

## Western Sahara (Morocco): Tan-Tan – Fort Guerguerat

The Western Sahara (Morocco) forms a particular region within the Sahara desert. This coastal band (300 to 400km wide) spreads from the foothills of the Anti-Atlas to the Cape Blanc cliffs, on the border with Mauritania. It is about 1200km of mostly flat steppes covered with small bushes and locally sand dunes. The area is covered by Cretaceous terrains resulting from the opening of the Atlantic Ocean along the margin of the West African craton (about 96 MA) and horizontal layers of Neogenic terrains (23 to 2 MA). Therefore, the altitude of the region is mostly below 200m and usually the continent ends in rocky cliffs of typically 15 to 30m high. Only three relatively high mountains are found: the rock peaks of Gueltat Zemmour (681m) and Aoussard (518m), and the Adrar Souttoug (518m). Only one major oued flows through the region, the As Saquia al Hamra, although most of the time is dry.

In comparison with the Central Sahara, the Western Sahara has larger water availability in the form of moisture and lower temperature annual range due to the proximity to the Atlantic Ocean. Consequently, there is abundant and diverse vegetation and several arbustive species are found, such as spurges (*Euphorbia balsamifera* and *E. obtusifolia*), *tuqra* (*Calotropis procera*) and *teichot* (*Balanites aegyptiaca*). The climatic mildness that characterises this region has been relatively stable throughout time. In the Central Sahara, the alternate historical phases of dry and humid climates since the Last Glacial Maximum (about 20.000yr BP) allowed the massive expansion and contraction of the desertic areas during the more humid phases (about 7.000yr BP) and arid phases, respectively. But in the Western Sahara, the entrance of oceanic winds saturated in humidity and the thermal stability, created a relatively mild micro-climate. Thus, this region constitutes a “corridor” between sub-Saharan and the Mediterranean ecosystems, allowing the spatial coincidence of species of Maghrebian origin (from the north) and of afro-tropical origin (from the south). From the Maghreb it can be found the Hare (*Lepus victorie*), the African wildcat (*Felis lybica*) and the Egyptian mongoose (*Herpestes ichneumon*), while from the sub-Saharan regions it can be found the Crested porcupine (*Hystrix cristata*), the Honey badger (*Mellivora capensis*) and the Stripped weasel (*Poecilictis libyca*). The relatively stable ecological characteristics of this region have allowed also the differentiation of several endemic species, i.e. species that are restricted to a particular geographic area. These include for instance the Western Sahara fringe-toed lizard (*Acanthodactylus aureus*), the Helmeted gecko (*Tarentola chazaliae*) and the Tarfaya’s shrew (*Crocidura tarfayensis*).

The region between the oued Sous (Agadir) and Tarfaya, among the extreme foothills of the High and Anti-Atlas, is particularly interesting due to an influence of Macaronesian climate. The abundant rainfall and mild temperatures that characterise the oceanic islands of Madeira and Canary, also span to continental Western Sahara, allowing the presence isolated populations of typical species from sub-Saharan Africa, like the Egyptian cobra (*Naja haje*) and the Puff adder (*Bitis arietans*). Probably, these species were able to colonize most of the Sahara during the more humid phases, but when dry periods imposed they persisted in refugia where suitable climatic conditions endured. Despite their relict and vulnerable character, these snakes are captured in massive numbers for the exotic shows in the Jemaa ef-Fna square of Marrakech. Several endemic species are also found in this region, such as the cactus-like spurge (*Euphorbia officinarum*) and the Argania (*Argania spinosa*), a tree that easily reaches 10m high, with wide and rounded top and short branches ending in strong spikes. Other endemic species include the Busack’s fringe-toed lizard (*Acanthodactylus busacki*), the Dark-chanting goshawk (*Melierax metabates*) and the Barbary ground squirrel (*Atlantoxerus getulus*). Finally, the Dragon tree (*Dracaena draco*) that was thought to be an endemism of the Macaronesian islands, was found in 1996 in the steep slopes of the Djebel Imzi, in the western Anti-Atlas.

