

## Exploring Morocco in Florida: The Morocco Pavilion at Epcot

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

As you explore the World Showcase at Epcot, I'm sure you'll find, just like me, that you have pavilions that are your favourites and others that don't interest you as much. However, with a bit of careful exploration, those perceptions can change.

When I was a kid, Norway was by far my favourite pavilion, something to do with Maelstrom, I'm sure. I used to wonder, at that age, what on earth the attraction of any country without a ride could be, but then I got older and could immediately appreciate the attraction. I slowly fell in love with Japan, something to do with the fact that I always wanted to visit the real thing. Even now that I have [Ed: [See Cheryl's many Japan-related articles](#)], I still marvel at that pavilion. It's a beautifully tranquil place and somewhere to lose yourself in, away from the hustle and bustle of the crowds around Epcot.

It was during our last trip that we discovered that the same thing is true of the neighbouring pavilion, Morocco. The only pavilion sponsored by its government, Morocco has always been a place that we tend to pass through rather quickly, partially due to the fact that a lot of it is hidden away, and perhaps hidden better than any other country around World Showcase. You really have to go looking to find the essence of this place, but once you do, you're rewarded immediately.

One thing that I already knew was that Morocco is a superb place for shopping. Much as I love the fashions in Japan and China, I always knew that I loved that style. I never had a clue that I would find tops that I liked so much in Morocco. I never cease to be amazed by the amount of times that people comment on the top I bought here a number of years ago. That's not all that you can buy here. There's an amazing array of lamps to be found in the shops here. I look at them every time with great envy and wish that we didn't have a Transatlantic flight home or that shipping rates were cheaper. Maybe then we'd be able to get one... Rugs, bags and, of course the traditional Moroccan emblem, the Fez, are amongst the other items on offer here.

One of the other hidden treasures of this pavilion is the eating options. Restaurant Marrakesh is one place that it's usually fairly easy to get into, however busy the parks are. It's often one of the last table service restaurants to fill up. That may partially be due to the fact that the menu is a little unfamiliar to many (and in part because the entrance is tucked away in the back), but my goodness, the food quality is excellent

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here. We tend to stick with table service restaurants, so we've yet to sample the Tangerine Cafe, but I've heard similar excellent reports about the food you can get there.

Morocco is sometimes visited by characters from Aladdin, such as the main man himself, Jasmine, and the Genie. They can be found down by World Showcase Lagoon, but in colder weather, you'll see them instead hidden in one of the back areas of this pavilion. Those back areas are also where you can explore and find a huge amount waiting for you.

In total, Morocco represents three cities: Casablanca, Fez, and Marrakesh. The dominant feature of this pavilion, the prayer tower, or Koutoubia Minaret, to give it its correct name, is a detailed replica of a minaret that stands in Marrakesh.

Head through the Bab Boujouloud, the gateway between and old and the new city and have a look at the sign, which tells you that this is indeed the entrance to the ancient city of Fez. If you're wondering what sign I'm talking about, then next time you're in Epcot, look for the sign, just by the archway into the back area of the pavilion. It tells a fascinating back story about the country you're visiting.

As soon as you enter the back area of the pavilion, you really do step into another world, a world of peace and quiet, that seems a million miles away from the bustle of World Showcase. Perhaps the thing that grabs your attention first is the intricate tiling that you see everywhere. It's truly beautiful and is perhaps best highlighted by the room just to the left after you pass through the Bab Boujouloud. Apparently, the tile work was done by royal craftsmen, sent by the King of Morocco, which could explain why it looks so impressive. We spent so long in here, just admiring all the work in here, not only the tiling, but the exquisite woodwork high above you.

From there, if you head towards the back of the pavilion, where Restaurant Marrakesh is located, you'll be rewarded by a courtyard, surrounded by trees, demonstrating the role of agriculture in Morocco. We were stunned by the fact that we were alone there for some time, taking photos, with no interruptions. It's amazing how places like this were created in a busy theme park and yet people never find their way there.

I guess part of the reason for that is that the crowd's attention is often taken by the activities at the front of the pavilion, with MoRockin performing Arabic and rock music regularly throughout the day. For some strange reason, whenever the belly dancer comes out, she seems to draw a crowd. I can't imagine why!

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It seems an interesting contradiction that many people who go through Morocco see the belly dancer and often that's it, not realising the religiously significant buildings that lie behind. Ever wondered why Morocco plays no part in IllumiNations every night? That's the reason, because of the religious significance, and therefore lights are not focused on these buildings.

Perhaps it's that fact that highlights how different Morocco is to all the other pavilions at World Showcase. Of course, Japan and China are exotic, but Morocco is unique in that it's the only country from Africa and, as such, it gives people a good idea of the differences in that continent and how beautiful the real Morocco must be.

*About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)*

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