

European influence on Morocco

Morocco's dazzling mosaic of Arab and Berber cultures—with a dash of African and European influence—is at once strange and romantic, alluring and disconcerting. It's little wonder that Morocco has regularly drawn seekers of the exotic. Although Morocco is situated in the western corner of Africa, the European influence is notable. The north of the country has a Mediterranean coastline and a strong European influence. The south of Spain is only a 20-kilometre ferry ride from the tip of Morocco.

By the 15th century Spain and Portugal began to intrude into Morocco, after having expelled the Moors from their own lands. Although Morocco successfully repulsed these invasions, the tide of European imperialism eventually proved too great. By the early 1900's, France had negotiated land deals with Spain, Italy, Britain, and other contending nations to become the overwhelming European influence in Morocco. In 1912, the country became a French protectorate, with the port city of Tangier deemed an international zone. Marshal Lyautey, established as the French Resident-General, respected Moroccan culture and recognized the need to preserve it.

From then until 1956 Morocco was administered from France, with a small area in the north under Spanish control. Since independence, Morocco has been a kingdom in which the King has considerable power as both political and religious ruler. New government initiatives are successfully improving the infrastructure and tourist economy to create an exciting new emerging [Morocco property](#) market which is only just coming to the attention of shrewd worldwide property investors.

Nowadays the tourism industry and huge amount of investors in Morocco property has exposed Moroccans to European values, fashions and lifestyles. Perhaps in the beginning, it was difficult for the locals to accept these new influences; but now they are a familiar part of everyday life. Morocco has actually submitted various applications for membership in the European Union; so far, it has been rejected.

However not Morocco has not only European influence. Both Arab and European influence are exemplified throughout the country, but especially in the capital, Rabat, and Casablanca. Despite a strong European influence, the Arab influence is visible as well even in construction of [property in Morocco](#) and old buildings. The Old Medina with its maze of narrow streets, neighborhood mosques, and whitewashed walls is clearly Arabic, as is the huge Hassan II Mosque on the sea coast. And although many women are attired in the latest European fashions, many choose to wear the traditional l'tam, or face veil, and robe-like djellabah.

Although European influence in Morocco is strong, it is still a country of distinctly Arabic tradition. The vast difference between the crude life on the streets and the hospitality and intimacy found in the home reflect the duality that is deeply ingrained in Moroccan culture. But one aspect of Moroccan life that is distinctly unified is religion. The king has declared that all citizens are born Sunni Muslims, and Islam is an important part of everyday ritual life. The Moroccan government is a constitutional monarchy, with a very powerful king. It is this mix of European and Arab influence, loyalty to the king and a strong Islamic base, which creates the uniquely Moroccan identity.

About the Author

Sandra Hamilton, independent researcher of current situation in Morocco regarding growing interest in [Morocco property](#) investment.

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