

Welcome to

Dar 91 Essaouira



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<https://dar91.com/>

Introduction



Thank you for choosing to stay in one of our apartments; we hope you will enjoy your time with us, and will fall in love with Essaouira just as we did 20 years ago, when we first visited this beautiful place.

We started Dar 91 as a small business in 2006, and since then have hosted people from all over the world. We work with various travel agencies, as well as with Airbnb and Booking, and take direct bookings via our website dar91.com. This guide includes important information to help you 'click' with Morocco and make the most of your time in Essaouira. If you have any problems or requests, please let us know and we will do our best to help.

Solo female travellers, please note: by law you are not permitted to bring Moroccan men to whom you are not related, into the house. This can be enforced by the courts. For the same reason we cannot accept bookings from mixed (Moroccan + foreign) couples who are unmarried.

Jeremy & Paolo (Owners), Dar 91, 89-91 Rue Chbanat, Essaouira 44000, Morocco.
Website: dar91.com; Facebook & Instagram: /dar91essaouira; Email stay@dar91.com.

Tel/Whatsapp: Paolo +212 648 908 214; Jeremy: +212 697 744 794.

Check-in

Check-in is available from 3pm to 9pm. Please confirm before the day of your arrival, what time you expect to arrive. We need to know this because we have to arrange for our staff to go to the house to greet you. You can confirm these details via email (stay@dar91.com) or on Paolo's Whatsapp (+212 648 908 214).

You may be greeted at the house by one of us, or by our staff:

- Halima, our housekeeper. We've known her since we first arrived in Essaouira. She's a mother of seven, the breadwinner of her family, a lovely person (and a great cook!). She doesn't speak any French or English, but is very welcoming and most of our guests fall in love with her.
- Hakim, our handyman. A native Souiri who grew up in Chbanat and helped us renovate the house. Hakim is a quiet, conscientious guy who looks after the place carefully; he speaks French and a little English.

Please note: We live 40 mins from Essaouira, and sometimes travel. Halima and Hakim are not on site all day every day, and some of the time we are offline, so we may not reply to all messages immediately. **We charge 50 dirhams for check-in after 9pm if this has not been agreed 24 hours in advance.**

Directions to the house

We recommend that before you set off on your trip, you download the free [maps.me](https://www.maps.me) application to your smartphone or computer, and download a map of Essaouira; you can use this to find your way around even when offline. Dar 91 is already marked on the map.

The address of Dar 91 is 89-91 Rue Chbanat, Essaouira Medina 44000. The door marked 89 is for Zhuzh and Tlata; 91 is for Wahed.

Rue Chbanat is a long street which runs along the eastern edge of the medina, just inside the walls, from Bab Doukkala to the smaller of the two gates at Bab Marrakech (ours is called Petit Bab Marrakech or Biba Chbanat).

If you arrive at Bab Doukkala (we would advise doing so by small taxi if you're coming from the CTM bus station), enter the medina through the big gate, then take an immediate left onto Rue Chbanat. Continue along this street for about 2-3 minutes. Dar 91 is a tall, whitewashed house with four French windows, on the left-hand side of the street, where the road is at its widest. If you see a public fountain on your right, you have gone too far.

If you're arriving at Bab Marrakech (as you will if you arrive on a Supratours bus, or if you're parking your own car), enter the medina through the small gate about 50m to the right of Bab Marrakech ('Biba Chbanat')- walk straight through and you're on Rue Chbanat. You can confirm that you're on Rue Chbanat by looking out for Hotel Emeraude on your left. Then carry on and after a couple of minutes you'll see Riad Chbanat on the right...a couple of minutes more and you'll find Dar 91 on the right, just after the fountain.

If you are driving...

If you are coming from Marrakech, there is one main road to Essaouira. As you head down the hill into Essaouira, there is a police checkpoint, at which you must stop. After this, go straight ahead over the roundabout, keep going past the two petrol stations and the Ryad Mogador hotel on your left, then you will arrive at a big roundabout. Take the 2nd exit onto the beach road, and keep going.

If you're arriving from Agadir or the south, you will arrive at this roundabout, with Ocean Vagabond and Beach & Friends to your left...from here you should take the last exit for the beach road.

