. (Bring the books and tape to the post office. Enter the small building on the left that says in Arabic *tard* (parcel). They will provide you with a box and the customs forms; put the books in the box, and take them to the customs inspector. He signs the forms, then you take them back to the desk where you got the box, you seal it with tape and address it, then pay the postage.) Mailing your books will probably leave your pack a bit lighter. You may want to buy a small phrase book. The Moroccan Arabic phrase book published by Lonely Planet is helpful and fits easily in a coat pocket. Also consider bringing a French dictionary. ALIF will issue you a Moroccan dictionary along with your textbook. If you have studied MSA, bring along Wehr’s *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. (Keep in mind that classical Arabic and Moroccan Arabic are very different.)
**Computer.** In addition to books, you may benefit by bringing a laptop computer—if you are fortunate enough to own one. If customs officials see that you are carrying one into Morocco, however, you may be asked to have your computer recorded in your passport as you arrive in the country, so that its export is verified on departure. This ensures that you will not sell your computer in Morocco. Students in ’02 had no need of computers until it came time to write papers—then they were desperate for them. Some also wished they had been able to keep their diaries in the computer. It is something of a hassle to bring one, but when you want one, you want one. You will need to think about printing, and/or a way to transfer your files to a computer linked to a printer. Flash-memory drives can work well for this. For e-mail, check out the College web-based email programs before you go. The ’02 group went daily to one of several cyber-cafes around town and paid 5-7 dirhams to check their blitz.

**Money.** Most expenses are already covered by the program, so Fassi life should not be a drain on your wallet. When you treat yourself, a cheap dinner costs only about 50 dirhams ($4.50 U.S.), an expensive dinner 120DH ($11 U.S.). A café au lait may cost as much as 12DH, tip included. Internet costs 7-10DH an hour. On a typical day, you may spend a few dirhams on bus tickets, a couple on a Coke, and five on a glass of mint tea. On average, five dollars a day is a generous estimate for what you’ll spend living in Fez ($500 U.S. total). However, traveling out of the city on weekends will cost more. And you may want to bring additional money for shopping ($200 if you want to go on an extravagant shopping spree). Since you will be making many trips to the medina, you may want extra funds to buy souvenirs and gifts. Overall, this could turn out to be one of your cheapest Dartmouth terms! Hidden expenses and surprises are always a possibility, so we suggest having a major credit card and Cirrus debit card for security. A few travelers’ checks for security are a good idea too, perhaps in Euros.

*Caftans and tile mosaics in Boujad.*
Clothing. You won’t need much variety in your wardrobe, so bring as little as possible. It’s hot for part of the time, so have a couple pairs of light cotton slacks or lightweight skirts. On the other hand, when you come, it may be cool (in the 40s, Fahrenheit) and it also gets wet. You might want to bring an umbrella or a rain jacket and definitely a heavy sweater or winter coat; (nice) sweatshirts and sweatpants can be useful in the house. Be prepared to layer: Moroccans don’t necessarily heat their houses or offices in March, and it gets very cold inside and out.

Moroccan youths seem to especially like black Levis (or imitations), and the average student you encounter will wear the same clothes day after day. It becomes the identifying characteristic of a person in many cases—for example, “Do you know my friend Mustafa; he’s the guy that wears the orange shirt.”

Bring only items you can hand wash to save yourself hassle. Count on doing laundry yourself (though many families offer). Small bottles of detergent or bar soap can be found at almost any local store (hanut). Dress conservatively—long sleeves and long skirts—although conservative clothing doesn’t necessarily mean dressy clothing. Most people wear jeans and sweatshirts, and comfortable clothing is the best choice. In the hot weather people will wear short-sleeved shirts and jeans, but you rarely see shorts. A pair of shorts for around the house or apartment may be fine, but be aware of the norms of your family before you take anything for granted.

Sunglasses and a hat are helpful, but Moroccans seldom cover their heads with anything other than a jellaba hood or headscarf. More and more young men and laborers now wear baseball hats, and sunglasses seem fashionable. While tourists often strut around in shorts, short skirts, and tank tops, you are recommended to dress conservatively. Attention from Moroccan men may be flattering at first, but soon becomes annoying and tiresome.

