

# Participant Handbook

## Rabat, Morocco



أمديست

amideast education abroad in the mena



**أهلاً و سهلاً!**

Ahlan wa sahan! **Congratulations on your admission to an Amideast program in Rabat!** We look forward to welcoming you to Morocco. This handbook contains a great deal of useful information to help prepare you to have a successful experience in Rabat. **Please read it cover to cover** so you have clear expectations of this experience. You will be grateful you did!

Please note that the information contained in this Student Handbook was correct when it was written. **Amideast reserves the right change any of the policies and procedures contained herein without notice.**

**EMERGENCY LINE: 1-202-599-3055**

Please note that this number is for your family and friends to use in case of an emergency and will connect them to our headquarters in **DC 24 hours a day**. Emergencies in Morocco should be reported to the **emergency line in Morocco**, which will be programmed in your Moroccan cell phones.

We strongly recommend that all participants share a copy of this handbook and review the information with those they have listed as emergency contacts in the [Student Portal](#).

**Amideast Center Street Address**  
 35, Zanqat Oukaimden, Agdal, Rabat  
 Tel: +212-53-767-5081/5082  
 Fax: +212-53-767-5074

Amideast Center Hours: Monday–Saturday, 8:00 am–8:30 pm Sunday, 9:00 am–5:00 pm

[www.amideast.org/abroad](http://www.amideast.org/abroad) | [EdAbroad@amideast.org](mailto:EdAbroad@amideast.org)

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# Section I: Pre-departure & Arrival

## Program Management

America-Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc. (Amideast) is a private, nonprofit organization that strengthens mutual understanding and cooperation between Americans and the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa. Every year, Amideast provides English language and professional skills training, educational advising, and testing services to hundreds of thousands of students and professionals in the Middle East and North Africa; supports numerous institutional development projects in the region; and administers educational exchange programs. Founded in 1951, Amideast is headquartered in Washington, DC, with a network of field offices in Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Morocco, Kuwait, Lebanon, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, West Bank/Gaza, and Yemen.

Amideast's Education Abroad department designs academic study, cultural immersion, and professional development programs that capitalize on the diverse resources of and experiences available in each country where Amideast operates in the region. Using its extensive network of field offices and contacts throughout the region, Amideast is able to customize programs to meet the specific needs and interests of each client. Its programs accommodate groups of any size and range in duration from a few days to an entire academic year.

### Program Calendars

All program calendars are available on the Amideast Student Portal under the Program Calendar tab.

[Area and Arabic Language Studies Program](#)

[Regional Studies in French Program](#)

[Intensive Arabic](#)

## Preparing for Departure

### ♦ Call your credit card company and bank.

- Inform them of the dates you will be travelling and the countries you will be visiting so your cards are not blocked when used internationally.
- Find out about fees for ATM usage and international purchases.

### ♦ Visit your dentist.

- Your program insurance ([CISI Insurance](#)) does not cover routine dental care.

### ♦ Visit your doctor.

- Discuss any chronic physical or mental health issues that may need attention while you are abroad.
- Ensure you have prescription medicines to last for your entire time abroad.
- Request a generic prescription and letter of explanation to bring along with all medications.

### ♦ Discuss your health insurance with your family and set up your account in the [CISI Portal](#).

### ♦ Research your host country and city to learn as much as possible before you depart.



## Get and Stay Connected

During your pre-departure process remember that there are several ways to connect online with Amideast students, alumni, and staff.

♦ If you haven't already, feel free to **visit our collaborative [student blog](#)** to read about experiences from previous and current students studying abroad with Amideast.

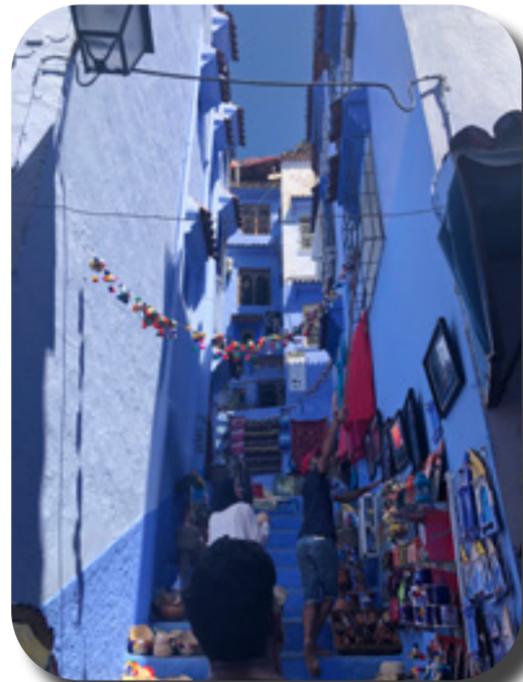
♦ **Visit and like our social media accounts.** You can find them all linked on the first page of this handbook!

♦ **Regularly participate in the pre-departure online discussions and activities** hosted by Amideast Online (an Online Learning Management Platform). More information on how to access this platform will be available in the Student Portal.

## Flight Information

In addition to the information included here, please refer to the [Student Portal](#) for more information regarding arrival in Morocco.

- ◇ **Arrival Time:** All students are required to arrive in Morocco on the day indicated “Students Arrive” on the program calendar.
- ◇ **Flight Information:** Please upload your flight itinerary and fill out the “Flight Information: Arrival” and “Flight Information: Departure” in your Student Portal.
- ◇ **Arrival Transportation:** Amideast will provide transportation from the **Rabat-Salé International Airport (RBA)** to your accommodations if you arrive exactly on arrival day. While Amideast can help make arrangements for transport from other airports, these will be out-of-pocket expenses. If you do not complete the “Flight Information: Arrival” questionnaire in your Student Portal **one month before your arrival**, we will not be able to pick you up from the airport.
- ◇ **Early Arrival:** If you arrive before the arrival date, you are responsible for your own transportation from the airport as well as accommodation up to the start of the program. If you are arriving early, please answer accordingly in the Student Portal and provide information as to where you will be staying prior to program.
- ◇ **Late Arrival:** Students **are not** allowed to arrive after the indicated arrival date as **orientation is mandatory**. Please note that if you purchase a ticket arriving after the designated arrival date you will be asked to change the ticket to an earlier date.
- ◇ **Departure:** You should plan to depart Rabat on **the day following the final day of your program** as detailed above.
- ◇ **Departure Transportation:** Amideast will provide you with transportation to the airport at the end of the program if you depart on the date indicated as “Students Depart” on the academic calendar. If you choose to stay on beyond the end of the program, you are responsible for your own transportation to the airport. If you do not complete the “Flight Information: Departure” questionnaire in your Student Portal **three weeks before your departure**, we will not be able to take you to the airport.
- ◇ **Independent Travel:** If you plan to travel before the program starts or after it ends, please be sure to keep us informed so we know whether you need help arranging transport, although the costs will be out-of-pocket.



## Arrival Information

Please anticipate waiting longer than you may be accustomed to when exiting the airport. Clearing customs will be your introduction to the cultural differences you will encounter while living in Morocco.

Arriving students can meet the Amideast representative by exiting the terminal and looking for an Amideast sign at the main sidewalk outside of the airport. Once outside your terminal look for someone who will be holding a sign with the Amideast logo. **The representative will wait at the airport and will not leave without you, even if your flight is delayed.** The representative will be waiting, so stay at the terminal (just outside the building) until you see the Amideast representative.

If there are any problems upon arrival at the airport, call the

**Amideast Morocco Emergency number at  
066-548-82-64**

You can reach this number through WhatsApp using the airport WiFi, but if you do not have a phone on you, do not worry. Ask any security guard or airport official for help; Moroccans are generally helpful and friendly!

Students are encouraged to obtain Moroccan currency at the airport prior to meeting an Amideast representative. There are banks, foreign exchange offices, and ATMs that are open throughout Moroccan airports. **We advise you to obtain Moroccan money to use during the weekend over orientation.** Many banks and foreign exchange offices outside of the airport in Morocco are not open over the weekend. Amideast representatives meeting students at the airport have instructions to wait for you until you obtain money.

**If your baggage does not arrive on the flight with you, submit your claim to the airline's airport baggage services.** To file a claim, you will need your luggage claim tags that were given to you at check-in. Please make sure to keep this with you in your carry-on luggage.

**If your flight is delayed for more than an hour, if you missed a connection and have been re-routed by the airline, or if your flight is canceled, you must contact Amideast immediately at**

**1-202-599-3055 (if you are in the US) or at  
066-548-82-64 (if you are in Morocco)**

## Visa Information

Please visit your [Student Portal](#) to find the most up-to-date information about obtaining a Moroccan visa.

Non-US citizens should get a head start in contacting Morocco's embassy or consulate in their home countries, as visa and residency requirements may require fees and significant time to process.

## US Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

All students who are US citizens should enroll in the US Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, prior to leaving for Morocco. The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a **free service** provided by the US Government to US citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country.

STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency. STEP also allows Americans residing abroad to get routine information from the nearest US embassy or consulate.

Once you enroll in STEP you can also subscribe to receive updates on Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and other information for Morocco. Please visit [their website](#) to register.