Drive along the beach road until the road forks. Take the right-hand fork and keep going, past the Gendarmerie Royale (on your right). At the end of this street you will see in front of you a big space made up of gardens and a car park, with the medina behind.

Look for Bab Marrakech: a big gate with cannon outside, through which pedestrians can enter the medina, plus gardens and a car park. There are lots of parking spaces in front of you and to the right of this square, at the start of Avenue Moulay Youssef; the price for 24 hours' parking is 20dh. Once parked, follow the instructions from Bab Marrakech above.

NB: If you are coming in your own taxi please ask the driver to park outside Bab Doukkala. You can then follow the directions as above. Most taxi drivers from Marrakech and other cities do not know their way around Essaouira, even if many will claim otherwise. They

certainly will not know the location of our house, and satellite navigation systems can vary in accuracy, so giving them our address is not a reliable way to get to us either! Bab Doukkala is a clear landmark and our house is very easy to find on foot from there if you follow our directions.

If you have heavy bags, you will find Cartmen who can bring them for you. The price for a trip for 2 small/medium cases is 30dh. If you are arriving in a taxi we have organised for you, the price of a cart is NOT included in your fare.

Paying for your stay

If you booked directly with us or via [booking.com](https://www.booking.com), we will confirm payment details with you via email or Whatsapp message. Please contact us if you are not clear about the payment arrangements or need a reminder.

If you cancel within 30 days of your stay, the deposit you have paid is non-refundable. We are happy to confirm payments received if your travel insurer requires this.

If you booked through Airbnb, you will have already paid by the time you arrive in Essaouira.

Please note, we can only accept direct payments (for example for laundry or home-delivered food) in dirhams.

Checking out

Checkout time is 10.00am. Please leave the keys on the table in your apartment, and pull the front door firmly behind you.

Luggage storage: Our neighbour Mohammed runs a luggage storage service. He charges 10dh per hour. If you need this, please let Paolo know and he will arrange it.

Dealing with any problems

We work hard to present you with clean, well-functioning apartments that meet Western standards of comfort. But at the same time we would ask you to remember that you are in Africa, and approach your stay with that in mind...

Sometimes the utilities which many of us take for granted in our countries of origin, don't work perfectly - so you may be unlucky and experience the water, electricity and/or WiFi being cut off. There are ongoing renovation works inside and outside the Medina, as the authorities renew the infrastructure of our ancient city. We are rarely informed of when such works are likely to affect us, and how long they will last. It's rare that such problems would affect us for more than a few hours. If we do hear about likely problems in advance, we will of course tell you!

We have invested in fibre-optic broadband, to give you the best possible WiFi speeds. If there is a fault or a power cut and the internet fails even once you have rebooted, please let us know.

Do please let us know via Paolo's Whatsapp (+212 648 908 214) if any of the utilities are not working, and we will do our best to help.

Emergency numbers:

Police 19

Fire/ Ambulance 15. In case of fire, please evacuate via the main staircase (or, if this is impossible: if you are in Wahed or Zhuzh, cross to a next-door building via your roof terrace; if you are in Tlata, exit via the medina wall). Then call the Fire Brigade as above.

If there is any kind of emergency (e.g. a burst pipe, fire, break-in) please call:

Paolo +212 648 908 214, Jeremy: +212 697 744 794 or Hakim: +212 678 490 846. If none of us are reachable, and ONLY in an emergency, please call Radouane: +212 606 672 846 (Radouane is a good friend of ours who knows the house well).

Please note, our numbers work on WhatsApp but we do not have Wifi 24/7, so you may need to make an actual telephone call.

The location

If you turn right out of Dar 91 and walk for 3 minutes, you will reach the main street of Essaouira, with Bab Doukkala - one of the main gates into the medina - on your right. Once you know the main street you will never get lost, and here you'll find most of the food and supplies you'll need during your stay., including the **fish, vegetable and spice souks**, and seasonal fruit & vegetable barrows. The **nearest ATMs** are on Boulevard Al Massira just outside the medina; or on the main street of the medina, on the left hand side as you walk towards the harbour.