Although the Western Sahara political situation is complex, the passage through the territory is currently safe. Furthermore, since early 2002 the region between Dakhla and the Mauritanian border is no longer under military control. Nevertheless, many inland regions of the Western Sahara are hard to reach due to the presence of landmines. The long-standing conflict left hundreds of mines, especially between Dakhla and the Mauritanian border. There are panels advising not to leave the paved road or the well marked pistes. Exiting the main roads is hazardous and the risk strongly increases in the areas close to the border with Mauritania. Also, mines have already been collected in beaches, notably in the Cape Barbas – Gulf of Cintra area, rendering these beaches as unsafe for plain tourism.

## Description and major highlights by sector

### Tan-Tan – Laâyoune (350km)

From Tan-Tan (N28° 26.0' W11° 4.7') the road heads west over plains with only the Lahmaoia escarpment (N28° 28.6' W11° 12.1') to cross, until reaching the Atlantic ocean at Douira (N28° 29.098' W11° 19.267'). From Douira, the road turns south and follows closely the rocky coastline all the way to the crossroad to Tarfaya (N27° 56.7' W12° 53.1'). Several interesting areas stand out from the flat landscape, such as the mouths of oueds Chbeïka (N28° 17.5' W11° 31.6'), Oumma Fatma (N28° 12.3' W11° 46.6') and el Oua'ar (N28° 10.3' W11° 52.0'). These mouths form small estuaries and lagoons which allow the concentration of large numbers of birds, including flamingos (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) and Audouin's gulls (*Larus audouinii*). The SIBE (Site of Biological Interest) of Khnifiis lagoon (approximately N28° 02.0' W12° 14.0') is also another hotspot of species richness, including several relict populations of amphibians and reptiles.

To circumvent the huge sebkha Khnifiis (N27° 57.6' W12° 16.6') the road follows inland for about 25km and then it turns north-west to reach to coastline again another 25km further down (N27° 59.8' W12° 33.0'). From here until the crossroad to Tarfaya it is about 34km of sandy beaches. Tarfaya (N27° 56.5' W12° 54.8') is located about 3km west of the crossroad and could be worth visiting. Although of simple aspect, it can be more authentic than for instance Bojador. Tarfaya lives almost exclusively from fisheries and the several fish boat wrecks that adorn the nearby beaches are a testimony of the main activity.

From the crossroad to Tarfaya, the road turns south leaving the coastline and zigzags between the 50m deep and 37km wide sebkha Tah (N27° 43.1' W12° 56.7'), the sebkha Oum Dbâ (N27° 35.2' W12° 57.4') near Dwara (N27° 27.9' W13° 00.0'), and the massif of coastal dunes that reach more than 50m high. The entrance in Laâyoune (N27° 09.4' W13° 13.2') is preceded by the crossing of the As Saquia al Hamra. In winter it is common to observe groups of flamingos filtering the water in search of invertebrates on the banks of a dam. This reservoir was built west of Laâyoune to provide water to the city. Laâyoune is the administrative capital of the Western Sahara. The city continues to grow adopting the Moroccan imperial style with large squares and gardens, palm trees in the sidewalks and linear sketch. The multiple pink tonalities of the buildings render the city with a fantastic outlook at sunset. Laâyoune offers all kinds of services, including banks, hospital and mechanics.

### Laâyoune – Dakhla (530km)

At the southern exit of Laâyoune the road turns west and crosses a dune field until reaching the port of the city, about 25km further down. From the port, the road turns south but follows far from the coastline (about 3km) for about 60km until reaching the small-sized sebkhas of Al Lekani (N26° 41.2' W13° 33.7') and Sam (N26° 39.7' W13° 38.4'). From these sebkhas the road turns south-west and follows along the rocky cliffs that precede the coastline (which is actually between 2 to 8km further west) for about 120km until reaching the village of Bojador (N26° 07.3' W14° 29.2').