When it’s hot, students felt it was ok to where short-sleeve blouses, but they really do need to be loose fitting or else you’ll draw unwanted attention. Some women found it comfortable to wear jellabas in the street so as to blend in. Remember you are staying with a family who will expect you to conform to their way of life, to a certain extent. After a few weeks in Fes you will be recognized as belonging to the neighborhood, especially in the medina, and people expect you
to respect their social customs. Hence, leave tank tops at home along with the shorts, and instead bring shirts with sleeves (t-shirts and short sleeved shirts are fine and perfect for warmer days).

Expect to do your laundry yourself, although many families have washing machines and dry cleaners often also offer regular washing. Detergent can be bought in any street corner store. Dry cleaners are widely available and cheap (about 15 DH for a pair of pants).

Furthermore, because Morocco is dry, your clothes will get dusty and dirty, so leave your expensive fabrics behind. You may need to dress up for a special occasion, whether a wedding with your family or a meeting with a government official or for a program dinner. For these events, men should bring nice pants, a shirt, and a tie. A skirt or dress pants with a blouse or a nice sweater is appropriate for women.

**Toiletries.** In addition to books and clothing, you may need sunscreen, anti-diarrhea medicine, aspirin or Tylenol, and cold medicine. If you take vitamins bring them. If you wear contacts, bring plenty of supplies and perhaps even a second pair. (Likewise for glasses.) You can buy soap, shampoo, toothpaste, and other toiletries at the local stores, but don’t expect to find many choices. Women should also bring plenty of feminine protection, as tampons are hard to find. If you plan to be sexually active—which we don’t advise—bring protection. Although many Moroccans are aware of the dangers of AIDS and other STDs, such issues tend to be swept under the carpet in socially conservative countries like Morocco.

**Supplies.** Other things to consider packing are a travel alarm clock, paper, notebooks, pencils, folders, and a pack of playing cards. These can be found at newsstands (along with stamps, postcards, popular “new Islamic” books, cookbooks, cigarettes, lighters, candy, and gum), but it can’t hurt to bring things of your own along. You might not be able to find a package of your favorite Papermate pens. Many students choose to bring gifts for their host families, a much appreciated gesture. Good gifts would be little things that hint of your home: a Dartmouth T-shirt, a picture book of the USA or your state, paperweight, mug, souvenir alarm clock or watch, small bottle of perfume, make-up, or even maple
syrup.

Your families will be very curious about life in the United States. They will ask you many questions, and they will ask to see pictures of your friends and family. Bring a few pictures of Dartmouth, your family, your friends or your hometown. (Screen out the pictures with beer cans and boyfriends or girlfriends in them.)

One of the most important things to pack is your curiosity. Moroccans are known for their exquisite cuisine and hospitality, which translates into great food and large quantities of it. Most families will push food at you until you say shbe’t (I’m full!).

Vegetarians may have a little difficulty avoiding meat, which is central to most meals. For some, “vegetarian” means “no chunks of meat,” and it will take some explaining to convince that meat broth, for example, counts as meat. Explaining in terms of “allergies” or “medical condition” seems to be effective here. Try to be sensitive and flexible, and most will be happy to accommodate you.

Moral support. Lastly, don’t forget to bring something that makes you happy —your phone card, Bible, book of poetry, last year’s letters from your sweetie, or what-have-you. Bring along some items to help you through moments in which you will feel isolated or crazy for going on this trip—whatever helps you deal with frustrations, loneliness, and disappointments. Matt carried around a heart-shaped stone given to him by a close friend. That, along with a book of daily readings and Sufi poems, did wonders. Jeneen made some mixed tapes before she left and spent hours in her room listening to music and singing to herself; she also brought running sneakers and tried to jog every other day. Consider your daily routines and figure out what small, easy items can help you with a sense of wholeness and happiness.
In Morocco

**ALIF**

Our affiliated institution in Fez is ALIF—The Arabic Language Institute-Fez. It is part of The American Language Center, where many Moroccans of all ages take English classes. The physical plant is a 1930’s-era villa, surrounded by a garden of date palms, orange trees, and, blue and white tile work. Situated near the center of the Ville Nouvelle, ALIF is both a school and a popular social space for local students. Coffee, tea, soft drinks, and snacks are also available at the concession stand. Our FSP arranges regular lunches in the garden. While you should expect to have all major meals with your family, lunch is available six days a week (excluding Sunday) at the ALIF concession stand. Lunch generally consists of a salad, tajine or couscous, fruit, and bread for 35 dirhams. Vegetarian offerings are available.

