

11 Best Things to do in Rabat Morocco – The Complete Guide to Morocco’s Capital City

This guide includes everything you need to see and do in Rabat, how to get there, how to get around in the city, where to eat and where to stay in Rabat Morocco.

When I first arrived in Morocco, I had like most people the impression that Rabat would be a big, busy, boring city. It’s the capital of the country after all. Boy, was I wrong!

People from Rabat are super welcoming and fun and the city itself has plenty of cool sites to visit.

Rabat is also a very liberal city where Moroccans are generally very open-minded. The city charmed both of us so much that we paid it a couple of visits during our travels in Morocco. Rabat is not your average boring capital...

When I was planning my trip to Morocco, I could only think of familiar cities such as Marrakesh, Fez, and Casablanca. I also imagined the capital of the country would be very expensive but it actually isn’t.

Rabat is a great place to travel on a budget. Accommodation there can be very cheap and there are plenty of food markets where you can buy cheap fruits and vegetables. It’s also a very safe Moroccan city.

Most travelers to this country tend to simply brush aside the idea of visiting the country’s capital but Rabat shouldn’t be missed.

If you’re looking for a fun city with great food, beautiful palaces, and gardens full of flowers, Rabat is the place to be!

This modern capital is located very close to Casablanca and is also easily accessible from nearby coastal cities such as Tangier, Agadir, and Essaouira. It also serves as a great base to explore Fez or Meknes since these cities are just two hours away.

In this guide, I will cover everything this capital city has to offer in terms of what to do, where to stay and where to eat while you are there.

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1) Visit the Hassan Tower and the Mausoleum

The Hassan Tower and the nearby Mausoleum are places you shouldn't miss when you go to Rabat.

The construction of the Hassan Tower started in the 12th century. It was intended to become the minaret for the largest mosque in the entire world. Sadly the Moroccan ruler Yacoub al-Mansour who had initiated the project died before it could be completed.

In 2012 these ruins became part of the UNESCO world heritage sites and nowadays you can walk around the site and admire the beauty of the unfinished building.

The Mausoleum of Mohammed V

The beautiful and complex patterns on the tower, as well as the pillars arranged in symmetrical perfection on the ground, makes this place a must-see on your visit to Rabat!

Just in front of the unfinished minaret lies the beautiful tomb of King Mohammad V and his two sons. It is possible to visit the interior of the mausoleum which is guarded by members of the Moroccan Royal Guard.

The tomb is also open to non-Muslims and all visitors are reminded to stay quiet and discrete inside the Mausoleum.

The area around Hassan Tower and the Mausoleum was very quiet and peaceful...

2) Go for a walk in Chellah

Chellah is an old medieval fortified city located on the outskirts of Rabat along the banks of the Bou Regreg River. It's a pre-Islamic Roman city that was left in decay in 1154 and then built upon by a Merenid Sultan.

It's a very quiet place and it's the perfect spot to escape the crowds of Rabat. The whole area is covered in abandoned buildings, overgrown plants, and immaculate flowers.

The old medieval city is located on the banks of the Bou Regreg river.

There are small pathways that allow visitors to walk around the abandoned minaret and the necropolis.

The abandoned city is now the home of groups of storks who made their nests on top of the old minarets.

The necropolis of Chellah is located a bit outside of the city.

3) Stroll around the zoo of Rabat

The Rabat zoo is impressively big. The size of this zoo and the sheer amount of different species that can be observed here (130 different species of animals) makes this place worthy of a full day visit.

This zoo also has a few of the animals one would dream of seeing on an African safari such as elephants, lions, rhinos and hippos.

A great feature of this zoo is that all the animals are in simulated environments like a simulated mountain, desert, Savannah and rain forest habitats for example.

4) Visit the giant cemetery of Rabat

Visiting Rabat's giant cemetery might sound a bit creepy. It's probably far from how you had pictured your trip to Rabat but believe me, it should definitely be included in the sights you visit.

In the modern world, we tend to think of death and beauty as incompatible. One look at this beautiful flowery cemetery facing the sea on the outskirts of Rabat will convince you otherwise.

Thousands of gravestones are neatly aligned in rows on a hill overlooking the coastline of Rabat.