Bojador is the largest village that can be found between Laâyoune and Dakhla. Despite its important location, it has few services to offer, but the basic fuel, food and lodge are all there. From Bojador the road turns south and follows through steppes for the next 530km until reaching Dakhla. During most of the time the road follows about 2km east of the coastline and the flat landscape apparently does not have much to offer. There are however several exceptions that help breaking the general monotonous setting along roadside: 1) the huge sandy beach that starts about 15km south of Bojador (roughly from N25° 58.7' W14° 29.9' to N25° 44.6' W14° 37.9'); 2) the 60m high cliffs that begin about 65km south of Bojador (from N25° 35.1' W14° 40.9' to N25° 33.3' W14° 41.4'); 3) the steep valley of the oued Lakra (N24° 37.9' W14° 53.2'); 4) the sand-covered sebkhas of the Skaymat area (roughly from N24° 29.6' W15° 01.4' to N24° 25.0' W15° 06.2'); and 5) the 50m high cliffs near the crossroad to Dakhla (from N24° 22.9' W15° 15.8' to N24° 10.1' W15° 29.0'). After these cliffs, the road turns away from the coastline until it reaches the crossroad to Dakhla (N23° 53.6' W15° 40.5'). From this point, it is possible to attain Dakhla, some 40km to the south-west, or to follow all the way south to the Mauritanian border.

Dakhla (N23° 42.8' W15° 55.4') is installed almost on the southern tip of narrow peninsula (about 1.5km wide). Curiously, the connection of the peninsula with the continent is so shallow that a small increase in the sea level will force Dakhla to become an island. The bay that separates Dakhla from the continent is so large (about 13km wide by 40km long) that it said that when Portuguese navigators accosted the place,

they thought that it was the mouth of a mighty river and, probably inspired by the golden tonalities of the sand covering the escarpments, named the region Rio do Ouro (or “Golden river”). Interestingly, in 1474, the navigator Afonso Gonçalves Baldaia states that at the time, about 5 thousand monk seals (*Monachus monachus*) existed along the bay. Nevertheless, the numerous explorations along the African coast, which started to use the meat of these large vertebrates as supplies, almost caused the extinction of this species. In fact, the monk seal is now absent from the peninsula, although it can be found further south in the Cape Blanc peninsula.

Dakhla grown a lot during the last few years and has become a nice and well arranged village. The entrance follows the typical Moroccan style with a large avenue, gardens and sidewalks. All types of services can be found and a visit to the souk is not be missed. Overall, the village is very clean and pleasant.

#### Dakhla – Fort Guerguerat (330km)

South of the crossroad to Dakhla there isn't much to do. If you are not planning to descend to Mauritania, then it is better to explore Dakhla and its magnificent bay. Additionally, the risk of mines further turns this region unsuitable for plain tourism. But if you are going to Mauritania or really willing to explore southern Western Sahara, then there are several interesting features along the road. Until El Argoub (N23° 36.371' W15° 52.092') the road follows close to the coastline providing a superb view over the bay of Dakhla. The almost unmarked tropic of Cancer line (N23° 26.0' W15° 58.1') that runs about 20km south of El Argoub is worth mentioning. Especially attractive is the view over the fishing village of Porto Rico (N23° 28.5' W15° 56.8'), fitted between the ocean and the cliffs. For the next 40km, the road follows inland so there few chances of seeing the coastline. The next attraction is the huge Gulf of Cintra with more than 40km of coastline (from N23° 10.1' W16° 06.9' to N22° 52.3' W16° 12.9') opening to the ocean in an almost perfect semi-circle. Other interesting stopping points include the western limit of the sebkha Tantawlet (N22° 43.1' W16° 19.7'), the 30m high rocky cliffs (N22° 34.6' W16° 21.4'), and also the western limit of sebkha Fares (N22° 32.0' W16° 23.9'). From this point and for the next 200km, all the way to the Fort Guerguerat (N21° 25.2' W16° 57.4'), there are few chances to reach the coastline, as the road follows mostly inland to avoid the lowest parts of the sebkha Lamhar Touil (roughly N22° 12.3' W16° 31.5'), south-east of Cape Barbas, and then zigzags between rock outcrops of the Agargar (roughly starting at N21° 45.6' W16° 54.2') and several croissant-like dunes. The single exception is at N21° 58.645' W16° 52.323', where a small and sandy track gives access to the beach. Do not forget that mines have been ignited by dromedary in the beaches of this region. The many safety panels along the road should allow remembering that exiting the paved road or well marked pistes is highly hazardous.

