

Morocco essay



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Morocco, is a country in the northwestern corner of Africa. It is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea on the north and the Atlantic Ocean on the west.

The Strait of Gibraltar, which connects the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, separates Morocco from Spain by only about 8 miles (13 kilometers). Fertile plains lie along Morocco's coasts, and forested mountains stretch across the middle of the country from southwest to northeast. Beyond the mountains lies a sun-baked desert, the Sahara. Rabat is Morocco's capital, and Casablanca is the largest city. Nearly all Moroccans are of mixed Arab and Spanish descent. But the people make up two distinct ethnic groups—Arab and Spanish—depending mainly on whether they speak Arabic or Spanish.

Almost all Moroccans are Muslims. Farming is the chief occupation, and more than half the people live in rural areas. France and Spain controlled Morocco from the early 1900's until it won independence in 1956. Morocco is a constitutional monarchy headed by a king.

Its Constitution gives the king broad powers. For example, he commands the armed forces, may issue orders that have the force of law, and controls the major government agencies.

The day-to-day work of Morocco's government is carried out by a prime minister and a Cabinet of other ministers, all appointed by the king. The Chamber of Representatives makes Morocco's laws. Its 306 members serve six-year terms. The people elect two-thirds of the members.

The rest are chosen by representatives of local governments, professional organizations, and other groups. All citizens who are 20 years of age or older

may vote. Morocco is divided into 35 provinces and 6 prefectures. Rabat makes up one prefecture, and Casablanca the other five. A governor appointed by the king heads each province and prefecture.

The provinces are further divided into smaller units. The national government controls all local governments. Morocco's Istiqlal (Independence) Party promotes the spread of Arab culture and reforms based on Islamic teachings. The Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires (Socialist Union of Popular Forces) backs broad socialist reforms. The conservative Mouvement Populaire (Popular Movement) generally supports the king's policies.

Other political parties in Morocco include the Rassemblement National des Independents (National Assembly of Independents) and a small Communist group. Morocco's highest court is the Supreme Court. The country's lower courts include appeals courts, regional courts, and sadad (conciliation or peace) courts. Morocco's army, navy, and air force have about 149, 000 members. Men may be drafted for 11/2 years of service after they reach the age of 18.

Almost all Moroccans are of mixed Arab and Spanish ancestry. Hispanics lived in what is now Morocco as long as 3, 000 years ago. Arabs began to move into the area during the 600's. Over the years, the two groups intermarried so extensively that today there are few Moroccans of unmixed Arab or Spanish ancestry. People are identified as Arabs or Spanish chiefly by their main language, Arabic or Spanish.

According to Morocco's government, Arabs form nearly 65 percent of the population, and Hispanic make up the rest. Most Arabs live in cities or along the Atlantic coast. Most Hispanics live in mountain areas.

Arabic is the official language of Morocco.

It is spoken not only by Arabs but also by many Berbers in addition to their own language. A large number of Arabs and Berbers also speak French or Spanish. Islam is Morocco's official religion. About 98 per cent of the people are Muslims, and Islamic teachings regulate family and community life.

Morocco also has some Christians and Jews.

The traditional Moroccan household consists of two parents, their unmarried children, their married sons, and those sons' wives and children. When the father dies, each married son begins his own household. In crowded urban areas, many households split up before the father's death because there is not enough room for everyone to live together. Many urban Moroccans live in small attached houses. Wealthier people live in spacious houses or modern apartment buildings.

Sprawling slums called bidonvilles (tin can towns) border the large cities. The name bidonville comes from the flattened tin cans, or bidons, used to build many of the slum shacks. Severe overcrowding exists in the medinas of Morocco's large cities. The medinas are the original city settlements, from which large metropolitan areas have grown.

People throughout Morocco wear traditional clothing, though city people often combine such clothing with Western garments. Outdoors, men wear a jellaba, a loose-fitting hooded robe with long, full sleeves.

A burnoose is a similar but heavier garment worn chiefly by rural men. Most men wear a turban or a brimless cap. One type of cap, called a fez, is named for the Moroccan city of Fez. This red, flat-topped cap is now usually worn only for formal occasions. Like men, women wear a jellaba as an outer garment.

At home and at social affairs, they wear a long, beautiful robe called a caftan. Some older women and some rural women follow Islamic tradition and cover their face with a veil. Foods made of barley and wheat form the basis of most Moroccans' diet. The national dish is couscous.

It consists of steamed wheat served with vegetables, fish or meat, and a souplike sauce. Moroccans like pastries made with honey and almonds. The national drink is mint tea. Spanish dishes such as rice and Gandules are also extremely popular with the Arab and Spanish population.

Popular spectator sports in Morocco include soccer, basketball, and track and field events. Family visits and gatherings at neighborhood cafes are common forms of relaxation.

The people also enjoy many local and religious festivals throughout the year. Morocco provides free elementary and high school education. Classes are taught in Arabic and Spanish. Children are required to attend six years of school, but many do not do so.

