

What to Know Before You Go: Travel FAQ for CES & HBES Conference Participants in Rabat

Where will the conference happen?

The conference will take place at the [University Mohammed VI Polytechnic \(UM6P\) in Rabat](#), Morocco. The campus features modern facilities and technologies designed to accommodate large numbers of students and conference participants. On-site lodging includes two hotels and well-equipped student residences. The campus is secure and accessible only through controlled entry points, and includes an on-site health center. A childcare center will also be available and fully operational throughout the conference.

Why UM6P?

UM6P in Rabat offers a uniquely fitting environment for hosting the annual conferences for the Cultural Evolution Society (CES) and Human Behavior and Evolution Society (HBES), thanks to its growing community of evolutionary social scientists anchored in two distinct institutions: the [Africa Institute for Research in Economics and Social Sciences](#) (AIRESS) and the [School of Collective Intelligence](#) (SCI). Both centers are home to researchers active in the CES and HBES communities, whose work addresses questions about cultural evolutionary dynamics, behavioral variation, institutional development, and human cooperation, using fieldwork, experimental methods, computational models, and philosophical analysis. SCI offers the world's first accredited Master's program in Collective Intelligence, alongside Ph.D. and executive training programs. ARESS researchers contribute to teaching within the [Faculty of Governance, Economics, and Social Sciences](#) (FGSES), which offers undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs in Behavioral Science that provide extensive training in evolutionary social science methods and theory. Together, these institutes support a vibrant student body engaged in evolutionary social science through interdisciplinary curricula and hands-on research experience. Hosting these conferences at UM6P presents an opportunity to connect this emerging regional hub with the broader global community, foster new collaborations, and introduce students and faculty to cutting-edge work in the field. UM6P is also deeply committed to gender equality, socioeconomic and cultural diversity, and the prevention of discrimination based on "characteristics including ethnic or national origin, civil status, pregnancy, social condition, gender, disability, language, age, religious affiliation, political or philosophical convictions or any other relevant characteristics"¹. It invests significantly in both merit- and need-based scholarships and welcomes a very large number of international students, primarily but not exclusively from other African countries. Hosting these conferences at UM6P would make participation far more accessible for African students and researchers, who often face financial and logistical barriers to attending international academic events. It would not only broaden the global reach of CES and HBES but also amplify voices and perspectives that remain underrepresented in academic communities.

¹ <https://policy.um6p.ma/knowledgebase/3677-2/>

Is Morocco a typical destination to host international conferences?

Morocco has become an increasingly attractive destination for international conferences, thanks to its strategic location bridging Europe and Africa, its relative accessibility from eastern North America *and* western Asia, and the availability of high-quality yet affordable accommodations in cities such as Rabat, Marrakech, and Casablanca. The country has a strong track record of hosting prominent global events across governmental, academic, and professional domains, including UN and WHO conferences, intergovernmental summits, international music festivals², and major sporting competitions. Morocco is set to host the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON 2025) and will co-host the 2030 FIFA World Cup³ alongside Spain and Portugal, further underscoring its growing reputation as a capable and welcoming venue for large-scale international events. Notable examples of past conferences hosted in Morocco include:

- United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 22), Marrakech, 2016
- Annual International Monetary Fund and World Bank Conference, Marrakech, 2023
- The 18th Congress of the International Society of Ethnobiology, Marrakech, 2024
- ENCG-C Model United Nations Conference, Casablanca, 2025
- 5th International Sociological Association (ISA) Forum of Sociology, Rabat, 2025
- International Conference on Societal Transformation through Engineering, Education, Social Science, and Humanities, Marrakech, 2025

As of June 2025, Morocco holds a Level 2 Travel Advisory⁴ from the U.S. Department of State (“Exercise Increased Caution”). It’s worth noting that this designation is shared by over 75 other countries⁵, including France, Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

Is Rabat a safe city to visit?

Rabat is widely regarded as one of the safest cities in Morocco, with a low crime rate⁶ and respectful residents⁷. As the nation’s political capital and a diplomatic center, it benefits from a strong security presence, reliable infrastructure, and a calm, orderly atmosphere. According to national surveys, approximately 82% of Moroccans report feeling safe in public spaces, including at night⁸. Violent crime targeting tourists is rare. Although petty theft, such as pickpocketing, can occur, it is far more common in busier, tourist-heavy cities like Marrakech than in quieter cities like Rabat⁹.

What are the biggest safety concerns?

²<https://www.oasis.ma/>; <https://mawazine.ma/en/>

³<https://www.fifa.com/en/tournaments/mens/worldcup/articles/world-cup-2030-spain-portugal-morocco-host-centenary-argentina-uruguay-paraguay>

⁴<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/morocco-travel-advisory.html>

⁵<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html>

⁶<https://www.numbeo.com/crime/in/Rabat>

⁷<https://moroccomwtours.com/is-rabat-morocco-safe/>

⁸<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/morocco-travel-advisory.html>

⁹<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/morocco-travel-advisory.html>

The primary concerns for visitors are petty crime, such as bag-snatching and pickpocketing, occasional scams, and traffic-related accidents. Rabat has not experienced any recent incidents of terrorism, and Morocco remains geographically removed from conflict zones in the Middle East¹⁰.

