

# Agadir

## Southern Morocco at its best

Nour - eddine Saoudi



The bay

الميناء

The number one coastal resort of the Kingdom, Agadir, the capital of Souss, is well rooted in the fabulous heritage of southern Morocco. It is the pivotal point of the richest zone of south Morocco, whose locos are tourism, agriculture and fishing. Agadir is also the capital of the large Amazighi community.

Who could have believed that the small city, which was destroyed in 1960 by the most terrifying earthquake that hit Morocco, was going to be reincarnated as the country's largest tourist city? The reconstruction of this city was definitely one of the biggest challenges for newly independent Morocco.

And it was successfully rebuilt: Agadir is now a new, modern harmoniously-planned city with large avenues, blooming gardens, magnificent tourist infrastructure, a dynamic port (the second largest in the country) and a splendid bay that stretches for more than six kilometers. There are also beautiful beaches with thin sand spreading for about thirty km. Add to this

its mild year-round climate and exceptional sunshine and you have a leading Moroccan and international tourist destination.

### A brief history

The history of Agadir begins in the early 16th century. In 1505, the Portuguese established a commercial center and fortress, which they named "Santa Crus of Ford Cape".

The founder of the Saadienne dynasty, Mohamed Sheik, liberated it in 1541, after a six-month siege. In 1571, his son, built, the Casbah, whose remains still dominate the city.

The city flourished, thanks mainly to its port, until the days of Sultan Mohamed

Ben Abdallah of the Alaouite dynasty. In 1764, after the citizens rebelled, he decided to turn the port into a naval base and Agadir monopolised trade with Europe. History forgot Agadir until 1911, when France and Germany competed for control. The German emperor Guillaume II, sent a cruiser to Agadir, in order to install a naval base. France, which was very interested in colonizing Morocco, opposed his project and gave him part of Congo.

From the thirties, Agadir became one of the stopovers for international flights between Europe and America. The famous French writer, Antoine of Saint-Exupéry, and the renowned French ➤



Traditional house

البيت التراثي



The beach

الشاطئ



Golf course

ملعب الغولف

aviator, Jean Mermoz, stopped there before crossing the Atlantic.

On February 29th 1960, an earthquake destroyed the city. Its reconstruction was a major architectural and economic success. Thanks to the will of the state and the hard work of the Sousses people, their commercial sense and their strong solidarity, the city was revived and witnessed extraordinary developments.

The desertification of the Sahara, undertaken in 1976, resulted in an economic boom and accompanying population growth.

### Fabulous tourist assets

Agadir city is a great, modern place to live.

It has one of the world's most beautiful bays, which always enjoys a moderate climate and first-class hotel facilities.

It offers its visitors an ideal stay, regardless of the season.

Throughout the year visitors can enjoy beautiful gardens, such as the "Portuguese Garden" and "Birds Valley" situated in the center of the city, an original creative work by the Italian architect, Polezzi.

On the cultural front, the city is home to a museum of traditional art that allows visitors to have an idea about the rich artistic heritage of the Berbers of the south.

It is also a sea resort par excellence. The

capital of Souss offers a diversity of beaches, stretching for thirty kilometers, the most famous being Taghazoute. For those who enjoy sport there is golf, sail boarding, surfing, tennis, horse riding etc

Agadir has the nature reserve of Souss Massa, where the pink flamingos, ibises, ducks, turtledoves, ashen herons and gazelles prove that fairy land is not just a dream.

Perched between the mountains of the regions of the anti-Atlas and the western extremity of the High Atlas, Agadir is the starting point for marvelous excursions. Towards the inside of the High Atlas, Immouzzer is a region of valleys and canyons edged by pink laurels and palm groves. It is famous for its waterfalls, the most beautiful being "bride's veil".

Eighty km to the west, is Taroudant, the medieval city, nicknamed, "Small Marrakech", with its amazing old pink wall and beautiful souks.

In the south, Tiznit, the sub-sahaian city, situated some 90 km from Agadir, is internationally famous for its fabulous Berber jewelry made of sculptured silver and its old handicrafts.

Tafraout is a small city at the heart of a wonderful valley. It seduces with its mountainous surroundings of pink granite terraces and its pale pink houses that blend admirably with the picturesque relief of the region, covered by almond, fig and olive trees. ■