## Orientation

Amideast assumes each student's home institution will provide an orientation covering relevant academic matters prior to departure. It is the sole responsibility of the student to be familiar with their home institution's relevant policies and information.

There will be a series of activities and webinars in the **pre-departure phase**, hosted by Amideast Online to help you prepare for the program.

Then, the Amideast Education Abroad Program **on-site orientation** takes place once program participants have arrived in their host country. **Orientation is an integral component of the program, and all students are required to attend all events and activities.**

During this orientation a variety of discussions and activities are designed to introduce Amideast Education Abroad Program students to Moroccan culture and daily life and familiarize them with the logistics of the program.

## Packing List

It can be stressful to think about all the things you may need to bring with you for your time abroad, whether it is a semester or a month. Please see our packing list suggestions to help you narrow what you need to bring. But we'll start with some helpful, general tips.

- ◇ Please make sure your **luggage is sturdy** and can withstand being thrown around.
- ◇ **Don't check anything you're not willing to lose**; this includes cash, cameras, passports, jewelry, irreplaceable items, and breakables.
- ◇ Pack all **liquid containers in sealable plastic bags** in case they leak.
- ◇ Pack a **carry-on with essential items** that could get you through the first 48 hours in the event that your checked luggage is delayed or lost. If the airline demands that you check a carry-on at the gate, take the time to remove all valuables.
- ◇ **If you do lose your baggage**, keep in mind that most airlines require reports to be filed within 21 days of the date the luggage was lost. If you miss the deadline to complete a baggage report, the airline can deny your claim.
- ◇ Include a copy of your name and personal information, along with the Amideast's contact information, **inside your luggage**, as exterior baggage tags can become separated from luggage.
- ◇ Prior to departure, determine **your airline's specific luggage weight and carry on limitations**, including quantity of liquids and size of containers you will be allowed to bring on the plane.
- ◇ Your smartphone may not work in Morocco **unless it is unlocked**, which may require you to pay off the full cost of the phone. If you wish to use your current phone line, you must arrange for **roaming cell services** through your provider. If you do have roaming on your phone, be aware that this can be very expensive. We recommend that you use the local cell phone Amideast provides and **connect your smartphone to WiFi**.
- ◇ **Less is more!** You will likely want to bring things back from your host country. Most students indicate that they brought too much with them. You will have a chance to donate gently used clothing and other items at the end of the program.



## What to Wear in Morocco

Although Rabat may at first seem like a fairly liberal city, in many respects it is **still rather conservative**. While unfair, what you wear can send messages to those around you or make your Moroccan friends and host family uncomfortable. Visitors from abroad can draw added attention if they wear what might be considered inappropriate clothing. Even if your local friends wear them with no problems, a non-Moroccan does need to be more careful.

Here are some tips on what to bring with you, specifically some clothing suggestions:

- ◇ **In General:** Jeans, khakis, trousers, or a long (below the knee) skirt, with cotton shirts, a sweater or sweatshirt, and comfortable walking shoes would be a good daily uniform. A light jacket would be useful for cooler nights. Tank tops and shorts are worn frequently in the US, but they would be considered inappropriate and disrespectful in most locations in Morocco.
- ◇ **Nice and Well-worn Options:** Bring a few relatively formal (but conservative) outfits, as you may be invited out with your host family to a dinner or a wedding. Also bring a set of clothes you don't mind getting dirty in case you participate in community service projects.
- ◇ **Keep Warm:** While Morocco can be quite hot in the summer and fairly warm in the fall and spring, there will days when it is **significantly** colder than you might expect in North Africa. Make sure you have at least one sweatshirt or light jacket for chilly summer nights.
- ◇ **Be Comfortable:** A hat is useful to keep the very strong sun off your head and to keep you cool. If your everyday walking shoes are not sturdy enough for more rugged terrain, please bring a pair of athletic shoes or hiking boots. Casual jewelry is fine but keep your bling to a minimum. As with any valuables, bring only what jewelry you think you'll need or that you want to have with you for sentimental purposes.
- ◇ **Culturally Appropriate Dress:**
  - Adult men and women rarely wear shorts in Morocco unless at a pool or beach. You should not plan on wearing them in your Moroccan home as it can be inappropriate to wear shorts in front of your host family and their guests.
  - No one should wear sleeveless, short, tight, or revealing clothing, as this type of dress results, unfairly as it is, in noticeably more unwanted attention and possibly harassment. The greatest impact is on students identifying as women and dressing more conservatively might not stave off attention or harassment.
  - There is no need for foreign women to wear a hijab/veil (scarf on the head), but hair should be covered if visiting a mosque.
  - Moroccans can be quite fashionable, so most of the time, especially outside your home, you will want to maintain a neat appearance.

"I recommend bringing your full-blown winter coat because I regretted only having light jackets for the first three months of the spring semester."

- Ciara Tenney, Amideast alumna

- Keep in mind that if you will be living with a host family, how you dress and behave is a reflection not only on yourself, but also on members of your host family. No matter where you live, how you dress and behave is a reflection on all the members of the Amideast community.
- You will be commuting from your place of residence to Amideast using mostly taxis but maybe various forms of public transportation (e.g., collect taxis), and you will want to maintain dress and decorum in a way that best helps mitigate your discomfort.

*Check out these suggestions from former students and our bloggers as to what to pack for your time abroad!*



"If you're packing light, basics are always a good way to go."

- Laurie Jones, Amideast alumna

### Carry-on Baggage Packing List

- Passport (leave a copy of your passport with a parent or other trusted person)
- Contact information for Amideast, including emergency numbers
- Contact information for study abroad office or campus safety at home institution
- Debit and/or credit cards
- Phone numbers in case of lost or stolen credit and/or debit cards
- Computer and/or other electronics such as a camera
- Emergency cash
- Prescription medications for the first two weeks
- All valuable items you are bringing along
- Something to read/entertainment for the long flight!
- Extra change of clothes and a few changes of undergarments in case of lost luggage

### Luggage Packing List

#### Medication & Toiletries

- Prescription medications for entire stay with a copy of the written medical prescription and generic drug name. Make sure these are in their original containers. Also ensure that you check with CISI Insurance and your doctor to ensure that the medications you are bringing are **legal** in Morocco. **Do not mail** yourself medications as these will likely get held up in customs, and you will have to pay a lot of money to get them out of customs if you're allowed to take them at all. If you have any concerns about medications while you are abroad, please contact [EdAbroad@amideast.org](mailto:EdAbroad@amideast.org) as soon as possible.
- Multi-vitamins or supplements
- Oral rehydration salts and anti-diarrheal medicine
- Sunscreen
- Travel-sized toiletries for your first few days until you have a chance to go to a supermarket. While many toiletries you might need are available in Morocco, if you have a favorite brand of toiletry that you need or that makes you especially happy and comfortable, bring enough for your entire stay in case that particular thing is unavailable or very expensive. **We also recommend that participants who rely on tampons bring a semester's supply with them;** brands are limited, boxes are small and expensive, and many stores carry only maxi pads.
- Eyeglasses/contact lenses (with lens solution)

### Clothing

- Several cotton shirts, both short- and long-sleeved
- Pants or long skirts (mid-calf length or longer)
- 1-3 nice outfits for special occasions or for going out
- Underwear, bras, and socks
- Pajamas (bring one pair for the warmer months and one for cooler months, keeping in mind you also want these to be culturally appropriate)
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Light jacket
- Hat for sun protection
- Sunglasses
- Cotton bandana or scarf
- Bathing suit and cover up

### Books & Electronics

- Small sturdy backpack or duffle/carryall bag
- Plug adapter(s) (see "Electricity" section below)
- Pens/pencils and notebooks (will be available on site as well, but will be different than those you are accustomed to)
- Camera, memory cards and batteries
- Travel alarm clock
- For Arabic: the correct level of the 3rd Edition of Al-Kitaab fii Ta'allum al-'Arabiyya (Arabic book based on the level you believe you will be taking during the program). See "Course Textbooks" on your [Student Portal](#) to know which book(s) you will need.
- Arabic/English, English/Arabic dictionary (The Hans Wehr Arabic-English Dictionary is preferred)
- Any other required textbooks (see the Amideast Student Portal for more information)
- Guidebook

"When it comes to packing, clothing is arguably the most difficult aspect. It is very easy to overpack, under-pack, or simply pack items that are not useful or appropriate.

**A common rule of thumb for packing light is you should pack the same for six months as you do for two weeks because you can do laundry.**

Additionally, many students buy clothes, especially t-shirts (often with Arabic on them!) where they are studying abroad so they do not need to bring a ton with them."

