

Al Quaraouiyein University in Fes was  
founded in 859 AD

## LITERACY RATE (AS A %)

SOURCE: THEGLOBALECONOMY.COM





## Education

# DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

**T**he pen might be mightier than the sword, but education in Morocco can be somewhat of a double-edged scimitar. Education is often considered a key investment for any country's national development, and in Morocco before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was some concern about the inequality in education and health opportunities negatively impacting economic growth and societal advancement. Leading up to the viral outbreak, increased use of technology and digitalization was a tool to enhance and facilitate access to such opportunities.

Yet, the acceleration of this digitalization has exaggerated the divide, which mostly coincides with urban and rural areas. This paradox is largely due to limited ICT infrastructure and students' access to devices to connect to the internet. The United Nations Development Programme and the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education, and Scientific Research partnered to address these issues. Other entities like Euro-Mediterranean University of Fes (UEMF) and Huawei also stepped in through efforts of their own, though the leaders across the education space, from kindergarten through higher ed, are aware this is merely the first step to address entrenched, multi-faceted inequalities.

Despite the challenges wrought by a rapid shift to online education, there are many bright spots in Morocco's education sector. Some noteworthy trends are higher education's proactive

and enthusiastic approach to partnering with industry, as well as supporting SMEs, entrepreneurship, and women's empowerment.

The country's innovative model for collaboration with industry is the Higher School of Textile and Clothing Industries (ESITH), which places unique emphasis on strengthening local companies' capacities to face international competition, R&D, and engineer training. Mohamed Lahlou, President of ESITH, told TBY his outlook for the future as Morocco emerges from the current crisis: "We will ensure that our expertise and know-how remain at the cutting edge of progress by enriching our network of partnerships on a national and international scale, taking care to implement the disciplines of the future and acquiring equipment and tools that will allow the school to remain a locomotive for the textiles, clothing, and other industrial and service sectors. The transformation of the industrial sectors requires more seasoned, agile, curious, and reactive skills."

UEMF, meanwhile, is focused on SMEs, promoting an entrepreneurial ecosystem through an on-campus incubator. Idoine Maroc, a human resource consultancy, notes that encouraging entrepreneurship and SMEs, in similar fashion to Tunisia, will stem the brain drain, pointing to a growing consensus within the education and human talent development areas that SMEs will be a critical component for economic progress. ✖



## INTERVIEW



Prof. Mostapha Bousmina  
PRESIDENT,  
EUROMED UNIVERSITY OF FES

## A BEACON *light*

Apart from doing its utmost best to take care of its staff and students during COVID-19, Euromed University of Fes is strongly committed to several technological projects that are of help to wider society.

### How did the university adapt to COVID-19?

When COVID-19 emerged, Morocco quickly took strong and proactive actions to manage an unprecedented crisis, under the direct supervision and leadership of His Majesty the King. Euromed took various measures and actions for our students and society. First, we implemented close to 100% distance learning for all our programmes. Notably, with help from the EU, we provided new computers and 4G internet sticks with one-year subscriptions to 530 students from rural areas and low-income families. We also acted to take care of our foreign students. We sterilize the dormitories, hand out PPE equipment, and provide packed lunches, drinks, and other items. We also offer psychological counseling when needed. As for society, our staff has voluntarily donated part of or entire one-month salaries to the national fund for the management of COVID-19. Second, we have produced thousands of protective visors and donated them to hospitals and regional administrations. We have also developed washable, sterilizable, and reusable plastic masks with homemade filters that comply with international medical requirements. The masks are manufactured by our 3D printing facilities. We have developed a new respirator valve and a new air-flow meter in our university in collaboration with doctors from Rabat. We have also developed an application for tracking COVID-19. Our university has been extremely active during this period of containment and confinement. We are doing our best to take care of our staff and students, and we are strongly committed to technological projects that are of help to society.

### UEMF offers a wide range of programmes. Which ones are the most popular?

In September 2019, we opened a new engineering school, the first of its kind in Europe and Africa: a five-year engineering school completely dedicated to AI. We have concluded several agreements with various universities from the two shores

of the Mediterranean. Presently, we have nine entities, three faculties, three engineering schools (mechanical engineering, civil engineering, IT engineering, biomedical, and AI engineering), a school of architecture, a school of business, and an institute of law and political sciences. In September, we will open a faculty of pharmacy. UEMF offers world-class bachelor's, master's, and PhD programmes.

### UEMF has several partnerships with foreign universities. What is your strategy in this regard?

Our strategy is to act as a platform that bridges, from educational and cultural viewpoints, the two realms of the Mediterranean. We have strong collaborations and partnerships with universities and research institutions from across the world. For example, we were expecting to receive some students from Stanford University in 2020 but unfortunately, this had to be postponed due to COVID-19.

