



*Real Travelers - Real Info*

## **LivingAdventure's Custom Travel Guide**

## Fes

### Things to Do Tips

#### Escaping the heat

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by Venturingnow; Feb 25, 2003

**Description:** In a place as hot as Morocco, it's essential to escape the heat. The best place to do so is at a cafe, and believe me, it's worth trying coffee to cool you off. It works, and besides, I have never had better coffee than I have in Morocco, they do it better than anywhere, and it's cheap as heck.

#### Blanket making

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by Venturingnow; Feb 25, 2003

**Description:** Ok, so here's the deal. Men make blankets, women make carpets. That's just how it works, and according to my local friend, the women belong in the house, working delicately with the intricate carpets they create only in their spare time after taking care of the family. The men on the other hand, are very simple minded people, and their work is also 'simple' when compared to women. They go to the factory and make blankets, very simple things with very little design. The women are much better at this craft, but I guess it's up to you to decide.

#### Getting beaten alive in a bath

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by Venturingnow; Feb 25, 2003

**Description:** This must be a local thing, but for a mere dollar you can get your butt beaten alive in a "massage". They took me into a dark, what seemed to be a cave, sprayed me down with extremely hot water, then a man proceeded to beat the living crap out me, stretching me in every direction humanly and non-humanly possible. All of this was done on a slick cement like floor. Then, after the fun was over, they dumped a huge bucket of cold water on me!

#### Roaming through Fes' Medina

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by Venturingnow; Feb 25, 2003

**Description:** While in the medina, either get your guide to take you to the tannery, or try and locate it. I had a great time in some leather shop overlooking the tannery where the locals dye leather in these huge pits of dye. It's really interesting.

**Directions:** Who knows, it's in the medina

#### Making crafts and other treasures in the Medina

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by Venturingnow; Feb 25, 2003

**Description:** Fes is known not for selling its crafts, silver, clothing, carpets, blankets, and more, but it is instead renowned for making its own products. A walk around the medina in Fes will show you how many workers there are in town. You'll see leather dyeing, cabinet making, yarn spooling, clothes making, rugs being put together, silver being pounded into shape, and more.

#### Sampling and buying fruit/nuts from the medina

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by Venturingnow; Feb 25, 2003

**Description:** It's fun to walk around the medina, bargain with the vendors, have some mint tea with them, and sample their products, whether it be a funny looking pair of slippers (I bought pointy yellow ones), a cap, or tasting some of their fruits and nuts. If you like them, buy some, if not, say thanks, and keep moving.

## The Sahrij Medersa

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by amsterdam\_vallon; May 4, 2004

**Description:** Built by the Merenids in the 14th century, the medina's third-finest medersa is named for the pool (sahrij) on which its patio is centered. The cedar carvings here seem a particularly rich chocolate color late in the afternoon, and the birds roosting in the eaves seem especially numerous. The medersa provides rooms for Koranic studies sponsored by the Kairouine Mosque; listen to hear students chanting the verses from the Koran from rooms over the central patio. Opening Hours : Daily 9-13 and 15-18:30. COST: 10 DH.

**Address:** Sidi-Bou-Ghaled Street

**Directions:** Inside the Andalusian District

**Phone:** 55 63 34 60 for info

## The Kairouine Mosque

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by amsterdam\_vallon; May 4, 2004

**Description:** One look through the doorway will give you an idea of the immensity of this place. With about 10,760 square ft, the Kairouine was Morocco's largest mosque until Casablanca's Hassan II Mosque came along in the early 1990s. Stand at the door's left side for a peek through the dozen horseshoe arches into the mihrab (marked by a hanging light). An east-facing alcove or niche used for leading prayer, the mihrab is rounded and covered with an arch designed to project sound back through the mosque. Lean in and look up to the brightly painted and intricately carved ceiling. Built by the Kairouine Fatima in 857, the Kairouine Mosque became the home of the West's first university and the world's foremost center of learning at the beginning of the second millennium. Averroës, Maimonides, and Pope Sylvester II were among the celebrated scholars and teachers who studied and taught in Fez. Sylvester II (a Frenchman from the Auvergne, originally named Gerbert), who was pope from 999 to 1003, was also a legendary mathematician who introduced Europe to Arabic mathematical concepts, most notably the zero. Opening Hours : Daily COST: Free The Can't miss: - The Courtyard; - The Praying Room; To see more pictures of the Kairouine Mosque : Inside the Kairouine Mosque Entrance restricted to Muslims

**Address:** The Bou-Touil Street

**Directions:** Inside the Fes El-Bali District

**Phone:** 055 56 00 52

## The Tanners District or the Suuq Dabbaghin

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by amsterdam\_vallon; May 4, 2004