ALIF maintains a library for the exclusive use of its students. The catalogued collection includes works on the Arabic language, linguistics, North African and Arab studies, literature, and Islamic studies. Books are checked out with the librarian, who can also help you locate books on particular topics.

ALIF has a few computers available for student use, located in on the top floor. These are not well maintained, and are not connected to the Internet. You must provide your own 3.5” disk for personal documents. There is a charge for printing documents. Macintosh users may be able print documents at Sofafax, a nearby photocopy/fax shop.

The ALIF administration keeps valuables (travelers’ checkers, plane ticket) for you in a specially marked envelope in the ALIF safe.

Finally, ALIF staffs our courses and tutorials. The Director and Associate Director have shown themselves flexible and helpful. You are welcome to discuss life in Fez with them, and, in conjunction with the Dartmouth director, to bring them suggestions for programming and events.

**Homestays**

ALIF arranges homestays from a pool of families—most somewhat experienced with foreigners—in all sections of Fez. Due to the nature of the homestay program, it is not possible to
standardize the conditions in the homes of host families. While meals are part of the arrangement, families are not expected to depart from their standard diet, and homestay participants are not entitled to ‘order’ particular foods (unless for medical or religious/ethical reasons).

While families try to make due allowances for cultural differences, your comfort level and theirs will be increased if you acknowledge Moroccan household norms. You should keep the family informed of your schedule, and eat with them at most mealtimes (which will be noonish for the large mid-day meal, perhaps a gouté in the late afternoon, and another meal in the evening, perhaps at late as 10 or 11pm.) You should inform them of your travels, and make an effort to converse with them about families— theirs and yours, your studies and other topics. Politics and religion might be deferred until you all know each other well; even then, delicacy may be required, on your part, as well as receptivity and openness.

Unlocked bags in your host family’s household can be seen as fair ground for exploration, especially by children, who will be delighted to discover your Walkman, tapes, notebooks, or alarm clock. Most of the ‘02s found studying best done in the afternoon outside the home.

**BASICS**

**Electricity:** Some wall sockets in Morocco are only suitable for low-voltage appliances. Check you’re your host parents or the hotel before you plug in anything. Two-pin round plugs (European type) are the norm. Jeneen was able to use her host mother’s blow dryer and didn’t have to waste useful space in her backpack for small appliances that might not work in Morocco. If you intend to bring a computer to Fez, also bring an appropriate transformer. Most electricity in Fez is 220v, although some areas use 110v. Power supplies for many laptop computers automatically convert from 110v to 220v, but check before you leave the U.S.

**Newspapers:** The International Herald Tribune and the previous day’s edition of English newspapers are available in most large towns and cities.

**Money:** In Spring 2002 the U.S. dollar was worth about between 11.4 and 10.1 dirhams (DH). Although most guidebooks will tell you that you cannot buy Moroccan currency outside Morocco, Jeneen was able to exchange some money at JFK airport, and a few dirhams proved handy for random airport costs in Morocco.

Keep in mind that the dirham cannot be exchanged for foreign currency and cannot be taken out of the country, so spend all your money before you leave!
There are many ATMs but not all work all the time. Also, the keyboard can differ from the ones at home so make sure you know your password as numbers and as letters. Check with your home bank about the charges for ATM transactions abroad. Credit cards may be used in some places, but don’t expect to use them at the corner store. They are good to carry as a backup.

Attitudes about money in Morocco are quite different from those in the Western world. Charity is one of the duties of all good Muslims, and a service rendered deserves a reward, no matter how small. If someone helps you in some way, it is customary to thank him or her by giving a few dirhams. It is also in your best interest, economically speaking, to learn how to haggle. If you do haggle, you will probably get a better price. However, if you want to get the best price, go with a Moroccan who has friends in the medina.

