

R Y M E

Morocco, My Love

*A personal travel guide to the country that stays with you,
and an invitation to experience it in the deepest way possible.*

By Hanna Attafi | RYME cofounder

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A Letter from Hanna

Morocco is in my blood.

Growing up between South Carolina and Morocco (thanks mom and dad) I always felt like a chameleon. Slipping between two very different worlds. Two languages, two foods, two ways of being in a body, in a family, in a room.

When people ask me what the biggest difference is between my two cultures, I always say: everything. Which is true in many ways. And of course, there is a shared basis of human framework. People are people, and the people of Morocco are absolutely stunning.

Morocco is the place that first taught me something I now teach my clients every day: that you can be fully held by a place. That a country, its smells, its sounds, its rhythm, can do something to your nervous system that no book, podcast, or therapy session quite can.

The prayer call at dawn. The sound of water in a riad courtyard. The weight of a hand-woven carpet. The sweetness of mint tea poured from a height. These things do not talk to your mind. They talk to your body.

That is why I wanted to bring RYME there.

This little guide is my love letter to a country that shaped me, and my honest, personal take on how to experience it well. I want you to *feel* Morocco, not just see it. And if the stars align, I hope you will feel it alongside us at our retreats this year.

With love,

Hanna



Why Morocco?

There are places you visit. And then there are places that visit you. Places that come back to you in a dream months later, that change the way you taste mint tea, that shift something in how you carry yourself.

Morocco is the second kind.

It is a country of extraordinary contrasts: ancient medinas and crashing Atlantic waves, snow-capped Atlas mountains and golden Sahara dunes, devout tradition and wildly cosmopolitan ports. It is multilingual, multicolored, and multi-sensory in the very best way.

*Morocco does not let you stay in your head.
It pulls you all the way into your body.*

The colours alone are enough to slow your brain right down. Deep indigo tilework, terracotta walls, saffron spices, cobalt blue doorways. And then there is the smell of the souks: cumin, cedar, rose water, leather. The sound of the call to prayer washing over rooftops five times a day. The feel of warm hammam steam opening everything up.

If you have been living in your head, doing all the right things but still feeling like something is quietly off: Morocco is a full-system reset. Not because it is comfortable (it is not always). But because it is so alive, so present, so unapologetically itself, that you cannot help but meet it the same way.

The People

The people of Morocco are warm, proud, and deeply hospitable. They will offer you tea before they offer you a price. They will ask about your family before they ask your name. The culture of connection is real and not performative.

Most Moroccans are multilingual, often moving between Darija (Moroccan Arabic), French, Berber, and Spanish depending on where you are. In Tangier, you might have a conversation that touches four languages in four minutes. Try to learn at least these basics before you go:

"Salaam alaikum" (peace be upon you) — the universal greeting.

"Shukran" (thank you) — you will use this constantly.

"La shukran" (no thank you) — essential in any medina.

The Spiritual Rhythm

Morocco is a Muslim country, open and modern in many places, but rooted in its faith. You will hear the adhan (call to prayer) five times a day. At first it might startle you. Then it will become a beautiful (frequent) reminder.

Let it be an invitation. Not to any particular belief, but to presence. To pausing. To the kind of gratitude practice we always mean to do but forget. The prayer call will do it for you, gently, five times a day.



When to Go

The ideal time to visit Morocco is during spring (April and May) and fall (September to October). These are the sweet spot months: warm but not scorching, vibrant but not overrun.

Summer in the interior cities (Marrakech, Fez, Meknes) can be brutally hot, often well above 40 degrees Celsius. The coast and the north are more manageable, but still intense.

Winter along the Atlantic coast is the season for surfers. The swells are consistent and powerful, and the towns feel more local and less touristic. Tangier and Essaouira are beautiful in winter: moody and raw.

And if you want the Sahara? Spring and autumn are ideal. Not too hot, and the light over the dunes in those seasons is extraordinary.

Best overall: April to May / September to October

Best for surf: November to February

Best for Sahara: March to April / October to November

Avoid: July to August in inland cities (very hot)



Getting There & Getting Around

Flights

The most common entry points are Marrakech Menara Airport (RAK) and Casablanca Mohammed V Airport (CMN). Both have good international connections.

If you are heading to Essaouira (where our retreat is), the nearest airport is Essaouira Mogador Airport (ESU). It has some direct flights via Spain. Alternatively, fly into Marrakech, which is approximately a 3-hour drive to Essaouira. Many retreat guests combine a few days in Marrakech with the retreat itself.

From Spain, you can also take a 45-minute ferry from Algeciras to Tangier. You watch Spain disappear and Africa appear on the horizon. Very cinematic. One of the most underrated travel experiences in the world.