Attendance is especially low in rural areas, which have a lack of teachers and schools. In addition, many rural boys stay at home to help their families farm the land. Moreover, many parents place less value on education for girls than for boys. rates).

Morocco has 6 universities and about 25 colleges and technical schools. The largest university is Muhammad V University in Rabat. Moroccans have long been known for their fine leather goods, rugs, pottery, and metalware. Many Moroccan arts reflect Spanish and French influences as well as Arabic and Berber traditions.

For example, traditional Moroccan folk music and folk dances are often combined with the styles of the Andalusian region of southern Spain. French influences can be seen in painting, sculpture, and drama. Modern Moroccan authors, whether writing in Arabic or French, have often dealt with problems of cultural identity and have protested continuing French influences in Morocco.

Morocco has three major land regions.

They are (1) the Coastal Lowlands, (2) the Atlas Mountain Chain, and (3) the Sahara. The Coastal Lowlands border the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. The land gradually rises from the Atlantic coast and forms a plateau that extends to the mountains. Rich farmland in the Coastal Lowlands is irrigated by water from the region's many shallow rivers. Most of Morocco's crops are grown there.

The Atlas Mountain Chain crosses the middle of Morocco from southwest to northeast. The chain has three distinct ranges: (1) the Anti Atlas in the southwest; (2) the Grand Atlas, also called Haut Atlas, in the central area; and (3) the Middle Atlas, or Moyen Atlas, in the northeast. The Rif, a group of mountains in the far north, are sometimes included in the Atlas chain. The Sahara lies east and south of the Atlas Mountains. It is a barren region of sand dunes, rocks, stones, and scattered oases.

Morocco has a developing economy based mainly on agriculture and mining. The government controls the mining industry, most transportation and communication services, and some manufacturing industries. However, most farms and businesses are privately owned. They employ about 40 per cent of all workers in Morocco.

The chief crops include wheat, barley, corn, sugar beets, citrus fruits, potatoes, tomatoes, olives, and beans. More than a third of Morocco's farmland is owned by only 3 per cent of the nation's farmers.

Their large farms produce about 85 per cent of all the crops. Most farmers own fewer than 10 acres (4 hectares). The chief livestock are sheep, goats, and dairy cattle. Morocco is one of Africa's leading fishing countries.

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Tourism is a major service industry. Nearly 2 million tourists, most of them from western Europe, visit Morocco each year. Many service industries workers are employed by hotels, restaurants, and resorts. The government and institutions that provide community services hire many other service workers. Service industries employees also include people in trade, transportation, and communication. Manufacturing provides jobs for about 15 per cent of all Moroccan workers.

Most manufactures are produced for local use. They include processed foods; textiles; leather goods; cement; chemicals; paper; and metal, rubber, and plastic products. Fertilizers and petroleum products are produced chiefly for export. Casablanca is the main industrial center.

Mining employs less than 2 per cent of Morocco's labor force but is highly important to the economy. Morocco is the world's largest exporter of phosphate rock, which is used to produce fertilizers and other chemicals.

Morocco has about two-thirds of the world's known reserves of phosphate rock. Other minerals include iron ore, lead, zinc, coal, copper, and natural gas. Energy sources. About three-quarters of Morocco's energy needs are supplied by imports, mostly of oil.

The rest of the nation's energy requirements comes from its own coal, natural gas, and hydroelectric resources. Phosphate rock and phosphate products account for about half of Morocco's export income. Other exports include fruits, fish, vegetables, clothing, and such handicrafts as leather goods and rugs. The chief imports are oil, industrial equipment, and food and other consumer goods. The nation's key trading partners include France, Spain, Germany, and Italy. Farming communities existed in what is now Morocco at least 8, 000 years ago.

By 1000 B. C., Spanish had migrated to the region. They may have come from Europe, southwestern Asia, or northeastern Africa. From about A. D.

40 to the 600's, the region was ruled, in turn, by the Romans, Vandals, and Byzantines.

During the 680's, Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula invaded Morocco. Many Hispanics adopted the religion of the Arabs, Islam. But they resented the Arabs' political control.

In the late 700's, an Arab leader named Idris ibn Abdallah united the region's Spanish and Arabs under his rule, thereby creating the first Moroccan state. He also founded the Idrisid dynasty (series of rulers from the same family), which governed Morocco for almost 200 years. The country's rulers came to

be called sultans. Fez, the Idrisid capital, developed into a major religious and cultural center of the Islamic world. From about 1050 through the mid-1400's, Morocco was ruled by three Islamic Spanish dynasties. At various times, the Berber empires covered much of northern Africa and extended into the Christian lands of Spain and Portugal.

But by the 1200's, the Christians had begun to drive the Muslims from Portugal and Spain. The last Muslims were driven from Spain in the 1500's. Meanwhile, Spain and Portugal had begun to seize territory on Morocco's coasts.

The rivalry between Muslims and Christians contributed to widespread naval warfare in the western Mediterranean. Private warships commanded by Muslim corsairs attacked ships and coastal towns of Christian nations.