- Ciara Tenney, Amideast alumna

### Other Suggestions from Past Students

- A laptop
- Small souvenirs or gifts for your new Moroccan friends
- Zip-lock bags
- Wet wipes
- Earplugs (if you're a light sleeper)
- Money pouch
- Durable, high-quality water bottle
- Hairdryer if needed (dual voltage with an adapter plug)
- Favorite recipes
- Pictures of your family, friends, and college life (remember to choose ones which will be considered culturally appropriate)
- Journal
- Slippers or flip flops for wearing around your accommodations (most Moroccans don't walk around the house in bare feet)
- Address book
- Note cards
- Hair extensions (if you use them)
- A satchel or backpack for textbooks or weekend excursions (many Moroccans do not use backpacks and they can be more difficult to locate)
- Small first aid kit
- Towel (this is available in Morocco; however, the quality of towels can be unsatisfactory to some students)
- Some students do bring their smart phones and turn off the data function so they can connect to WiFi. Some students have also replaced their SIM card in their current phone with the card provided by Amideast.
- Portable battery pack to charge your phone on the go



## Section II: Academics & Academic Policies

### Amideast Rabat Study Environment

All classes are held in Amideast's center in Rabat, located in the city's Agdal district, close to coffee shops, fast food restaurants, cafés, and shopping. While the Amideast center in Rabat is not located on a university campus, there are many Moroccans who use this center for educational activities. The Amideast/Morocco center offers a number of different services to individuals and local organizations, such as English language courses, professional training, entrepreneurship workshops and mentoring, scholarship opportunities in the US and elsewhere, management consulting and coaching, internationally recognized test administration, and educational advising and placement services. In other words, the Amideast center is a hub for many different education and training activities, not only education abroad programs.



The Amideast center is a large facility in its own building with several large and small modern classrooms, WiFi access, a small lounge space dedicated specifically to education abroad students, staff offices, and a small, but growing, library of books specifically purchased for education abroad student use. The Amideast center in Rabat also has computers reserved for student use. Although computers are available, Amideast recommends that participants bring a laptop if possible in order to complete Arabic listening activities and to be able to complete homework outside of the Amideast center.

### Blended Arabic (Modern Standard Arabic + Colloquial Arabic) with Amideast

For a detailed list of courses, required textbooks, chapters covered, please see "Course Textbooks" in your [Student Portal](#). Please ensure that **you bring a copy of your Arabic textbooks with you**, as books are notably more expensive or unavailable in Morocco.

For a sample of the course syllabi, please visit [amideastedabroad.org/syllabi](http://amideastedabroad.org/syllabi).

## Who Will Be Teaching?

Amideast Education Abroad Program courses in Rabat are taught by a select group of Moroccan professors from the College of Letters and Humanities at Mohammed V University as well as others from other colleges of the University and from other institutions in Rabat and neighboring cities. **All have both fluency in English and experience teaching in English.** Participating faculty earned post-graduate degrees at universities in North America and Europe or have spent extended periods at English-medium institutions as students, visiting faculty, or visiting researchers. Most have also engaged in training and have garnered significant experience in remote teaching.

All courses are taught exclusively for the Amideast program, and students take classes only with other program participants. **Most Amideast courses are hybrid**, meaning that there are participants both onsite in Morocco and in the virtual space.

## Amideast Online

Amideast Education Abroad makes extensive use of a Moodle-based LMS (Learning Management System), similar to what you use at your own university. Starting in the pre-departure process and throughout your time abroad, staff and faculty will make extensive use of the LMS for communication, assignments, and resources. **Instructions and account information will be distributed via email through the Student Portal per the schedule made available to you in the portal** so that you can complete a number of pre-departure requirements and activities.

## Academic Culture

This is a serious academic program and as a result you should not expect it to be any easier than a term on your home campus — in fact, you may find it more challenging. Courses assume that you will do a significant amount of work, at minimum 3–4 to hours per day, outside of formal classroom settings. Students consistently comment that this program is more rigorous than they were expecting, so expect a challenge!

While you should maintain the same standards for this academic program that you do for the courses at your home institution, the teaching styles, conditions, and approaches that you will encounter will inevitably be different than those to which you are accustomed. It is important that you do not undervalue the quality of the academic experience in your courses simply because they are not identical to those at your home institution. You should not let these differences negatively affect the rigor with which you approach your courses. In fact, the process of adjustment that you must make to accommodate these differences demands greater rigor, and this process will be a valuable part of your academic experience.



At Amideast, we craft our programs so that each component – from living situations, to courses, to excursions, to activities – is intimately tied into your overall academic experience. There is no component of our programs that is tangential or an “amenity.” The idea is that to fully benefit from your time abroad you must treat each of these components as a rigorous experience for learning and personal development.



## Program Excursions

Excursions are an integral part of the academic experience and are included in the program fee. Past excursions have taken students to the imperial cities of Fez and Meknes and to **Zawiyat Ahansal**, a rural Amazigh community (pictured above). Details about the excursions will be provided by program staff in Rabat during and after orientation. These excursions will provide you with a valuable, first-hand experience in different areas of Morocco to supplement what you learn from your courses and your experiences in Rabat. While excursions are designed to be fun, their ultimate aim is to improve your understanding of Moroccan culture and society.

## Note About Early Departure

As stated in the Student Agreement and Release, students must complete the program and remain at the program site until the end-date specified in the program’s Academic Calendar. **Reflection Period and finals are considered part of the academic program and are mandatory.** Early departures are not permitted, except under extraordinary circumstances and requested long in advance.

## Library Resources

Amideast maintains a **small but growing library** for students in the program. The collection is focused on works to supplement assigned reading for the courses offered.

By using the wireless Internet available at Amideast, students also may access the electronic holdings of their home institutions' libraries for research.



## Proficiency Testing and Arabic Placement

Amideast Education Abroad programs **finalize Arabic language placements onsite**. The placement process consists of two parts — an unofficial Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and a written placement test.

**All participants in Amideast programs are required to take both the pre-departure written Arabic test found in the pre-departure materials in Amideast Online (access granted via your Student Portal) and the unofficial OPI that is conducted during the in-country orientation. You will not receive your unofficial OPI results (either the pre-program or post-program results) until you have returned home.**

Keep in mind that it is possible that you will test into a level lower than you wish. Please know that our Arabic teachers are well trained and want to place students in a class that will be an appropriate balance of being challenging and conducive to learning. If there is a particular level into which you need to test or you otherwise wish to enroll in a level for which you have not been approved, you will be asked to fill out a waiver once onsite. In that case, please see our syllabi online, and make that you thoroughly review material covered in the previous Amideast level prior to arrival.

## Academic Policies

For detailed information about policies regarding Grade Reports/Transcripts, Course Loads, Drop/Add Period, Withdrawal from a Course, Pass/Fail/Audit Options, and Appeals, **please carefully review the Student Agreement and Release**. These policies are spelled out in detail and you will be expected to be familiar with them upon your arrival in Morocco.

# Section III: Onsite in Rabat

## Program Staff

While you are in Rabat, your program will be coordinated by several Amideast staff members who work specifically on Education Abroad Programs. This staff coordinates all aspects of the Morocco Education Abroad Program, including orientation, housing, excursions, scheduling, student activities, and much more. Our Amideast Morocco staff will be an invaluable resource during your adjustment to and experience of Rabat. To learn more about the in-country staff, please visit the [Amideast website](#).

## Rules and Regulations

It cannot be stressed enough that **you are a guest in Morocco**. As such, we encourage you to think about your daily actions within the framework of a guest. You are expected to adhere to the terms of the Student Agreement and Release (found in your Student Portal) at all times during your stay in Morocco. **Further, you are required to adhere to all directions given by Amideast staff while participating on the program.** Based on Amideast's vast experience in the region, these policies have been put in place to ensure your safety and well-being and serve as a reference for appropriate standards of comportment while you are in Morocco.

**We ask you to keep in mind that your actions represent not only yourself, but also affect the reputation of Amideast as an organization, including program staff and fellow students (present and future).** As a foreigner in Morocco, you are always subject to the jurisdiction of Moroccan law and courts. Although the law is not always evenly applied to foreigners and nationals, law enforcement agents have in the past arrested and continue to arrest foreigners, usually related to illegal drugs and political activity, though not limited to these two situations.

## Co- and Extra-Curricular Activities

In addition to the academic program, the Amideast Education Abroad Program in Rabat offers a variety of co- and extra-curricular activities. These activities are designed to acquaint students with Moroccan culture and society and create space for meeting Moroccan students. **As with homestays and excursions, these are all considered integral components of the program, and are not "amenities."**

Amideast can assist in arranging and adapting volunteer projects to individual student interests to ensure a unique and educational service-learning experience.

"Citizen Diplomacy is the concept that the individual has the right, even the responsibility, to help shape U.S. foreign relations, 'one handshake at a time.' Citizen diplomats can be students, teachers, athletes, artists, business people, humanitarians, adventurers or tourists. They are motivated by a responsibility to engage with the rest of the world in a meaningful, mutually beneficial dialogue."

- US Center for Citizen Diplomacy

### Language Partners

In each host country, Amideast field staff recruits local students, young professionals, and participants in Amideast English-language courses to act as language partners for semester/academic year education abroad students. Amideast Education Abroad students work with **host-country peers to practice language and build cross-cultural friendships**. Language partners are a core element of the Arabic language learning agenda of those programs.

### Policy on Independent Travel

Weekend travel, or travel on days when no classes or other program events are scheduled, is permitted, per the regulations established in the **Travel Policy** found in your [Student Portal](#).



For all student housing policies, please refer to the Student Agreement and Release.