**Telephone:**

Getting a phone card from any convenience store or tele-boutique and calling home is easy enough to do, but very expensive. Some students suggested that students buy a cell phone here and let people call you on it. Calling out of Morocco is very expensive, and calling in is cheaper. (Your host parents will probably not have a landline and will just have cell phones). However, many U.S. telephone calling plans provide an access number from Morocco and then connect to your home number (probably your parent’s) at the same charge as though the call were initiated in the U.S. (MCI charges about 89¢ per minute as of 2002.) The cell phones are not that costly and worth the investment and can be used throughout Europe after your stay in Morocco. Cell phone companies are Meditel and Maroc Telecom and are located throughout the city; keep your eye out on weekly specials. The tele-boutiques are safe and convenient but are a drain on your wallet because you have to feed coins continuously into the phone. There are tele-boutiques all over the city. MCI or AT&T calling cards work from Morocco, but only to call the US and not other countries. Be careful to watch the clock, since the rate is about $2.50 a minute. If it is an emergency, you can be reached at ALIF, and you can also receive a fax for a small fee. Some host families don’t have a telephone and others may prefer that you not use it. Most Moroccan families regard the telephone as a luxury, and few lines have itemized billing, so any long-distance call that you initiate may cause stress.

**Important Phone Numbers:**

Telephone numbers and area codes change frequently, but the numbers below are believed correct as of Fall 2002.

The country code for Morocco is 212; the area code varies: Fez = 055, Rabat = 037, Casablanca - 022, Tangier = 039. To dial long distance within Morocco, dial “0”, then area code followed by the number.

American Chamber of Commerce (Casablanca) (022) 311448

AMIDEAST, Rabat (037) 726230

AT&T USA Direct 00 2110011
Emergency /Police 19 Fez airport (055) 624800
Fez train station, ONCF (055) 625001, 625132
French Cultural Center (Fez) (055) 623921
Hotel Zalagh, Fez (next to ALIF) (055) 625531
King Fahd School of Translation, Tangier (039) 942813
MCI 00 2110012
Qarawiyyin Library, Fez (055) 633939
Royal Air Maroc, Fez (055) 625516
TAK Voyages (Fez Travel Agency) (055) 624550
Tangier American Legation Museum (039) 935317
Tel. Info 16 / Operator Assistance 12
US Consulate, Casablanca (022) 264550
US Embassy, Rabat (037) 762265, Fax: 037-765661

**Postal Services:**

The central post office in Fez is located on the corner of Avenues Hassan II and Mohammed V. To buy stamps, send mail, or collect packages, enter under the sign posted on the Hassan II side of the post office which reads “Paquets et Colis Postales.” There are also a number of branch offices around Fez on Atlas Square, Batha Square, and Alaouite Square in Fez Jdid. Winter Hours: 8:30-12:00, 2:30-6:00; Summer Hours: 8:00-2:00

If you know the weight of your letters or how many stamps you need, it is much easier to buy stamps at a kiosk or newsstand around town. A three-page airmail letter to the USA = 8.5 DH; to Europe = 6 DH. Many tabacs just sell you 7 DH for Europe and 10 for the US. These rates are subject to change, so check with the ALIF secretary. Bright yellow mailboxes are attached to the sides of buildings, for instance, next to the entrance of the Central Market on Avenue Mohammed V. There is only one box for local, domestic, and airmail. You can also leave your stamped letters with the ALIF secretary for twice-daily mailings. You are welcome to use Box 2136 for personal mail, which will be kept with the secretary.
Expect mail from the USA to take up to 2 weeks to arrive. Students should avoid having family or friends send electronic goods, cameras, or audiocassettes, since the customs duty charged on such items is exorbitant and the paperwork wearying. Also, never have cash sent to you by mail.

**Photography:** Although most Moroccans are not overly sensitive to having their picture taken, ask first! Although it may feel like it at moments, it is worth remembering that the medina is not a Disney Theme Park. Film is widely available, especially color print and slide film of various brands and speeds. Prices seem to vary from shop to shop, and the film can be of questionable quality. Black and white film is available in some shops, but there is no place to have it developed in Fez.

**Transportation:**

Petit taxis (bright red taxis with yellow roof racks) can save you a lot of time. It costs 7-10 DH for an average trip from the Ville Nouvelle to the medina. They are plentiful in the Ville Nouvelle and at the edges of the Medina. There is rarely any difficulty flagging down a taxi, and they can be found at all hours at different taxi stands throughout the City. The presence of a passenger in a taxi does not necessarily mean that the taxi is taken; one taxi may pick up as many as three fares along the route, if passengers’ destinations aren’t too out of the way. If you get into an already-occupied taxi, note the amount on the meter as you get in. Your fare should be the amount elapsed from getting into the taxi plus the initial charge of c. 2.8 DH. Drivers in Fez usually use their meters without any hassle so you aren’t expected to bargain over the price. Also, they don’t expect a tip between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 PM. Fares go up 50 percent at night, although only the newest meters reflect this. Unfortunately, there is no way of telephoning for a taxi in Fez.
The City Buses are packed on some of the principal routes during peak hours, and you should guard against pickpockets. Buses run from 6:00 a.m. to between 8:30 and 9:00 p.m. Fares for routes within the City are 1.80 DH, while the fare for buses that run outside city limits is slightly more. Check at the ALIF desk for a complete update.