Getting Around

Taxis are the easiest way to get around cities. There are petit taxis (small, city-only, metered) and grand taxis (shared, between cities). Always agree on the price before you get in, or insist the meter is used. Carry small bills.

The train network (ONCF) is genuinely good: clean, punctual on the main routes between Casablanca, Rabat, Fez, and Marrakech. And scenic. I recommend putting on Marrakesh Express and watching the landscape change.

If you rent a car and drive, it is a beautiful way to explore the countryside. Carry small bills. If you are stopped at a checkpoint (it happens), a small note smooths things over. You will understand once you are there.

Be Smart. Be Respectful.

I get asked all the time: is Morocco safe for solo female travelers? The answer is yes, and also, as with anywhere, it depends entirely on how you show up.

Morocco is a Muslim country. It is also wildly diverse. You will see women in full niqab walking next to women in jeans and crop tops on the same street in Tangier. The range is vast. But the more you understand the culture and lead with respect, the more you will be welcomed into it.

Clothing

As a general rule: the less skin you show, the less attention you attract. Loose, flowing clothing is ideal, and honestly it is more comfortable in the heat. In the cities, a light linen shirt and wide-leg trousers are perfect. No need for a headscarf unless you are entering a mosque.

The further south you go, the more conservative things get. Tangier and other major cities feel almost European. The deep south feels very different. Use your judgment and read the room.

Energy

Here is something I always tell first-time visitors: Morocco is a place where your energy speaks before your words do. In the medinas especially, vendors are experienced at reading signals. If you walk in radiating a quiet no, they will leave you alone. If you walk in open and curious, you will be invited into conversations, glasses of tea, and back rooms full of rugs.

A past RYME guest who had been feeling overwhelmed in the souks decided to simply shift her energy: to embody a calm, grounded no rather than a stressed one. It worked almost instantly. Play with this. It is actually a fascinating real-time somatic experiment. It's all about your nervous system.

Rest as needed. The stimulation is a lot. Taking a break in your riad courtyard is not wasted time. It is essential time.

A Note on Alcohol

Alcohol is technically restricted in Morocco but widely available in licensed restaurants, hotels, and large grocery stores, especially in the tourist cities. You will not find it in small local cafes or in the countryside.



Where to Go

Morocco is a big country with wildly different personalities by region. Here are my honest favorites, and a few I know less about, so I will say so.

Tangier — My Second Home

Tangier is where my father is from, so I am biased. But I think it might be one of the most underrated cities in Morocco.

It sits at the very top of the country, where the Atlantic meets the Mediterranean, where you can literally see Spain on a clear day from the coast. The city is deeply cosmopolitan: Spanish, French, Berber, Arab, and international influences layered over centuries. It is open, diverse, and endlessly interesting.

You can reach it by ferry from Algeciras, Spain in 45 minutes across the strait. Spend a weekend here on your way through Europe, or use it as your entry point into Morocco.

Tangier Favorites:

- Le Salon Bleu: beautiful view, old city, lunch only
- Cafe Hafa: legendary sunset spot, ask taxi for Marchan Park. Hemingway used to sit here.
- Hotel Chellah: music and drinks
- Grand Hotel Villa de France: historic, beautiful
- Saveur du Poisson: famous hole-in-the-wall fish restaurant. Incredible.
- The American Legation of Tangier: great art and history

Chefchaouen — The Blue City

Chefchaouen is a blue-washed mountain town nestled in the Rif Mountains. Every wall, every staircase, every flower pot is blue. It is staggeringly beautiful and completely unlike anywhere else in Morocco. Not the most authentic experience in terms of local life (it is very touristic), but visually extraordinary and genuinely peaceful.

Fez — The Artisan Soul

Fez is full of artisans and craftspeople and is known for its cultural and artistic depth. The medina is one of the most labyrinthine in the world. You will get lost,

and it will be magical. The leather tanneries, the tile workshops, the perfume souks. Stay at least two nights.

Marrakech — Old Town Meets Big City

Marrakech is a really nice mix of ancient medina and big city energy. Beautiful old markets, artisans everywhere, good restaurants, rooftop bars, lush riads. It can be overwhelming, but also incredibly alive.

Marrakech Picks from Past RYMERS:

- La Mamounia Spa: historic luxury hotel and world-class spa
- Riad Melhoun: luxury spa and riad
- Le Jardin Restaurant: lunch in the medina
- Farmers Marrakech: beautiful farm-to-table
- Jardin Majorelle: Yves Saint-Laurent's home and garden, with Berber and YSL museums

Essaouira — Where We Retreat

Essaouira is a walled Atlantic port city with a completely different energy to the inland cities: windy, wild, salt-kissed. It has a strong Berber and Jewish heritage, a thriving surf and arts scene, and the kind of light that makes everything look like a painting.