### Host Family Accommodations

As you will be living with a host family in Rabat, you will have an opportunity to form personal relationships with Moroccans and participate in Moroccan family life. **This may require some adaptation on your part.** For example, you may be sharing a room with a host family member of the same sex, and you may not have the amount of private time, personal space, or independence that you are accustomed to having.

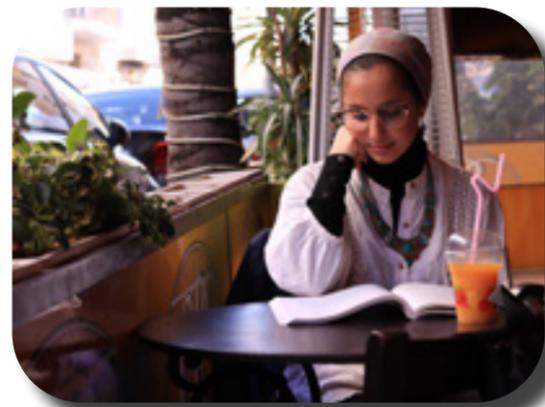
There will certainly be differences in economic means among families, and it would not be fair to compare families and experiences with them in this regard. **You will observe and experience many different aspects of life** in Morocco, and you will be expected to be respectful

and approach these experiences with flexibility and an open mind.

**You will learn your host family assignment upon arrival in Morocco.** The reason we do not share your housing assignment with you earlier is because there can be a number of changes to host family assignments in the weeks leading up to your arrival, and it only creates more stress and confusion if we have to alter arrangements that we've already shared with you.

While host family accommodations vary greatly, **you should expect to have a basic bedroom that will be shared with your roommate and access to the family bathroom.** Your host family may have a desk or communal table on which you can study, but you should not expect to have a private or quiet study location in your home.

Our students often divide their study time between several locations such as the Amideast center, local cafes, and their home. As this arrangement may take some adjustment on your part, **we encourage you to think in advance about how you might modify your study habits.**



**In almost all cases, you will be placed with another student on the Amideast program.** Living with a fellow study abroad roommate allows you to bounce ideas off each other during your cultural adjustment process and travel more easily to and from your home. Additionally, research has shown that pairing students with host families provides a more positive homestay experience. You will learn your roommate assignment upon arrival in country.

Please note that we make every effort to match students up based on similarities in their profiles. For example, matching students with similar language skills ensures that both students have an equal opportunity to build strong connections with the family.

Amideast staff carefully screen and select host families both for safety and so that they are representative of Moroccan society. Nearly 99% of Moroccans are Muslim, so it is almost certain that you will be living with a Muslim family. Most families speak Darija (Moroccan Arabic) at home, while some may also speak Tamazight (one of the indigenous languages in Morocco). **Although it**

**is possible that someone in your host family will speak English, we cannot guarantee this.** However, most of Amideast's host families have welcomed other foreign students and are able to communicate effectively, despite the initial language barrier.

In Morocco, it is common for family members from multiple generations to live together in one house. It is also not uncommon for multiple generations to share sleeping space. **Meals in Morocco are often communal and extremely social.** Host families will try to feed their students a lot. Many meals are eaten in front of the television; indeed, in many Moroccan homes the television is almost always on. That does not mean that the family does not want to talk to the student. Egyptian or other foreign soap operas dubbed in Arabic are common mealtime entertainment.

**Family routines vary, but you might expect mealtime to go something like this:**

- ◊ **Breakfast** usually consists of bread, jam and cheese (La Vache Qui Rit). Most people drink instant coffee that they mix into steamed milk, or mint tea with sugar.
- ◊ **Lunch** is the largest meal of the day. Even people working outside the home often have lunch with their family. The main dish, usually a stew, or tagine, is traditionally served on and consumed from one large platter. Side salads and mixed vegetables are also usually served. Instead of cutlery, bread is used to scoop up food.
- ◊ **Tea time** customarily occurs in the late afternoon/early evening after work or school. Moroccan mint tea is the staple, but cookies and sweets are often served alongside.
- ◊ **Dinner** is a smaller meal than lunch and is usually served right before bed, much later than most Americans are accustomed to. Soup, olives, bread, salad, or leftovers are common dinner items.
- ◊ **Friday lunch** is a special meal. Friday is the day when Muslims gather together for the noon prayer at the mosque, and in Morocco, couscous with meat and vegetables is traditionally served for lunch afterwards.



We want you to start thinking about issues of **flexibility** and **communication**, which will prove invaluable during your time abroad. **Families who choose to host foreign students are often taking a risk** – they are opening their home to outsiders, sharing the inner workings of their family, and oftentimes need to make large adjustments to accommodate student needs. Just as you will be attempting to adjust to life in Morocco, so too will your host family be trying to adjust to having you in their home.



It is not uncommon for students participating on our programs in the Middle East and North Africa to have a number of different dietary religious, health, or other restrictions. **Although we cannot guarantee all specific requests, we will carefully review the Housing Profile you submit through the Student Portal to try to determine the most appropriate family for you.**

Particularly if you have very specific medical or dietary needs, we would like to encourage you to start thinking now about the sincere and often difficult adjustments that families make to help make your stay in their culture as pleasurable as possible. Once you are on program, we encourage you to reflect back on this note and remind yourself of your host family's flexibility.

### Telephone Access

Amideast will provide you with your own “pay as you go” cell phone (not a smartphone) within the first two days of arrival. **You are responsible for adding credit to this phone as needed** by purchasing scratch phone cards, which are available at most shops. You will be able to call home with this phone, although this option is more expensive than the other options available.

You are required to **return your Amideast-issued cell phone** (along with the charger and SIM card) at the end of your program.

**A smartphone will work in Morocco**, but it will need to be unlocked or set up for roaming and will cost about \$30 per month depending on your carrier. If you intend to bring a smartphone, please make arrangements with your carrier before you leave home. Turning a smartphone on “airplane mode” and **turning its WiFi connection** on can allow you to connect to internet in cafes or anywhere with a wireless connection free of charge.

If you have an unlocked smartphone, you can use it with the SIM card that Amideast provides. Additionally, it is possible to go to a Moroccan SIM card provider and switch plans. Data plans in Morocco are relatively expensive, but still cheaper than in the US.



### Internet Access

The **Amideast center has a wireless Internet network**. Education Abroad students who bring their own laptops can use the network during working hours (typically Monday–Saturday, 8:00 am–8:30 pm, Sunday, 9:00 am–5:00 pm). Amideast also provides access to its computer lab, which is equipped with Internet service, during specified hours. You should expect to have limited or no access to this lab one to two days per week. Rabat also has many cafes that provide internet with purchase.

Some host family homes may have internet access, but **we don't require it and families are not obligated to allow students to use it**. If your family offers, please use their internet with discretion. WiFi is expensive, generally not as fast as it is in the US, and many plans still don't include unlimited data. **Do not assume you can spend long hours online**, download large files, or stream TV shows or movies, especially when using your host family's internet connection. Many plans can run out of data or simply start accruing charges for exceeding monthly allowances.

**Internet speed in Morocco is slower than you are used to at home because bandwidth is not as great**. You should be prepared for this. Downloads can take a very long time as a result. In addition, the entire network experiences intermittent outages. This is normal, so you need to adjust your expectations accordingly.

### Receiving Mail in Morocco

**We strongly discourage you from receiving letters and packages from home while in Morocco**. The Moroccan Customs Service may hold packages until duty is paid. The Customs Service fixes an estimated value on the contents of your package (this estimate is NOT based on the value declared). Students in the past have had issues with this, and some have had to pay \$100 or more simply to collect their packages.

Sending a package through DHL or other specialized companies will not prevent this from happening. **Amideast is NOT responsible** for getting goods out of Moroccan Customs for you. In case of an emergency situation in which you feel that a package needs to be sent, please see the Program Manager in Rabat **BEFORE** the package is sent to you and make sure that your family and friends understand these difficulties.

### Climate

Morocco has been called a cold country with a hot sun. Morocco's climate is moderate and subtropical, cooled by breezes from the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean. In the interior, temperatures are more extreme; winters can be fairly cold and summers very hot. Rabat, which lies on the Atlantic coast, has a moderate climate with an average winter temperature of 55°F and summer temperature of 85°F. The temperature can vary greatly throughout the day. For example, winter mornings maybe a chilly, damp 50°F, which then becomes a sunny 70°F in the afternoon before turning cold again in the evening. The spring is warmer but with some cold snaps.



## Meals & Incidental Expenses

**Breakfast and dinner will be provided by your host family** during the week and all three meals will be provided on the weekends. Many families will also provide students with lunch on Fridays, as it is typical for families to have couscous together on this day (although this is not required for host families to do).

**You should also expect taxi/tram rides to be a significant incidental expense.** Since you are not living on a university campus, you may need to take taxis or the tram from your host family to the Amideast center and back each day. Please review the “Program Costs” section of [Student Portal](#) to understand the estimated personal expenses for the program. You need to have access to funds to cover these expenses while you are abroad.

If you decide to travel on weekends, you are responsible for all expenses. You will need to bring money (or have access to it through the use of an ATM card) for expenses such as transportation, cell phone cards, personal items, and any other incidentals you wish to purchase during your time in Morocco.