### Can you tell us about your eco-campus?

From the beginning, the campus sought to be an eco-campus that got the labeling from COP22. We have included several sustainable technologies, with the objective to be energy sufficient, consume minimal water, and go solar. Some of the technologies we use are highly insulating materials, photovoltaic and thermal solar devices, and water recycling systems. The design of the buildings was inspired by the ancestral know-how of the city of Fes.

### How would you rate the Moroccan educational sector?

In the last five years, we have witnessed an important expansion, with a wide choice of universities including public universities, not-for-profit universities, and private universities. The number of students has also tripled. This brings various challenges, such as ensuring a true digital transition in universities. Second, we have to design career-oriented programmes as well as proactive programmes. It is also of high importance to revise the 01-00 law governing the higher education system. To comply with international standards, Moroccan universities should also open more to the diaspora and international students. Finally, a true assurance quality system should be implemented in universities with a top-down and bottom-up assessment and evaluation. ✖

**“With help from the EU, we provided new computers and 4G internet sticks with one-year subscriptions to 530 students from rural areas and low-income families.”**



**Mohamed Lahlou**  
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD,  
HIGHER SCHOOL OF TEXTILE  
AND CLOTHING INDUSTRIES  
(ESITH)



**Abderrahmane Farhate**  
GENERAL MANAGER,  
HIGHER SCHOOL OF TEXTILE  
AND CLOTHING INDUSTRIES  
(ESITH)

## ESITH

What started as a school to train students in line with the needs of the job market has become an institution ahead of its peers. With cutting-edge and transversal training, ESITH has branched out into new domains, such as two crisis units to help Morocco fight COVID-19.

**What have been the main milestones of ESITH in the last 24 years?**

**MOHAMED LAHLOU** From the beginning, the school's function was different compared to other conventional engineering schools that were more rigid and less reactive. The school is organized around three cycles of engineering training, specialized master's, and professional licenses. 2007 represented an extremely significant milestone due to the creation of an R&D department composed of two laboratories: research laboratory on textile materials (REMTEX) and a center of excellence in logistics (CELOG). Since its creation, this department has established solid relationships with various Moroccan, European, and Canadian research centers. For a better immersion into the world of research, in collaboration with ENSAIT France, we started an international ITMC conference on technical and intelligent textiles and mass customization. In 2019, we organized the seventh edition of this biannual conference in Marrakesh. In addition, there have been four editions in Casablanca and one each in Ghent, Belgium, and Roubaix, France. This conference was so successful that three new partners—Ghent University, Shinshu University in Japan, and CTT Group in Canada—joined

the two founders to form a solid consortium that will allow the conference to grow internationally. The next editions will be held in Canada in 2021 and Japan in 2023.

**What is the goal of ESITH?**

**ABDERRAHMANE FARHATE** The School of Industry, Textiles, and Clothing was established in 1996 with an innovative model. ESITH was created as a PPP, but it is a public school that awards public diplomas. At the time, it was the only higher educational institutions that was created as a PPP. It is an association between the Moroccan government and the Moroccan Association of Textile, Clothing, Industries (AMITH). The idea was to establish a school in collaboration with the private sector to train students in line with the needs of the job market. After 23 years, ESITH continues to serve its purpose. Since 2002, the ESITH, Engineering Training School, by setting up cutting-edge and transversal training, has been able to open up to other sectors of industrial activity and service. For example, ESITH was the first engineering school in Morocco to train engineers in international logistics. Today, more than 90% of our graduates secure a job in less than six months.

**How did ESITH adapt its operations to COVID-19, and what is your main focus during this crisis?**

**ML** ESITH had to face two major concerns: the continuity of student training and supporting industrialists in their retraining to manufacture protective masks and gowns. In terms of initial training, our response was extremely reactive. We set up two crisis units, one to manage the operation of human resources, administration, and school infrastructure and another entirely dedicated to ensuring educational continuity through distance learning. This upheaval in the pedagogical approach is so significant that it will open up new hybrid training methods post COVID-19. In terms of support for companies, ESITH has been extremely responsive. LEC, its laboratory, actively participated in the work of developing the standards and technical specifications of masks with the Ministry of Industry (IMANOR). We provided manufacturers with educational capsules to explain the technical characteristics of the materials and methods of manufacturing barrier masks according to IMANOR standards. At the same time, ESITH developed and shared innovative methods to optimize the production of masks. Our R&D department was also mobilized to create new tissue functionalization processes to meet the most stringent requirements of barrier masks. In addition, we have launched three free online training cycles to improve the management skills of companies and hospitals to better cope with this crisis.