Our retreat villa is about 20 minutes outside the town itself. We go in for a walking tour one day, and it is a lovely place to land a few days before or after the retreat. More relaxed and human-scaled than Marrakech.

Taghazout & The Atlantic Coast

Further south, Taghazout is a super cute surf town with a unique blend of surf culture and Moroccan tradition. Around here are some of the most famous waves in the world: Anchor Point, Killers, Draculas, Banana Point, Boilers. Even if you do not surf, the coastline is spectacular to drive along.

The Sahara Desert

Even further south: the Sahara. Which is, of course, quite remarkable. You can find companies that take you into the dunes, let you sleep in a Bedouin camp under more stars than you have ever seen in your life, and experience the kind of silence that recalibrates something deep. I highly recommend spending at least

two nights. Google is your friend for finding reputable camps.

Ancient Sites

If history is your thing: the ancient city of Meknes and the Roman ruins of Volubilis (both UNESCO World Heritage Sites) are genuinely worth the visit. The train from Fez makes it easy.

What to Eat, Drink & Experience

Moroccan food is one of the world's great cuisines. Slow-cooked, deeply spiced, layered with history. And eating in Morocco is a social act: slow, generous, communal.

Must Eat

- Chicken or Kefta Tagine: the classic. Slow-cooked in a clay pot with olives, preserved lemons, and spices. Order it everywhere and compare.
- Couscous: traditionally served on Fridays, the way it should be. Fluffy, rich, served with seven vegetables and slow-braised meat.
- Spicy grilled sardines: trust me. Eat them whole. You are welcome.
- Msemen: a flaky, layered flatbread, best eaten hot with honey and argan oil for breakfast.
- Bastilla: a sweet and savory pastry pie, typically with pigeon or chicken and almonds, dusted with cinnamon and sugar. It sounds strange and it tastes transcendent.
- Traditional boiled beet salad, carrot salad, and zaalouk (smoked eggplant): these show up before everything else. Eat them all.

Must Drink

- Mint tea: poured from a height to create foam, sweet as syrup. Refusing tea in Morocco is almost rude. Just say yes. Always.
- Fresh-squeezed orange juice: the whole country practically runs on it. The Jemaa el-Fna square in Marrakech is famous for it.

Must Experience

- A local hammam: not a hotel spa hammam, a real one, neighborhood-style, men and women separate. Leave your valuables behind and get ready to get scrubbed, and emerge feeling like a new person. Ask your riad host to recommend one locals actually use.
- Jardin Majorelle: even if you are not an art person. The blue is extraordinary.
- Watching the sunset: from a rooftop, from the beach, from a mountainside. Watch it sink. Every time.

Food Safety

Do not drink the tap water. I repeat: do not drink the tap water. Even if someone tells you it is fine, it is not fine for your stomach. Stick to bottled water, always. For the same reason, avoid ice, raw salads, and unpeeled fruit. Say yes to traditional cooked salads and fruits you can peel yourself (oranges, bananas, pomegranates). PS — our retreat house has a beautiful water filtration system and the most amazing clean food.

Pack imodium. Modern pharmacies are everywhere in Morocco and will have most things you need. But peace of mind before you land is better.



The Art of the Haggle

Carpets. Leather. Spices. Ceramics. Textiles. Handwoven baskets. You will want to buy things. Many things.

*Pretend like you do not want them.
It may not feel expensive, so pretend like it is.*

Haggling is not rude in Morocco. It is expected, it is cultural, and it is actually kind of fun once you get the hang of it. Here is the basic playbook:

- Pick something up, put it down, then pick it up again with mild disinterest.
- If they name a price, cut it in half. Start there and work your way to somewhere in the middle.
- Say you saw it cheaper somewhere else (even if you did not).
- Act like you are debating whether you even want it.
- Walk away slowly. If they want to sell, they will call you back.

The more simply you are dressed (not flashing your phone and jewelry) the more reasonable the opening prices tend to be. Carry cash. Small bills are your friend.

The whole thing is a game. Once you embrace it, it becomes one of the more entertaining parts of Morocco. And when you walk away with a hand-knotted Berber rug for a genuinely fair price? Very satisfying.



Morocco as a Somatic Reset

Here is something I have noticed over years of guiding people through nervous system work, and over many trips home to Morocco:

Morocco is one of the few places in the world that is genuinely, unavoidably present-moment. Not because it tries to be. Because it just is.

In our regular lives, especially for those of us who are high-functioning and high-achieving, so much of our experience happens in the mind. In the analysis, the planning, the mental overhead. We think about our bodies more than we feel them. We understand our stress responses better than we can soften them.

Morocco changes that, fast.

The sensory intensity of the souks pulls you into your senses whether you want it or not. The beauty of the landscape makes you stop and just look. The prayer call at dawn asks you to pause. The tea ceremony slows everything down. The hammam makes you completely, unavoidably present in your body.

