

# **Tarentola mauritanica (Crocodile Gecko / Moorish Gecko) — Complete Care Guide**


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## **Overview**

- **Scientific Name:** *Tarentola mauritanica*
  - **Common Names:** Crocodile Gecko, Moorish Gecko
  - **Origin:** Mediterranean regions (Southern Europe, North Africa)
  - **Size:** 4–6 inches total length
  - **Lifespan:** 8–12 years (longer with excellent care)
  - **Behavior:** Nocturnal, hardy, semi-arboreal
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## **Natural Habitat**

- Found in **Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, and North Africa**
- Lives on **rock walls, ruins, trees, and buildings**
- Thrives in **warm, dry climates with humidity spikes at night**
- Often seen hunting insects around lights

 This species is extremely adaptable and even thrives in urban environments.

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## **Enclosure Setup**

### **Tank Size**

- **Minimum:** 10–15 gallon (single adult)
- **Ideal:** 20 gallon vertical or tall enclosure

### **Setup Style**

- **Arboreal / rock-climbing layout**
- Use:
  - Cork bark slabs
  - Rock backgrounds
  - Vertical climbing surfaces
  - Hides at different heights

## Substrate

- Best options:
  - Reptile carpet (easy clean)
  - Paper towels (simple)
  - Bioactive mix (advanced keepers)

⚠️ Avoid loose sand for beginners (risk of impaction)

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## Temperature & Heating

- **Daytime ambient:** 75–85°F
- **Basking spot:** 88–92°F
- **Night drop:** 65–72°F

## Heating Methods

- Heat lamp (preferred for natural behavior)
- Ceramic heat emitter (night heat if needed)

👉 They are more tolerant than tropical geckos but still need a gradient.

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## Lighting

- **UVB:** Low-level UVB (5.0) recommended but not mandatory
  - **Photoperiod:** 12 hours light / 12 hours dark
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## Humidity & Hydration

- **Daytime humidity:** 40–50%
- **Night humidity:** 60–70% (light misting)

## Water

- Small shallow water dish
  - Light misting in evening helps stimulate activity
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## Diet & Feeding

### Staple Diet

- Crickets
- Dubia roaches
- Mealworms (occasional)
- Small superworms

### Feeding Schedule

- Juveniles: Daily
- Adults: Every 2–3 days

### Supplementation

- **Calcium (no D3):** 2–3x per week
  - **Calcium w/ D3:** 1x per week
  - **Multivitamin:** 1x per week
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## Behavior & Temperament

- Fast, alert, and **not very handleable**
  - May drop tail if stressed
  - Best kept as a **display species**
  - Nocturnal hunters—very active at night
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## Maintenance

- Spot clean daily
  - Full clean every 3–4 weeks (non-bioactive)
  - Clean water dish regularly
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## Sexing & Breeding

### Sexing

- Males:
  - Larger
  - Visible femoral pores
  - Broader head
- Females:
  - Smaller
  - Less pronounced features

## Breeding

- Easy under correct conditions
  - Females lay **1–2 eggs at a time**
  - Eggs often glued to surfaces
  - Incubation: ~45–70 days
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## Common Health Issues

- Metabolic Bone Disease (lack of calcium/UVB)
  - Dehydration
  - Shedding issues (low humidity)
  - Parasites (wild-caught specimens)
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## Pros & Cons

### Pros

- Hardy and beginner-friendly
- Unique “crocodile-like” texture
- Tolerates a wide range of conditions
- Very active at night

### Cons

- Not handleable
  - Can be skittish and fast
  - May drop tail easily
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## Pro Tips (From Keepers)

- Provide **lots of vertical texture**—they love walls
- Use a **rock background** to mimic natural habitat
- Mist lightly at night to trigger hunting behavior
- Great for **bioactive desert/Mediterranean setups**