In winter, yellow flowers cover the burial grounds transforming this place in a very peaceful sight.

Some of the tombstones are very simple while others are beautifully carved with intricate designs and patterns.

The cemetery of Rabat is located on the coast near the lighthouse and the Kasbah des Oudaias (see map above).

5) Admire the Royal Palace

The Royal Palace in Rabat is the official residence of King Hassan II and the royal family. On top of being the place where the king and his family spend most of their time, this palace is also a place where many of the most important governmental offices in the country are found.

The official name of this palace is El Mechouar Essaid Palace, which means the venue of happiness palace. The spacious grounds also include administrative and governmental buildings, trees and gardens, and a large parade square.

The palace can only be admired from a distance as entry is forbidden. That being said, it still feels majestic and huge, even from far.

Reading Tip: Top Things to do in Essaouira – Essaouira City Guide

6) Walk around Kasbah des Oudaias

This old Kasbah is where the original city of Rabat was built. It's perched on top of a cliff

overlooking the place where the Bou Regreg River and the Atlantic Ocean meet.
The view on the water from this fortified Kasbah is stunning and it serves as a great location to admire the sunset.
The Kasbah des Oudaias overlooks the river...
The citadel is now mainly a residential area and it's very peaceful to walk around the narrow little streets of this old medina.
You won't encounter as many merchants and artisans here as in other Kasbahs and medinas of Morocco but the ones you'll meet have some amazing wooden souvenirs for sale.

These are some of the beautifully painted wooden doors and frames sold in the Kasbah.
We were there in the middle of the week and we were surprised by how quiet and peaceful the little streets were. The silence was only broken by the occasional Gnawa musicians we would come across...
There are a few Gnawa musicians playing in the streets of the Kasbah...
Part of the walls and the houses have been painted in blue, which reminded us of Chefchaouen, Morocco's famous blue city.

To enter Kasbah des Oudaias you will have to walk through the original grand doors of the old city. I highly recommend taking a few pictures at these ancient gates.
They are covered in intricate patterns and designs and they are super photogenic!

These are the gates of the Kasbah and the view you get above the city of Rabat...

The design of the gates reminded us of the Portuguese architecture found in Essaouira...
Directly at the right of the entrance of Kasbah des Oudaias, you will find the Andalusian Gardens where you could sit and relax while admiring the flowers before continuing the exploration of the Kasbah.

Reading Tip: Top things to do in Chefchaouen, Morocco's Blue City

7) Walk through the Andalusian Gardens

I was hesitant about entering the Kasbah des Oudaias at first because I felt it would be too similar to all the Kasbahs I had seen before in Morocco.
As I entered this old city, I was mentally preparing myself for miles and miles of narrow streets.

Imagine my surprise when upon entering the old Kasbah I walked into one of the most beautiful gardens I had seen in the country. There were flowers left and right and the whole place had an atmosphere of soothing serenity.

The Andalusian Gardens are located at the entrance of Kasbah des Oudaias towards the right of the main gate.

These immaculate gardens were built by the French in the 20th century and they have been maintained in perfect condition until today. Here you will see a mix of Andalusian flowers and shrubs as well as some orange, lemon and banana trees.

The garden is the perfect place to relax in the shade on a hot day in Rabat...

The gardens are very relaxing. While we were there we saw a few people reading books under the trees in the company of the cats who call this place their home. If we would live in Rabat, reading in this garden could easily become our daily ritual.

There were plenty of cats sleeping in the garden when we were there...

8) Take a boat ride or go kayaking on the Bou Regreg river

Just outside of Kasbah des Oudaias, there is a very large area where the Bou Regreg river and the sea meet. A very cool activity to do while in Rabat is to take a short boat ride or go kayaking on this river.

Nothing beats a boat ride at sunset with your other half...

The little row boats are very quiet so they're really ideal for a relaxed evening on the river.

They're also a great way to see the old fortified Kasbah from a different perspective.

A lot of families come together on the boats for some family time around sunset.

You will have to negotiate the price with the guys offering the service but it's totally worth it! A trip across the river to Salé will cost around 2 MAD but going farther is bound to cost a lot more.

The sunset gives a beautiful color to the boats on the Bou Regreg river...