**Description:** The medieval tanneries are at once beautiful, for their ancient dyeing vats of reds, yellows, and blues, and unforgettable, for the nauseating smell of rotting animal flesh on curing sheep, goat, cow, and camel skins. The terrace overlooking the dyeing vats is high enough to escape the place's full fetid power and get a spectacular view over the multicolor vats. Absorb both the process and the finished product at No. 2 Chouara Lablida, just past Rue Mechatine (named for the combs made from animals' horns): the store is filled with leather goods of all kinds, all of which smell terrific. One of the shopkeepers will explain to you what's going on in the tanneries below -- how the skins are placed successively in saline solution, lime, pigeon droppings, and then any of several natural dyes: antimony for black, poppies for red, saffron for yellow, mint for green, and indigo for blue. Barefoot workers in shorts pick up skins from the bottoms of the dyeing vats with their feet, then work them manually. Though this may look like the world's least desirable job, the work is actually very well paid and somewhat in demand. Studies on tannery workers' health have shown that tanners live, if anything, longer and healthier lives than workers in most other collectives. This might be because they need to be fit to do the work in the first place; or perhaps the foul-smelling liquids contain some as-yet-undefined curative properties. To see more pictures of the Tanners District : Tanners District

**Directions:** Suuq Dabbaghin, or the tanners' quarter, is situated no more than 50 metres away from the Kairouine mosque

## The Merinid Tombs

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by amsterdam\_vallon; May 4, 2004

**Description:** There is not much left from the Merinid tombs anymore, here to the north of the city near the Bab el Guissa. But the view over the city, as well as the knowledge that the Merinid rulers were central in making Fez the cultural and religious capital of Morocco, will make the visit worthwhile.

**Directions:** North of the Medina. On the Merinid Tombs Hill.

## The Andalusian Mosque

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by amsterdam\_vallon; May 4, 2004

**Description:** This mosque was built in AD 859 by Myriam, sister of the Fatima who had erected the Kairaouine Mosque on the river's other side two years earlier. The gate was built by the Almohads in the 12th century. The detailed wood carvings in the eaves, which bear a striking resemblance to those in the Fondouk Nejjarine, are the main thing to see here, as the mosque itself is set back and elevated, making it hard to examine from outside. Entrance restricted to Muslims.

**Address:** Nekhaline Street

## The Bali

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by amsterdam\_vallon; May 4, 2004

**Description:** The Bali, or the oldest quarters of Fez, were to a large degree saved by the French general Lyautey. When the French got in control of Morocco around the time of World War I, he made all necessary arrangements to protect the medieval structures against the modern development. The result is that Fez el Bali has taken good care of its old architectural structures and is also very much a living city, where most streets are too narrow for cars and donkeys and mules are in common use. Just like all through its history, Fez el Bali has a striking combination of poverty and developed culture. The Fes El-Bali is composed of two historical entities which are divided by the Fes Oued : the Andalous neighborhood and the Kairouanais.

**Directions:** Inside the Wall of the Medina. The Fes El-Bali is the old section of the town.

## The King's Palace

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by Venturingnow; Feb 25, 2003

**Description:** Viewing the King's Palace is pretty cool. They frowned on me taking pictures, but the building was masterfully made, wonderful green tiles used to symbolize Islam, and the Blue tiles used to symbolize the city of Fes were both perfect compliments.

## Dar Batha Museum

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by barryg23; Apr 27, 2005

**Description:** Dar Batha was my favourite of the Fes museums, not so much for its collection, but for the buildings and gardens.

**Address:** Place de l'Istiqual

**Directions:** Western end of Fes El-Bali, near Bab Bou Jeloud

## The Dar El Makhzen

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by amsterdam\_vallon; May 4, 2004

**Description:** Fez's Royal Palace and gardens are strictly closed to the public, but they're an impressive sight even from the outside. From Place des Alaouites you can take a close look at the door's giant brass knockers, made by artisans from Fez el Bali, as well as the brass doors themselves. Inside are various palaces, gardens, and Places des Armes (arms squares or parade grounds), as well as a medersa founded in 1320. One of the palaces, Dar el Qimma, one of the wonders of Dar el Makhzen, has intricately engraved and painted ceilings. The street running along the palace's southeast side is Rue Bou Khessissat, one side of which is lined with typically ornate residential facades from the Mellah's edge. The Entranced is not allowed

**Directions:** Inside the Fes El-Jedid (the new town)

## Views from Borj Sud

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by barryg23; Apr 29, 2005

**Description:** From Borj Sud, there are excellent views over Fes El-Bali, giving an idea of the layout of the medina and just how vast it really is. The best way to get here is by petit-taxi and it costs about 6 Dh one-way from the Ville Nouvelle. Other good areas to get a panorama view over Fes are from the Merenid tombs and Borj Nord, both North of the medina.