The most interesting highlight of the region is the Dakhla National Park (DNP), which covers more than 1.900.000ha separated into two areas: the plutonic mountains of the Adrar Souttoug and the 170km long coastline between Cape Barbas and the southern tip of the Cap Blanc peninsula. The inland mountains are home of the Western giant Dob (*Uromastix occidentalis*) an endemic agamid lizard described in 1998 and known only from two localities. Also, the Souttoug is especially important for the conservation of Saharan antelopes. In the recent past, Western Sahara supported large densities of antelopes, like the Scimitar-horned Oryx (*Oryx dammah*), the Addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*) or the Mhorr (*Gazella dama*). Nevertheless, they were slaughtered during the colonial epoch, especially after the arrival of four-wheel vehicles and AK-47's to the Sahara, and virtually became extinct. Currently, the Dakhla National Park is reintroducing the Addax and the Mhorr, in an attempt restore the typical Saharan ecological structure in the region. To visit these mountains, it is advisable to gather information at the DNP headquarters in Dakhla.

The access to the coastal section of DNP is only possible after crossing to Mauritania because the western side of the Cape Blanc peninsula is under Moroccan military control and the area is full of mines. The best option is to follow the road to Nouâdhibou (N20° 50.9' W17° 02.6') and from there taking the piste that heads always south until reaching the lighthouse on the tip of the peninsula (N20° 46.3' W17° 02.8'). Do not attempt to reach La Gouira from Nouâdhibou since the piste is closed and there are mines. The tip of the peninsula constitutes also a satellite reserve of the Banc d'Arguin National Park and a few is required to visit it. The peninsula is very interesting because it harbours the most important colony of the Monk seal (*Monachus monachus*). This marine mammal is considered to be critically endangered of extinction and it is restricted 300 to 400 individuals scattered by half a dozen colonies along the Mediterranean, Desertas

islands (Madeira), Western Sahara and Mauritania. With about 100 individuals, the Cape Blanc peninsula is the world largest colony, even despite the high mortality that affected this population in 1997 due to unknown causes (epidemics caused by a virus or intoxication caused by toxins of dinoflagellates). Also, the coast is especially rich in halieutic resources allowing the concentration of exceptional large numbers of Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*) in winter.

## Fuel

The first fuel station after leaving Tan-Tan is at Douira (N28° 29.098' W11° 19.267'), in the crossroad to Laâyoune, already near the coastline. But the price of fuel here is the same as in northern Morocco; if you can hold about 90km before running dry, then the best option is the next fuel station at about 2km before Sidi Akhfenir (N28° 05.814' W12° 02.824'). From this point onwards, diesel is at about 4.25 dirhams or about 57% of the price in northern Morocco. Fuel is also available at the entry and exit of Sidi Akhfenir (N28° 05.440' W12° 04.094' and N28° 05.372' W12° 04.336', respectively). From Akhfenir until Laâyoune, fuel is available only at Hassi Laoroud (N27° 40.465' W12° 57.449'). Around Laâyoune, fuel is available at entry, within the city and at exit (N27° 8.617' W13° 14.540' and N27° 9.555' W13° 20.204') and the last option before heading to Cape Bojador is at the crossroad to the port of Laâyoune (N27° 06.167' W13° 24.517'). From this point until the Cape Bojador, fuel is available only at Lemsid (N26° 32.385' W13° 50.242'). Around Cape Bojador, fuel is available at entry (N26° 08.297' W14° 27.833' and N26° 07.950' W14° 28.370') and at exit (N26° 06.206' W14° 29.105') of the village. From Cape Bojador southwards, fuel stations are irregularly spaced. The next station is nearly 150km after Bojador, at Nwiyeef (N24° 54.645' W14° 49.196'), followed closely by another one in the Gor Touf area (N24° 39.994' W14° 52.320'). Fuel is available again nearly 100km after this station, in Entayreft (N24° 03.639' W15° 34.214'). At the crossroad for Dakhla, fuel is available at about 200m to the west (N23° 53.615' W15° 40.585'), in the direction of Dakhla and inside Dakhla as well. From the crossroad southwards, fuel stations remain scarce and in the 350 km section until the border with Mauritania, there are only four options: 5km before El Argoub (N23° 38.326' W15° 50.785'), 5km after El Argoub (N23° 34.052' W15° 53.377'), Cliyeb (N23° 12.484' W16° 05.756'), and at the Hotel Barbas (N22° 03.262' W16° 44.821'). This is the last fuel station before the border, so fill out all jerrycans, since the price of fuel in Mauritania is more expensive. By the way, in December 2007 they were experiencing problems with the fuel pump, and we had to wait nearly one hour for fuel. It is the sort of unexpected things that can ruin the plans, for instance of still crossing the border the same day! From the Hotel Barbas, the next fuel stations are in Nouadhibou (N20° 50.9' W17° 02.6') at about 150km or in Bou Lanouar (N21° 16.597' W16° 31.695') on the road to Nouakchott, at about 130km.