While grand taxis (shared taxis) cost about 20 to 50 percent more than a cross-country bus on the same route, they are worth considering for scenic routes. Grand taxis are usually an old Mercedes Benz. They depart when they have their full complement (usually 6) of passengers. There are set prices between cities, but you will need to negotiate a price with the taxi driver before you jump in, and it is advantageous to travel with 5 of your friends for the best deal. You can also buy extra “places” so that you are more comfortable, or the taxi leaves sooner. In general, you can count on paying 10 DH for every 30 km. Be aware that most highway deaths are attributed to grand taxis. Their penchant for passing cars and trucks on blind, winding mountain roads is enough to make anyone sick with fright. In such cases, it’s best to look at the landscape and let the other passengers do the worrying. For location of grand taxi stands, ask at the ALIF desk.

Cross-Country Buses: These buses are a useful alternative to trains or grand taxis, if you are trying to get to particular areas. Schedules may be obtained at the ALIF desk.

Trains:

A rail network of about 2,500 km. links all the major towns, and a good deal of upgrading has occurred in recent years. For schedules and costs see http://www.oncf.ma/. On the whole, trains are modern, comfortable, and reliable. Most have first and second classes and some have buffet cars or a trolley snack service (sandwiches, hot and cold drinks). On some routes, “couchettes” (night sleepers) are available. Thieves and pickpockets are not unknown on trains, particularly on overnight trips. Never leave your wallet, passport, or other valuables in beside you or in the pack’s outside pockets and have locks on all luggage zippers. There are several daily trains to Meknes (about 45 minutes), continuing on the same line to Sidi Kacem (2.5 hours), Kenitra (3.5 hours), Sale (4 hours), Rabat (4.5 hours), and Casablanca (5.5 – 6 hours). Train to Tangier leave from Fez also with a change of trains often necessary at Sidi Kacem. The line to Marrakech via Casablanca takes anywhere from 8 to 11 hours, depending on the type of train. Fast trains are preferable, as they bypass small, rural stations, thus reducing time spent en route. Train schedules are posted at ALIF. Cost is minimal: about 90 DH for the 6-hour trip from Fez to Tangiers.
Legal and Social Considerations

While you may find life in Morocco laid-back and easy in many respects, it is not without its rules. Although you may encounter kif and hashish being smoked openly, it is illegal; and some police take great pleasure in applying this law to foreigners. The penalties vary but can involve an extended stay in a Moroccan prison—an experience to be avoided.

Other Moroccan laws to keep in mind are interdictions on proselytizing (which is grounds for repatriation), public criticism of the royal family, and participation in certain political activities.

In Morocco, Islam remains the official state religion. Non-Muslims are not allowed to enter mosques, mausoleums, or other religious shrines. However, Moroccans are fairly tolerant of non-Muslims peering (respectfully) into mosques from the doorway. This interdiction does not include the theological colleges (madrasas), which are among Morocco’s most splendid historic monuments.

Drinking alcohol is expressly forbidden in Islam. While Fez does have several bars, and fancy hotels and restaurants serve liquor, most Moroccans do not drink. Those who do in public are often not the best elements of Moroccan society. If you must drink, it is recommended that you do so in hotel lounges or restaurants rather than in bars. Alcohol is also sold in certain shops, especially around the Marché Central. You should not drink in Moroccan homes.
If you break the law, it is primarily your responsibility to deal with the authorities. The program director will help whenever possible, but neither Dartmouth College nor the program director can do more than notify the consular services of your country, a step that with Moroccan authorities (like their European counterparts) would undertake in any case.

**Health and Emergencies:**

The ailment you are most likely to encounter in Morocco is diarrhea, a natural consequence of any change in diet and water. The best prevention is to avoid raw vegetables and fresh fruits that have no peel. Also stay away from, charcoal-grilled meats, especially ground meats, and fish at market stalls, salads in inexpensive restaurants, and ice cream from street vendors.

