

Morocco

By Lilly Tapper

This past winter break, I had the opportunity to travel to Morocco with my grandparents and cousin. It was amazing and inspiring.

Typically, when Americans think of Islamic countries, we often automatically think of terrorists: the people responsible for 9/11, or the people responsible for the Boston Marathon bombings, or the attacks in Paris, or the San Bernardino attacks. The list could go on and on. I will be the first to admit that I was a little apprehensive about my trip after the San Bernardino attacks. This was totally unnecessary.

Let me give you some background on Morocco. Morocco has a population of 33 million people. Out of those 33 million people, 99% are either Sunni or Shia muslims. Hearing this, you might just be surprised about what I have to say.

We flew into Marrakech and stayed there for four nights. As an American, the first thing I noticed walking outside the airport into the hot, polluted air was the amount of babies on motorbikes! We were greeted by a lovely man named Ali, who was outgoing, friendly, and very happy to welcome us to his country. We stayed in the heart of Marrakech, in the Riad Djemanna. Riad means house in arabic. It was beautiful, and I was surrounded by totally authentic Moroccan culture.

The most amazing moment of the trip occurred on the third day. We toured mosques and many historic sites around Jemma el fna, the main square of Marrakech, filled with snake charmers, french cafes with rooftop terraces, shops, tents where you can get henna tattoos, monkeys, and stands where you can get a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice for 2 dirhams, the equivalent to about 20 U.S. cents. No matter how delicious the orange juice was, or how beautiful the architecture and Riad were, the best part of Morocco was the amount of religious toleration and friendliness that Moroccans had for visitors and fellow Moroccans. On the top of every mosque in Morocco, there are three spheres. The first sphere represents Islam, the second represents Christianity, and the third represents Judaism. In addition, mosques typically are tiled with three different colors that all represent something meaningful to Muslims. Green is always in mosques because green is the sacred and holy color of Islam. Blue is also represented in mosques because blue is the divine, and the color of God's Glory in the Jewish religion. The third color is an amber/red/gold which represents the overwhelming radiance of God in Christianity. In addition to all this, the people are some of the friendliest people that you will ever meet. Thank you, Morocco, for leading the way for religious tolerance in the world. Shukran lak Morocco, shukran.