## Electricity

Morocco's electricity supply is 220 volts/50 cycles AC. Sockets are generally of the two-pronged European variety. American equipment which is dual voltage still requires an international adaptor and surge protector.

## Money/Exchange Rate

The basic unit of currency in Morocco is the dirham (DH/MAD), which is divided into 100 centimes. The exchange rate at the time of writing was approximately **US \$1 = 9.64 MAD**. However, the dollar has been gaining and losing value against the dirham for quite some time, and the exchange rate may vary widely during your stay in Morocco.

Dirhams cannot be taken out of the country and Moroccan currency is not easily available abroad. **Plan to withdraw cash using ATM cards.** There are both exchange windows and ATMs at the airport. **Traveler's checks are very difficult to cash; don't bring them.**

Credit cards are accepted at some large restaurants, hotels and shops, especially international chains. **Do not be surprised, however, if a business's credit card machine is broken, and do not expect to use your ATM card at most of the stores and restaurants you will be frequenting.** You can also use your ATM card to withdraw cash at any bank linked with your credit card network, which can be identified by a logo on your card (e.g., Cirrus, Plus, Visa, MasterCard). Again, check with your bank prior to departure to find out which Moroccan banks will accept your ATM card and what charges your bank imposes on such transactions.

## Budgeting

Most American study abroad students consider living in Rabat to be inexpensive. Daily expenses for food, transportation, toiletries, and clothing are cheap by American standards, but they add up. Beyond that, most of you are unaccustomed to using cash to the extent you will use it in Morocco. **When you're constantly using cash to pay for things, you not only become more acutely aware of your spending habits, but you also have to worry about things like having enough cash on hand at all times.** The amount of money you can expect to spend depends on your own personal interests and habits.

**Roundtrip airfare, local transportation, textbooks, and other personal expenses are not included in the program fee,** but are significantly less than in the US. Please see the [estimated out-of-pocket costs](#) for such items. Estimated costs of common personal expenses are as follows:

- ◊ Meals in Rabat range from \$2 (16 dirhams) for local food to \$10+ (80 dirhams or more) for fancier restaurants
- ◊ A 1.5-liter bottle of water costs 5–6 dirham (\$0.65)
- ◊ Shampoo costs around 5–20 dirham depending on size (\$0.60–\$2.50)
- ◊ Dress shirts range from 60–200 dirham (\$7–\$24)
- ◊ A kilogram of tomatoes is 5 dirham (\$0.65)
- ◊ A box of cereal is 8 dirham (\$1.00) for local brands and 80 dirhams (\$10) for imports
- ◊ Many local supermarkets stock imported products at comparable prices to the West, and there are new familiar clothing stores such as Zara or Mango whose prices are slightly higher than in the US
- ◊ Taxis range from \$1–\$5 for longer trips
- ◊ You can obtain discounts at many historical sites, museums, and some other venues with a student ID such as the International Student Identity Card (ISIC)

Participants who are extremely cost-conscious and limit themselves to very few indulgences can budget for as **little as \$300 a month**, although some students find themselves spending **upwards of \$1000/month** when including recreational activities, weekend trips, and souvenirs.

*The Amideast program fee includes:*

- ◊ Pre-departure services, materials, and preparation
- ◊ All courses
- ◊ All onsite staff support, including 24/7 emergency support
- ◊ All-inclusive onsite orientation
- ◊ Housing and most meals with an Arabic-speaking Moroccan host family
- ◊ Numerous additional meals and events
- ◊ All program-organized excursions per session
- ◊ All extra- and co-curricular activities
- ◊ Medical insurance, including medical evacuation and repatriation, and political and natural disaster evacuation coverage (students are covered for the duration of the program)
- ◊ Amideast Grade Report
- ◊ Program-supplied mobile phone for use in Morocco (usage charges not included)

### Tipping

Moroccans in the service industry (baggage handlers, museum guides, etc.) **expect to receive a small tip** of 5–20 dirham. Plan to tip 10% of the bill at restaurants and cafés. It is not necessary for you to tip a taxi driver. It may be difficult in general to get change for large bills, so try to carry coins and bills in small denominations.

All of the following is covered in more detail in the pre-departure webinars and onsite orientation.

### Health, Safety, & Security

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) provide current information for travelers. There are **no vaccinations required for travel** to Morocco; however, the CDC does provide suggestions. We recommend that you consult your physician prior to departure for any supplemental advice.

The [US Department of State's website](#) is a source of current information regarding travel to Morocco, and we strongly suggest that you read it.

**Amideast requires that all students who are US passport holders register in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)**, a free service that registers your upcoming travel with the nearest American embassy or consulate. Please see the information on this

program in the "Smart Traveler Enrollment Program" section above. Non-US citizens should register with their country's embassy or consulate in Rabat.

The locations and contact information for the US Embassy in Rabat and the US Consulate in Casablanca are below. US citizens are welcome to visit the US Consulate General for routine consular services for American citizens on any Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, excluding US and Moroccan holidays, from 8:30 to 9:30 am and from 1:30 to 3:00 pm.

**The US Embassy in Rabat**  
 2, Avenue de Mohamed el Fassi  
 (212) (537) 76-22-65  
<http://rabat.usembassy.gov/>  
 Hours: Monday - Friday from  
 8:00 am – 5:00 pm

**The US Consulate General in Casablanca**  
 8, Boulevard Moulay Youssef  
 (212) 522-26-34-50  
 (212) 661-79-70-00 (American Citizens' Service)  
[http://casablanca.usconsulate.gov/uscs\\_gen.html](http://casablanca.usconsulate.gov/uscs_gen.html)

### Insurance

As part of the program fee, **Amideast provides medical and accident insurance for all students** through Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI). Once in-country, Amideast program staff help students deal with medical issues as they arise and have a list of recommended providers and hospitals both in the host city and in areas visited on excursions.

**Please review the policy information that is sent to your email so you are aware of what is covered by CISI Insurance.**

Approximately 2-4 weeks prior to the start of your program, you will receive a "Welcome Package" from CISI directly into your email. This will include your personal insurance card, information on your policy, and the instructions to set up your own online account with CISI. We recommend you print a copy of the card to bring with you to your host country.

If you need to receive a letter to verify your insurance coverage to meet a scholarship requirement, please complete the [Request for Insurance Verification Form](#).



### Staying Healthy: Before Traveling and In-Country

It is important to maintain good health and well-being when studying abroad. Becoming sick, needing medical attention, spending days in bed, and delaying getting help when you think you might need it can be frustrating and overwhelming, with repercussions for how much you are able to enjoy and get out of your experience. **You can prepare for your time in Morocco by reading about health risks and becoming aware of the dangers associated with the places you'll be visiting, how Amideast can support you, and what you begin to do and explore now to better manage your expectations of your time abroad and develop strategies for building and maintaining your well-being and resilience.**



In addition to the resources available in the [Student Portal](#), our required pre-departure webinar series (made available to you via Amideast Online) includes an in-depth module on health, safety, and security, in addition to a separate webinar on issues of identity and intersectionality. While the webinar focusing on identity and intersectionality is not about health, safety, and security, it covers important host country context for beginning to understand social and legal discourses related to race and colorism, gender, sex, and sexuality, disability, religion, labor, and many other issues. **With this context and additional resources, you will begin to develop an understanding about how identity and intersectionality might impact**

**issues of health, safety, and security in you host country and among participants on the program.**

If you start by keep the following basic guidelines in mind, you can reduce the risk of serious illness or injury during your stay:

- ◊ **Traffic accidents are the biggest risk to the health of education abroad students.** Always stay alert as a pedestrian and make safe, informed decisions when traveling by road. Never assume a car will stop for you or steer out of the way. Stay on sidewalks away from the curb and walk facing on-coming traffic whenever possible.
- ◊ **Always wash your hands with soap and water before eating and after using the bathroom,** and as often as possible when venturing out into less sanitary areas (it is helpful to carry hand sanitizer with you).
- ◊ **Be wary of food from street vendors,** especially uncooked foods that include vegetables and fruits, and make sure that meat products are always **fully** cooked.
- ◊ Poor refrigeration, undercooked meat, and raw fruits and vegetables improperly washed often lead to health problems such as diarrhea, food poisoning and, on rare occasions, parasites. **If you do get sick, drink plenty of fluids and consider seeing a doctor** if you do not feel better in a day or two. Give your body time to adjust to the new types of foods you will be eating and to build a tolerance for the different ways food is prepared and handled.
- ◊ **Dairy products should be pasteurized and properly stored** (long-life milk is not refrigerated when you purchase it, but it must be refrigerated after opening).
- ◊ Always remember to **check the expiration date on products, especially food and medicines.** Note that many food products in the Middle East (such as yogurt) will list their production date rather than their expiration date.
- ◊ To avoid possible insect-borne diseases, **apply bug spray** if you notice mosquitoes, ticks, or fleas.
- ◊ **Do not touch or pet animals on the street or in the wild,** as bites and scratches can lead to serious infections. This includes the cute cats on the street and in cafes! Do not touch them and avoid the chance of having to get rabies shots.
- ◊ **Wear sunscreen of SPF 30 or greater** to protect your skin from the sun, and drink plenty of water to stay hydrated when out in the heat.
- ◊ **For sexually active students, the rules abroad are the same as they are at home – you need to practice safe sex.** To reduce the risk of an unwanted pregnancy or contracting any sexually transmitted disease, you should always use appropriate contraceptives, such as condoms or other forms of barrier protection. **Because the culture surrounding contraceptives in the Middle East and North Africa differs from what you may be used to, we recommend that you pack some condoms and/or barrier protection and contraceptives for your time overseas (regardless of whether you plan to engage in sexual activity).** The least risky activity is to avoid sexual activity altogether while overseas. If you choose to be sexually active while abroad, please take control of your sexual health.