## Police checkpoints

There are several police checkpoints along the road. Additionally to the typical controls at the entrance and exit of main villages (Laâyoune, Cape Bojador and Dakhla), there are checkpoints on the bridge over the Oued Drâa (N28° 31.862' W10° 56.669') just before Tan-Tan, 2km before Sidi Akhfenir (on the first cheap-fuel station: N28° 05.814' W12° 02.824') and on the crossroad to Dakhla (N23° 53.615' W15° 40.585'). At the crossroad, if you just want to fill out in the nearby fuel station and not want to drive all the way to Dakhla, explain that to the police which will probably let you pass more rapidly. In fact, police checkpoints are usually friendly and things can move very rapidly if you hand out a photocopied paper with the details of the travellers: name, surname, date and place of birth, address, profession, number and validity of the passport, coming from, going to, date of entry in Morocco and the Moroccan police number (a group of letters and numbers stamped usually on the last page of the passport when entering Morocco); and also of the vehicle: brand, model and license plate number. Be aware that radars for estimating speed are on the rise in Morocco, and they are no exception in Western Sahara; a typical spot for speed checking is on the southern exit of Laâyoune.

## Driving and Traffic

Driving in Western Sahara is very easy as the paved road is most of the time a long and dull straight line. From Tan-Tan to Laâyoune there is plenty of traffic with dozens of overloaded trucks, buses, business and private cars roaming down the road. Thus, in some situations, driving can be hazardous due to the very common "kamikaze" overtakes made by all sorts of local vehicles. Particularly risky are the drivers of cars to be sold in sub-Saharan Africa, typically Euro-bangers (mostly Mercedes 190D and Peugeot 505) but more recently also high-capacity BMWs or Mercedes, who are always on a rush to get to the border. If you are not in a hurry, it is better to facilitate the overtaking. On the opposite side, more than 30 year-old Land Rover Santanas left by the Spanish during their departure still hang around. These vehicles move very slow (usually less than 80km/h) and can be frighten if you approach them very fast from behind. This can be risky especially at night due to their deficient illumination. The same applies to the wandering dromedaries that occasionally cross the road. For these reasons, it is best not to drive at night and avoid the sunset hours if heading south. Finally, another risky situation may arise from the sleepiness induced by the landscape. Driving many hours over long straight lines with almost constant landscape can very easily induce dullness, especially after lunch. So take your time; a brief resting-stop when your body demands can let you discover amazing landscapes and avoid troubles.

South of Laâyoune there is a noticeable decrease in the amount of vehicles circulating. Even so there is plenty of traffic in case of breakdown. As expected, south of the crossroad to Dakhla traffic is reduced. Nevertheless, the Moroccan mobile phone network is efficient and it should be possible to phone to insurance companies in case of breakdown. Also, the fairly wide road that came all the way from Tan-Tan starts to narrow, requiring stronger attention. Particularly, there is an unexpected section of turns with low visibility due to several rock outcrops at about 45 km north of the border (roughly at N21° 45.6' W16° 54.2'). Also south of Dakhla, it is highly advised not to leave the paved road or the well marked pistes due to mine risk.