What are the crime rates in Rabat compared to those of various U.S. and European cities?

Rabat has more favorable crime rate statistics compared to many U.S. and European cities. Below are data from [Numbeo.com](https://www.numbeo.com) (values on 0-100 scale¹¹):

Category	Rabat	Atlantic City	Paris	London
Overall crime level	30.52 (Low)	76.56 (High)	62.29 (High)	64.75 (High)
Violent crime (assault, robbery)	35.57 (Low)	67.19 (High)	56.90 (Moderate)	58.21 (Moderate)
Property crime (vandalism, theft)	36.99 (Low)	75.00 (High)	67.94 (High)	59.69 (Moderate)
Drug-related issues	48.84 (Moderate)	82.81 (Very High)	64.84 (High)	63.44 (High)
Safety walking alone (day)	79.28 (High)	53.12 (Moderate)	62.54 (High)	63.24 (High)
Safety walking alone (night)	46.61 (Moderate)	18.75 (Very Low)	35.70 (Low)	37.23 (Low)

Are terrorist threats a real concern?

No specific threats to Rabat have been reported; however, the general risk level is moderate due to the global threat environment. Authorities advise avoiding protests, staying alert around transit hubs, and following their guidance¹². However, note that Morocco is generally considered one of the most stable and secure countries in the region when it comes to counterterrorism, with a very low impact of terrorism, lower than many Western countries¹³.

What about women's safety?

¹⁰<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/morocco-travel-advisory.html>

¹¹https://www.numbeo.com/crime/indices_explained.jsp

¹²[thetimes.co.uk](https://www.thetimes.co.uk)

¹³<https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/global-terrorism-index/#/>

Rabat ranks as the **safest city in Morocco for women**, scoring a 3.6 out of 5 on safety with low crime levels¹⁴. In the Rabat–Salé–Kénitra Region, 17.1 % of ever-married women reported experiencing some form of violence in 2023, mostly verbal or psychological¹⁵. Although street harassment still occurs, Morocco criminalized sexual harassment in public spaces under the 2018 “Hakkaoui law,”¹⁶ introducing prison sentences of 1–6 months and fines up to 10,000 MAD (~ USD 1000). Since its enactment, reported incidents have dramatically decreased. Apps like **Manchoufouch** (launched in Rabat by Free Feminist Union) allow anonymous reporting of harassment¹⁷. Authorities are particularly attentive to the safety of tourists, and harassment targeting visitors is taken seriously, with swift action often taken against perpetrators.

What clothing is appropriate, especially for women?

In Rabat, women can dress as they would in Europe or the U.S.—it’s a cosmopolitan city where a wide range of clothing styles are common, from short skirts and tank tops to modest or traditional attire. Most residents are accustomed to this diversity in dress, including among Moroccans and international visitors or expats. Rabat and other major Moroccan cities tend to be more liberal in this regard, but more modest clothing is generally recommended when visiting remote rural areas, where cultural norms may be more conservative.

What about the role and rights of women in Morocco?

The [2011 Moroccan Constitution](#) explicitly affirms the equality of men and women in rights and freedoms. However, extra-marital sex¹⁸ (for Moroccan women and men, foreigners are not concerned) and abortion for non-medical reasons¹⁹ remain illegal. Significant reforms in family law and reproductive rights are currently being discussed in the Moroccan parliament²⁰.

Morocco has a vibrant civil society, a long history of feminism²¹, and numerous active women’s rights organizations that provide support, raise awareness, and advocate for gender equality and legal reforms²².

¹⁴<https://travelladies.app/crime/morocco/rabat>

¹⁵<https://www.emro.who.int/emhj-volume-29-2023/volume-29-issue-12/prevalence-socio-demographic-and-economic-determinants-of-violence-against-ever-married-women-in-morocco.html>

¹⁶https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bassima_Hakkaoui

¹⁷<https://fr.le360.ma/societe/manchoufouch-une-application-pour-denoncer-le-harcelement-sexuel-160883>

¹⁸https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Article_490

¹⁹<https://mei.edu/publications/womens-reproductive-rights-and-abortion-morocco-regulatory-reforms-should-not-miss>

²⁰<https://globalhumanrights.org/stories/reforming-the-moudawana/>

²¹<https://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-1232>

²²<https://solfem.wordpress.com/home/>; https://www.instagram.com/kifmama_kifbaba/?hl=f;

<https://www.unfm.ma/>; <https://www.projectsoar.org/>;

<https://www.assohelp.org/asso-55-association-democratique-des-femmes-du-maroc>;

<https://www.amdh.org.ma/>;

<https://www.safeabortionwomensright.org/isad/maroc-mouvement-alternatif-pour-les-libertes-individuelles>;

<https://www.instagram.com/9addat?igsh=MW1tdTZ6YWx2azJ5Ng%3D%3D>

What are the laws regarding LGBTQ+ individuals?

