



WHAT'S DOWN THERE?

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Director's word

Hello everyone, and welcome to this March's newsletter for Projects Abroad Morocco. This newsletter aims to inform all our volunteers with news and pieces of information about Projects Abroad Morocco, and the country in general.

This month we had the great pleasure in welcoming Mikhail Makushinskiy in Morocco: the Projects Abroad recruitment director of Russia.

He was very impressed with the work that the volunteers are doing here in Morocco and even though he was here for only a short period of time he visited many of our placements and host families. Mikhail also had a few opportunities to be introduced to Moroccan cuisine.

On the Projects Abroad Morocco Facebook group all new, current and past volunteers can ask questions, get advice and keep up to date with what the Projects Abroad Volunteers are doing in the country. Please feel free to join this group and become involved. The link is:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=107221012639679>

We hope you will join us in Morocco, or one of our other destinations, for a rewarding and worthwhile experience in one of our many projects.

Whatever you decide to do, Asmaa, Adil, Lotfi and I will be here to advise and support you before you arrive and whilst you're here.

We are here to help you plan your project abroad with Projects Abroad. So, if you have any suggestions, please feel free to drop us an e-mail on morocco@projects-abroad.org

Placement of the month:

E-Joussour

Who we are?

The majority of the Maghreb and Mashrek NGOs are not in a position to benefit from the advantages of Internet visibility.

- To understand the many issues, figures and features of the past, present and future processes of globalisation which have indisputable impacts on the populations of the regions targeted by this project, namely the Maghreb and the Machrek.
- To make it possible for the populations and civil society players of these regions who often share the Arabic language to have access to this type of information in a centralised and user-friendly way, and to produce and publish reviews on such issues in this language, as well as in English and French.
- To promote greater participation of the Maghreb/Machrek civil society partners in social movements that propose socially-responsible alternatives, as well as research, analysis and production of knowledge on the phenomena of globalisation.



Accommodation of the month: Mesbahi Family

The Mesbahis are very experienced with volunteers. They are very understanding and open-minded. However, it is better to keep away from tight clothes and make sure skirts and shorts are always below the knee. Long sleeved shirts are preferred.

Make sure you tell your hosts where you are going and when you will be back. You should avoid staying out late and you should try to spend time with your hosts; talking to them and getting to know them will greatly enrich your time in Morocco, and you will also make friends for life!

We strongly advise the volunteers to keep a professional relationship with their colleagues or students at work.



About the food:

Spices, couscous, meat, bread and vegetables are typical ingredients in Moroccan meals, and lunch is the main meal of the day.

Mint tea is a very common drink. Sweet pastries are very popular, and sugar in general is consumed in large quantities.

Your host family will be able to accommodate any reasonable requests you may have regarding food.



About your room:

The room where you are staying has all the basic necessities and is very clean and quiet. If you want to spend time in your room, nobody will bother you.

Your room is next door to another bedroom where a second volunteer could be staying. Sometimes you might be sharing the room with another volunteer.

Please bear in mind that most Moroccan families use sofas instead of beds for sleeping at night.

Your Role as a Volunteer:

All volunteers in Morocco live with a local host family and hence gain a rich and varied experience of Moroccan life. Respecting the family's rules and customs and explaining your own culture are key to a happy home.



Mirleft



The village of Mirleft (Province of Tiznit) has earned a solid reputation in Morocco and abroad; it is paradise for lovers of the ocean and the pleasures associated with it. Sea bathing, fishing, surfing and windsurfing are added to the already long list of attractions in southern Berber cuisine, sun, friendly people...

The oasis of Mirleft

The beaches of southern Morocco amaze globe-trotters . Tourists fond of seaside pleasures are struck by the uniqueness of the area; beaches nestled at the mouth of wadis where fruits and vegetables grow in the shade of palm trees, sand dunes shaped by the desert wind; the bite of the sun, the crashing ocean waves, the vast stretches of white sand.

Besides the beach and fishing, surfing and windsurfing are renowned around Mirleft. The followers of these sports are often very demanding; keeping ahead of the best waves, they do not hesitate to travel thousands of miles to cross whole countries and experience the best sensations, this communion with the board and wave. Waves often impressive, and especially regular in a wild and wonderful Mirleft. Some veteran fans are quick to compare Mirleft to Tarifa, southern Spain, a now legendary place for all surfers. We even met some surfers who regularly come to Mirleft from the Persian Gulf; this proves the attractions of the place!

