



Sustainability Guidelines: Morocco

You are about to embark on a wonderful trip to the African country of Morocco, known for its stunning landscape and unique culture. Your trip will show you all that Morocco has to offer, leaving you with a great appreciation of this country.

Environmental Issues:

Morocco's natural beauty is, however, threatened by environmental concerns. The main environmental struggles that Morocco faces are the following:

- Land degradation/desertification
- Soil erosion due to farming in marginal areas and overgrazing
- Drought
- Oil pollution of coastal waters

Environmental Initiatives:

The Moroccan government has a firm commitment to the protection of its biodiversity and has set up a protected area network consisting of 3 National Parks, 4 proposed National and Natural Parks, and 146 existing/proposed nature reserves.

Livestock and Pasture Development Project in the Eastern Region was created to strengthen herders' livelihood and protect the fragile ecosystem of Morocco's Eastern Region. The project set out to involve herders, through the formation of cooperatives, in improving livestock healthcare, creating more watering points for animals and boosting herders' income levels. There are 3 million hectares of common property that nearly 8,500 herders and their sheep share which leads to incredible land degradation and overgrazing. This project works to balance the commons so that each herder and their sheep get access to grazing land and that this land is not depleted in such an aggressive manner. The results from this project are that, despite five years of drought, over 460,000 hectares of pastureland were rehabilitated, herders were organized into 44 cooperatives, and improvements to local herding practices were introduced that centered on herd control and respect of pastureland. This project represents an important step in increasing awareness of the need to use pastureland resources rationally and adopt conservation practices.



Association Merzouga is an international non-governmental non-profit organization for the Development of Merzouga. The objectives of the association are to integrate rural women in social activities and development, reverse desertification, develop tourism and agricultural sectors, tutor and increase literacy, and health education. Some of the activities undertaken are the following: well drinking water project in Ksar Khamlia, creation of 2 rooms for preschool classes, moral and financial support to families affected in Merzouga, distribution of school supplies and clothing to children in poor families, and creating a sewing and weaving program for rural women. While it seems that *Association Merzouga* is kept busy, the association is planning ahead, with several projects slated for the future. These include: reconstruction of a green area in Merzouga, digging a well for the nomads, a project of Rural Sustainable Tourism, and participation in the organization of an annual festival in Merzouga in the context of cultural tourism.

In terms of renewable energy, in October 2008, Morocco announced plans for a '*knowledge campus*' - a \$3.2 billion five year renewable energy investment plan. The campus is essentially a clean energy park built in the eastern city of Oujda and is expected to open in 2010. The campus will host the capacity needed for long-term research programs and help develop the scientific workforce with training programs, conferences, and seminars on renewable energy. Local wind energy technologies will be erected along with solar energy projects. It will be a working experiment and research project on renewable energy.

As a visitor to Morocco you can help mitigate the environmental perils of the country by conserving water as it is a precious commodity in this country. Wherever you visit in Morocco, respect the natural environment as it truly is an exotic country that should be preserved for future generations.