Just to the right of our house on the way to Bab Doukkala is **Graghi's shop** (it appears in the photo above, with a gas bottle outside) he sells all the basics and is open pretty much all the time. He doesn't speak French or English but he's a lovely guy and you'll manage fine. On the same side as our house, halfway to Bab Doukkala, you'll find the **public oven** - just walk in, say 'salam aleikum' (it's customary to say this when entering any shop or



house), choose your bread and pay the guy at the desk. There is a **walk-in mini-supermarket** about 4-5 shops along on the left hand side of the main street, as you walk down from Bab Doukkala. If you want a bigger, European-style out-of-town supermarket, take a small taxi to **Carrefour**.

If you're short of time and looking for somewhere to eat (for example if you arrive late and want something quick), you'll find standard tourist cafés open in the **Marché aux Grains** until about 7-8pm, or head to **Boulevard Al Massira**, just off the square outside Bab Doukkala, for sandwich-and-chip kiosks.

Our street is in Essaouira's textile quarter, Chbanat. This is one of the more unspoilt parts of the medina, and is still populated mainly by Moroccans. In common with the rest of Essaouira, there are some 'incomers', ourselves included - not too many though, thankfully. In a fast-changing medina, Chbanat still retains its traditional Moroccan charm.

Around us you will find a few little weavers' workshops where blankets are woven on hand-loom. Dotted around the backstreets are small tailors' shops, making djellabas and kaftans, mainly for the local market. Tailors' assistants chat to each other from opposite ends of the street as they spin their yarn, stretching in threads above your head as you stroll past.

Chbanat is still a bit rough around the edges, which for us has always been part of its appeal. Many of our neighbours live a pretty hand-to-mouth existence, in cramped conditions and without many of the luxuries that those of us in Europe and elsewhere take for granted, like running water and free, safe healthcare.

Life here is 'real', and the street is alive with gossip, laughter and an occasional domestic dispute. Especially if you're visiting for the first time, you may feel a little intimidated. But crime is rare and while the locals' life experiences may be very different from most tourists', they are almost without exception tolerant, friendly, honest and helpful. In the 16 years we've been here, none of our guests have ever had problems with our neighbours.

Our services

Cleaning

If you are staying in Tlata (the studio apartment) there will be no cleaning during your stay. If you are in either of the larger apartments (Wahed or Zhuzh), please let us know 48 hours before your arrival if you would like Halima to come and clean, and how often. She is available to do this in the morning (10am to 1pm). To conserve water and energy we ask you to dry your towels on the roof terrace if possible (or if you're in Tlata, at the window), rather than changing them too often. If you need fresh towels please send us a Whatsapp message. To reduce our environmental impact, we now give everyone just one large towel; if you would like hand towels too, please ask and we are happy to provide them.

Dinner

We can arrange for delicious home-made tagines (meat, fish or vegetables) and other local dishes, to be delivered. Please contact us 24 hours in advance.

Taxi transfers, tours, car hire, surfing lessons etc

We are happy to organise transfers from airports and other towns & cities, and can get quotes for other services locally. We don't take commission.

Gas and wood

If you run out of gas (for your cooker and/or heater) please contact us and we will organize for a new bottle to be delivered. If you are staying in Wahed or Zhuzh, we can supply you with firewood in colder months, price 50dh per bag.

Laundry

We can wash and dry clothes for you, price 30dh per load.

Rubbish

Please take your rubbish bags to Bab Marrakech (near Biba Chbanat) or Bab Doukkala, where there are communal bins. You can give your empty plastic bottles to Graghi in the shop next to the house.

Smoking

Dar 91 is a non-smoking establishment.

Social responsibility

As a socially-conscious small business, we take our responsibilities to our local community seriously. We are a registered Moroccan company, filing accounts annually and paying all taxes, fair wages and national insurance contributions for our staff (depressingly unusual for European-owned guest houses). We give a minimum of 5% of our profits to local charities and neighbours who are in need.