Social events album: Get together meeting – Day trips



Moroccan Food



Morocco, the culinary star of North Africa, is the doorway between Europe and Africa. Much imperial and trade influence has been filtered through the country and blended into its culture. Unlike the herb-based cooking across the sea to the north, Moroccan cooking is characterised by rich spices. Cumin, coriander, saffron, chiles, dried ginger, cinnamon, and paprika are always on a cook's shelf. *Harissa*, a paste of garlic, chiles, olive oil, and salt, makes for fiery dishes that stand out among the milder foods that are more the Mediterranean norm. Ras el hanout (which means head of the shop) is a dried spice mixture that combines anywhere from 10 to 100 spices. Each vendor has his own secret recipe (hence the name), and no two are exactly alike. Couscous, granular semolina, is central to Moroccan cuisine and is often cooked with spices, vegetables, nuts, and raisins. It makes a meal in itself or is topped with rich stews and roasted meats. Lamb is a principal meat -- Moroccan roasted lamb is cooked until tender enough to be pulled apart and eaten with the fingers. It is often topped with raisin and onion sauces, or even an apricot puree. Meat and fish can be grilled, stewed, or cooked in an earthenware *tagine* (the name for both the pot and the dish). Savoury foods are enhanced with fruits, dried and fresh -- apricots, dates, figs, and raisins, to name a few. Lemons preserved in a salt-lemon juice mixture bring a unique face to many Moroccan chicken and pigeon dishes. Nuts are prominent; pine nuts, almonds, and pistachios show up in all sorts of unexpected places. Moroccan sweets are rich and dense confections of cinnamon, almond, and fruit perfumes that are rolled in filo dough, soaked in honey, and stirred into puddings.

Spring Break in Morocco by Christopher Guimarin

Day 1: Traveling in Our Moroccan Adventure

Day 1:

I'm off to Morocco with my friend Jenna Bordy for a week long volunteer trip. We will be helping individuals/children with mental and physical difficulties.

Currently we patient wait for our flight to Casablanca. It has been an interesting morning; we go to Syracuse Airport at 10:10. Checked our one bag and then headed to our gate. We arrived in JFK International Airport and after a quick Starbucks run we realized that we had to leave and go to the international terminal.

When we arrived at security we were told that we had to go to the ticket area. When we went there we couldn't check in until 2. So we wait patiently in the food court above security and for an hour just chilled.

So now we are sitting at Gate One playing on solitaire on our iPhones.

Check back tomorrow for more updates!

Chris & Jenna

Day 2: Arrival and Introductions

Day 2:

After a long flight where Jenna and I slept the majority of the time, we arrived in Casablanca. As I write this first part we are being driven from Casablanca to Rabat. Jenna has just finished yelling at Blackberry global support. For some reason no data was coming to her phone.

The sun! After months in Syracuse, the sun is a beautiful thing. So far it seems pretty awesome!

On our ride we were driving past a town with lots of satellite dishes on the roofs. I was like "Look lots of satellite dishes" Jenna responds, "Yeah still no service for Jenna..."

The visuals like the signs and the design of light posts are similar globally. It makes you think that there are shared parts of our societies making us into a global community.

Shell, Michelin, Ford and CocaCola are some of the American brands we have seen so far.

I'm loving it so far. After the drive we walked into the medina which is the old part of Rabat. We ventured to Jenna's host family first where we dropped her off, then headed to my host family.

I love where I'm living, I think it is really cool. I'll post photos when I return. Let me attempt to describe it. I'm living on the second floor of the house near the new kitchen since the old one on the first floor broke some how. There is a family room with a tv where the hostess has a sewing station setup. She currently sews a beautiful dress. I'm loving the geometric patterns throughout the designs of the house from the tiling to the cushions. My room is smaller then my dorm room but it's different because there are other rooms I can hang out in. I can't wait to start sketching later.

I'm writing this, currently with no idea how I'm going to be able to post it. There is no Internet at my house but there seems to be a near wifi I just have no idea how to get on it. It turns out it is the wifi my host family setup

I've also realized, I have to learn some more languages!!

So now after having a snack with the coordinator at Projects Abroad, Jenna and a teacher from the Applebee School in Toronto, I'm sitting watching the Spain football. The oldest son is sitting with his friends and I'm trying to determine what card game is being played.