You can also go on a 2-hour kayaking trip on the Bou Regreg river, organized by the local yacht club:

9) Get lost in the old medina of Rabat

No trip to a Moroccan city would be complete without taking time to stroll around and get

lost in the streets of Rabat's old city center.

It feels exhilarating to walk amongst thousands of people squeezed between stalls of merchants selling exotic produce from all around the country.

The streets are filled with millions of colors, smells, and noises. Rabat is no exception to this but luckily the streets of its Medina are much easier to navigate and a bit less daunting for some than those of Marrakesh and Fez.

This old city is much less chaotic and more accessible than others around the country. This means that visitors coming here will be able to walk around without stressing too much and simply enjoy the experience.

The Medina has everything you could possibly want to buy from artisanal soap to wooden sculptures and everything in between.

It's the ideal place to find some souvenirs for friends or family members before heading back home.

Reading Tip: Top things to do in Marrakech – Complete City Guide to Morocco's Red City

10) TAKE A COOKING CLASS AND/OR GO ON A FOOD TOUR IN THE OLD town OF RABAT

Another great way to explore the old town of Rabat is by going on a guided food tour in the old medina and Kasbah des Oudaias.

During this 3-hour tour you'll be introduced to the Moroccan specialties of Rabat. While visiting the ancient medina and Kasbah, you'll go on a local gastronomy exploration at the artisanal food stalls. If you're a food lover, this is a must-activity to do in Rabat!

11) Admire the lighthouse and relax on the coast

Rabat and the nearby city of Salé both have beautiful coastlines for those who want to escape the hustle and bustle of the city and breathe in the fresh seaside air.

Rabat also has some beaches, however, the main ones are usually quite busy. I would recommend taking a shared taxi from the center to go to wilder beaches located around 13 km south of the city.

Not too far from Kasbah des Oudaias in front of the giant cemetery, there is a lighthouse that we found particularly beautiful.

We went there at sunset and it looked fantastic!!

Where to stay in Rabat

Rabat has a wide selection of hotels and guesthouses.

Here are some of the places in Rabat we recommend:

Riad Dar El Ghali

This Riad is located right in the heart of the old Medina at walking distance from Kasbah des Oudaias and the Andalusian Gardens. It has very comfortable beds and quiet cozy rooms. It's a great choice for travelers interested in exploring the old Medina, visiting the busy markets and trying out the local food. The terrace of this Riad offers a view of the sea. There is a very complete and delicious breakfast served every morning on location. The staff of this Riad is particularly helpful and will answer any questions you have about Rabat. Click to check out rates and availability for "Riad Dar El Ghali"

Studios Taha

This place is more like a studio or a private apartment than a hostel. It's very clean. The studio comes furnished with comfortable sofas and offers good working spaces. The kitchen has cutlery, pots, and pans if you would prefer to cook your own meals instead of eating out in restaurants.

It's not located very close to the old Medina but the fact that it's right next to a tram stop is very convenient.

The private apartment has very good wifi, a flat screen TV and also includes breakfast served every morning.

Click to check out rates and availability for "Studios Taha"

Dar Bennis Medina

This family-owned guesthouse located right in the center of the old city will certainly charm you. It's located amid the colorful streets of the old Medina and in the perfect location to soak in all the atmosphere of the busy market.

The beach, the Kasbah Oudaias as well as the main train station are all within a short walking distance of this beautiful house.

Breakfast is served every morning and can be enjoyed with the owners of the house and the other guests staying here.

Click to check out rates and availability for "Dar Bennis Medina"

Reading Tip: Surfing in Morocco – A Guide to the Best Surfing Spot in the Country

Where to eat in Rabat

Cynthia and I don't often eat out in restaurants but when we arrive in a city that has such a good reputation for its amazing food, it's hard to stay away from them.

Here are a few of our favorite places in Rabat. Although these restaurants are a bit pricey, if you will be in Rabat for a few days, you should indulge yourself in dinner in one of these with your loved one.

La Koutoubia

This restaurant is a bit hidden in a side street, but don't let the discrete setting fool you, it's one of the best places in Rabat. They have delicious traditional Moroccan dishes such as chicken Pastilla and lamb Tajine.