Please note: Our staff will do their best to help you enjoy your stay, but please treat them with respect; they are not your personal servants! We add this footnote reluctantly, having experienced a tiny minority of guests approaching their stay at Dar 91 with such an attitude - expecting Halima to shop for them, wash their clothes and be on call 24 hours a day - and then not even leaving a tip.

Tipping is, of course, entirely at your discretion, but it is customary in Morocco, and our staff certainly won't be offended if you tip them, especially if they have been running lots of errands for you!

Our recommendations

Restaurants

Restaurant Baghdad: the closest restaurant to our house. Rue Baghdad (no.7), in an alley just off the main street. Simple, clean and good value.

La Table Madada, near Bab Sbaa. Classy seafood restaurant, lounge bar and Moroccan cookery school. W: <http://www.latablemadada.com/fr/> or <https://web.facebook.com/latablemadada/>. Reservations: 0524 472 106.

Umia, on Rue Skala. Fresh, well cooked and presented food in a romantic setting, with great service. W: <https://web.facebook.com/umia.essaouira>.

Silvestros, on Rue Lallouj. A straightforward, reliable Italian restaurant, serving pasta dishes and pizza.

Chalet de la Plage, at the medina end of the beach. Great for fish lunches overlooking the sea.

Koozina Garden, in the gardens outside the medina, between Bab Marrakech and Bab S'baa. Offers a melting pot cuisine of seasonal and creative food.

We also recommend:

- Caravane Café <https://web.facebook.com/CaravaneCafeArt/>
- Les Alizés, on Rue de la Skala
- Restaurant La Decouverte <https://web.facebook.com/Restaurant-La-Découverte-Essaouira-265001036863122/>
- Miyame Resto <https://web.facebook.com/Miyame-Resto-252827558538650/>
- Les Delices de Zahra <http://www.riadzahra.com/restaurantes-en/>
- Triskala (vegetarian) <https://web.facebook.com/triskalaessaouira/>

Cafés

There are so many cafés in Essaouira, and the people-watching so entertaining, it's hard to choose between them. In the space of a few days, you'll stop at so many that you'll pretty soon find your own favourites, but for what it's worth here are ours:

For location: Cafe France, in the main square; the downstairs café at Bab Laachour, overlooking Place Moulay Hassan; the café in Place de l'Horloge; the cafe at Chalet de la Plage (at the start of the beach); and Sogebi café, on the seafront.

Bars

Taros, overlooking Place Moulay Hassan. The original and best rooftop bar in town. Often has live music.

Beach and Friends, at the far end of the beach. A relaxed indoor/outdoor lounge bar with regular DJs and a chilled-out vibe.

La Coupole, overlooking the seafront.

Restaurants/bars outside Essaouira

Villa Nour, French/Moroccan restaurant at 7km from Essaouira, in Ghazoua. Tel: +212 661 206 369. For us one of the best around, with a wide-ranging menu that always delivers. Well worth the short taxi ride.

The Domaines du Val D'Argan winery in Ounagha (about 25km outside Essaouira, on the way to Marrakech) produces some of the best wines in Morocco. It also has two restaurants: a more 'formal' one overlooking the vineyard, and an outdoor one next to the (unheated) pool. Both are well worth the visit. <https://web.facebook.com/Domaine-du-Val-dArgan-234725706720465/>. Tel: +212 524 783 467.

Akal Bio, organic farm-to-table restaurant. On the road to Marrakech, between Ounagha and El Henchane <https://web.facebook.com/akalbbio/>. Tel: +212 706 440 754.

Out-of-town swimming pools

Le Jardin des Douars: set in beautiful gardens, it has a family pool and adults-only pool (both are heated). Book in advance for lunch (no fixed price) and pool. Address: Douar Sidi Yassine, BP209. Tel: +212 700 083 233. Email info@jardindesdouars.com.

Les Jardins du Villa Maroc: a heated pool in a beautiful countryside setting. Lunch, use of pool and free transfers = 250dh per person. Book in advance. Address: Route Essaouira-Marrakech. Tel: +212 524-473147.

Villa Beldi: stylish cuisine and a sun-drenched (unheated) pool in lush, tranquil gardens, just 1km outside Essaouira (beyond Beach & Friends). Address: KM1 Route d'Agadir. Tel.: +212 524 78 48 04. Email contact@villabeldi.com.