*It is not a place you observe from a distance.
It is a place that gets inside you.*

And for a nervous system that has been quietly bracing, holding it together, staying on top of things: this kind of immersive, sensory presence is not just enjoyable. It is healing.

Travel, when it is done with intention, is one of the most powerful nervous system interventions there is. Not because it solves anything at home, but because it gives your system a completely different set of inputs. A different rhythm. A different pace. Space to exhale in a way that a weekend away or a Sunday walk cannot quite reach.

Morocco is particularly potent for this. I have seen it again and again. Guests arrive tight, distracted, a little disconnected from their own experience. And Morocco, gently, shamelessly, immediately, begins to pull them back in.

The RYME Morocco Retreat

September 26 to October 1, 2026 | Bab Essaouira, Morocco

This is it. The retreat we have been hosting for years.

A small group of women. A stunning private villa on the Atlantic coast of Morocco. Five days of deep somatic work, guided movement, real rest, local food, and the kind of deep inner work that only RYME can provide in a light way.

We have been to this villa before and it is something else. Bab Smalla sits about 20 minutes outside the medina, nestled in the landscape between the Atlas foothills and the Atlantic. Heated pool. Big light-filled communal spaces. The kind of place that makes you want to stay.

Where We'll Be

Villa: Bab Smalla, Morocco

Location: Approximately 20 minutes from Essaouira town

Dates: September 26 to October 1, 2026 (5 nights)

Group size: Small — maximum 10 guests

Nearest airport: Essaouira Mogador (ESU) or Marrakech Menara (RAK, approx. 3hr drive)

What's Included

- Daily somatic movement and yoga: gentle, body-led, meeting you exactly where you are
- Breathwork and nervous system reset sessions
- EMDR-inspired and hypnotherapy practices (gentle, deeply supportive)
- Group coaching sessions with Hanna and Loes
- Pre and post retreat 1:1 calls
- A walking tour of Essaouira town
- Chef-prepared meals: Moroccan food in its most nourishing form
- Heated pool access throughout

- WhatsApp community group before, during, and after for connection and continued support

Who This is For

This retreat was designed for the woman who:

- Looks fine on the outside, but inside everything feels like a lot
- Has done the therapy, read the books, understands her patterns, but still cannot quite find calm in her body
- Is craving a real pause. Not a vacation that leaves her needing another vacation, but a genuine reset
- Wants to be held in community with other women doing real work
- Has always wanted to experience Morocco and wants to do it in the most intentional, safe, nourishing way possible

This is not a push-yourself retreat. It is not a high-intensity, early-morning, transformation-in-five-days kind of energy.

It is gentle. Steady. Body-first. We work with your capacity, not against it. We move slowly enough to actually feel things. And we leave enough space for Morocco itself, the smells, the light, the sounds, the food, to do its part.

*The retreat does not take you away from your life.
It returns you to it.*

Practical Details

- **Flights:** Fly into Essaouira Mogador Airport (ESU) for direct access, or Marrakech Menara (RAK) for more flight options (approx. 3hr transfer)
- **Visas:** Most nationalities enter Morocco visa-free for tourism. Please check based on your passport. Ensure your passport is valid for at least 6 months beyond your travel dates.
- **Transfers:** You are responsible for your own transfer to the villa. We will connect you in a WhatsApp group and share trusted driver contacts closer to the date.
- **Arrival day:** September 26. We gather, get settled, have dinner together, breathe.
- **Departure day:** October 1. We close the container together before you travel home.

Want to Extend Your Trip?

Many guests choose to arrive a few days early to explore Morocco before the retreat. Our top suggestions:

- Essaouira town itself: 20 minutes from the villa, a lovely place to land and acclimate
- Marrakech: 3 hours away, full city experience, great food and markets
- Or fly into Tangier and make your way south by train. The slow way is the best way.

Is This You?

You have been holding a lot. Maybe for a long time.

You are doing life, really doing it, but your body is carrying a load that your mind keeps trying to manage. You know the theory. You understand your patterns. But something is not quite shifting.

You have been craving something. Not more information, not another course or another framework. Something more like space. Air. A place where you can let your guard down without the whole thing collapsing.

Morocco is that place. This retreat is that space.

And the women you will share it with? They will understand exactly what you mean when you say: I am fine, but also I am really not. Because they feel it too.

Come as you are. Morocco will meet you there.



Come RYME With Us

Spots for our September 26 to October 1 retreat in Essaouira, Morocco are limited to 10 guests.

If something in this guide moved you, or if Morocco has been quietly calling your name for a while, we would love to hear from you.

To learn more or reserve your spot:

Email: hello@rymewithus.com

Visit: rymewithus.com

September 26 to October 1, 2026

Bab Essaouira, Morocco

Small group | 5 nights | Somatic retreat

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See you there.

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