**How do you keep up with the latest international developments?**

**AF** Industrialists are part of the school's management bodies. At ESITH, we help companies with ongoing training and technical assistance. Due to this, we are constantly aware of what is happening in the textile sector and in the different industrial and service sectors at a global level. For example, at present, the textile industry is shifting to lean industry. Globally, the focus is on waste recycling, sustainable development, circular economy, automation, and Industry 4.0. In line with this, we have invested in equipment, automation, and intelligent workshop layouts. We have to recover procurement waste and adopt better organizational industrial models. We have to adapt not only our equipment, but also the way we organize our workshops. In my opinion, it is time for the school to move toward Industry 4.0 technologies, such as AI and big data. ✖

## VOICES FROM THE SECTOR

Sâad Benkirane  
GENERAL MANAGER,  
IDOINE

**What are some of the consequences of digitalization?**

When we talk about digital, it encompasses digital marketing. But it also involves the management of social networks, because reputations in today's world are made and unmade on social networks. The first people who can ruin the image of a company are its stakeholders, because when a stakeholder is not satisfied, they often express it through social networks. To this end, we see companies increasingly using activities such as team building and internal events to communicate with their employees. We work with companies doing excellent internal work, but they are not aware that their actions define their brand to their customers, suppliers, and the market.

**What do businesses struggle with in Morocco?**

Companies undergoing restructuring often need to retain their high-performance employees and strengthen their agility in the face of a highly mobile market. Many companies are fighting against informal competition, which is dangerous. Many companies have honest managers who want to be fairer and more civic-minded, but they are faced with a market that is not fair and therefore find themselves at a crossroads. The second challenge is that there is a conflict between publicly stated values and the behavior of leaders. In a market where there is great uncertainty, everything that is strategic in the long term starts lose meaning because all it takes is a customs rule or a powerful competitor to destroy a company.



Hicham Belbachir  
CEO,  
TARGET AUTONOMY

**What do you understand by "drivers," and how do they influence people's decisions in the workforce?**

Being a driver is an injunction given to us by our parents. This becomes a background program, that is to say, an unconscious one. We have five drivers: be perfect, be strong, be pleasing, be quick, and make the effort. When subjected to stress, we activate these drivers. There are several levels in the execution, and the drivers will get stronger as the level of stress increases. We all have one or two dominant drivers as a means of response, and the key is to be aware of them. Something as simple as being aware of your shortcomings can fundamentally change your life.

**When do you know when you are under stress and when you are not?**

There are several ways to identify when we are under stress. Stress comes mainly from fear, the fear of not being up to the task, but stress is useful because it allows people to understand their limits and overcome them.

**What kind of tools do you offer?**

We offer several coaching tools for collaborators, teams, and managers. For each category of people, we have specific tools, including a professional coach who has been properly trained to accompany them. I was a member of the International Coach Federation, whose goal is to get coaching recognized as a profession. That speaks to me a lot because even coaches need a professional and legal framework so that the client feels reassured.

# EDUCATING THE MASSES

Morocco's education sector has long been its Pandora's box.

**EDUCATION HAS LONG BEEN A SORE SPOT** for the Moroccan government, with much money spent with little to no payoff. While government reform over the past decade has increased school attendance, especially in regard to female students, there is still much work to be done for the system to produce a more equally educated society.

With only 50% of Moroccan children aged 4-5 attending preschool in 2017, children usually begin compulsory education at seven and have 12 years of combined primary and secondary schooling. While previously students took a national test to enter universities, students now rely on grades in the final year of secondary school to guarantee their entrance. In primary and secondary public schools, the language taught is formal Arabic, while at university level all courses are generally taught in French, leaving those who may not be fluent in either language behind. Meanwhile, private schools are taught in Arabic, French, English, and Spanish.

As in many countries, private schools in Morocco often have a leg up on public schools, especially in terms of university attendees and graduates. And while it would be easy to simply point to the disparities between private and public schools as the cause for Morocco's education problem, many private schools face the same problem as their public counterparts: lack of competence, crisis of qualified personnel, and lack of pedagogical material. According to the OECD, differences between public and private school performance in students is more the result of a student's socioeconomic standing and the degree of autonomy granted to schools in terms of decision-making and management.

One major area of concern is school dropouts. A 2019 article from Morocco World News quotes World Bank Magreb Country Director Marie Françoise Marie-Nelly as saying only 53% of middle school students continue onto high school, while less than 15% of first-grade students are likely to graduate from high school. These low numbers may partly be explained by the school environment. According to a 2018 OECD PISA report, 44% of students reported being bullied multiple times per month, compared to the OECD average of 23%. Children who experience bullying have a much greater like-

lihood of dropping out and skipping school, another area in which Morocco suffers. According to the same report, 44% of students reported skipping at least one day of school. The quality of education or lack thereof is evident in the 2018 PISA results, with Moroccan students averaging scores of 359, 358, and 377 in the reading, math, and science sections, respectively. The OECD average is 487, 489, and 489, respectively.