We also recommend: Essaouira Lodge <https://www.essaouira-lodge.com/en/>.

Shopping

Essaouira is great for shopping. Less 'fashion forward' but also less 'hassley' than Marrakech, it's possible to find good quality items here at a fair price and without excessive (or indeed any) haggling.

There are lots of opportunities to buy goods made by local craftspeople, and wherever possible we would recommend you to visit and buy from the workshops directly - not just because you'll get better quality and a better price, but also because it helps smaller businesses keep going - plus you can commission your own pieces, for example from the thuya wood/marquetry workshops on Rue Chbanat.

For Moroccan antiques and antiquities, we recommend Galerie Jama, 22 Ibnou Rachd, run by Mustapha El Boussaidi. www.galeriejama.com. Tel 0670 01 64 29.

For home décor, don't miss Elizir Gallery, 22 Avenue al Istiqlal, run by our good friend Abdelatif Rharbaoui. Tel 0610 882 598. Here you will find a truly unique collection of vintage furniture and objets d'art.

For everyday things - water, sugar, milk etc - please buy from the little local shops wherever possible. These businesses are finding life increasingly tough as Essaouira modernises and supermarket culture begins to creep into the new town. We would hate to see them disappear. Our nearest shop, next door to the house, is run by a lovely man called Graghi, who stocks everything from candles and Coca Cola to milk, sugar and water. He only speaks Moroccan but opens late and is very helpful and honest; you'll find a way of communicating!

Markets

Moroccans love their markets, and in our region you will find numerous village markets spread throughout the week. They sell everything from donkeys and goats to grain, fruit & vegetables, shoes, baskets, bits of bric-a-brac and the occasional gem of an antique. If you're lucky there may even be a travelling barber or dentist on hand! These markets are essential for the farmers and country people to stock up on provisions for themselves and their animals, and are a great experience for those of us more used to M&S!

Had'Dra market, held on Sunday mornings in a village about 30km north-east of Essaouira, is a proper farmers' market. It's huge and almost medieval in character. Get a bus or taxi from Bab Doukkala, or if you're driving head towards Marrakech and take the big left turn at the roundabout in Ounagha. Park on the edge of town or you'll never get out again.

A smaller version is the Wednesday morning market at Ida Ougourd, which opens early and finishes around lunchtime. Location: 20 km south-east of Essaouira - take the road south toward Agadir, after Diabat at the first fork in the road turn left (not airport, not Agadir), 10 minutes' drive on this road (which would eventually bring you out on the Marrakech-Essaouira road, near Ounagha) you will find on your right a sign for Ida Ougourd.

There is also a great junk market in Essaouira on Sunday mornings - on the outskirts of town, around 10 minutes' walk up the coast from Bab Doukkala; or you can jump in a taxi or horse-and-trap and ask for the 'ferraille'. This market is an Essaouira institution - and it's under threat - so please support it if you get the chance.

Beaches/walks

Oued Ksob, near Diabat: where the river meets the sea. Just walk up the beach past Ocean Vagabond and keep going. You'll come to a point where you see water coming from the left - head inland and you're at the start of a river bed which attracts lots of bird life; nearby is the ruined palace of Sultan Sidi Ben Abdallah (the apocryphal inspiration for Jimi Hendrix's song Castles Made of Sand).

A bit further afield, if you rent a car you can find your own mini-treks, and deserted beaches, all over the place. Here are two ideas to start you off:

Moulay Bouzerktoun, famous for windsurfing, is a tranquil (some might say almost desolate!) village about 20km north of Essaouira, on the road to Safi. It's great for long, deserted beach walks, and/or a lazy afternoon/sunset at Lawama (see above). There is also a marabout (shrine) for Saint Bou Zerkton, and a couple of tiny shops.

Ain l'Hjar ("Source of the Stones") is a small village with a natural spring, nestled within a lush agricultural valley on the road that runs from Had'Dra to Moulay Bouzerktoun/Akermoud. Just park the car and go for a stroll or picnic in this rich oasis, where shade is provided by palm, olives, figs, argan and pomegranate trees. There is also a small mosque and zaouia (holy place).

