

HOW TO SURVIVE & THRIVE AS A FIRST YEAR AUXILIAR



BLACK GIRL WORLD TRAVELLER

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Media requests can be sent to:
blackgirlworldtraveller@gmail.com.

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Introduction

Auxiliar Guide to Spain

Congratulations! You have made the courageous decision to move to Spain. No matter where you are moving from - this is a big deal. I remember being so scared to move to Spain but I had to do what was on my heart. I had to go with my gut. If you're reading this you're likely following your gut and/or in search of something more.

I can say that Spain showed me everything that I could not imagine. It opened up my eyes to the world and will forever have a place in my heart.

I wrote this ebook to help first-timers on their journey to Spain. This road will not be without bumps and setbacks - no journey is. But, it will be rewarding. I hope that you find everything that your heart desires and that your journey in Spain inspires you to keep traveling the world!

- Shira

Arrival

Auxiliar Guide to Spain

This ebook will not cover anything related to your pre-arrival (e.g. Purchasing flights, getting your visa, choosing a location, etc). IF you would like more information on the topic, I would recommend reading this [blog post](#).

Prior to arrival in Spain you should have your accommodations set up for where you will stay. The ideal option would be for you to stay with someone you know. However, I recognize that will not be an option for most of you reading this.

Book a 1 week stay in a hostel or hotel of your choice. If you need to extend - do a day by day extension. I made the mistake of overbooking because I thought that I would need more to find my apartment but I was wrong. You don't want to start off by spending money unnecessarily.

Finding An Apartment

Auxiliar Guide in Spain

Get ready for the hunger games because you will be in the fight for your life! My motto is expect the worse and hope for the best.

The most important advice I can tell you is to start looking for apartments 1 week before your arrival to Spain. That may seem counterintuitive - but renting in Spain is nothing like any other place that I've lived. It is nothing like the United States. You could see an apartment posted online one day and then rented out within the next few hours. The renting laws are much more lax than in the U.S. Private landlords may draft leases in Microsoft word and have you sign the lease the same day.

The renter's market is largely comprised of private landlords who rent out rooms and real estate companies who find apartments for you

Finding An Apartment

Auxiliar Guide in Spain

and charge you a hefty fee. I went through a real estate company and it was the worse experience of my life. They charged me €300 to find an apartment and they were unprofessional, tried to get me to go over my budget, and slow to act.

Working with a private landlord is ideal. Use websites:

<https://milanuncios.com> (Spanish version of Craigslist)

<https://pisocompartido.com>

<https://idealista.en>

Finding An Apartment

Auxiliar Guide in Spain

Remember, NEVER send a deposit, first months, or any form of payment until you are actually in Spain.

If you work with a real estate company they will work on your behalf.

here are several scams out there and you want to make sure that you actually have the keys in hand before you send anything. charge you a hefty fee. I went through a real estate company and it was the worse experience of my life. They charged me €300 to find an apartment and they were unprofessional, tried to get me to go over my budget, and slow to act.

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<https://pisocompartido.com>

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Arriving to Marrakech

A Guide to Marrakech

Marrakech is served by the Marrakesh Menara international Airport. This is the easiest way to come into the city. Use [skyscanner.com](https://www.skyscanner.com) to find the cheapest flights. However, for international flights I recommend traveling 1st class for added comfort.

You also have the option of coming by sea, especially if you are already in Europe. I do not recommend this option, as it is very easy to get sea sick.

If you are traveling from another city within Morocco there are several bus options to get you to Marrakech. We took the CTM bus from Casablanca to Morocco and it took about 3-4 hours. The buses were spacious, smelled nice. Expect to pay anywhere from 8-10 dollars for a bus ticket and an extra \$2-\$3 dollars to store your bags under the bus. Your bags will be safe under the bus.

Accommodations

A Guide to Marrakech

There are basically two types of accommodations in Marrakech. Hotels & Riads.

Riads are a type of traditional Moroccan garden and courtyard which usually is inside of a house. Simply, put they are very beautiful boutique hotels.

The economy of Marrakech depends **heavily** on tourism so I recommend booking a local riad (e.g. on Airbnb) to support small businesses whenever possible. Check booking.com to compare riad prices if you do not use Airbnb.

If you want a more lively location, stay in the medina. For luxury you can stay in one of the many mainstream hotels.

For a riad, you can expect to pay \$40-\$50 per night for a large room that can accommodate 3-4 people.

Included in that price should be access to the full house (some have pools) and a full breakfast.

A Guide to Marrakech

Here's the Airbnb (Riad) I stayed in while in Marrakech.