As with all things in life,

**STUDY ABROAD COMES WITH UNCERTAINTY.**

Despite all the planning in the world, things happen, schedules will have to change, there will be things that can't be decided or done until the last minute. Acceptance of that will go a long way and help you mitigate stress and challenges. Morocco has always been more event oriented than time oriented, but this is hardly unique to Morocco. Your ability to be flexible, go with the flow, and have a sense of humor goes a long way.

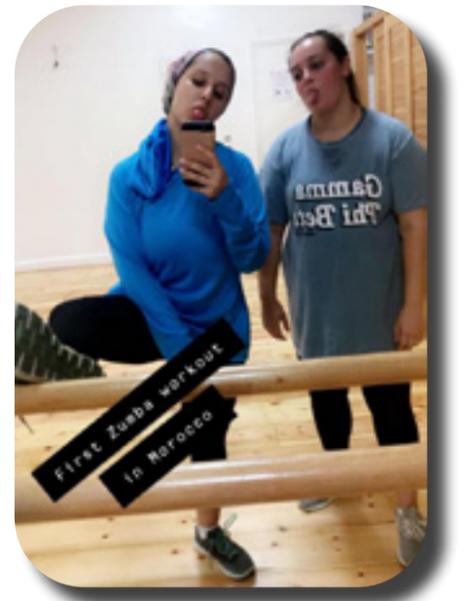
**Health Services**

Amideast is not a university, and therefore **does not have an on-site health facility, health staff, or pharmacy.** However, there are clean, safe, and well-equipped hospitals and clinics in Rabat, as well as excellent, qualified doctors and practitioners in all specialties related to mental and physical health. Amideast keeps a list of private clinics and has a number of relationships with doctors and counselors and will provide students with recommendations and assistance as needed. **Amideast will assist students seeking medical care during their time in Morocco.** Students and host families are provided with emergency telephone numbers for use should they become necessary.

**Exercise & Fitness**

As Amideast is not a university, it does not have a gym or fitness equipment and maintaining a fitness regimen in Morocco can be a challenge. **The best options are walking as much as possible and joining a gym.** Once you arrive in Morocco, interested students should talk to the on-site staff to understand the gym options to figure out which one is best for you.

Running or jogging outdoors is not as common as it is in countries like the US and many participants have found themselves targets of harassment while jogging. Our staff is also willing to help try to **connect students with clubs** that play sports or with language partners who might also play the same sport.



**Water**

**The natural bacteria in Rabat's tap water are different from the natural bacteria in water in your home country.** For this reason, some students may become sick with diarrhea or other gastrointestinal problems when first drinking Rabat tap water. However, these bacteria are not considered dangerous and **Rabat tap water is clean and safe to drink.**

If students choose to drink Rabat tap water, Amideast recommends that it be **phased in to the diet.** A student should start by using tap water to brush teeth, and slowly start drinking it some of the time, gradually increasing the percentage of tap water being drunk until it is well tolerated. **It is NOT recommended to drink tap water outside of Rabat or other big cities.** Bottled water is readily available and should be purchased when in remote places, or when feeling unwell in Rabat. If you choose to drink bottled water during all or part of your time abroad, please ensure that you bring sufficient funds for this expense as bottled water is not provided by the program or your host family.

**Do not drink unfiltered water outside of major cities,** as you risk contracting bacterial infections, hepatitis, and/or the parasitic disease schistosomiasis. Drinking lots of clean water, washing your hands regularly, avoiding sharing utensils or water bottles, getting enough rest, and keeping a positive attitude will go a long way toward keeping you healthy during your study abroad experience.

## Safety and Security

Amideast takes issues of safety and security very seriously and does everything in its power to ensure that students have a healthy, safe and secure environment. **Amideast's longstanding physical presence in Morocco has enabled it to develop an extensive network of contacts and a very positive reputation among Moroccans.** Amideast/Morocco's Country Director maintains close ties to the Regional Security Officer at the US Embassy and local program staff members are included in the US Embassy warden network. Amideast is a member of the Department of State's Overseas Security Advisory Council and also reviews other sources of information from international organizations, news media, and informal networks within the region. Most of the staff at Amideast are Moroccan, and many have worked for Amideast for years. **They maintain a vital local network and contribute to the understanding of ongoing and developing situations on the ground.**

Amideast facilities are accessible only through controlled entrances that are guarded 24 hours a day. Local staff are able to simultaneously send out text messages (SMS) to all students' mobile phones to update them instantly on issues related to safety and security. For this purpose, Amideast utilizes the older technology of non-smart ("brick" or "burner" phones), SMS messaging, and phone calls because they are most reliable in case of emergency, whereas apps that rely on networks and digital technology are vulnerable and can easily fail. **We count on participants to appreciate this, and to follow Amideast policies, procedures, and guidance related to communication.**

While neither Amideast nor any other institution or program provider can guarantee that accidents won't happen or that unexpected security situations won't arise, Amideast does take these matters very seriously and continually monitors the local environment. Amideast also continually updates safety and security procedures and has contingency plans in place to respond effectively should unforeseen events occur. Finally, a superb communications infrastructure links Amideast's headquarters office in Washington, DC, with the local Amideast center in Morocco, and key staff members are **available around the clock** to respond to emergency situations.

Amideast advises all students to read the [US State Department's Country Specific information for Morocco](#).

## General Safety Tips

- ◊ **Do not carry your passport with you** (unless you are leaving your host city), but always carry a copy of your passport information page, along with another form of identification.
- ◊ **Avoid mannerisms that draw attention to you:** smiling at people you don't already know as you walk down the street, speaking boisterously in public, gesticulating intensely, or making eye contact. While these things may be normal and even friendly in your home country, they can draw unwanted attention while in Morocco.
- ◊ **Traveling with a friend or in a small group is better** than traveling alone or with a large group. Walking with someone else helps deflect approaches by people who might bother you but walking in a large group may call more attention to you.



- ◊ If you are out at night, **always walk with someone else.** If you visit friends alone in the evening, ask them to escort you home or until you are in a taxi.
- ◊ **Always** tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return.
- ◊ If you want to visit a new neighborhood, **make your first visit during the day.** Familiarize yourself with a map of the area before you go. Note nearby landmarks and the nearest sources of public transportation and routes.
- ◊ **Be aware of purse snatching, pick pocketing, and other thefts** as they do occur in Morocco; even in broad daylight and especially in busy marketplaces and tourist areas. If someone threatens you and demands your belongings, give them up. Your safety is more important than your belongings.
- ◊ Never put your wallet or any kind of mobile phone (particularly iPhones) **in your back pocket**, in a backpack outside pocket, or in a coat/jacket pocket. Wallets and mobiles in the back pocket of your pants make for an attractive target.
- ◊ If you have any concerns about the city, **speak to Amideast staff.** Your safety is one of their goals, and as locals they will be able to give you more detailed information about areas you may want to avoid.

## Safety in Taxis

Taxis are one of the most efficient ways to travel around Morocco and in its cities. There are two kinds of taxis in Morocco, petit taxis and grand taxis.

The petit taxis are metered and will take you to a specific destination. The driver may not know where you want to go from an address alone, so it is a good idea to be able to give them a landmark or directions if necessary. Each taxi can take up to 3 people and the cost is per ride, not per person, so they are an economical choice if several students are going together. They are equipped with luggage racks to carry baggage.

Grand taxis are more like buses and have specific routes. Grand taxis travel between cities for a set price that you pay ahead of time.

## Public Gatherings

North Africa, the Middle East, and Morocco have changing political climates, which can often lead to protests, demonstrations, and strikes. Protests are of special concern for foreigners in Morocco.

**Students are required to stay away from public demonstrations and should always avoid areas prone to instability and disorder.**

### Alcohol & Drugs

Being a more conservative Muslim country, it is discouraged to purchase or consume alcohol. If you do decide to drink, be mindful of the following:

- ◊ If you plan to drink, **always drink in moderation**. It is inappropriate to return to your host family's home intoxicated or smelling like alcohol. Please have a safe and viable plan for getting home and being sober any time you consume alcohol.
- ◊ If there is a group function where alcohol may be present, and you would like to invite your language partner or other Moroccan friends to attend, **let them know there may be alcohol present**.
- ◊ As anywhere, be careful where and with whom you drink, and **always maintain a buddy system**.
- ◊ Alcohol is **extremely expensive**.
- ◊ Most bad incidents that have happened on this program in the past have involved **misuse of alcohol** — which makes this environment not that much different from that on your home campus. Please be mindful of that, act accordingly, and look out for one another.