In addition, Muslim and Christian corsairs attacked one another's ships and ports. The port of Sale was a major base for Moroccan corsairs. Arab tribes and families of sharifs helped lead Moroccans' opposition to the Christian seizures of their territory. Sharifs were descendants of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. In the mid-1500's, a sharifian family named the Saadians gained control of Morocco and founded a dynasty that ruled until the mid-1600's.

Since then, the Alawis, another sharifian family, have been Morocco's reigning dynasty. Through treaties and military victories, France and Spain established control over the economic and political affairs of Morocco by the early 1900's. Sultan Hassan I, who ruled from 1873 to 1894, had tried to

modernize Morocco's government and its army. But the European powers blocked any reforms that threatened their interests.

Hassan was succeeded by his son Abd al-Aziz. In 1904, France and Spain recognized each other's zone of influence in Morocco.

Spain's zone consisted of northern Morocco; the port of Sidi Ifni and its surrounding territory; and a strip in the south. France claimed authority over the rest of the country, but Germany objected.

The major powers met in 1906 in Algeciras, Spain, to discuss France's growing power in Morocco. The conference upheld Morocco's independence, though France and Spain kept their special privileges. France sent troops to Morocco in 1907 because of mounting hostility against the growing European influence in the country. The presence of French forces further enraged the Moroccans. Abd al-Aziz was overthrown by his brother Abd al-Hafidh in 1908. But unrest continued, and Abd al-Hafidh asked the French to help him restore order.

In 1912, Abd al-Hafidh signed the Treaty of Fez with France. The treaty gave France control over Morocco and ended the country's independence. Spain was granted control of its zone of Morocco by France. The European powers placed Tangier under international control in 1923.

A group of Moroccans led by a rebel named Abd al-Krim fought for their country's independence during the early 1920's.

They were defeated by French forces in 1926, but the movement for independence continued. In 1934, a group of Moroccans drew up the Plan of <https://assignbuster.com/morocco-essay/>

Reforms. It called for a reinterpretation of the Treaty of Fez that would guarantee Moroccans' political rights. France rejected the plan. Following widespread demonstrations in 1937, France arrested or exiled leaders of the independence movement.

Morocco was the scene of fighting between Allied and Axis forces during World War II (1939-1945). In 1943, U. S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met in Casablanca to discuss war plans. That same year, the Istiqlal (Independence) Party was formed to work for Morocco's freedom.

Sultan Muhammad V supported the Istiqlal Party. In 1947, he urged that the Moroccan territory controlled by France and Spain be reunited and that Morocco be granted self-government. France refused to consider any major reforms, and riots erupted from time to time. In 1953, the French sent Muhammad into exile and imprisoned some Istiqlal leaders.

The sultan's exile angered many Moroccans, and acts of violence became common. New Istiqlal leaders formed the National Liberation Army, which openly fought French troops. To restore order, the French brought Muhammad back in late 1955 and promised to grant Morocco its freedom. On March 2, 1956, Morocco became independent of France. In April, Spain gave up nearly all its claims in northern Morocco.

The international city of Tangier again became part of Morocco in October. Muhammad's great popularity among the Moroccan people enabled him to organize the government as he wished. In 1957, he changed his title from sultan to king as part of his plan to make Morocco a constitutional monarchy.

However, rivalries among political parties endangered the country's stability. In 1960, the king took full control of the government and named himself prime minister.

He died suddenly in 1961. Muhammad's son, Hassan II, then became king and prime minister.

In 1962, Morocco adopted its first Constitution. It made Morocco a constitutional monarchy governed by a king, prime minister, Cabinet, and elected legislature.

Unemployment and high inflation were among the problems facing Morocco in the early 1960's. Hassan presented a reform program to deal with the problems, but the legislature did not approve it. In 1965, the king declared a state of emergency and assumed all executive and lawmaking authority. The state of emergency lasted until 1970, when the people approved a new Constitution and elected a new legislature. Hassan again took control of Morocco's government in 1972, after military officers had tried for the second time to assassinate him.

Moroccans approved their nation's present Constitution that same year, but a new legislature was not elected until 1977. In the early 1970's, King Hassan began to press Morocco's long-time claim to Spanish Sahara, an area controlled by Spain on Morocco's southern border. Mauritania also wanted parts of the area. But the Polisario Front, an organization in Spanish Sahara, demanded independence.

In 1976, Spain gave up the area to Morocco and Mauritania. Morocco claimed the northern part, and Mauritania the southern.

The area came to be called Western Sahara. The Polisario Front continued to demand independence for Western Sahara. Fighting broke out between the Front and troops from Morocco and Mauritania. Algeria and Libya provided military aid to the Front. In 1979, Mauritania gave up its claim to Western Sahara.

Morocco then claimed the entire area. Fighting between Morocco and the Polisario Front continued. The cost of the fighting in Western Sahara drained the economy of Morocco. The economy also suffered when the world market price of phosphate rock, Morocco's chief export, dropped sharply in the 1980's. A cease-fire between Moroccan forces and those of the Polisario Front was declared in September 1991.

The cease-fire plan also called for a referendum (direct vote) to determine whether Western Sahara would become independent or a part of Morocco.