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Things to Do:

Djemma el Fnaa

Tourism centers around this market. It is often said to be the largest market in Africa. While I am not sure if that is true - it is massive.

There are tons of different vendors selling different types of things that are usually over priced. Remember to always negotiate pricing - 50% of what is originally offered. Bargaining is a game in Morocco and you don't want to be on the losing end of the stick. As the customer, you have the power don't take that lightly and never feel obligated to buy something just because a shop owner is begging you.



Things to Do:

Jardin Majorelle

Jardin Majorelle is a botanical garden located next door to the YSL museum. You should visit both in the same day and make sure you come picture ready because the views are gorgeous!



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Things to Do:

YSL Museum

Fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent lived in Marrakech for several years. He credits the city with introducing him to color. The museum tells the story of his life and current trends with the brand today.



Things to Do:

Les Bain de Marrakech

Hammams are public bathhouses - places where people go to get clean and are usually separated by gender.

They are also fabulous spa experiences.

You remove all of your clothing and someone comes into a sauna like private room and scrubs you down. You will never feel more cleaner in your life! This a must do when visiting Morocco. Phones are not allowed in the actual room where you are cleaned.



Places to Eat

Marrakech Restaurants

You don't have to plan too much in this area as there are food vendors everywhere, especially if you are staying in the medina.

However, be warned to never eat from food trucks as you could get food poisoning.

Many of the more international or westernized places tend to fill up quickly so plan to arrive ahead.

Here are some restaurants I researched but never actually got a chance to eat at:

1. Eveil Des Sens
2. Corner Cafe
3. Le Tosil

You can expect to pay no more than 50 Mdh for a full meal with and another 10-15 Mdh for a beverage. If meals are priced more than 100 mDh it is definitely overpriced and geared towards tourists.

Sahara Desert

A Guide to Marrakech

The Sahara Desert will be one of the most meaningful parts of your trip to Morocco. You will connect with nature and see beauty in a whole new light.

There are several different tour companies that you can use to book your Sahara Desert excursion. There is no need to book ahead. You will be able to book directly in the medina (Djemma el Fnaa). I have not included the company here because I do not recommend it.

The cheapest trips will be priced around \$100-\$110 USD. The trip will likely include:

- Kasbah Ait Ben -Hadou (UNESCO Heritage site, and is technically free. Tour guides demand tips of around \$3 USD. Don't take the tour if you don't want to. You don't need to.
- Visit to the Berber community (They will try to to sell you over priced rugs)
- Breakfasts
- All hotels you will stay in a long the way (Expect 1 star hotel like accommodations)

Sahara Desert

A Guide to Marrakech

- Expect camping like structures while in the desert (communal bathrooms, showers, mosquitoes, in & out hot water).

I recommend paying the extra money for the advertised "luxury" solo private Sahara Desert trips. Those can be several hundred dollars. You'll get more space, privacy and added comfort. However, if you do a group trip don't expect much difference.

Remember, at the end of the day you are traveling to the desert. Expect inconveniences like poor phone service and to not to have the same accommodations that you would have under normal circumstances.

Overall, the Sahara Desert is a once in a lifetime experience. Make sure to read [this article](#) before going.

Sahara Desert Packing List

A Guide to Marrakech

- Charged portabble charger
- Bug Spray
- Shower shoes
- Light-weight pajamas
- Local Moroccan dresses (Optional, Cost 500 mDh or \$5USD in the medina)
- Lightweight dresses
- Running sneakers
- Sunscreen
- Deodorant
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Sunhat
- Sandals
- Tissues
- Handsanitizer
- Makeup (Optional)

Common Scams

A Guide to Marrakech

When I spoke about the culture shock I experienced I was shocked to learn there is always a hustle of some sort taking place. It can feel like people are being aggressive towards you or that you are being singled out because you a foreigner.

The truth is that you can not take it personal. It would be happening to someone else if it wasn't you. And culture looks different globally. Become an observer to what you see and again - don't take things personally.

As a black woman we are often times assigned hyper-visibility because people think we are easy targets. We are not.

When you come aware, ready, and vigilant you not only anticipate things that may happen but you are also smarter, more understanding, and more compassionate traveler.

Now let's review some common scams that I either experienced or observed during my time in Marrakech.

Common Scams

A Guide to Marrakech

Henna Scam

Henna is a plant based dye that can be used to create temporary tattoos.

It can last for a week or two when properly done and maintained. There are several vendors, mostly women who will offer this service to you. Some will even walk up to you and begin drawing on you without your consent.