### The Bab es Seba

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by amsterdam\_vallon; May 4, 2004

**Description:** Named for the seven (seba) brothers of Moulay Abdellah who reigned during the 18th century, the Gate of Seven connects two open spaces originally designed for military parades and royal ceremonies, the Petit Mechouar and Vieux Mechouar. It was from this gate that Prince Ferdinand, brother of Duarte, king of Portugal, was hung head-down for four days in 1437. (He had been captured during a failed Portuguese invasion of Tangier, and Portugal had failed to raise the ransom for his release.) His remains were subsequently stuffed and displayed here for 29 years.

### The Attarin Medersa

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by amsterdam\_vallon; May 4, 2004

**Description:** The Attarin Medersa (Koranic school) was named for local spice merchants known as attar. Founded by Sultan Abou Saïd in the 14th century as a students' dormitory at the Kairaouine Mosque next door, it is arguably the loveliest medersa in Fez for its graceful proportions and elegant, geometrical carved-cedar ornamentation as well as its excellent state of preservation. Opening Hours : Daily 9-13 and 15-18:30.

### The Nejjarine Fondouk

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by amsterdam\_vallon; May 4, 2004

**Description:** The Najjarin Funduq was built in 1711 by Amin Adiyil during the reign of the 'Alawid Sultan Isma'il b. Muhammad I al-Sharif, al-Samin (1672-1727). Located in the old city of Fez, or Fez al-Bali, the funduq opens onto the square of the Najjarin, or carpenters. It provided lodging and storage space for visiting merchants in three floors of rooms arranged around the central courtyard. The funduq's monumental portal and the adjacent fountain are focal points of the small square of the carpenters, and are decorated with carved cedar wood, colourful mosaic tile revetment, and intricately carved stucco. Their decoration and forms create visual connections between the exterior space of the square and the interior space of the funduq's central courtyard, which is decorated with carved stucco and carved wooden balustrades. This site has been put on the Unesco Heritage List in 1916.

**Address:** El-Najjarine Place

**Phone:** 055 62 34 60

### The El-Seffarine Square

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by amsterdam\_vallon; May 4, 2004

**Description:** The wide, triangular souk of the dinandiers, or coppersmiths, is one of the medina's largest open spaces, a comfortable break from tight crags and corners. Donkeys and their masters wait for transport work here, and a couple of plain trees are welcome reminders that this was once a fertile valley alongside the clear-running Fez River. Copper bowls are wrought and hammered over fires around the market's edge, and the smells of donkey droppings and soldering irons blend nicely in the sun. Looking into the Kairaouine Mosque at the top of the square is the Kairaouine University library, once one of the world's best book collections but not presently open to the public. Opposite the library and facing away from it is the Seffarine Medersa.

## The Bou Inania Medersa

**Source:** Fes Things to Do by amsterdam\_vallon; May 4, 2004

**Description:** The word medersa comes from madrasa, a classical Arabic word for "school" -- which meant, of course, Koranic school, in which the only subject was the memorization of the Koran. The medersas housed students while they learned to recite the Koran and the Hadiith, the words and deeds of the prophet; and once they had mastered these, they were passed on to more analytical studies. The Bou Inania Medersa was built by order of Abou Inan, the first ruler of the Merenid dynasty, which would become the most decisive ruling clan in Fez's development. (Nearly all the medersas were built by the Merenids, with the exception of the Moulay Rachid Medersa, built by the Alaouites.) The main components of the medersa's stunningly intricate decorative artwork are the green-tile roofing, the cedar eaves and upper patio walls, carved in floral and geometrical motifs, the carved-stucco mid-level walls, the ceramic-tile lower walls covered with calligraphy (Kufi script; essentially cursive Arabic) and geometrical patterns, and, finally, the marble floor. The most dazzling display is the carved cedar, each square inch a masterpiece of handcrafted sculpture involving long hours of the kind of concentration required to memorize the Koran. The stucco is made of plaster toughened with egg white (a technique that, after more than 1,000 years, must be pronounced effective). The black belt of ceramic tile around the courtyard bears Arabic script reading this is a place of learning and other such exhortatory academic messages. The Can't Miss: - The Facade; - The Praying Room; Opening Hours : Daily 9-7 COST: 10 DH

**Address:** Talaa-Kebira Street

**Directions:** Inside the Fes El-Bali district

**Your Notes:**