What makes Morocco's education problem an enigma is that the sector receives a good amount of government funds: 25.6% of the 2019 state budget was spent on the education sector. A large part of the bill was due to public wages and pensions, which took up 49% of the public wage bill in 2016. However, the government has tried to reduce these costs by hiring "contracted" teachers through regional institutions called Regional Academies for Education and Training (AREFs). While this new system offers more local employment in rural areas, it does not provide the same security as a public-sector job. Contracted teachers reported feeling worried about regional bodies' long-term financial viability and low pensions, and 2019 saw them hold month-long protests seeking more beneficial contracts.

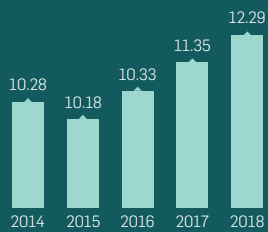
Still, it is not all doom and gloom for the sector. Thanks to rigorous government initiatives, the number of students enrolled in primary school education has increased enormously, numbered at 4.322 million, according to UNESCO 2018 statistics. Meanwhile, the number of those enrolled in tertiary education grew from 877,404 in 2015 to 1.056 million in 2018. Currently, the number of children enrolled in early childhood education development programs stands at 6,032, a number that will hopefully increase with the World Bank's USD500-million program to support Morocco's 2015-2030 Education Reform. The World Bank program seeks to increase the quality of early childhood education and support teaching practices in primary and secondary education, while increasing accountability through the education supply chain, a step in the right direction. OECD cites more efficient and transparency in resource and financial management, greater involvement of civil society, and monitoring school performance as key to increasing a country's education quality. ✖



Casablanca is a bustling metropolis popular with tourists looking for a taste of both modern and historic Morocco

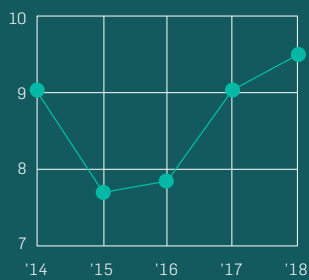
### INTERNATIONAL OVERNIGHT ARRIVALS (MLN)

SOURCE: VALUSTRAT



### INTERNATIONAL TOURISM RECEIPTS (USD BLN)

SOURCE: OECD



### NIGHTS IN ACCOMMODATION (INTERNATIONAL)

SOURCE: OECD

2014	132,000
2015	125,609
2016	128,757
2017	132,585
2018	147,790





## Tourism

# RETHINKING TOURISM

**T**ourism is one of the main engines of growth of the Moroccan economy and continues to be one of the priority sectors for the public administration. The direct contribution of tourism to GDP is estimated at 11%, according to data from the National Tourism Office. Today, there are more than 750,000 employees in this sector, according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

Morocco's natural attractions and its proximity to Europe provide the Kingdom with an important competitive edge. With more than 3,500km of beaches—on both the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts—and beautiful landscapes, Morocco has consistently been recognized as a top African tourism destination. In numbers, Morocco received 13 million arrivals in 2019, a 5.2% YoY increase. Tourist revenues from non-residents totaled MAD80 million. Marrakesh remains the most prominent destination, receiving 60% of total arrivals. Agadir places second with 20% and Casablanca, Morocco's financial hub, rounds out the top three with 10%. While tourism figures continue to rise, operators from the sector agree on the need to develop a strategy that shares the spotlight with other regions including Fes, Rabat, Tangier, the Mediterranean coast, and southern Morocco.

Development of the sector follows the country's Vision 2020, created in 2010 with the goal of doubling the size of the tourism sector and placing Morocco among the top-20 global tourist destinations. Through an integrated spatial planning policy, the government strives for an even distribution of the benefits of tourism and the socioeconomic development of all regions of the Kingdom.

Despite its positive outlook, the tourism sector has yet to achieve the goals set by the 2020 Vision; the aim to receive 20 million tourists in 2020 are far from reality, even more so in view of the current COVID-19 outbreak that has paralyzed international travel across the globe.

The tourism authorities are currently reorganizing the strategy of the sector to look for new ways to attract investment, with an important effort directed toward the development of eight tourist regions and the coastal tourist complexes.

Dynamizing outbound tourism by facilitating visa procedures, creating a strategy that strengthens the image and increases awareness of cities other than Marrakesh and Agadir, and enhancing investment in education and healthcare are some of the measures suggested by decision makers in the private sector that will lay the foundation toward sustainable growth. ✖



## INTERVIEW

# AUTHENTICITY *for the win*

Atlas Voyages has a three-pronged plan for the success of Morocco's tourism industry: authentic experiences, sustainable tourism, and digitalization.



