

Immigration fuels the homeland's economy

The dream to return to the land of their roots after earning a living in Europe has long motivated immigrants' desire to invest in their country: first they invested in property (building a house), especially in their region of origin, then in small businesses, usually family-run.

However, it was not until the 1990s that a real structure to support "active" investment in the country was organised, boosted by the growth of tourism. Increasing numbers of Moroccans are now opening accounts in local banks.

Their return in summer is also a commercial boon (with rentals and purchases of gifts, food and assorted equipment) and is a time when many weddings take place... largely because they are funded by "cousins" in Europe.

Memories of the summer transhumance...

By car, van, coach or plane, some two million Moroccans living abroad travel to Morocco during the summer holidays. These seasonal journeys, made for the purpose of visiting family and increasingly for seaside tourism, also have a significant economic and political impact which Morocco looks forward to each year. This human transhumance is still symbolised by the familiar images of overloaded cars and vans, and interminable queues in the port areas. That said, with the rise in low-cost air travel and a social shift towards relaxation, the "cathedral cars" are gradually dying out.

Yet this cliché-laden mythological ritual is still a collective movement that gives a new lease of life to the Moroccan diaspora's identity and keeps the myth of the return alive among the eldest. Family stories about these trips are an integral part of the migratory saga: the choice of gifts to bring, the picnics by the motorway, the journey across Spain and its dangers, the boat and the Moroccan road that marks the end of the voyage...