

# Geography

**Location:** Northern Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, between Algeria and Western Sahara

**Map references:** Africa

**Area:**

*total area:* 446,550 sq km

*land area:* 446,300 sq km

*comparative area:* slightly larger than California

**Land boundaries:** total 2,002 km, Algeria 1,559 km, Western Sahara 443 km

**Coastline:** 1,835 km

**Maritime claims:**

*contiguous zone:* 24 nm

*continental shelf:* 200-m depth or to the depth of exploitation

*exclusive economic zone:* 200 nm

*territorial sea:* 12 nm

**International disputes:** claims and administers Western Sahara, but sovereignty is unresolved; the UN is attempting to hold a referendum; the UN-administered cease-fire has been currently in effect since September 1991; Spain controls five places of sovereignty (plazas de soberania) on and off the coast of Morocco - the coastal enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla which Morocco contests as well as the islands of Penon de Alhucemas, Penon de Velez de la Gomera, and Islas Chafarinas

**Climate:** Mediterranean, becoming more extreme in the interior

**Terrain:** northern coast and interior are mountainous with large areas of bordering plateaus, intermontane valleys, and rich coastal plains

**Natural resources:** phosphates, iron ore, manganese, lead, zinc, fish, salt

**Land use:**

*arable land:* 18%

*permanent crops:* 1%

*meadows and pastures:* 28%

*forest and woodland:* 12%

*other:* 41%

**Irrigated land:** 12,650 sq km (1989 est.)

**Environment:**

*current issues:* land degradation/desertification (soil erosion resulting from farming of marginal areas, overgrazing, destruction of vegetation); water supplies contaminated by raw sewage; siltation of reservoirs; oil pollution of coastal waters

*natural hazards:* northern mountains geologically unstable and subject to earthquakes; periodic droughts

*international agreements:* party to - Endangered Species, Marine Dumping, Nuclear Test Ban, Ship Pollution, Wetlands; signed, but

not ratified - Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification,  
Environmental Modification, Law of the Sea, Ozone Layer  
Protection

**Note:** strategic location along Strait of Gibraltar