Othman Cherif Alami  
PRESIDENT,  
ATLAS VOYAGES

Tourism directly  
employs more than

**750k**

**What were the main outcomes of the Tourism Marketing Days event?**

In Morocco, the tourism industry plays a crucial role, as it is a key sector. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), more than 750,000 people are employed in the tourism industry. The Moroccan Tourism Marketing Days aimed to share the vision of the Moroccan National Tourist Office (ONMT) and industry leaders. The event was an opportunity to share our strategies concerning countries where we should consolidate our presence, such as the UK, Germany, France, Spain, and Italy. We also identified future potential markets in China and North America. In January 2020, we launched our first direct flight from Casablanca to Beijing. In North America, we have direct flights to Miami, Washington D.C., New York, Montreal, and Boston. In the meantime, we must consolidate our core market with new flights to Morocco. Thanks to a decision made by the Moroccan government in 2008 with Europe, all European airlines can land in Morocco without authorization, and the same goes for Royal Air Maroc in Europe. Morocco has 3,500km of beaches along the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts. We also have beautiful landscapes, welcoming people, an outstanding desert, and amazing hospitality. In 2019, we reached 13 million tourists and USD8 billion in revenue. Moving forward, we should further promote the cities of Fes, Rabat, Tangier, the Mediterranean coast, and the south. The Tourism Marketing Days focused on domestic tourism as well, which accounts for more than 30% of occupancy in official hotels. Digitalization and human capital are two other key points we discussed.

**“If we can preserve the authenticity of our country and keep the right attitude, we will be able to provide a genuine experience, which will always be in demand.”**

**What are the challenges preventing Morocco from reaching its full tourism potential?**

We need to increase our foreign-language skills, service quality, and hospitality. Furthermore, we need to adapt our attitudes to clients coming from the global village. We also spoke about quality, domestic tourism, MICE events, golf, and even cinema, as many movies are filmed here. Robert Redford earlier came to Marrakesh, and he showed his appreciation on Twitter. That digital attention is worth more than publicity on CNN. We also have to ensure sustainable development to promote inclusive tourism.

**What has been the impact of digitalization on your company?**

B2B has been fantastic, while B2C has been more challenging. We are working on solutions to fix this, like our new application, where clients can find more than 400,000 hotels and flights. We have around 15 engineers working 24/7 to help us with this. B2B is a machine-to-machine business, and in 2020, we will be connected to one of the biggest providers of travel services in the world, located in China. It took six months for the engineers to connect the two systems. All the clients of this Chinese platform will be able to look at our products online and book instantly. Machine-to-machine connection, which is the third revolution of tourism, will have a positive impact on the industry.

**What does Morocco need to do to ensure the tourism sector is sustainable?**

If we can preserve the authenticity of our country and keep the right attitude, we will be able to provide a genuine experience, which will always be in demand. We must not forget the inclusive economy, and we must keep in mind that everyone has to have a slice of the cake. To this end, we need the government, regional authorities, and key decision makers to work together to facilitate stores, museums, and activities that can generate an income for all participants of the economy. We also have to work on a digital marketing approach. We must build a strong digital presence that covers the entire value chain. We need to invest more in human talent. If we can ensure that our people are trained and educated, growth and development will follow. ✖

# off the BEATEN PATH



Habib El Fassi  
MANAGING DIRECTOR,  
VISIT MOROCCO

From its outset, Visit Morocco has shown Morocco's authenticity to business clients from the world in a tailor-made manner.

**There has been a shift in demand in the tourism sector. How would you define this shift?**

Indeed, this shift has taken place both in the business and the leisure segment, but more so in leisure. The shift in demand is mainly related to digitalization. From our side, our position has always been to show our clients "Morocco through our eyes" in a tailor-made manner. We are always opening up new authentic and interactive experiences to encourage people to understand our country, rather than going on a strictly touristic path. We have observed this shift in demand, and we have found it to be positive because it better emphasizes our real value as experts of the destination. When we do our sales calls in the different markets we target, we show this expertise. We explain there is much more to see behind a medina or a mosque. Even in the last few years, despite the slowdown in the country, there was great growth. Between 2017 and 2019, we experienced double-digit growth.

**What services weigh more in terms of revenue?**

MICE and business travel represent 70% of our business, but leisure is growing. We are opening the leisure part, and the line between business and leisure is less clear now. When you organize a congress, some people will ask for extensions to make it into a vacation. People really appreciate our approach because it is different than just selling a typical packaged product. We make people interact with the country, and people are taken to lesser known places that are more authentic. Sometimes, we create something new for the MICE segment and then adapt it to our high-end leisure groups and individuals or vice versa.

**What is your average client's profile?**

We are a B2B company; we rarely work with individuals directly. Most of our clients come from our business partners and our representative agents. Our local business is more B2B, so we

work with corporations to manage their accounts.

**Do you consider authenticity as the path to a sustainable tourism sector?**

Yes, authenticity is the key for a sustainable sector, and that is trending. It is obviously more difficult and challenging to create an authentic experience. We have a double mission. First, it is our duty to promote this authenticity and look for it across the country. To be more inclusive, sometimes we go into the desert and contact remote communities that live without access to electricity. Second, we need to do it in a way that does not spoil the experience nor the communities that we are interacting with. That is why we mostly focus on high-end clients who are willing to pay for something more authentic in a way that will bring value to the country and local communities.

