

Practical Information - Morocco

Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a valid passport with an expiry date at least 6 months after the date of your return to the UK. British citizens and those travelling on a British Passport do not require a visa for entry into Morocco.

It is essential that all those who do not hold a British passport check their visa status with the Moroccan Embassy in the UK, well before their departure date. It is the responsibility of each group member to make sure they have the necessary visa to enter the country. Schools Worldwide cannot be held responsible for any restricted travel in relation to the visa or immigration laws of Morocco.

You can contact the Moroccan Embassy in the UK as follows:

Morocco Embassy
49, Queen's Gate Gardens
London
SW7 5NE

Reception: 020 7581 5001/4
Consular Section: 020 7724 0719
Fax Machine: 020 7225 3862
Website: www.mincom.gov.ma or www.morocco-uk.com/embassy

As stated in your kit list, we recommend you to carry a photocopy of the personal information page of your passport, and any visa, at all times during this trip. You should also "scan" this information onto a computer and email the image to yourself for additional back-up.

Important Information

As stated in the Booking Information of our Application Pack, please note that you must be in possession of a valid passport and all visas, permits and certificates, including medical certificates required for the whole of the trip. It is your responsibility to obtain these unless you are expressly advised otherwise by us. Please note that all information and advice given by us on visas, vaccinations, climate, clothing, baggage, special equipment etc. is given in good faith.

We regret that we cannot accept any liability if you are refused entry onto any transport or into any country due to failure on your part to carry correct documentation. If you are not a British citizen or hold a non British passport, you must check passport and visa requirements with the Embassy or Consulate of the country to or through which you are intending to travel.

A full British passport presently takes approximately 4 weeks to obtain. Should the passport information you have submitted on your Application Form be out of date for any part of your trip, you will need to apply for a new passport and submit the details to us immediately. We recommend you to do this no later than 12 weeks prior to departure. Please note that the UK Passport Service has to confirm your identity before issuing a first passport and will ask applicants to attend an interview in order to do this. If any member of the group does not have a passport or will need to renew it prior to departure, they are recommended to apply no later than 3 months in advance of departure.

Health – in the UK

Medical Declaration

You should have already completed the Medical Declaration, on your Application Form which you received, when joining the trip. It is essential that you inform your school of any medical issues that may have arisen since completing your form, or those that may arise between now and your departure. Failure to do so may not only jeopardise your safety and well being while overseas, but also your financial cover for insurance against medical treatment, evacuation or repatriation.

If you wish to speak to anybody in confidence, regarding any medical condition that you have not disclosed on your Application Form (for whatever reason), we please ask that you discuss this with your Lead Teacher in confidence, as soon as possible and before leaving the UK.

Dental Check-up

If you have not recently had a dental check-up, it is advisable that you make an appointment to see your local dentist at least 6 weeks before your departure. This will allow you to receive any dental work necessary in the UK, rather than abroad. Trekking with toothache can be very uncomfortable!

Vaccinations and Medical precautions

The information provided in this section is recommended only and not strictly specific for you in particular. Every body is different and you must consult your GP with your itinerary to obtain the correct information for you.

Naturally, when travelling to an overseas country there is always a risk of picking up infections and illnesses and it is essential that you receive the most up to date information for yourself with regard to receiving vaccinations. We strongly advise you to make an appointment to see your local GP or travel clinic to discuss this well in advance of your departure, allowing you to set up a well-paced timetable to receive your choice of vaccinations, and ensuring that any “boosters” are all up-to-date.

For team members needing to receive the more expensive inoculations, we recommend that you do so as a group, to obtain any possible discounts. In addition, we suggest shopping around, as prices can vary substantially.

There are no statutory requirements in Morocco, unless you are arriving from an area infected with cholera or yellow fever, in which case it will be necessary that you hold the relevant vaccination cards. For instance, in the case of Yellow Fever, you will need to present a Yellow Fever Certificate.

We recommend, that you be protected against the following:

- TB
- Typhoid
- Polio
- Tetanus
- Hepatitis A

Malaria in Morocco is classed as low risk, but you may wish to take malarial tablets none-the-less. You should certainly seek advice from your doctor and perhaps a travel clinic who will be able to advise you on the different regimens that are available, before making your final decision as to which regimen to opt for, or whether to take an anti-malarial drug at all.

These are our recommendations only and we strongly advise that you also refer to your own GP or local Health Clinic to receive professional advice and more information regarding each of these, plus any other, infectious diseases or illnesses that you may wish to guard yourself against.

Health – abroad

This is your expedition and we want you to have a safe, enjoyable and memorable experience. It is never pleasant being ill at home, but it can be very different being ill abroad. There is a lot that you can do for yourselves individually and as a team to keep yourselves fit and healthy while away.