We also recommend: Sidi M'barek, beyond Sidi Kaouki, about 40km south of Essaouira. This lush green river valley has sloping cascades and a marabout, leading down to a deserted beach.

Longer trips

Oualidia is a village on the edge of a lagoon around 200km north of Essaouira. Here you will find a small fleet of fishing boats, a smattering of hotels, restaurants and apartment buildings - and the remains of a summer residence built by Mohammed V for his true love (it was never finished because the relationship ended - but bizarrely, the place remains guarded at all times). Oualidia is famous for oysters, which are farmed according to stringent European health and hygiene regulations, and there are lots of restaurants overlooking the lagoon.

Imsouane is a fishing village/surf spot with a beautiful beach and lots of little cafes, perfect for a leisurely afternoon out of season. It's about 120km south of Essaouira, off the picturesque and winding Agadir road.

Valley of Paradise. For a long, leisurely drive (150km) that takes in some of the most stunning scenery in the region, head south on the Agadir road - a beautiful drive in itself. Around 12km before Agadir you'll find a left turn at Aourir, signposted to Imouzzer. This road (No. 7002) takes you to the Ida Outanane mountains; as you ascend you will pass through the Valley of Paradise, which is particularly beautiful in springtime when the almond blossom is out - but is stunning all year round. If you're in for the long haul you could keep going up to Imouzzer, where there is an occasional waterfall (it's often dried up in fact, but don't worry, it's the getting there that counts). It is possible to then a) turn round and come back the way you came or b) carry on driving and eventually end up further along the Agadir-Essaouira road, towards Smimou. The latter option takes an absolute age but is fantastic if you like driving!

Our Essaouira A-Z

Alcohol and drugs

The sale of alcohol within the walls of the old town is restricted to a small number of licensed restaurants and bars. If you want to buy alcohol to consume at home, Dar 91 is (by chance!) just a stone's throw away from two off-licences, just the other side of the wall on Boulevard Moulay Youssef (exit through Bab Doukkala or the smaller gate between it and Dar 91). There is a third on Boulevard Al Massira, which runs at an angle from the Bab Doukkala. All the off-licences are closed on Fridays. The Carrefour supermarket (on the edge of Essaouira, as you exit the city on the road to Marrakech) also sells alcohol. Do please be aware that drinking on the streets is not permitted, and that the consumption of recreational drugs is illegal in Morocco and attracts severe punishments.

Begging

Although it's an increasingly popular tourist destination, Morocco is a developing country and you may well be upset by the poverty you see around you. Essaouira has its share of unemployment and social problems, and you'll see beggars (some of them disabled) along with children selling tissues and an occasional able-bodied young person who will strike up conversation with a view to asking for money. It can be tricky to know to deal with all this. Giving alms to the genuinely needy is one of the pillars of Islam, and although we're not religious we believe it's a good tradition to uphold. But the people in most need tend, of course, to be the least visible. If you do give money, it's probably sensible to donate fairly small amounts - especially since you might be approached several times a day. For someone who really has no other option but to beg, even one or two dirhams, or a small donation of food, will be genuinely helpful.

Camels

You can find camels, horses and quad bikes for hire at the end of the main beach, but animal welfare standards, and liability insurance, are questionable. We recommend Ranch de Diabat: a family business in a small village 5km south of Essaouira. Omar and Erika look after their animals well: for a one-hour ride expect to pay 150DH, but do please check on the website in case the prices change. They also organise riding lessons, walking excursions and quad biking.

Car hire

The taxi company we use also rents out cars. Prices start from 300DH per day. The cars are well maintained, insured and regularly serviced. Please let us know if you'd like to hire a car, and we can book it for you.

Dress

Although most Moroccans make foreigners extremely welcome, do remember that Morocco is a Muslim country. As a tourist there's always a balance to strike between 'being yourself' and 'blending in', and this can feel like a real challenge in a place where most people 'cover up' - and where immodest dress, especially among women, is so frowned upon. Tourism can be a positive learning experience for the visited as well as the visitors, but we also believe it's important to respect others' sensibilities and try not to cause offence. Generally speaking, the advice for women is to cover shoulders and chest area, and to not wear high shorts or mini-dresses, while in the medina; men should wear long trousers or at least 'long shorts'. This applies particularly during the holy month of Ramadan. We would never dictate to anyone how they should dress, but we feel we should highlight this issue: do your homework and decide how best to present yourselves!