The chicken Pastilla is done just right, not too sweet and not too savory and with lots of chicken. The meals are also served with olives and roasted almonds on the side. Just the right mix of flavors for an authentic Moroccan food experience.

Al Marsa

This restaurant is ideal if you love seafood. Cynthia had a delicious grilled Calamari while I had a fish plate and we were both super pleased with the meal. Bread and olives with bruschetta were also served as appetizers before the main course.

The restaurant is located in front of the area where the Bou Regreg river meets the Atlantic and if you sit next to the window you will have a gorgeous view of the marina.

You can also see the Hassan tower from Al Marsa and if you go there when it's dark to have dinner, you will be treated to a spectacle of light as the tower is illuminated at night.

Le Dhow

This is by far the most interesting restaurant/bar where you could eat and drink in Rabat. It's located on the Bou Regreg river just outside of the Kasbah Oudaias and it's set in the replica of an old Moroccan merchant vessel.

It's complete with wooden fixtures and an elegant interior where you can enjoy the finest French cuisine in Rabat.

Their menu selection is very good and they serve delicious steaks accompanied by some of the best wine you'll find in Rabat.

Le Dhow is a restaurant inside a ship...

If it's a sunny day, you can enjoy a coffee outside on the sundeck. This restaurant is also occasionally a place where there are live concerts.

Read: [The 17 most beautiful places to visit in Morocco](#)

5. How to get to Rabat Morocco

Rabat is the capital city of Morocco and as such, it is easily accessible from many other Moroccan cities.

Since November 2018 there is a high-speed train that connects Tangier and Rabat and it covers the distance between the two cities in two hours.

The fact that Rabat is so close to Casablanca also makes it ideal to visit the two cities back to back on a trip along the Moroccan coast.

Reading Tip: [Best things to do in Casablanca – Casablanca City Guide](#)

How to get to Rabat from Tangier by train

Traveling between Tangier and Rabat is now more convenient than ever since the inauguration of a high-speed train in November 2018.

Trains in Morocco are cheap and this high-speed train is no exception. Taking a train in this north African country is also a great way to see the stunning landscapes while being comfortably seated.

In Morocco, it's very convenient and easy to buy your train tickets in person directly at the train station.

All the information on schedules and prices can be found on the ONCF website, once you know which train you will take you can head over to the Tangier train station (see map below) to buy your ticket.

Make sure to bring cash to buy your ticket as it's not always possible to pay by debit or credit card.

There are many trains leaving daily in direction of Rabat and some of them will stop in different cities along the way while others, such as the high-speed train will go directly to the southern city.

In Rabat, you can get down at either one of the two main train stations in the city. I would suggest buying a ticket that takes you all the way to the Rabat Ville station as it's much more central and close to the popular landmarks and sights of Rabat.

How to get to Rabat from Tangier by bus

Another good option is to travel between Tangier and Rabat by bus. I would recommend taking either a CTM or a Supratours bus between the two cities.

I've traveled around Morocco with different companies and I have to say that these two companies although being slightly more expensive than others, provide much more comfortable buses.

To catch a bus in Tangier, you'll have two options. You can go to the main city bus station "Gare Routiere" at Place al Jamia al Arabia.

Another option is to take a CTM bus directly at the separate CTM bus terminal.

Reading Tip: 20 best things to do in Tangier – Tangier City Guide

How to get to Rabat from Casablanca by train

Casablanca and Rabat are located very close to each other. The two cities are quite similar in terms of size and looks and people often think that Casablanca is the Moroccan capital.

If you visit Morocco and first travel to Casablanca, your next stop should inevitably be Rabat.

You can look online on the ONCF website for the timetable of the trains going between Casablanca and Rabat. Once you know which train you will take, you can go to the main train station in Casablanca called Casa Voyageur and buy your ticket there.

There is a train that leaves every 30 minutes and it takes about 50 minutes to reach the

Capital city. The price of a ticket is between 35 and 80 MAD.

How to get to Rabat from Casablanca by bus

It's possible to take a bus to Rabat at the main bus station in Casablanca. This bus station is located on Rue Léon (see map below).

You can reserve your ticket in advance at the bus station or book it online. However, if you book your ticket online, you still have to go to the CTM office to pay for your luggage on the day of departure so make sure you arrive at least 30 minutes in advance.