Personal Medication

Please let us and your teachers know if you are carrying any personal medication for an existing illness or condition. If you are carrying any prescription drugs, we suggest that you carry an ample supply for your entire trip with you at all times, accompanied by a letter from your doctor explaining your condition and listing the drugs you intend carry and why you need them. We also ask those who need regular medication to explain the condition and procedure to your teachers and SW Leader.

Airline Travel (inc. Deep Vein Thrombosis – “DVT”)

For your comfort we advise not to eat a heavy meal immediately before your flight and to dress in loose comfortable clothes. During the flight, try not to sit still for too long and whenever convenient try to move around the cabin. Prolonged sitting in the same position can restrict your blood flow in the legs and cause blood clots. Stretching your legs and arms every couple of hours can make a big difference to your comfort and all airlines provide good advice on in-flight exercises during the safety brief before flight take-off – please take note of this and follow their advice on additional exercises.

Try not to eat too heavily during the flight and drink plenty of water throughout the journey rather than tea, coffee, or alcohol, which are all more likely to dehydrate you.

In flight meals and food allergies

As Airlines do not have any control over the kitchens of the catering companies who provide in flight meals, they cannot guarantee that specific food allergies can be catered for. Therefore, please note that if you have a severe food allergy, especially a nut allergy, we highly recommend that you provide your own packed meal and snacks for your outbound and return flights.

Food & Water

Treat water supplies with suspicion. Do not put water into your mouth while cleaning your teeth unless you know it is safe (e.g. from a bottle). You should always boil, filter or disinfect drinking water with iodine or chlorine before drinking it. Bottled water is normally a safe option, but you should always ensure that the seal is intact.

There are certain foods best to avoid, but ultimately your own common sense is the best guard. Un-boiled milk, salads, ice creams, street food and ice cubes in drinks are obvious foods to avoid, but there are also some fairly good rules to stick to in order to avoid common illnesses. Always wash your hands before eating or preparing any food, always peel your own fruit, always carry a bottle of purified water, never eat bad smelling or discoloured meat and never eat cold food that should be hot.

It may be a temptation for you to offer a group member a drink from your own water bottle. Though this may seem to be a generous and friendly gesture, we recommend that you use your own water bottle only and do not share. The reason for this being that viruses can rapidly move from one person to another via saliva and by only drinking from your own water bottle, you will either contain a virus (if you are ill) or reduce the likelihood of falling ill (if one of your group members is ill).

And finally...always wash your hands after going to the toilet!



Personal Hygiene

Again, using your common sense and taking care of yourself are the best ways to keep yourself healthy, and staying hygienic (as you would at home) should not become a secondary thought. Wash whenever you can, even if it is in a washing up tub of water on the ground! Dry your feet and use an anti-fungal foot powder at the end of each day. Always keep a dry set of warm clothes to wear in the evening. Use purified water to clean your teeth. If you wear contact lenses, always thoroughly disinfect your hands before touching your lenses and always carry two lens cases with you. You should never allow anyone to give you an injection unless you are certain that the needle is sterile and you should be present when the needle is taken from its packet. Cuts, grazes and scratches can quickly become infected, especially in hot and humid climates, if not regularly cleaned and dressed.

The Sun & heat

If arriving into a very hot climate, it will take your body several days to acclimatise to the high temperatures and illnesses such as heatstroke and sunstroke are particularly unpleasant and will certainly ruin your trip and can seriously jeopardise your overall safety.

However, they are very easily avoidable and drinking a small amount of water, regularly is much better than large volumes rarely, and you should maintain a clear-looking urine at least twice a day.

Take plenty of high factor sun-cream with you to wear all day as well as a wide brimmed hat, to shade your neck and face, and sunglasses to protect your eyes (not just from the glare of the sun and its UV rays, but also from dust and dirt).

If you do get sunburnt, cover up immediately and apply an after-sun lotion. Our best advice is not to try and get a suntan but to be sensible in the sun. Don't under estimate its strength.

Women's Health (inc. The Contraceptive Pill)

You know your body and how it works better than anyone. Periods may be effected by changes in time zone, diet or diet and may become irregular or even missed. Sanitary towels and tampons may not be readily available throughout your expedition, so be sure to take a reasonable supply with you.

Some women decide to begin taking the oral contraceptive pill prior to leaving on an expedition in the hope of avoiding a period while travelling. This should always be discussed in detail with your GP with your itinerary in mind, as considerations must be taken into account. The contraceptive pill may be prevented from being absorbed by the body due to diarrhoea, and there is a theoretical risk of blood clots forming in women who take the contraceptive pill and travel to altitudes of more than 4500m.