Sandstorms in spring are relatively common due to the *harmattan*, a dry and hot wind that blows from north-east. Notably the section between Guelmim and Tan-Tan (still in Morocco), the Gulf of Cintra area (N22° 57.1' W16° 09.1'), and the crossing of the sebkhas Khnifiis (N27° 57.6' W12° 16.6'), Tantawlet (N22° 43.1' W16° 19.7') and Fares (N22° 32.6' W16° 23.2') are especially windy and prone to sandstorms. If you face a sandstorm then drive with the headlights on and with the emergency lights blinking. If it becomes very strong and you consider parking, then do so well away from the road. After a sandstorm or even only with strong wind, there might be small dunes covering partially or even the entire paved road. Reduce speed for crossing these small dunes; otherwise you might damage the direction and/or suspension of the vehicle or even lose control of the vehicle. Typical sections for dunes to cover the road are the southern exit of Laâyoune and the above mentioned area of Gulf of Cintra and all sebkhas.

Even if there are no sandstorms, the wind in Western Sahara is always present. Surprisingly, the consistency in the direction of wind blow, north-east to south-west, and its intensity are enough to let you go faster southwards than northwards. If you are driving a tall vehicle, the difference in fuel consumption and average velocity between heading south or north should be even more noticeable.

In winter, rainstorms are not as rare as one could think of. In fact, it is common north of Tarfaya for the road to be blocked after heavy rainfall. Many of the usually dry oueds become violent creeks that may be hard to pass. If you face such a situation, it is better to evaluate the risk by watching if Moroccans are going for it!

### **Lodging and camping**

Along the route there are several options of lodging. Several hotels and pensions for all pockets are available in Laâyoune but less so in Cape Bojador and Dakhla. Hotel al Ahram (N23° 41.862' W15° 55.891') in Dakhla is a fair option. Several camping sites are also available and constitute a good alternative to villages: south of Oued el Oua'ar (N28° 10.472' W11° 52.922'), 90 km after Tan-Tan; camping Lamsiyed (N27° 02.488' W13° 05.703') at about 15 km SE of Laâyoune on the road to Smara (with an excellent view over the valley of the Saguia el Hamra); the camping Moussafir at the entrance of Dakhla on the left; and the camping Le Roi Bedoin (N27° 27.710' W13° 03.110') at about 35km before Laâyoune. Le Roi Bedoin is installed in the southern tip of sebkha Oum Dba at about 4km west of the paved road, but the crossroad on the road (N27° 26.433' W13° 01.372') and the piste to the camping are well marked. These campings serve

hot meals but early reservation is needed. An obligatory reference on the Western Sahara road is the hotel Barbas (N22° 03.262' W16° 44.821') at about 80km before the border with Mauritania, as it looks like an unlikely event in the deserted landscape! This unit and many of the fuel stations along the road have fair accommodations and serve warm meals.

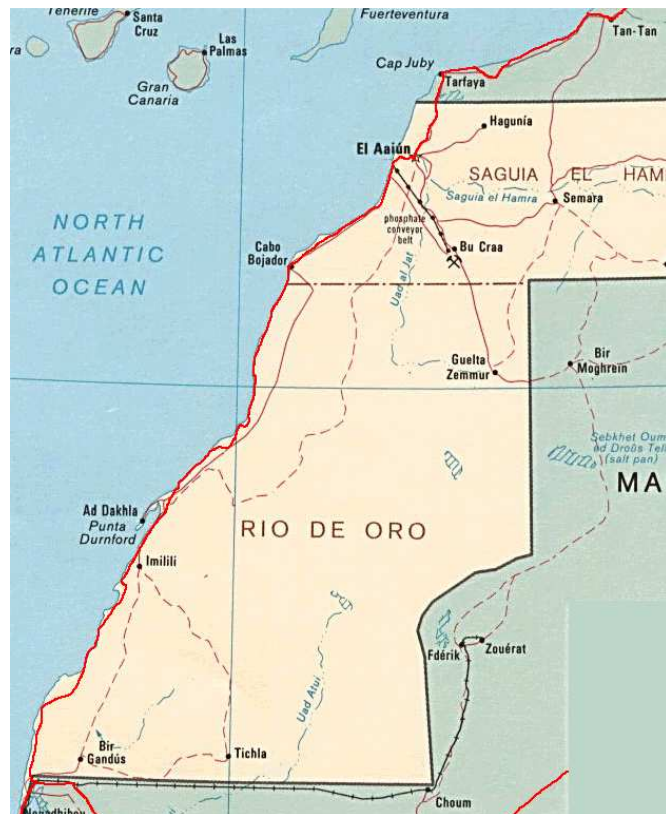
Bush camping is also an option along the road, but do remember to do it well away from the paved road, since cars and trucks continue to pass all night long, making an uncomfortable noise. If you decide to leave the road at night for bush camping, then it is better to go east. In some sections the road goes very close to the scarp edge, and with poor light you will be prone to miss out the edge and end up in the Atlantic! Also, avoid camping very close to large villages. Finally, if bush camping is an option north of the crossroad to Dakhla, it is certainly not after that due to the mines. If you are descending to Mauritania, then the best option for bush camping is either do it some kilometres north of the crossroad to Dakhla or along the numerous sandy spots along the bay of Dakhla. In an emergency, you may leave west the paved road at N21° 58.645' W16° 52.323' and follow the narrow and sandy piste to the beach close to the border. Although it is a perfect spot for an overnight stop, mines have been detected in beaches! That being said, spending a few dirhams in the Hotel Barbas will give you more relaxation plus a meal, shower and a bed.