Don’t become paranoid, however: tasting the local cuisine is one of the highlights of the Moroccan experience. The best remedy for a mild case of diarrhea is to let it run its course. (Since paper supplies are coveted, you may want to keep a personal stash of tissue or toilet paper.) In more severe cases, Imodium is available in pharmacies. Tap water is safe in the modern sections of larger towns, although water in the medina may contain a wide variety of intestinal flora. Should you feel you’re coming down with something, contact the ALIF administration or stop at a pharmacy. In addition to prescribing medication on the spot, pharmacists can recommend doctors. Business hours for pharmacies are typically from 8:30 to 12:30 in the morning and 3:00 to 7:30 in the evening. Many medical matters can be resolved at a pharmacy.

In the case of more serious illness, a list of recommended doctors and hospitals can be obtained at the ALIF desk.

**If an ambulance is required, dial 15.**

Have a dental check-up before going to Morocco. If a dental problem arises while you are in Fez, there are plenty of dentists in town, and recommended offices are listed with ALIF.

**Etiquette: Street and Society**

The greatest problem most female students will encounter is catcalls from men on the streets. Moroccan women receive similar advances and are aware that, while extremely annoying, such attention is seldom physically threatening. The easiest way to deal with this problem is to ignore the comments and walk on confidently. However, once your Arabic is good enough, it might prove effective to stop and say, for example, "excuse me, I really don't have an interest in talking to you," or, to persistent men in the medina where you will be offered help to get around,
"thank you, but I live here and know how to find my way around," or even a Moroccan greeting may be enough to end the encounter. The last thing men in the streets are expecting is for you to confront their advances, and this may also take away the thrill they get by following you and speaking to you. Often, a single line will be enough for you to be left alone.

Moroccan women and men also walk with a certain ease and style that can only be understood by watching them, but this style is learnable; especially because you too will begin to feel at home and this is the key to other people accepting you in their environment.

While Moroccan women rarely walk the streets alone or at night, you will always be recognized as a foreigner and will be classified under the same category as the many European and American tourists who often walk around town alone. However, depending on the family you are living with, it is possible that your family will expect you to be home by a certain hour and be accompanied if going somewhere in the evening or at night.

**Hustlers:** You will inevitably be harassed by little boys and girls called faux guides who will try to help you through the city. It is wise to immediately say no or la, shukran. If hustlers do not stop bothering you, which is often the case, do not be afraid to be firm and walk on by. Registered guides wear an official identity badge. They are pleasant and efficient, and are licensed by the government as part of a greater effort to increase the quality of tourism.

**Beggars:** You will be approached for money from people of all ages, children to the elderly. You are not obliged to patronize them, especially the children who ask for everything from "stilo" (pen) to "One dirham." If you would like to give something, by all means do, but be responsible and be discrete, and in any case refrain when we are traveling as a group.

**Gender roles:** The place women are accorded in Moroccan society has seen significant transformation in recent years. By way of example, two women were recently elected to the Moroccan Parliament (one of the women is from Fez) and classes at Morocco’s universities were once the exclusive prerogative of men but are now fully coed. In Morocco’s September 27, 2002, parliamentary elections, fully 30 seats were reserved for women by mutual agreement of all parties fielding candidates. Nevertheless, traditional attitudes among both men and women concerning the role of women are still very much in force. Public places, such as bars and most cafes, are considered inappropriate for women, and unmarried women (even if they are over 21) may have strict parental supervision. In Morocco, women often go out of the house in pairs or groups, but you will rarely find a woman on the streets by herself after dark.
Except in good hotels, women should never attempt to go to bars unaccompanied. This is partially true for cafes, too, which tend to be male-only gathering places. The more elegant pastry shop or juice-shop cafes are usually acceptable places for women, especially sitting inside or upstairs with a companion. Naturally, foreign women have a certain latitude that “respectable” Moroccan women do not. However, even this cultural license has its limitations and its price. Smoking in public by women is still considered somewhat risqué.

**Intimate Relationships:** Relations between men and women in Morocco differ considerably from those in America and Europe. You should try to be sensitive to these differences, as misunderstandings can lead to hurt feelings, resentment, and, occasionally, physically threatening situations. Strong, non-romantic friendships between members of the opposite sex are far less common in Morocco than in Europe, and these are generally formed and maintained within the structure of family gatherings, work, or school. The occasional couples you see walking together or in cafes are usually married or dating—a practice which is still not as common in Fez as in other major Moroccan cities.