**One of the challenges of the country is to sell this added value. What is your view on this?**

Our market is global, and currently destinations are in competition with each other. Morocco must establish a unique selling proposition that will differentiate it from other destinations. It is important to show that Morocco is diverse. For example, we have one of the best windsurfing spots in the world. Marrakesh is the most touristic city in Morocco, and it still has so many hidden gems. Overall, in order to sell our entire offerings, we need the adequate infrastructure around it.

**What are your goals for 2020?**

Historically, we have had mostly a business travel focus, since we work with many corporations. Now, we are focusing more on bringing tourists to Morocco, so it will be a similar strategy for 2020. We are present in the US, Mexico, most of Europe, the Middle East, Russia, and other regions through our partners. Now, we are trying to develop more and find out more about these markets. ✖

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***Experienced double-digit growth between 2017 and 2019***

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***Present in the US, Mexico, Europe, the Middle East, and Russia***

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## BIO

Habib El Fassi has been Managing Director of Visit Morocco Travel & Events since 2013. A telecoms engineer by training, he began his professional life in strategy and marketing consultancy. After completing an MBA at INSEAD, he joined Inditex Moroccan franchisee as country manager. He embarked on modernizing and making Moroccan cuisine accessible to all and joined Visit Morocco Travel & Events. He has developed original, authentic, and exclusive customer experiences, making Visit Morocco Travel & Events a benchmark in the MICE segment and high-end leisure customers.



# MÖVENPICK

## HOTEL CASABLANCA



Located between the business district and the old medina of Casablanca, the Mövenpick Hotel Casablanca is a 5-star hotel that combines comfort and contemporary design respecting local traditions to welcome guests in a warm setting with a great sense of hospitality.

Ideal for both business and leisure travelers, the hotel has a rooftop pool and bar with a breathtaking view of Casablanca where you can relax with friends or family after a long day in the city or at the office.

Mövenpick is also a place for wellness, known for their steam room, massage and beauty treatments.

Last but not least conference rooms dedicated for business meetings and gatherings are equipped with the latest audio-visual technologies.

The Mövenpick Hotel Casablanca is the perfect choice for business travelers and holiday makers.

Book your stay on +212 5 224 880 00 or email us on [hotel.casablanca@movenpick.com](mailto:hotel.casablanca@movenpick.com)

[movenpick.com](https://movenpick.com)



# CHAMPIONING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Morocco's unique landscapes and cultural heritage have made tourism a fundamental pillar of the economy. The goal now is to preserve cultural identities, protect the environment, and uplift local communities so the country can successfully surf the wave of sustainable development.

**MOROCCO'S UNIQUE GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION** at the intersection of Europe and Africa and bordered by the waters of the Mediterranean has resulted in a tourism boom over the past decades. Not only does the country offer a vast variety of landscapes, ranging from beaches and mountains to deserts and jungles, it also presents tourists with an opportunity to discover two millennia of history and vestiges of several great civilizations and dynasties that succeeded one another.

In 2019, the sector accounted for almost one-fifth of GDP and employed more than 2 million people, or 20% of the total workforce. All this happened as Morocco received a record 13 million tourists, up 5.2% YoY.

But as the number of tourists travelling to Morocco skyrockets, COVID-19-related challenges aside, many are considering ways to make their trips sustainable. Fully aware of this trend, the government has been guiding growth in the sector toward the path of sustainable development.

Home to six national parks and reserves, 200 species of birds, and 105 species of mammals, including many endangered ones, Morocco is working on preserving its diversity via a real commitment to environmental principles by the government. King Mohammed VI launched the Moroccan Responsible Tourism Charter in 2016 and signaled his determination to make Morocco a sustainable tourism leader that protects its environment and cultural heritage. The end goal is to ensure that tourism goes beyond the beach resorts of the past to benefit natural and cultural attractions across the country.

While Marrakesh and Agadir continue to host the majority of tourists, the Ministry of Tourism is consequently seeking ways to develop alternative tourism sites. At the national level, destination stewardship planning is underway with multiple stakeholders, including NGOs, the private sector, government, and local communities, to promote sustainable tourism.

The Taghazout seaside resort is a prime example of this. In 2H2018, a EUR10-million agreement was signed between the

French Development Agency (AFD) and the Company for the Development and Promotion of the Taghazout Resort (SAPST), which is responsible for planning and developing 4.5km of the region's coastline, to strengthen the integration of neighboring communities into the bustling tourism industry, protect the environment, and preserve local culture. In total, AFD is working on more than 40 projects in Morocco with the aim of extending the range of sustainable services, open up rural areas, and make the country more resilient to climate change.