Do not use illegal drugs during your time abroad. The use of illegal drugs is not only a health risk but also puts you at risk for arrest:

- ◊ The legal ramifications of using illegal drugs abroad can be very serious, and **your home government cannot get a citizen out of jail overseas if he or she has been convicted of a drug offense abroad**.
- ◊ **The social and cultural consequences of using drugs can be different in a foreign country**. This behavior may be viewed very negatively by your new acquaintances abroad. Drug penalties in Morocco are strict, and Moroccans view illegal drugs much more harshly than Americans as a result. Use of illegal drugs puts not only yourself, but your host family, Moroccan friends, your entire cohort, and Amideast at great risk.



## Section IV: Background Information

### Rabat, Morocco

Your program is based in Morocco's capital city of Rabat. Situated at the mouth of the Bou Regreg River, Rabat, along with its neighbor Salé, is a relaxed but stately metropolitan community of about 1.2 million people. The city has a rich history and is known as one of the four imperial cities of Morocco. Its medina (old city) is easy to navigate and includes housing, as well as shops and traditional craftsmen plying their trades. The modern city, dating to the early 20th century, has wide, pedestrian-friendly, tree-lined boulevards, many green spaces, and houses the political and administrative offices of Morocco's government as well as its parliament, supreme court, and Royal Palace.



In addition to government offices, Rabat is home to Morocco's most prestigious academic institutions and numerous non-governmental and international organizations, including ISESCO (the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). Mohammed V University was Morocco's first modern university and is joined in Rabat by such prestigious institutions as the Hassan II Institute of Agronomy, National Administration School, and Applied Statistics Institute. A recent addition to Rabat's research and cultural institutions is the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture.

Rabat's waterfront is undergoing a total makeover with construction of a marina, apartment and commercial complexes, and a landscaped walkway along the riverside. A light rail system links Rabat with Salé, its twin city across the river, and extends through the modern city to Medinat al-Irfan (City of Knowledge, or university quarter).

### Moroccan Society & Culture

Characteristics of Moroccan society are similar to those found elsewhere in the Arab world. **Life revolves around the family, and people have many duties and obligations to both their immediate and extended family members.** Nuclear, and sometimes extended, families occupy the same house, and most people continue to live with their parents until they are married.

**Religion plays a major role in daily life**, with the call to prayer coming from every mosque five times a day. Moroccan law draws very heavily from French civil law, although Islamic law holds a special place in the constitution. Family law is dictated by separate religious authorities for Muslims, Christians, and Jews. **Moroccans view men's and women's roles as binary, distinct, and complementary.** Though this divide is beginning to fade among some segments of society due to urbanization, women are traditionally seen as housekeepers and men as breadwinners.

**Honor is an important value in Moroccan culture.** As you will be guests in Morocco in a very intimate way, the value of honor both impacts you and imbues you with important responsibility. It denotes respect, entitlement, dignity, reputation, and admiration. **Though honor is ultimately tied to an individual and their behavior, it cannot be separated from the family.** This tends to differ greatly from the US American and other contexts where honor is primarily an individual attribute. A family member's actions can severely damage the honor and reputation of the entire family. Damaged family reputations affect marriage prospects, business transactions, friendships, and authority. Honor is tied to many other facets of life, such as hospitality, generosity, dress, appearance, social power, politics, respect for elders, and business.

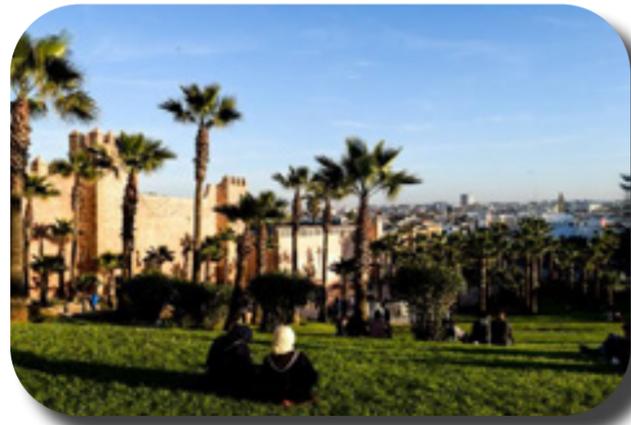
### Social Events & Festivities

**Ramadan is the holy month of fasting and is the most festive period of the year in Morocco.** Since the Islamic calendar is lunar, Ramadan falls eleven days earlier each successive year. All Muslims (except children, the sick, the elderly, and other groups as stipulated by the Qur'an) abstain from eating, drinking, smoking, and sexual activity from sunrise to sunset. Muslims spend more time praying (with higher attendance at mosques), visiting friends and family, and giving alms during Ramadan than at any other time of the year. It is a month of contrasts: celebration and reflection; relaxation and strict discipline.

### Other Holidays

Aside from designated holidays, **Moroccan social events range from intimate gatherings at home to public outings.** Invitations for visits to Moroccan homes should be readily accepted, as you will be treated with great hospitality. Generally, you will be invited for a meal, though you may also experience an invitation just to "be together." Tea and coffee may be offered for a few hours of pure socializing and talking.

**Moroccans also socialize by going to public parks,** going downtown to the medina on Mohammed V Street, and engaging in many other activities in which you likely engage in your home environment. Many foreigners have the idea that Moroccans smoke a lot of shisha or hookah (water pipe), and while some Moroccans do smoke hookah in their private homes, it is never found in cafes or on the streets.



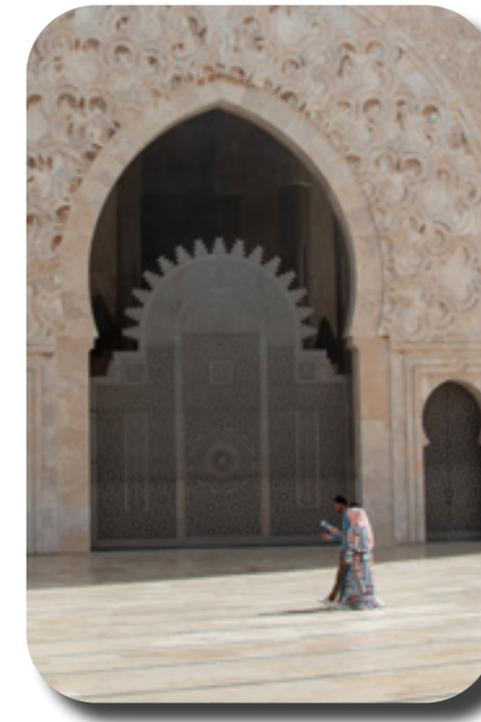
### Religion

**Islam heavily influences daily life in Morocco.** From the fasts of Ramadan to the five daily calls to prayer, it is a significant force in virtually all aspects of Moroccan life. It has been the dominant religion in the region for nearly fourteen-hundred years and the official religion of the modern state since Morocco regained its independence in 1956. The population is overwhelmingly **Sunni Muslim, adhering to the moderate Maliki school of Islamic law.**

Moroccan Islam has attracted considerable attention from scholars for its openness to multi-party democracy, human rights, women's rights, and acceptance of liberalism in government. American anthropology as a field has been strongly influenced by fieldwork carried out in Morocco by pre-eminent scholars such as Clifford Geertz, Lawrence Rosen, Paul Rabinow, Vincent Crapanzano, Daisy Dwyer, and others. **The diversity of the hybrid cultural variants in the country is fascinating – not only in religious practice but also in music, folklore, rituals, architecture, and ethnic interactions.** Amazigh (Berber) culture, history, and its positionality in Moroccan society is another area of increasing interest in many fields as well.

Morocco is the Arab country that had the **largest Jewish population prior to the establishment of the State of Israel** in 1948, and Moroccan Jews have played key roles in Morocco over many centuries. Members of the Moroccan Jewish community were active in the independence movement and a Jew served in the first post-independence cabinet in the mid-1950s as Minister of Posts and Telecommunications. The history of relations between Jews and Muslims in Morocco has, however, been mixed, with some periods of discrimination and hardship for Moroccan Jews, particularly during times of civil unrest in the country as a whole. During World War II, when Morocco was ruled by the pro-Nazi Vichy French government, Sultan Mohammed V refused to implement the Vichy Government's anti-Semitic laws and protected Morocco's Jews.

The number of Jews in Morocco has shrunk from roughly 265,000 in the mid-1940s to 2,500-5,000 today, but Jews are Moroccans and remain deeply involved in Moroccan life. While Moroccan Muslims are generally proud of Morocco's Jewish community, prejudices are still present.



**Proselytizing is illegal in Morocco and is considered a serious offense.** In 2010 the government started a crackdown to show the severity of the offense. They expelled 20 Christians deemed as proselytizers, some of whom had been in the country doing the same work for 10 years. Anyone is free to practice their own religion in Morocco, but you are required to keep it private, and any acts that could be interpreted as proselytizing should be avoided, even if that is not your intention.