Should you be interested in something more than a platonic friendship, whether you are male or female, make sure you know what you’re getting into! Outside of schoolyard flirtations, much of the dating that does go on in Fez occurs with marriage as the eventual aim. Some couples, in fact, are not allowed to date until after their engagement. If you have no intention of getting married, it’s wise to make sure that the other party (and his or her family) shares your feelings.

We might also note that public displays of homosexuality are generally unacceptable in Morocco.

**Social life**

By this point you might be thinking “What do Moroccans do for fun?” If you’re looking for night life, you’ve come to the wrong country. Most people do not even walk on the streets after 8:00 or 9:00 at night. It’s amazing to watch the mass exodus of people from the public spaces once night falls. Furthermore, some host parents feel that it is dangerous to be out at night, and expect you to stay in after dinner.

During the day, you will find that much socializing occurs over a cup of mint tea. Jeneen and Matt found that cafes were good places to watch and meet Moroccans socially.

The Dartmouth group in fall 1995 affectionately referred to the ALIF garden as “the love boat.” It seems that the garden is a neutral zone where certain norms no longer apply: you will see
more Moroccan “couples” than anywhere else in Fez. You, too, may discover your social life revolving around this space—spending long afternoons on the benches, sipping glasses of mint tea with Moroccan friends, discussing and arguing about various topics.

Playing pool was also a favorite in 1995. Although pool halls mainly attract a male audience, women were welcome. One place to check out is the deaf (yes, deaf!) pool hall near ALIF. If tea and pool sound a little too mellow for your tastes, there are dance clubs in some of the larger hotels, but the entrance fees are pretty stiff.

Jeneen found that some of the tennis clubs in Fez were not only cheap and clean but also open to the public. If you like to play, definitely bring your racquet and a pair of sneakers. There were also rumors of pubic swimming pools, but no one on the 1995 program took advantage of them. (The ’02 group definitely took advantage of the swimming pool at the Hotel Zalagh. Also, the garden at that hotel is a good place to study.) Lastly, you can become a member of one of the local athletic clubs and practice anything from aerobics to martial arts.

**Living with your host family**

After living in a hotel for a week you will be ready to meet your families. The families vary greatly, but you can be assured that you will be able to communicate with at least one family member, whether in French, English, Spanish, or whatever language you speak. Most of the families have never had a foreigner stay with them, so they are just as excited and nervous as you. Some families will have students your age (often enrolled at the American Language Center), some won’t have children, and others will have small babies. You may or may not have your own room, given that many people can sleep comfortably in a large. Families will range from lower middle class to very upper class. Some of us lived in very large homes and had our own bedrooms and bathrooms; other students were given a small corner of the family room and bathed at the local hammam. There are benefits to both situations. In the case of students living in the same space as the rest of the family, they will benefit from an inescapable closeness and will witness every aspect of Moroccan life. Students who end up in large houses will feel a little more isolated, and may experience more moments of loneliness and disconnectedness.

Moroccans have a very different concept of personal space and time alone. Whether you have your own room or not, you will have very little privacy. In Jeneen’s case, her little brothers and sisters would come into her room whenever they wanted. Matt’s host parents thought it was strange that he studied so much. Many families will want you to go with them to weddings, naming ceremonies, circumcisions, and to tour other cities. If your family does this, consider yourself blessed. If they don’t, be proactive and curious. You are in Morocco to learn, and this is the best way to do it. You will not have time to do everything, but try not to miss out on truly Moroccan adventures.
Host families generally insist that you not bring Moroccan friends to their homes, as they feel, often correctly, that a foreigner may not have the necessary discrimination to differentiate between trustworthy and untrustworthy Moroccans. In addition, many families may not be very flexible about allowing their guests to return late at night without prior warning. They will typically be more protective of female students, treating them almost as daughters.

If you want to meet with other Moroccans, the ALIF garden is an excellent place to socialize. Women in particular will at first be swooped down upon by Moroccans—particularly men—eager among other things for friendship, and English practice. Hold yourself aloof from those who act in this un-Moroccan manner, but gradually get to know lots of people in the garden. You can swap Moroccan practice for English practice, or ask advice on facets of life or purchases you need to make. Remember women are generally friends with women; men with men.