Illness & Injury

Blisters, toes and feet

Your feet are two of the most important parts of the body to look after when abroad and probably the most commonly uncared for. Blisters can turn an enjoyable trek into a painful experience and in the worst cases can totally immobilise. They can develop in a space of minutes if not attended to at the first signs of development, but are very easy to avoid. Still, so many people suffer from them.

Here are some very easy steps to take to ensure that your feet do not suffer.

- ✓ Ensure your toe-nails are clipped
- ✓ Ensure your boots fit properly and are worn-in prior to departure
- ✓ Wear comfortable padded socks (trekking socks)
- ✓ Keep your feet as dry as possible and powder them each evening
- ✓ Remove any grit or gravel that gets inside the boot immediately
- ✓ Cover a blister with a good plaster as soon as it starts to develop

Colds & flu

Coughs and colds are common on most expeditions, and especially in mountainous and where the air tends to be thinner, drier and colder. It is also common to feel the symptoms of a cold after a long flight or if you are run down or tired, which is why food, water and rest are so important throughout the entire expedition. It is also important that you keep 1 set of dry warm clothes to wear in the evening after completing your trek or project work for the day. Throat lozenges can help, but only to ease any discomfort or dryness in the throat, rather than fighting the infection.

If you develop a fever, ensure you tell your teacher and SW leader as this may develop into flu-bug. It is also vital to consider the early signs of malaria, especially once back in the UK.

Diarrhoea

It is likely that you may experience some sort of short-lived diarrhoea at some stage during your journey, which will be best remedied by fluids and rest. If you do develop diarrhoea of any kind, ensure you monitor your illness and continue each day as normal. Try to eat if you are hungry, as you will need to be strong to fight the infection, but stay clear of spicy food and dairy products. Do not be embarrassed and under no circumstances should you self-medicate without consulting your teacher and leader. Note – many travellers take Imodium thinking it will cure the problem. It does not. Imodium will only block the problem, sealing in the infection rather than fighting it.

Should your diarrhoea persist for more than 3 days, you develop a temperature or you notice blood in your stools, please tell your teacher and SW Leader.

Muscle strains and aches

You should have done some training before departing on expedition and so will be aware of any weaknesses you may have. For instance if you suffer from sore knees after walking down hill, you may find it easier walking with a trekking pole. However, it should be said that a good level of fitness will go a long way to preventing sore muscles and joints.

As with most exercise, it is important to warm up at the start, and also take time to stretch at the end of the day. This will go a long way to reducing aches and stiffness on the following day.

If you suffer some serious twisting that becomes bruised and inflamed, it will certainly help to have bandages to support the area. In these instances rest and anti-inflammatory drugs are the best remedy.

Bites & Stings

Animal & Dog Bites

Animals in the developing world are not like domestic pets here in the UK, they are often used for hunting and in some cases seen as scavengers and bad luck, and badly treated, therefore prone to attacks. Dog bites are common in the developing world and almost all animal bites will become infected, with the risk of developing tetanus or rabies. All bites should be deep cleaned thoroughly and immediate medical attention should be sought.

Leeches & Ticks

These parasites can be regularly encountered while abroad, and even in the UK (Ticks). They feed on mammals but are straight forward to deal with if caught early. Leeches are mainly found in vegetated areas where there are mammals. The best methods for removing a leech are with a lighter, until they fall off, or by using DEET, which may also repel ticks and leeches in the first place. Do not brush a leech off your skin.

Ticks burrow their heads under the skin to feed, and spread disease. You should check your skin for ticks regularly and remove them as soon as possible. Do not use a flame to remove them, but tweezers or petroleum jelly. Ensure that the entire tick is removed, do not leave the head in the skin. If you suspect you have been bitten tell your teachers and SW leader as soon as possible to ensure the tick is removed in the correct manner. Clean the bitten area completely and regularly use antiseptic.

Snakes & Scorpions

Though snakes are found in many countries, the risk of actually being bitten by one is extremely remote. It is important to remember that snakes will move away when you approach and will only bite a human when threatened.

To avoid getting bitten by a snake

- ✓ Wear closed feet boots
- ✓ Keep campsites clean and tidy, sealing all rubbish.
- ✓ Use a head torch at night
- ✓ Take care when collecting firewood
- ✓ Do not go in search of snakes

If you do encounter a snake...

- ✓ Keep your distance
- ✓ Note its markings
- ✓ Let it move away from you

Scorpions are frequently encountered abroad and checking for them may become a part of your daily routine. It is important to remember that stings are painful (very, in some cases) but rarely fatal. However you should avoid them however possible by not leaving clothes out overnight or shaking them out in the morning if you do, checking shoes, checking mosquito nets and checking hats.