### **Suggested duration**

If you are in a hurry to get into Mauritania, it is possible to cover Tan-Tan – Mauritanian border in one and a half days. “Desperado”-like drivers of European Mercedes and BMWs to sell in Mauritania certainly can do it in lesser time. But to allow a safer and relaxed driving, enjoying the amazing coastline, and visiting Dakhla and its magnificent bay, set aside four to five days.

### **Onwards to Mauritania**

Nearly 80km separate the Hotel Barbas (N22° 03.262' W16° 44.821') from the border with Mauritania. Following the paved road you will first arrive to the Fort Guerguerat (N21° 25.297' W16° 57.465') with military located on the right and a park on the left. Border formalities used to be accomplished here, but now they are done another 6km further south, exactly where the paved road ends. Before entering the Moroccan border post (N21° 21.700' W16° 57.639'), there is a very recent restaurant which might have some food for selling. In December 2007, it was still being finished. When inside the “border wall” the order to proceed is the following: first go to the gendarmerie to register, and then go to the police to stamp the passport. After that, go to the Douane (costumes) to formalize the exit of the vehicle and wait for a brief inspection of the vehicle. You can now move about 50m down the road to finally register with the military. After this you are allowed to leave. The paved road will end and a rubble and rough track will begin with several deviations appearing. The main track that leads to the Mauritanian border post (N21° 19.978' W16° 56.828') is pretty straightforward, just follow the widest piste, but if you are unsure, do not try to attempt it alone. Wait for one of the big and usually overloaded Mitsubishi trucks driven by Moroccans to pass by and follow them. They will move very slowly on the bumpy track but you will have no problems to find the Mauritanian border post. After 6km you will arrive the border post where you will have to register with the military and police (passport stamp), and formalize the entrance of the car at the Douane. You can also change money (trailer-van at left, usually with unfavourable rates) and buy insurance for the vehicle (small hut at right). From here it is all paved road to either Nouadhibou (about 70km) or Nouakchott (about 450km).



**List of waypoints mentioned in the text**

Locality	Latitude - degrees	Latitude - minutes	Longitude - degrees	Longitude - minutes	Description
Tan-Tan	28	26.000	-11	4.700	City
Oued Draa	28	31.862	-10	56.669	Police checkpoint
Lahmaoia escarpment	28	28.600	-11	12.100	escarpment
Douira	28	29.098	-11	19.267	Fuel
Oued Chbeïka	28	17.500	-11	31.600	Oued
Oued Fatma	28	12.300	-11	46.600	Oued
Oued el Oua'ar	28	10.300	-11	52.000	Oued
S oued el Oua'ar	28	10.472	-11	52.922	Camping
2km before Sidi Akhfenir	28	5.814	-12	2.824	Fuel and police checkpoint
Sidi Akhfenir	28	5.440	-12	4.094	Entrance and fuel
Sidi Akhfenir	28	5.372	-12	4.336	Exit and fuel
Khnifiis lagoon	28	2.000	-12	14.000	Protected Area
Coastline	27	59.800	-12	33.000	Coastline
Sebkha Khnifiis	27	57.600	-12	16.600	Sebkha and sand on road
Crossroad Tarfaya	27	56.700	-12	53.100	Crossroad
Tarfaya	27	56.500	-12	54.800	Village
Sebkha Tah	27	43.100	-12	56.700	Sebkha
Hassi Laoroud	27	40.465	-12	57.449	Fuel
Sebkha Oum Dbâ	27	35.200	-12	57.400	Sebkha
Dwara	27	27.900	-13	0.000	Village
Crossroad Le Roi Beduin	27	26.433	-13	1.372	Crossroad
Camping Le Roi Bedoin	27	27.710	-13	3.110	Camping
Laâyoune	27	9.555	-13	20.204	Fuel