Well until tomorrow!

Day 3: Arabic and Placement

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Day 3

First off we woke up had breakfast with our host families. Then we met at Jenna house and met our Arabic teacher and proceeded to her place. We then spent the next two hours learning how to write and speak the Arabic Alphabet. It wasn't easy.

Our day continues with eating lunch with our host family the heading out to our placement in Sale. At our placement we were introduced to the head of the association and we met all of the other volunteers and the kids. We eventually ended up playing picture dictionary in one of the classrooms.

Towards the last part of our day Jenna and I went shopping in the medina. Finally having dinner with one of the coordinators and now relaxing before sleeping.

Until tomorrow!

Day 4: Meeting the More Volunteers

Day 4:

Our day started off like any other day with Arabic lessons. Arabic is a difficult language to learn. Jenna has been able to pick up the language faster than me.

Afterwards we went sightseeing and check out some old roman structures. We had lunch looking out onto the countryside. It was beautiful and very relaxing.

With a relaxing lunch ended, Jenna and I ventured to our placement. We got there early and one of the kids showed up early too. So in my attempt to communicate I pulled my iPhone and launched the brushes app which is like paint for the iPhone. From what I could gather he attempt to teach me the names of the other kids and where they lived. Jenna of course sat laughing in the corner.

We helped the kids learn their numbers then myself and the volunteer from Japan who speaks Arabic, French, Japanese and English attempted to teach the other volunteers English. While I was doing that Jenna was playing memory with the kids. In between the two activities we went outside and played a variation of duck duck goose but instead of tagging you had to the person with a ball. Overall it was a fun day.

Our final stop was one of the volunteer's host family's medina where all the volunteers gathered and we ate lots of food. In projects abroad we have volunteers from Canada, United States of America, England, Australia and Denmark.



Day 5: The Hammam

Day 5: The Hammam

Jenna and I are currently on the way to Fez. There we will be looking at local artisans doing their crafts and a number of other activities. Apparently it is a multiple hour car drive.

Yesterday started off like usual with Arabic lessons. Lotfi, our volunteer coordinator, took us for tea in the Kasbah. The Kasbah was a fort for the Moroccans against the pirates who were on the other side of the river in Siles. I just found it enjoyable to sit near water and relax for a bit.

For lunch yesterday we ate with our host families. Later once I'm state side I'll describe in a few more details how a Moroccan meal works.

In the afternoon we worked in our Care Project. Today consisted of drawing, painting and jewelry making. Sadly Jenna's necklace broke as she put it on.

Going to the Hammam was an ordeal within itself. We met Lotfi and headed farther into the medina and eventually came to a Hammam. Lotfi walks in and talks to the guy behind desk and finds out that it's currently the time for ladies and soon it will be the time for the men. So Lotfi took Jenna and I to another Hammam just for ladies and dropped Jenna off there so she could have enough time to relax. We headed back to the original Hammam and the women inside did not get out till half hour after they were supposed to. Jenna by that time had already finished, and I haven't even started. So I eventually headed in once the last lady left and grab two buckets, I put my all my clothes except my underwear in my bag then in the cubbyhole.

From there you go into this steam room where you fill up your buckets then you clean part of the floor. Where you clean is where you'll sit and wash yourself.

Afterwards feeling refreshed and clean we went to dinner and after that back to our host families. Currently at Fez at the Cafe Clock, woo for free wifi!

Day 6: Fez

Day 6: Fez

The today began early at 7:15 where we met Lotfi, Henry, a fellow volunteer from the UK, and our driver outside the medina. We then set forth on our multiple hour car ride where everyone except for the driver of course fell asleep.

An interesting observation is that lanes kind of any kind of do not really exist in Morocco. There will be times that the car takes up the entire road. Anyway it freaked us out a little bit.

45 minutes away from Fez we stopped at a gas station/coffee shop. Thank god for caffeine, I still feel asleep during those last 45 minutes.

After arriving in Fez, we met our tour guide and began learning about the intricate roads and mosaics of Fez. I loved seeing the mosques for the sole purpose of looking at the art. Everything was hand carved and there was a great deal of detail. The detail, I hope will be a post within itself. Look for it in a few days!