In addition, you should always check a campsite area for scorpions and take great care if moving stones, wood or any other natural habitat.

Environmental Illnesses

Hypothermia

Sometimes also called "exposure", this is a serious condition where the body falls below 35C. In the most serious cases, organs may fail, ultimately becoming a fatal condition.

- As with most problems, prevention is better than cure:
 - ✓ Drink water to prevent dehydration (dehydration reduces the body's ability to produce heat)
 - ✓ Eat regularly (muscles need fuel to maintain the body temperature)
 - ✓ Wear the correct clothing for the environment (see clothing list in TIP1)
 - ✓ Keep warm (wear layers and a wind + waterproof shell, trapping warm air between layers)
 - ✓ Hat and gloves are essential (keep your extremities warm)
- The signs of hypothermia include:
 - Tiredness
 - Confusion
 - Shivering or stumbling (poor muscular co-ordination)
 - Irrational or uncharacteristic behaviour

As the body temperature drops, shivering stops and the casualty will become drowsy, even falling into a coma. Once hypothermia develops, you must stop further heat loss and increase heat production.

- Emergency procedure:
 - ✓ Stop and seek urgent shelter
 - ✓ Insulate casualty from the ground
 - ✓ Replace all wet clothing with many layers of dry clothing
 - ✓ Try to warm temperature (i.e. put several people in a small tent)
 - ✓ If casualty is conscious, provide warm drinks

Altitude Sickness (Acute Mountain Sickness - AMS)

At altitudes above 2500m, the reduced amounts of oxygen in the air mean many people can suffer from Mountain Sickness. The illness is characterised by the following symptoms.

- Headaches
- Breathlessness
- Nausea
- Insomnia

Most of these problems settle after a few days of acclimatisation, but it is important not to continue climbing to higher altitudes when any of the above mountain sickness symptoms are present.

Occasionally mountain sickness can progress to High Altitude Pulmonary and Cerebral Oedema, producing breathlessness at rest, severe headaches and unconsciousness. If these symptoms occur or any from the first list persist, immediate descent is vital and will improve the situation.

Stay Safe

Your safety is our priority and we have provided this pack of information to help you and prepare you, not alarm you. We have conducted a comprehensive risk assessment to accompany your trip and we ask you to stay within our guidelines. There will always be an element of risk and danger with such trips and we ask each team member to use their common sense, behave sensibly, talk to us about any problems and stay safe.



Fitness Exercise

Introduction

As mentioned in TIP 1, fitness is an essential part of the preparation you should be making for this trip. The level of your fitness will greatly affect the overall experience of the trip for you as an individual and the group as a whole.

You should already be taking the necessary measures to improve or maintain your fitness levels and by following the guidance provided in TIP1 you should now be at a point where a Fitness Exercise can be run for the entire group to assess individual levels of fitness. (Please refer to TIP1 if you are yet to start preparing yourself for this trip).

The Exercise

This Fitness Exercise is designed to raise awareness for those who need to focus further on training.

The exercise should be run 3 - 4 months prior to departure in order to allow time for any improvements to be made. It is important that those who struggle with the test, carry out additional training prior to the start of the trip.

The exercise should be organised by the Lead Teacher, the team and the Schools Worldwide Leader (if they are available / appointed).

Team members should cover a distance of 15km with a 10kg trekking pack on flat ground maintaining a pace of 5km/hr (in line with advice from the Mountain Leader Training Board, Naismith's Rule). Variations should be allowed according to the nature of the terrain, but the exercise should be conducted over a period of at least 3 hours in order to properly assess individual's stamina.

For those aiming to complete particularly physically demanding treks as part of their overseas itinerary, you could lengthen the time of this exercise or use an area of steeper or undulating ground.

Additional points

If there is not a suitable location in your area to run this exercise, then an alternative could be your school playing fields or running track, which has a measured distance.

Medical Advice: It is very important that if you have any medical problems, you always seek advice from your GP before starting an exercise programme.

Health & Safety: Ensure everyone drink lots of fluid, carry out a thorough warm-up before commencing and a cool down/stretch afterwards.

Consult PE staff: Perhaps they will oversee the event or help organise it.

Aim to make it as fun as possible: You should have made sure that you have physically prepared for the exercise, so try and enjoy yourself.

Fundraising: This is an ideal chance for a sponsored event/team-building exercise.

After the Exercise

If you have struggled with the exercise or don't succeed, please discuss your fitness training with your Lead Teacher, who may be able to help draw up an appropriate training programme with the help of P.E staff. It is your Lead Teacher's decision as to whether you should do the exercise again, perhaps 4 to 6 weeks before departure.