**FSP Group Dynamics**

Because you are part of a Dartmouth FSP experience, particular considerations about group dynamics are worth further discussion here. Due to your status as foreigners, you can expect to be thrown together with a wider variety of students than you usually associate with at Dartmouth. You’ll spend lots of time with your colleagues simply because you are all strangers in a strange land. Animosities and annoyances with others do continue, however, and you are advised to keep yourselves and each other in check. Floundering group dynamics—such as backstabbing comments or outright avoidance—can make for a hassling, stressful situation abroad. Be considerate of your colleagues: if someone needs a partner to go to Meknes, why not go? If someone wants to walk the Medina and you don’t have another appointment, it’s likely you’ll learn more than you would hanging out in an Internet café.

With a group limited to 15 students, there’s no particular reason for fragmentation or exclusion. Most individuals will need at least some support from the group and will want to share letters from home, talk about boyfriends or girlfriends, and complain about how much they miss
Hop fries or whatever. Each person, on the other hand, will have to determine what balance between host family life, travel time, and hours spent hanging out in the ALIF garden needs to be. As the weeks go by, be considerate of the choices your friends make.

Keeping a journal will be of particular value in sharing experiences with others. Jeneen and Matt read each other’s writings on several occasions, offering windows into events and situations the other didn’t have the opportunity to experience. Discussions about Morocco-related life are much more productive than sessions of “What I miss about home,” which only serve to reinforce homesickness. Try to avoid such talks. Reinhart in particular thinks that conversations referring to “them” or asserting that “they” are such-and-such always go badly. If you are going to generalize, say so: “All Moroccans are…” Of course, when you start this way, you frequently realize an untenable assertion.

Socializing in the ALIF garden.

**Academics**

Given that it is a multidisciplinary program, each year the classes will vary depending on the professor and his/her department. You will take three classes: Colloquial Moroccan Arabic, a class taught by the Dartmouth instructor, and course on the city of Fez. All three classes will be academically rigorous and will demand much of your time. Moreover, the class on Fez will involve a number of outside lectures and tours. You may end up feeling like you spend all day in class, which is partially true. Every minute in Morocco is a learning experience, which can be tiring, and the divide between life and classroom becomes blurred. Remember that it’s only ten weeks and try to take advantage of everything that comes your way.

You’ll have a lot of homework every night. In fact you probably won’t be able to complete everything on time. One thing not to do is save everything until the end—it will catch up with you. On the other hand, keep academics in perspective and go with your host parents to
visit friends in Casablanca or to a wedding in Meknes. These kinds of events will be some of your best and most distinct memories of Morocco.

**Suggested Readings**

"The mind is the man, and knowledge mind; a man is but what he knoweth."  - *Francis Bacon*


*An interesting perspective on cultural practice in Morocco, albeit not the definitive work on these issues.*


*An exemplary ethnographic account of women's power relations in a rural Moroccan village. Schaefer Davis explains the position of women in society and frames the discourse on feminine power and persuasion.*


*This is a work that tackles the issue of Jewish identity in a predominantly Muslim country. In his account, Shlomo penetrates Moroccan culture and discusses a variety of key concerns that will give perspective to your experience.*


*A fascinating window on the lives of both a rural Moroccan judge and the anthropologist, interwoven with discussion on traditional Islamic education and concepts of knowledge.*


*A clear and concise account of Middle Eastern culture that reads like a text book and will be an invaluable reference. Eickelman's book is an excellent introduction to both anthropology and the Middle East.*

*In this book, Geertz analyzes notions of Islam on a practical and theoretical level, as well as making a cross-cultural comparison.*


*A brilliant analysis of the implications of the counter-culture masquerade in Morocco as well as an entertaining description of this spectacle.*


*An original and highly readable study of how economic changes and education in Morocco over the last three decades have influenced how women think about themselves and their activities.*


*An outdated and rather boring account of Fez during the Marinid dynasty. Although it is difficult to get through, it offers a vantage point that remains integral to todayís discourse on Morocco.*


*A controversial book written by an Arab feminist-scholar that examines gender relations from an insider's vantage point. It remains an important source for those studying gender issues.*


*A cutting-edge exploration of the cultural significance and impact of the media and mass images of fashion, power, and Westernization in urban life.*


*An interesting account of the Moroccan political elite, with an emphasis on the symbolic and practical role of the king.*


*A very useful guide to Morocco.*