Electricity

Dar 91 has an awful lot of lights and we really hope you'll enjoy the atmosphere they create. When you're not using them, do please help save the planet by turning them off. The current is quite variable here, so occasionally the fuse box might blow...if this happens please try flicking all the fuse switches off and on again....and if that doesn't work, let us know: it could be that there's a power cut. In Wahed there are two fuse boxes: one in the kitchen and one in the hall (1st floor). In Zhuzh there's one on the stairs from the kitchen to the floor above, and another underneath the mezzanine. In Tlata there's one in the kitchen (hidden under a round wall plate). If you need candles, you can get them from Graghi's little shop next door (ask for 'sh'ma').

Health

It's best to take out travel insurance just in case, but there are lots of pharmacies dotted around the medina, and outside in the new town. Our nearest is just off the main street, on the right hand side as you walk down from Bab Doukkala - at the start of Rue Boutouil. If

you need a doctor we can recommend Dr Ahmed Yassine Zourhbar, whose office is near the bus station. He is very conscientious and speaks good English (tel 05 24 78 40 77, mobile 06 15 14 51 46).

Heating

In the coldest months of the year (December to February/March) you will find gas heaters in the house and, on your arrival, some wood in the grate. We will explain how to use the gas heaters; please switch the gas bottle off when not in use (including overnight or when you've left the apartment). We can supply firewood, for 50DH per bag.

History of our house

You can find out more on our website, dar91.com.

Insects

The house is occasionally visited by creepy-crawlies (including ants, flying ants (usually in early summer) and, on occasion when it's really hot, cockroaches!) but these invasions are generally short-lived. We regularly fumigate the apartments to kill insects, but cannot guarantee to remove them all! You can buy various insect sprays in the local shops and supermarkets. Biting insects including mosquitoes can be a problem sometimes, so do please pack some insect repellent (it's also available in pharmacies).

Internet

You will find Wifi in all three apartments. We will give you the password when you arrive. Please DO NOT give the password to anyone else; we have had problems with local kids using our internet connection for nefarious purposes and we need to be very careful about this. If for any reason our internet isn't working, you can also find wifi hotspots in various places around Essaouira (for example there is one about 5 minutes' walk away at the Bixi café in the Marche aux Grains); or, if you have a smartphone you can buy a Maroc Telecom SIM card at the phone shop near Bab Doukkala; 20dh - 50dh of charge should last a week.

Languages

Moroccan Arabic is not a language one picks up quickly - although a basic vocabulary is easy to learn, and much appreciated by the locals. French is widely spoken, so if your high school French is ok you'll get by just fine; a fair smattering of people also have some English and other European languages, especially Spanish and Italian. Lonely Planet's Moroccan phrasebook is really useful, and also has sections on simple French and Berber.

Noise

Please remember that you're staying on a mainly residential street, and adapt your noise levels accordingly - especially if you're on the roof terrace or have the windows open at night. At the same time, remember you are staying in the centre of a working town, so total silence, even at night, cannot be assured. Part of the charm of the place is also the mixture of noises one can hear through the day and night - the calls to prayer, cockerels, dogs, children playing on the streets and the mobile ice-cream and detergent sellers! Apartment 2/Zhuzh and Apartment 3/Tlata face outwards from the Medina wall, so there can be some traffic noise - but again, nothing you wouldn't expect in an average urban environment.

Public oven

If you turn right from our house and head towards Bab Doukkala, on your right you will smell and then see the public oven. Don't feel intimidated - just walk in, choose your loaves, hand 1dh per baguette/small round loaf (or 1.5dh per large round loaf) to the attendant, and the job's done.