Elsewhere, in Moqrisset, a town located in a mountainous region that is home to 44 tribes and only 10,000 people, an inn called Djebli Club has become a place where the new and old worlds meet. Practicing a form of collaborative tourism where people pay in knowledge rather than in cash, every resident of Djebli Club, depending on their area of expertise, is required to devote two to three hours per day to workshops or trainings for the local community.

The rise of sustainable tourism in Morocco is also reflected in the growing reputation of Green Key, an internationally recognized environmental label that is awarded to accommodation establishments that comply with a set of eco-friendly criteria. With 44 Green Keys, Morocco is among the top-10 countries with the highest number of awards. Staying at a Green Key establishment in Morocco is unique. Not only do establishments do their best to enrich customer experience and ensure their stay is aligned with ecotourism principles, each property has its own way of recycling waste and lowering the use of energy and water. All the properties in Morocco also work with guests, suppliers, and staff to create the changes necessary to promote and uphold the Green Key Label.

The government has certainly multiplied its efforts and collaboration with different stakeholders to further advance sustainable tourism and sustainability in general. And such has been the country's performance that it did not surprise many when Morocco was ranked the second-most sustainable country in the world by the 2019 Climate Change Performance Index. ✖

# room for GROWTH

As one of the only hotels in Casablanca with a prime ocean-front location, Four Seasons Hotel is helping Casablanca capture a larger share of the leisure market.



Mehdi Zaanoun  
GENERAL MANAGER,  
FOUR SEASONS HOTEL  
CASABLANCA

## *Majority of leisure guests from US, Canada, and China*

**What have been the main achievements of Four Seasons Hotel Casablanca over the last four years?**

Opening and establishing the first luxury hotel in the city has definitely been the key achievement for us over these last few years. More importantly, our unique oceanfront location has also allowed us to tap into the leisure segment, which has always been overlooked in Casablanca. The city has become a major gateway for Africa and Europe, attracting tourists from around the world as well as being an economic hub for business. Previously, leisure travelers preferred to visit cities like Marrakesh and Fes over Casablanca due to the absence of a luxury hotel. We used this as an opportunity to capture a larger share of the leisure market. We have received positive feedback from our corporate clients, the majority of whom are international, as well as local companies that choose our property over other hotels because of the Four Seasons service.

**How would you evaluate the state of tourism in Casablanca?**

Casablanca has great potential as a tourism hub. The government realizes this and is upgrading the airport and looking to attract airlines from around the world. Morocco is well connected to Europe, the Americas, the GCC, and Asia, especially China, which has recently become a strategic market for us because of the visa-free program launched by the two countries. As of June 2019, Morocco received 8 million visitors, marking an 8% increase YoY. Marrakesh and Agadir are driving the growth, but other cities are also improving their offerings. The leisure sector in Morocco is strong, and this has helped both the country and cities like Casablanca unlock the full potential of the tourism sector.

**Can you tell us about your average client profile?**

We have two major categories of guests: leisure and business. The majority of our leisure guests come from the US, Canada, and China. The GCC is our third-biggest market, mainly Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain. Our business travelers are primarily from Europe, specifically France. The hotel is equipped with all the necessary facilities to cater to all kinds of guests throughout the year.

**What is Four Seasons' added value?**

Our location, service, and our unique F&B offerings are our main differentiators. Moreover, the design of the hotel also stands out. We are one of the few hotels in the city with a prime oceanfront location. Both leisure guests and locals enjoy our services and facilities, whether having lunch at our signature restaurant Bleu, afternoon tea in our lobby Mint, or a luxurious treatment at our spa. We have an extraordinary location just a few minutes from the city center, which allows both our leisure and business guests to disconnect from the rest of the world and relax in our garden oasis.

**What are your goals for the future?**

We continue to look at expanding our footprint in the leisure segment in key markets such as North America, the GCC, Europe, and China, as well as other emerging markets in Latin America, capitalizing on new airlifts from these markets. We will continue to invest in marketing to grow in other markets by participating in trade shows to showcase our unique offerings. An increase in hotel offerings in the city and a revitalized airport will attract more tourists in the future. The government is undertaking a number of ambitious initiatives, which will bring new opportunities in the future. ✕

### BIO

Mehdi Zaanoun joined Four Seasons Hotel Casablanca as General Manager in 2018. He has a degree from École Hôtelière de Lausanne. Zaanoun's hospitality experience began at the Four Seasons Hotel George V in Paris, followed by a 14-year career that saw him advance in management through food and beverage with various international hotel groups in France and the Middle East.



Amr Kallini  
GENERAL MANAGER,  
MÖVENPICK HOTEL CASABLANCA

## PUTTING THE *customer first*

Located in close proximity to the business district, the old medina, and famous markets, Mövenpick Hotel Casablanca has something for everyone.

