

## Activities at Ahlan Morocco

Outline: Ahlan Morocco offers activities that allow students to overcome the superficiality of the purely tourist experience and look into the deeper meaning. These cultural activities create a dynamic between students so that their focus shifts from merely studying and traveling to learning and appreciating the culture. The Ahlan dynamic emphasizes respect, communication, and equality through discussion that crosses cultural differences and helps to build international bridges and understanding. Through unique circumstances of each story, location, and aspect of culture, Ahlan participants are hence able to escape their comfort zones and reach out to learn and help in the world around them. These activities are discussion based and with a broad topic allow the exploration of related tangents and enable students to create memorable, interpersonal connections with those around them.

Profile: With experience working with students in the archeology work and volunteering in work camps across Morocco, Ali (the head of activities) is able to look at the problems of organizations from an outside view and bases his work on giving the individual importance, purpose, and freedom. For each activity, he assesses the unique combination of interests and personalities in a group and creates an environment where there is no hierarchy and communication with all people as he emphasizes respect and communication by all participants. He approaches the professional world with an innovative, more animated style that involves people of all ages and education level and treats them the same.

Activities:

**Black Magic:** Students can learn about the realms of superstition, magic, possession, and exorcism that exist in Morocco. Through discussion of the beliefs in the power of sorcery and witchcraft, djinns and devils, and so much more, students can make connections between the superstitions in their own religions and cultures and those of people of other cultures.

**Folkloric Moroccan Dance and Music:** Ahlan students have the opportunity to study the various types of music and dance that have existed in Morocco, historically and today. They will study the reasons for the existence of these different types of music, the instruments through which this music is explored, given examples of some of these types of music, and how these aspects differ between regions of Morocco.

**Gender in Morocco:** Students will study the underlying dynamics of gender and sexuality that exist in Morocco. They will explore how these can change between Arab and Berber culture, the political and social treatment of women, the interaction between men and women in marriage, and how the LGBTQ+ community is treated within Morocco. Through this, they will go into more depth concerning the borders of masculinity and femininity, how men and women exist in their social spheres in Morocco, the sexualization of women, and the legal and religious interpretation of LGBT+ people as opposed to the public perception.

**History of Morocco:** Students may choose to study the history of Morocco from its very beginnings in its early history, then the changes during the early Islamic era, the alterations as part of an empire and thereafter as part of a European protectorate, and how all of this has contributed to make Morocco the country it is today.

**Moroccan Wedding:** Through visuals and text, students have the chance to study the process of marriage in Morocco from the period of engagement to the actual event of the wedding. They will therefore study what are the processes and conditions of marriage, how the marriage ritual takes place, the differences between regions, and the spiritual significance.

**Rabat:** For those who decide to do the activity about Rabat, they will learn about the history of Rabat, its tangible and intangible heritage, the various monuments that are famous in Rabat, and about the Old City. Furthermore, they will learn the origin of the name of Rabat, reason for the city's creations, and learn more through visual examples of the art and locations which Rabat is known for.

**Religion:** This cultural activity enables students to explore religion as a general concept and the specificities of Moroccan religions. They will discuss connections between the religious sphere of Morocco and their home country while also learning about the difference between the religious and social hijab, about mixed relationships, and polygamy in Morocco.

**Architecture and Arts:** This course gives the students the ability to see how the arts and architecture of Morocco contributes to the city's identity. They will see how the tangible and intangible arts intertwine and differ in Morocco and examine the connection between Western and Eastern arts/architecture, different Moroccan arts/architecture, and connections across time.

**Language Exchange:** One opportunity open to students of Ahlan Morocco is a language exchange between the Ahlan students and volunteers of the association Chantiers Sociaux Marocains. This transfer of ideas and also languages is at the heart of Ahlan Morocco's key values as people of different cultures and backgrounds discuss topics including Arabic language culture, gender roles, politics, and religion.