I do not recommend getting henna on the street. But if you do - you should agree on a price ahead of time.

Always negotiate 1/2 of whatever the price the seller initially offers.

However, even if you agree on a price (e.g. 100 mDh = approx \$10USD) they may try to convince you that you initially agreed on 200 mDh = approx \$20USD.

Simply hand over the money you agreed upon and walk away. They won't do anything to you.

Common Scams

A Guide to Marrakech

"I don't have change"

- Shopkeepers and stall owners will tell you that they do not have change so that you end up paying more than your agreed upon price.
- Avoid this by changing money before coming to Morocco.
- Alternatively, you can go into a local bank and ask for coins. Never carry any bills larger than 100Mdh (\$10USD).
- Most things are cheap in Morocco, meaning \$10USD or less.

Examples of banks found in Marrakech:

1. Credit Agricole
2. Societe Generale
3. Attijariwafa

Common Scams

A Guide to Marrakech

Pay to take pictures

- Stall owners will try to tell you you have to pay pictures. This will happen a lot in the medina Djema el Fnaa. You are under no obligation to pay. Stay stern and polite even if folks get aggressive.
- Do not take pictures of people without their consent (or if they ask you first). This can be taken as a sign of disrespect.
- Remember the phrase “La shukran” which means “No thank you.”

Common Scams

A Guide to Marrakech

Give you unsolicited directions

You will be immediately recognizable as a foreigner no matter how much you try to assimilate in to the culture. Note: Me wearing traditional head scarves.

People of all ages including children will walk up to you and try to give you directions in an effort to corner you so that you might give them money.

You must be firm with your **La shukran**. After one time ignore them.

My Airbnb owner told guests to **only** accept directions from women.

Make sure you have the "Maps.me" app downloaded onto your phone prior to arriving.

Maps.me will be particularly helpful in the Medina which is where people often try to give you unsolicited directions.

If you do get lost, don't show it. Remain calm and find a shop owner and ask for directions.

Common Scams

A Guide to Marrakech

Give you unsolicited directions

Traveling at night

I recommend that women not travel alone at night while in Marrakech. I was forcefully grabbed by a man - and I was with another woman!

Another person staying in my riad said that she had similar experiences at night.

I would highly recommend jam packing your itinerary with activities to do during the day that way you are tired by the time evening comes.

Marrakech, and Morocco more broadly has a more reserved culture. The country practices islam in which it is inappropriate to consume any toxicant including alcohol. That does not mean that it doesn't happen though.

If you do travel at night, use a taxi and demand that they use a taxi meter. At night taxi drivers typically refuse to turn on meters so always negotiate half the price they originally offer you.

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Review of Common Scams

A Guide to Marrakech

Henna Scam

Local artists will not only overcharge you for the henna but they will try to convince you that you agreed to pay more after they have rendered you service.

"I don't have change"

When shopping, especially in the medina stall owners will tell you they do not have change. Remember to always go shopping with very small bills and coins. Know that Morocco in general is cash based.

Pay to take pictures

People will ask you to take pictures and then try to charge you. In the medina (Djemma el Fnaa) and try to take general pictures people will try to get you to pay. Refuse to pay. A local man grabbed my arm because I refused to pay him after he practically forced me to take a picture with him. He still got no money.

Give you unsolicited directions

Folks will walk up to you and try to give you directions. They will randomly tell you that you are going the wrong way. Ignore them. If you ever get lost, find a shop owner and ask for directions. If you know French, this will be a much smoother process.

Marrakech Sample Budget

Sample Budget for 3-4 days in Marrakech. This is a conservative estimate based off of a budget traveler.

Your numbers may look different based on how fancy and touristy the places you patron are.

EXPENSE NAME	APPROX AMOUNT
Flight (U.S. city to Marrakech)	\$500
Accommodations (\$40-\$50 per night)	\$200
Meals (Only lunch & dinner, breakfast should be included in accom. price)	\$100
Souvenirs	\$50
Sahara Desert (Including everything tour company provides, souvenirs, meals, & beverages not included)	\$200
Approximate Total:	\$1,050

Backpacking while Black

Conclusion

I hope this ebook serves you well on your travels to Marrakech and that planning your trip is a lot less stressful. I hope you feel like you have a guide and roadmap to begin planning your dream trip.

Every time you travel, you become stronger and wiser. I am honored that you have entrusted me to be apart of your journey.

For more resources, please review my [original itinerary](#) I wrote for the trip back in 2019. If you need more resources, you will be able to find them there as well!

Good luck on your travels!

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THANK YOU!



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