### BIO

Amr Kallini has been the General Manager of Mövenpick Hotel Casablanca since 2014. Prior to this, he was general manager of Mövenpick Hotel Cairo between 2007 and 2014. Throughout his career, he has acquired more than 25 years of international experience, including stints with other renowned international companies such as Starwood and Hilton. Kallini has a bachelor's in business administration from the University of Maryland and a master's in business administration from Boston University.

**What is your assessment of the tourism sector and of the hotel industry in Morocco?**

The tourism sector in Morocco is under development. We have Marrakesh, a destination that has been chosen among the top-10 destinations worldwide. There are also new areas such as Taghazout and Dakhla, which are gaining momentum quickly. As for hotels, there are plenty of new properties being constructed in Rabat, Casablanca, Marrakesh, and Tangier.

**How did 2019 compare to the year before, and what has changed in terms of trends?**

The first five months of 2019 were good for Marrakesh, Agadir, and Rabat, but it slowed down toward the third quarter. On the other hand, Casablanca had a slow start in 2019. Growth has declined mainly due to new openings and bad performance of other sectors, such as real estate and agriculture.

**What are the biggest challenges in the sector that Mövenpick Hotel Casablanca has successfully overcome to maintain its position within the hotel industry?**

The biggest challenge is to continuously update the property to meet the demanding requirements of customers and keep in close contact with guests to understand their needs.

**Serving both business and leisure travelers, how do you position Mövenpick Hotel within the hospitality market?**

Mövenpick Casablanca is oriented toward business travelers during weekdays, with a daily presence of local seminars. Over weekends and during the summer, we host the leisure segment in addition to several airline crews as well.

**What are your unique offerings? How can people utilize your premises for business or special events?**

Mövenpick Casablanca has a unique location, centrally located between the

**“The biggest challenge is to continuously update the property to meet the demanding requirements of customers and keep in close contact with guests to understand their needs.”**

headquarters of major banks and next to the head office of major multinational organizations. Apart from an amazing sky bar rooftop with a pool, Mövenpick Casablanca offers a central location that is in close proximity to famous markets and cafes.

**How are increasing innovations in technology affecting the hospitality industry and your operations?**

We have succeeded in acquiring the latest technology in Wi-Fi and internet-enabled TV. At present, we are working on putting an iPad in each room. Guests will be able to use the iPad to order room service, control the room's lights, and operate the TV.

**What is your outlook for the future?**

With new openings in Morocco, and especially in Casablanca, we expect the competition to be furious. Moving forward, all hotels will need to concentrate on updating their infrastructure and improving guest satisfaction rates to retain their loyalty. ✕



PHOTO ESSAY

Moroccan medinas

# HISTORY, PRESERVED

Morocco has its fair share of tourists, and the majority rarely leave without experiencing a historic medina.

An ornate city gate found in Fes el bali, the old city of Fes



Image: Sadik Yalcin

A misty morning at the Essaouria medina



Image: Nalla

**MOROCCO HAS LONG ATTRACTED** the attention of adventurous travelers, who are drawn to its unique blend of Arab and Berber culture and the many historic towns and cities that dot its landscape.

And at the heart of many of Morocco's most iconic cities lies a medina, meaning "town" or "city" in modern Arabic, but generally referring to the old, walled city still existing as a vestige to a time long past.





The colorful streets of the Meknes medina

Image: Kenneth Dedeu



A panoramic view of the Marrakesh medina

Image: Balate Dorin



Striking blue walls in the Chefchaouen medina

Image: themajestic

Built at a time before the advent of motorized transport, Morocco's medinas feature narrow streets, sometimes as little as a meter wide, making them highly dense urban hubs, but also strong magnets for visitors, drawn by their many alluring features, including souks, mosques, and colorful architecture.

One of Morocco's most impressive medinas lies in Marrakesh, one of the four imperial cities of Morocco. And within the medina, tourists throng to El-Badi Palace and Koutoubia mosque. Rivalling it is the medina at the heart of Fes, another imperial city and former capital. This medina is recognized as one of the oldest, best preserved, and largest medieval areas in Europe and Africa, dating back to the 9th century. Visitors often speak of the sharp contrast of stepping out of the medina and into the modern city of Fes.

Other medinas that shouldn't be missed include those at Meknes, often called the Versailles of Morocco, Essaouria, which enjoys views of the Atlantic ocean, Rabat, the current capital of Morocco with a medina that, until the early 1900s, represented the entirety of the city, Casablanca, immortalized in film but with a medina that transports visitors back to the 18th century, Tangier, possibly home to one of the most visited medinas in the country due to the city's proximity to Europe, and many more.

As Morocco continues to modernize, its medinas will continue to represent the historic traditions of this ancient land. And with the government keen to maintain a well-rounded economy, the medinas continue to form a key aspect of the country's tourism promotion efforts, showcasing the best of Morocco from centuries past.



Tangier, just a short hop across the water from Gibraltar, is popular with European tourists







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