Morocco's Penal Code (Article 489) criminalizes same-sex relations, with penalties ranging from six months to three years in prison and fines²³. In practice, enforcement is rare—particularly in urban areas like Rabat, where LGBTQ+ travelers typically face no legal issues²⁴. However, public displays of affection between same-sex partners have, in isolated cases, led to legal consequences. According to local advocates for gay rights, foreigners are rarely targeted, and discretion generally mitigates risk. Nonetheless, it's advisable to avoid overt public displays of affection and to choose LGBTQ+-friendly accommodations where possible (see also²⁵).

Morocco is also home to a resilient and increasingly visible LGBTQ+ advocacy network. While associations cannot officially register under an LGBTQ+ designation, many operate within broader human rights organizations or from abroad²⁶.

What are LGBTQ+ travelers' experiences in Rabat?

Many LGBTQ+ travelers report no issues when visiting Morocco. A recent safety guide notes that LGBTQ+ visitors can “feel relatively safe in Rabat when practicing caution,” particularly by choosing welcoming accommodations and avoiding public romantic gestures²⁷. A Reddit thread discussing this issue includes the following advice: “Casablanca, Rabat, and Marrakech are basically ‘come as you are’... you’ll be okay if not gender conforming, just try not to be provocative”²⁸.

What should I know about religion in Morocco?

Morocco is a majority-Muslim country, and Islam plays a visible role in public life. The state endorses a moderate form of Sunni Islam (Maliki rite), and Islamic holidays and customs shape aspects of daily rhythm, such as prayer calls and the observance of Ramadan. That said, Morocco is also known for its religious tolerance and legal protections for freedom of belief²⁹. The 2011 constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion, and Rabat, in particular, has a long history of coexistence among Muslims, Jews, and Christians. Foreigners are free to practice their religion, and there are active churches and synagogues in major cities. While it's respectful to dress modestly—especially in rural areas—there are no religious dress requirements for Muslims or non-Muslims, and most locals are accustomed to cultural and religious diversity.

²³<https://www.intrepidtravel.com/us/morocco/is-morocco-lgbtqia-friendly>

²⁴<https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/blog/gay-travel-morocco.html>

²⁵<https://www.youtube.com/@GAYMAROCTV>, <https://www.instagram.com/lgbtq.plus.morocco>

²⁶

<https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/emergence-resilience-and-tensions-a-decade-of-lgbtq-activism-in-morocco/#:~:text=%E2%80%9C9C%20Article%20489%20of%20the%20Moroccan,to%20three%20years%20in%20prison.>

²⁷<https://bestmoroccotravel.com/is-rabat-safe/>

²⁸https://www.reddit.com/r/Morocco/comments/19azm3w/queer_american_traveling_to_morocco_needing_advice/

²⁹<https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/morocco/>

What general travel tips should participants be aware of?

Visa & Passport

Visitors from North America and most European countries are granted a 90-day tourist visa on arrival. Passports should be valid for at least three months beyond the planned departure date.

Transportation

Small blue taxis (*petits taxis*) are widely available for getting around the city. Always ensure the driver uses the meter. Ride-hailing apps such as InDrive, Careem, and Heetch operate in Rabat, are affordable, and are often preferred over street taxis, as they help avoid scams and language misunderstandings³⁰. The Rabat tramway and public buses are clean, safe, and efficient, connecting most major parts of the city with regular service throughout the day. Since the UM6P Rabat campus is located outside city limits, the most convenient option for getting there from central Rabat is by using one of the ride-hailing apps.

Money Matters

Use ATMs from major banks for reliability. Cash (Moroccan dirhams, MAD) is essential for small purchases and for paying ride-hailing drivers. Be cautious of credit card and card-skimming scams, especially in tourist-heavy areas.

Health & Emergency

Bring any essential medications you may need. Pharmacies in Rabat are generally well stocked. For emergencies, dial 19 for police, 15 for medical assistance, and 150 for road accidents.

Cultural Etiquette

Greetings tend to be formal and polite. It's respectful to ask permission before photographing people, especially in non-tourist areas.

Who can I ask if I have additional questions?

This FAQ was developed by local organizers Sarah Alami (sarah.alami@um6p.ma), Mathieu Charbonneau (mathieu.charbonneau@um6p.ma), Zach Garfield (zachary.garfield@um6p.ma), and Ed Seabright (edmond.seabright@um6p.ma) in consultation with Rebecca Koomen (rebecca.koomen@um6p.ma) and advocates of LGBTQ+ rights in Morocco. **They are in ongoing dialogue with local organizations to ensure that conference participants have access to accurate information, resources, and support.** For any additional questions, they can be reached by email.

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³⁰https://www.reddit.com/r/Morocco/comments/19azm3w/queer_american_traveling_to_morocco_needing_advice/