Ramadan

Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic calendar, and is the holiest month; observant Muslims fast from food, all liquids, smoking, any sexual interaction and impure or bad thoughts from sunrise to sunset every day. Many also visit the mosque and perform additional prayers and religious tasks during this time. At sunset, after the 4th call to prayer, an iftar (breakfast) occurs. During this time the streets will be deserted as people are in their homes to eat - then later in the evening people come back out again, and stay up later than usual. If you visit during Ramadan, your experience of Morocco may be different from any other time of year; be prepared for shops and restaurants to open later or be closed altogether; for people to be on a shorter fuse; and for alcohol to be

unavailable in supermarkets and off-licences (these normally close about 10 days before the start of Ramadan, in fact).

Security

Essaouira is a safe place but on occasion you may encounter people asking aggressively for money, or knocking on the front door and trying to persuade you to contribute to fictitious charities or the latest scam. Please be assertive in refusing contact with such people and if necessary threaten to call the police. We would stress that this is not a common occurrence but feel we should mention it just in case it happens during your stay.

Sexuality

For all its fancy cafes and so on, Essaouira is a long way from being a sophisticated metropolis - that's hopefully partly why you've chosen to go there! Culturally, sexual behaviour between non-married Europeans and Moroccans (as well as between unmarried Moroccans, and including un-chaperoned friendships that might be entirely innocent but could be viewed otherwise) is condemned. It is also punishable by law, and as owners of a property rented to people engaging in such activity we could also be prosecuted. More parochially speaking, our neighbours are ordinary Muslims who are friendly and welcoming of tourists but have straightforwardly conservative views and would consider sexualised behaviour in the street of any kind - between people of any gender - unacceptable. There are of course plenty of Moroccans, especially younger ones, who have more westernised attitudes - but for us as 'incomers' we feel that it's important to respect the people who live around us, rather than blaze a trail for more liberal values. Please be sensitive to this.

Sunbathing

In Morocco, sunbathing on roof terraces is an entirely Western import, and one that many locals feel affronted by (especially as terraces tend to be used by women for hanging out washing and other domestic duties; as in most conservative cultures, a high value is placed on the preservation of women's virtue!). Our roof terraces are reasonably private, but PLEASE be aware that nudity and even semi-nudity (male as well as female) can cause great offence.

Taxis

If you're travelling short distances around Essaouira (which can be useful sometimes if you want to avoid walking through the medina), you can get a petit taxi (normally a blue Fiat Uno) - the flat fee is 8DH for up to three people (the fee rises to 9DH after 6pm). If you want to hire a grand taxi for a longer day or half-day trip, please ask us and we can get a quote from our usual firm.

Water

The tap water in Essaouira is clean, but it's safest to drink bottled water. As explained above, the drains in the town can go badly wrong, especially if there's been rain recently, so be prepared for some rank aromas from time to time and make sure your children don't get too interested in manhole covers or puddles.

The medina of Essaouira was originally built for 12,000 people and the water infrastructure bursts at the seams at busy times. Over the last few years there have been ongoing water works in the medina, and from time to time the municipal authorities turn down the water pressure in order to conserve supplies. This is unpredictable and can happen without notice. If you are affected please let us know as soon as possible. If we lose water for more than 24 hours, we can organise for you to visit the local hammam for showering. We apologise for this potential inconvenience ...it's one of the realities of life in Africa!

Weather

Essaouira is warm all year round, including the winter - although evenings can be chilly in the colder months and even into the summer, so it's advisable to bring jumpers and/or a coat. All the apartments have electric blankets, gas heaters and hot water bottles, as well as duvets and blankets, and both Wahed and Zhuzh have fireplaces. Essaouira is sometimes called the 'windy city' (mainly by people wishing to promote it as a windsurfing destination); the winds are at their strongest in the spring and early summer. Do please also bear in mind that although rain in Essaouira is pretty rare and generally confined to the winter months, when it comes it can arrive with some force. For understandable reasons, Moroccan towns and buildings are not designed to withstand much more than a light drizzle - so when there is a real downpour, roads and houses (including ours on occasion) can feel quite damp.

That's all folks... wishing you a fantastic time in Essaouira! Do feel free to tag us on Facebook (@Dar91Essaouira) and Instagram (@Dar91essa).