Eventually our guide to us to the Tannery, which had to be the coolest thing I had seen all week. The process of making the hides was here and it was fascinating to watch. Apparently Henry talked about him and his mum were watching the Telly and there was this whole special about this tannery. Henry had been wanted a leather jacket for years and his mom was like, "if you want a jacket you should only get it from that place." Low and beyond, guess where Henry is 5 weeks later. Guess what he did, he bought himself a jacket.

After the tannery we ventured to the ceramics area. It was awesome. I would be surprised if SU's ceramics department didn't study the ceramic of fez. And if they don't they really need to setup a trip and check it out.

Eventually we arrived back in the medina of Fez and had lunch at the Clock Cafe. All four us had camel burgers. It seemed to be a cross between beef and sausage. I thought it was amazing! Plus they had free wifi!



Volubilis was our next stop. Volubilis was a Roman City! Finally 6 years of Latin could finally come into use. Nope... The texts on the pillars were too far degraded, words were missing. So hopefully later with pictures I'll be able to translate some of the tablets. I enjoyed walking around the ruins. If there was more time I could see myself pacing with a book in my hand muttering and pointing, "this is where the atrium should be..."

Even though I slept for most of the car ride, I still come away with the feeling that I loved the Moroccan countryside.

Well I've finished packing! Time to sleep then off to airport in the morning. I'll write today's adventures then!

Day 7: Moroccan Music

Our last Arabic lesson! This time we started learning some words and how to write them correctly.

Afterwards Lotfi took us shopping and was able to get us some amazing deals! Lunch was spent with our host family. Since Friday is a holy day for Muslims apparently everyone eats couscous. It was delicious. The one shared plate was a slightly uncomfortable but hey when in Rome!

Our final day at our placement was filled with music and dancing. One of the volunteers and his friends apparently all played together so they played classic Moroccan dance music. It was a lot of fun. It was great seeing the looks of excitement and joy of the kids there. It made the whole experience memorable. Some of the mothers also taught me how to make Moroccan tea and I can't wait to make some back home.

Our evening consisted of a Syrian dinner, afterwards Jenna and I finished up our shopping and

Day 8: The Flight Home

Late, that's how I started the day. Not the best way to start the day but it happens. I arrived at Jenna's host family ten minutes later than I was supposed to. We then walked quickly through the medina to the gate to meet our driver to the airport.

We arrived at the airport and were dropped off at terminal one and two. We then proceeded to find out that our flight leaves out of terminal 3. Of course there are no signs that say terminal 3. Eventually as we scurried to the appropriate place to find the bus to terminal three, we passed some other Americans who were also on the way to terminal 3.

Eventually we all piled into an enlarged van and set off to terminal. Apparently it was a 5-10 minute car ride. We arrived there and went through security at the door. Then had our bags hand searched at check-in. The officials informed me that I needed to check my orange bag which I had originally used as a carry on the flight to Morocco. Oh well.

Boarding started 2 hours before takeoff. Everyone had to have their bags hand searched and then had to go through a pat down before we were allowed to get on the bus. The bus took us to our flight. As one of the other travelers noted this was what was known as the three "P"s (Piss Poor Planning)

Well after arriving in JFK we met with Jenna's mom and sister. For dinner that night we went into the city. Then later slept at a friend of Jenna family's place. A nice bath and a warm bed was needed before heading back to Syracuse.

Now we are off to Syracuse to get back into school.



Volunteer's experience:



Teaching basketball to the Egyptian Institute in Sale was a very well rounded experience for me, that I will cherish for the rest of my life. The projects abroad staff were very helpful whenever I needed something from them. The other volunteers were really good to get to know because they were all passionate and interested in the well being of the Moroccan students, who either learned English from a volunteer or an entirely new sport, which is not easy to do in the matter of 6 weeks or so.

I also enjoyed deepening my relationship with the host family that I lived with. I learned a good deal of quick Arabic and French and hopefully touched upon some of the students knowledge of the English language as well. The overall getting used to Morocco was difficult at first, because I was such an outcast - I spoke no French and I felt like a typical tourist aimlessly wandering the old Medina in Rabat. What I learned after 6 weeks in this country is not only that Moroccans are a breed of their own with a rich culture and tradition, but also how willing the children are to learn and better themselves which is a direct reflection of their parents keeping the faith in a better future and, of course, their god Allah.

Projects Abroad Volunteer
Luke Miller

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