How to get around in Rabat

Even though Rabat is the capital of Morocco, it is still much quieter and calmer than other cities like Marrakesh, Fez or Casablanca.

However, that is not the case on the roads and the traffic in the capital is just as chaotic there as it is elsewhere in the country.

I would recommend taking petit Taxis (small taxis that are not shared with others) to get around the city if you have to leave the city center. They all have taximeters and their fare is very cheap.

If you are staying within the city center, you will notice that Rabat has an incredibly good Tram system that links its major neighborhoods together.

Rabat has a very good tram system...

You can have a look at this website to see a plan for the tram routes in Rabat. It's an excellent way to get around the city center and access different landmarks such as the Hassan Tower. You can find the timetable of the different tram lines online here.

A tram ticket costs 6 MAD and can be bought from ticket machines on the platforms (it's also possible to buy multiple journey tickets)

There is a tram running every 20 minutes from 6 AM to 10 PM.

Other awesome Moroccan cities to visit near Rabat

Essaouira

Essaouira is a cool fishing port located south of Rabat. It's a place that regularly receives a crowd of young surfers and travelers from all over the world.

Something that charmed us about this city is its peculiar Portuguese architecture which is very different from what you will encounter in the rest of the country. Its streets are also filled with the beautiful handicraft of local artisans.

Essaouira is a great city to visit near Rabat...

How to reach Essaouira from Rabat by train and bus

It's possible to reach Essaouira from Rabat by traveling first to Marrakesh by train and then to the coastal city by bus. From Rabat, you can first take a train towards Marrakesh at the Rabat Ville train station.

There are trains leaving every two hours. The journey should take 3 hours and 40 minutes and cost between 130 and 250 MAD. You can find timetables and prices online.

Once you are in Marrakesh, you'll need to walk for about 15 minutes to catch a bus from the

main station in the direction of Essaouira. A combination train/bus ticket is available for purchase for this route at the ONCF website.

How to reach Essaouira from Rabat with your own car

Since these two cities are located on the coast, it's very easy and convenient to travel from one to the other by car.

Whether you have your own car or a renting one, you'll have the freedom to stop whenever you want to take pictures on the gorgeous coastal road that links the country's capital to the fishing port.

This drive is definitely a pleasant one and along the way, you'll pass through another gorgeous little coastal city called El Jadida. The distance between Rabat and Essaouira is 457 km. It should take around 5 hours to reach the southern city.

To drive from Rabat to Essaouira follow highway A1 towards the south along the coast until you reach a roundabout to the city of Bouguedra. Take the direction of Bouguedra and from this city continue driving south-west on highway N1 until you reach Essaouira.

Reading Tip: How to rent a car in Morocco – Everything you need to know

Fez

Fez is known as Morocco's cultural capital and is famous for its tanneries where world-famous leather is produced.

The city is also famous for the miles of winding narrow streets of its old Medina. It's Morocco's oldest colonial city and it's definitely worth the detour if you want a quick getaway from Rabat.

Reading Tip: How to visit the tanneries in Fez, a photo essay

Fez is a city that is known around the world for its leather tanneries...

How to reach Fez from Rabat by train

Fez is located very close to Rabat and can easily be reached by train. You can have a look at the price and the timetable for this train online. Once you know when your train will leave, you can buy your ticket directly at the Rabat Ville train station.

A train from Rabat should take around 2 hours and 40 minutes to reach Fez and the ticket will cost between 143 and 243 MAD.

The train will arrive at the main station in Fez and from there a taxi to the old Medina should cost around 8 MAD.

Avoid taking a taxi directly at the exit of the train station because they usually overcharge. It's better to walk a bit farther and hop in a taxi that has a taximeter.

How to reach Fez from Rabat by bus

Another option is to take a bus from Rabat to Fez. You can take a CTM or a Supratours bus between the two cities. A bus ticket will cost between 131 and 171 MAD and the journey should take 4 hours and a half.

The CTM bus station is located on Avenue Hassan II in Rabat.

How to reach Fez from Rabat by car

It's very easy to get to Fez from Rabat with your own car or with a rented one. To get there follow highway A2 towards the east. The distance between the two cities is 207 km and driving there should take around 2 hours.