### Things to Keep in Mind

♦ **Entering mosques is illegal for non-Muslims** in Morocco (except the Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca, which is a major tourist attraction, and the mosques in Moulay Idris and at Al Akhawayn University).

♦ Moroccans may inquire about your religious persuasion, and **this is not considered an intrusive or rude question.** It is best to respond simply, directly and honestly, not showing offense, as this can insult the person asking. An answer stating that you don't believe in God may be met with skepticism or disrespect.

♦ **Do not argue or debate religion** with people with whom you are not familiar and comfortable.

## Social Relations

Rules, both formal and informal, governing social interactions vary substantially depending on the circumstances. Though foreigners are sometimes “exempt” from traditional customs governing social relations, **it is still best to observe how Moroccans interact among themselves to get an idea of what is appropriate.**

While our webinar on identity and intersectionality (available as part of the pre-departure series hosted on Amideast Online) explores this in more detail, it bears mentioning here that **public discourse in Morocco is heteronormative and holds that sex is binary, and sexual intimacy happens between men and women in the context of marriage.** Relations between men and women, even when a foreigner is involved, are still subject to public scrutiny in Morocco. A large segment of Moroccan society values traditional gender roles, and interactions that are common between members of the opposite sex in your home country may be considered offensive in Morocco. You will find many people, however, comfortable with social relations to you which you are more accustomed. **Your interactions with Moroccan society depend largely upon how well you know the person and the specific situation.**

**Friendships between and among men and between and among women in Morocco are generally more intimate,** even in public, than they may be in your home environment. Friends will make intense eye contact, smile, and touch, while greeting each other with a kiss on the cheek and a long handshake. Friends of the same sex will often walk hand-in-hand or arm-in-arm in public. If a Moroccan friend treats you in this fashion, it generally means that you are viewed as an equal and accepted as a friend.

**Close friendships between women and men are common, but rules depend extensively on how familiar you are with those involved and the specific circumstances of a friendship.** On a formal level, relations may appear somewhat distant and conversations may seem impersonal. Take your cue from Moroccans you meet about handshakes, eye contact, and other boundaries; **if in doubt, talk to program staff.**

Dating practices in Morocco may differ significantly from those to which you may be accustomed, but there are also **many variations within Moroccan society.** Only a minority of Moroccans considers it proper for young men and women to socialize on a one-to-one basis, and generally dating occurs in public venues and includes activities such as going to movies, cafes and restaurants, going to social clubs, or taking walks. Intimate time in a private setting, such as an apartment or house, is uncommon. Couples who spend the night together might offend neighbors’ sensibilities, and the couple, especially the woman, may experience reprisals from the doorman or landlord. Intimate or affectionate behavior, such as kissing, is not seen in public, and bystanders will respond negatively. Holding hands has become more common among young couples in Morocco, though only in specific locations. For instance, one would not see a couple hold hands in rural areas, but around cities it is a more common sight.



## Things to Keep in Mind

- ◊ **Please approach any relationship with caution at first,** until you understand acceptable behavior. Observe how Moroccans around you behave, and follow the lead of your Moroccan peers, and discuss with program staff if you have questions.
- ◊ **Foreign men should not approach or converse with Moroccan women if they have not been properly introduced.** Participants identifying and/or presenting as men should observe the social distance that exists between men and women and avoid behaviors and language that suggest familiarity or intimacy.
- ◊ Participants identifying and/or presenting as women already know that men frequently interpret their existence in space as an openness to intimacy to which they as men are entitled. **While this has particular nuances in the Moroccan context, in most ways the underlying notion is no different.**
- ◊ You will **not be subject to the same dating rules** as the most conservative classes of Moroccans, but you should be aware that not all practices to which you are accustomed are acceptable in Morocco.
- ◊ Interactions between and among anyone in public **should conform to Moroccan standards of conduct.**



## Cultural Adjustment

Many students choose to study abroad to experience living in a new and different culture. Studying in Morocco is a fulfilling and rewarding experience, though **adapting to the new environment is not always easy.** The stress of cultural adjustment is experienced differently by each student, but there are some common stages that many will encounter. It is difficult to assess in advance the degree to which the process of cultural adjustment will affect you but preparing yourself prior to departure and understanding your reactions as you experience them will aid in successful adaptation.

Amideast Education Abroad Programs are structured to include opportunities for students

to humbly develop their intercultural competence. Through each program component, students on Amideast programs in Morocco are consistently encouraged and expected to look below the surface and search for deeper understanding of how Moroccans perceive the world around them. **Even the simple awareness that there is so much beneath the surface helps participants begin to adapt their behavior to Moroccan norms while on program.** Over the course of the program, that awareness deepens and much of it begins to turn into knowledge, limited as it may be in the short span of a program. This process can later be used in other cultural contexts to become truly effective intercultural communicators in a wide range of contexts both at home and abroad.

## Things to Keep in Mind

- ◊ Before going to Morocco, you should **acquaint yourself with the basic outlines of Moroccan culture and history**. In addition to the resources we have included via Amideast Online, you have access to your universities' wonderful library systems, and Google is at your fingertips. Please use these resources.
- ◊ **Your adjustment to your new surroundings and to Moroccan culture will be easier** if you are willing and able to manage frustration well, try new things, understand your strengths and weaknesses, step out of your comfort zone, be flexible with schedule changes, interact with people from diverse backgrounds, and be ready to laugh at yourself and your new surroundings.
- ◊ You will experience Morocco in your own way, and it is best to come without preconceived notions, unrealistic goals, or expectations. **Remain open minded.**
- ◊ **Please don't hesitate to seek out the help of a mental health professional if you need it.** Delaying the intervention of a mental health professional can be one of the most disruptive and destructive things to your study abroad experience. Amideast staff are ready to discuss any problems/concerns you may encounter, and help you find the professional resources you need.

## End of the Program

While it may seem like a way off, before you know it you will have completed your Amideast Program and be an Amideast Education Abroad alum. While Amideast currently has limited capacity to have a very active alumni organization, we do try to have outreach and activities from time to time in and beyond the DC area.

We do have great opportunities to stay in contact with you in the virtual space, and we want to highlight the amazing things you are doing and offer you opportunities to keep networking, growing, and shining professionally.

Amideast recently launched the **Amideast Leaders, Alumni, and Mentors (ALAM)** network to engage you and your peers around the world. Shortly before the end of your time abroad, you will be invited to join ALAM on **Localized**, an exciting new platform designed for alumni of programs like those run by Amideast, where we offer personal and professional network, development, and programming opportunities by connecting you with experts and peers in a huge range of topics. Localized connects Amideast program alumni from all over the MENA regions and from our US participants in Education Abroad programs.

On the alumni section of our website you can also **request your grade report/transcript** and find a link to review your Amideast program. It is important to keep your contact information current so that we can be in touch with you about alumni opportunities. Please notify us if your e-mail address changes by writing to [EdAbroad@amideast.org](mailto:EdAbroad@amideast.org).



## Pre-Departure Checklist

Getting excited for your program? Although we've covered all this in the handbook, here is a handy quick reference checklist! Make sure you've done these things before your departure.

### Months before:

- ◊ Check that your passport is **valid for at least 6 months after your expected departure** from Morocco. If not, renew as soon as possible and update your Student Portal with the new info!
- ◊ Visit your doctor(s) and dentist for any check ups or prescription renewals.
- ◊ Make sure your credit/debit cards don't expire while you're abroad. If they do, order new ones!
- ◊ Be sure to complete ALL materials in the [Student Portal](#). Our staff relies on this info to prepare for your stay!
- ◊ Buy your flight and enter the info in your [Student Portal](#). Flight info needs to be entered one month before departure to arrange your pick up.
- ◊ Follow Amideast EdAbroad on social media and read [what our bloggers](#) have had to say.
- ◊ Complete all activities in Amideast Online as part of your **pre-departure orientation**. Info on how to access this platform is in your [Student Portal](#).
- ◊ Check all electronics you plan to bring for power adaptors; many have built in power adaptors, but you'll still need plug adaptors. Figure out how many/what type you'll need.
- ◊ Purchase your Arabic books and any other course books you need (list in your [Student Portal](#)) so they have time to arrive before you depart.
- ◊ Review all of your home institution policies; you're responsible for being informed!

### 1-2 weeks before:

- ◊ Call your bank & credit cards to let them know you'll be traveling.
- ◊ Set up your [student insurance portal with CISI](#). You'll get an email with instructions.
- ◊ Input your flight info into the [WorldAware portal](#). You'll get an email with instructions.
- ◊ Register with your [home embassy](#).
- ◊ Make sure to **leave copies** of your passport, credit/debit cards, and Amideast Morocco & DC contact info with a family member.
- ◊ Be sure you know all your **passwords** for banking, school/library access, and other accounts you may want to access while abroad.

### Before you depart for the airport, be sure you have these things with you:

- ◊ Passport
- ◊ Insurance card and information (sent to you via email)
- ◊ Emergency cash
- ◊ Morocco and Washington, DC staff contact information (in this handbook!)
- ◊ Baggage contains a durable name tag and adheres to airline weight requirements



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