Travelling in the Sahara is unpredictable and can be dangerous. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained herein is as accurate as possible. However, we are unable to accept responsibility for any inconvenience, loss or injury sustained by anyone as a result of the advice and information given.

Laâyoune	27	9.400	-13	13.200	City
Laâyoune	27	8.617	-13	14.540	Fuel
Camping Lamsiyed	27	2.488	-13	5.703	Camping
Laâyoune port	27	6.167	-13	24.517	Fuel
Sebkha Al Lekani	26	41.200	-13	33.700	Sebkha
Sebkha Sam	26	39.700	-13	38.400	Sebkha
Lemsid	26	32.385	-13	50.242	Village and Fuel
Bojador	26	8.297	-14	27.833	Fuel
Bojador	26	7.950	-14	28.370	Fuel
Bojador	26	7.300	-14	29.200	Village
Bojador	26	6.206	-14	29.105	Fuel
Beach	25	58.700	-14	29.900	Beginning
Beach	25	44.600	-14	37.900	Ending
Rocky cliff	25	35.100	-14	40.900	Beginning
Rocky cliff	25	33.300	-14	41.400	Ending
NwiyeF	24	54.645	-14	49.196	Fuel
Gor Touf	24	39.994	-14	52.320	Fuel
Oued Lakra	24	37.900	-14	53.200	Oued
Sebkha Skaymat	24	29.600	-15	1.400	Beginning
Sebkha Skaymat	24	25.000	-15	6.200	Ending
Rocky cliff	24	22.900	-15	15.800	Beginning
Rocky cliff	24	10.100	-15	29.000	Ending
Entayreft	24	3.639	-15	34.214	Fuel
Crossroad Dakhla	23	53.615	-15	40.585	Crossroad, fuel and police checkpoint
Dakhla	23	42.800	-15	55.400	Village
Hotel al Ahram	23	41.862	-15	55.891	Hotel
5km before El Argoub	23	38.326	-15	50.785	Fuel
El Argoub	23	36.371	-15	52.092	Village
5km after El Argoub	23	34.052	-15	53.377	Fuel
Porto Rico	23	28.500	-15	56.800	Village
Tropic Cancer	23	26.000	-15	58.100	-
Cliyeb	23	12.484	-16	5.756	Fuel
Gulf of Cintra	23	10.100	-16	6.900	Beginning
Gulf of Cintra	22	57.100	-16	9.100	Sand on road
Gulf of Cintra	22	52.300	-16	12.900	Ending
Sebkha Tantawlet	22	43.100	-16	19.700	Sebkha
Rocky cliffs	22	34.600	-16	21.400	Cliffs
Sebkha Fares	22	32.600	-16	23.200	Sand on road
Sebkha Fares	22	32.000	-16	23.900	Sebkha
Sebkha Lamhar Touil	22	12.300	-16	31.500	Sebkha
Hotel Barbass	22	3.262	-16	44.821	Hotel and Fuel
Beach	21	58.645	-16	52.323	Exit to beach
Agargar	21	45.600	-16	54.200	Rocky outcrops
Fort Guerguerat	21	25.297	-16	57.465	Locality
Moroccan border	21	21.700	-16	57.639	Border
Mauritanian border	21	19.978	-16	56.828	Border
Bou Lanouar	21	16.597	-16	31.695	Fuel
Nouadhibou	20	57.852	-17	2.390	City
Cape Blanc	20	46.300	-17	2.800	Cliffs