

# INSIDER'S GUIDE

THE SHOPS, HOTELS, RESTAURANTS AND HOT SPOTS  
MAKING MOROCCO SIZZLE RIGHT NOW



## MARRAKESH

This is a city where the muezzin sings out his final call to prayer as DJs turn up the volume, a place where shoppers buy wood tooled by foot in the souk before dropping thousands at Louis Vuitton. Bold, coquettish and utterly unforgettable, Marrakesh has long been a melting pot thanks to traders from other African countries and Europe who've been meeting there for centuries to barter goods—not to mention Yves Saint Laurent, who put the North African city on the style map and inspired curious foreigners who flooded in.

**1 DJEMAA EL FNA** The heart of Marrakesh comes alive at night as snake charmers and henna tattooists jostle for space with the poets, musicians and storytellers whose centuries-old words and notes have earned the square its legendary status. As sunset falls, smoke from food stalls billows into the air while performers' drumbeats fill it further. Either plunge straight in or watch the spectacle from a nearby cafe roof terrace.

**2 RIAD EL FENN** Traditional Morocco is given a twist courtesy of *tadelakt* plaster walls washed in vivid sea green and a clutch of lanterns transformed into artwork. Two suites here have private pools, and works from co-owner Vanessa Branson's contemporary art collection—including paintings by Bridget Riley and sculpture by Antony Gormley—are on display. (Derb Moullay Abdullah Ben Hezzian, Bab El Ksour, +212 524 44 12 10; [riadelfenn.com](http://riadelfenn.com); high season from \$364)

**3 ATIKA SHOES** Soft suede loafers for men, women and children in a kaleidoscope of colors make Atika the number one shoe store in Marrakesh. High-quality leather heels, handbags and jackets are also for sale. Go early because there's standing room only come midafternoon. (34 Rue de la Liberté, Guéliz, +212 524 43 64 09)

**4 LE SALAMA** Everyone from Paloma Picasso to Roberto Cavalli has dined at Le Salama, located just steps from Djemaa El Fna. Styled with a Casablanca flair, the atmospheric dining rooms are spread over three floors, and the cuisine fuses traditional Moroccan cooking techniques with a modern take on flavors. (40 Rue des Banques, Kennaria, +212 524 39 13 00)

**5 DELANO MARRAKECH** If a riad isn't your speed, the Delano Marrakech, opening in September, could be. The 73-suite hotel will boast a 20,000-square-foot spa, three private pools, a roof deck and a subterranean nightclub. And while Morocco is famous for dishes like tagine, dining at the Delano offers more international options, with French and Italian eateries from *Michelin*-starred chefs Michel Rostang and Giancarlo Morelli. (Angle Avenue Echouada et Rue des Temples +212 524 42 42 42; [morganshotelgroup.com](http://morganshotelgroup.com), from \$315)



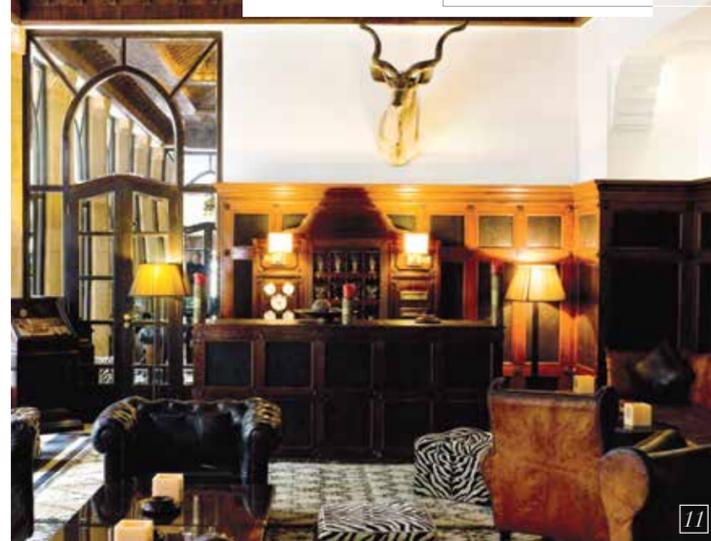
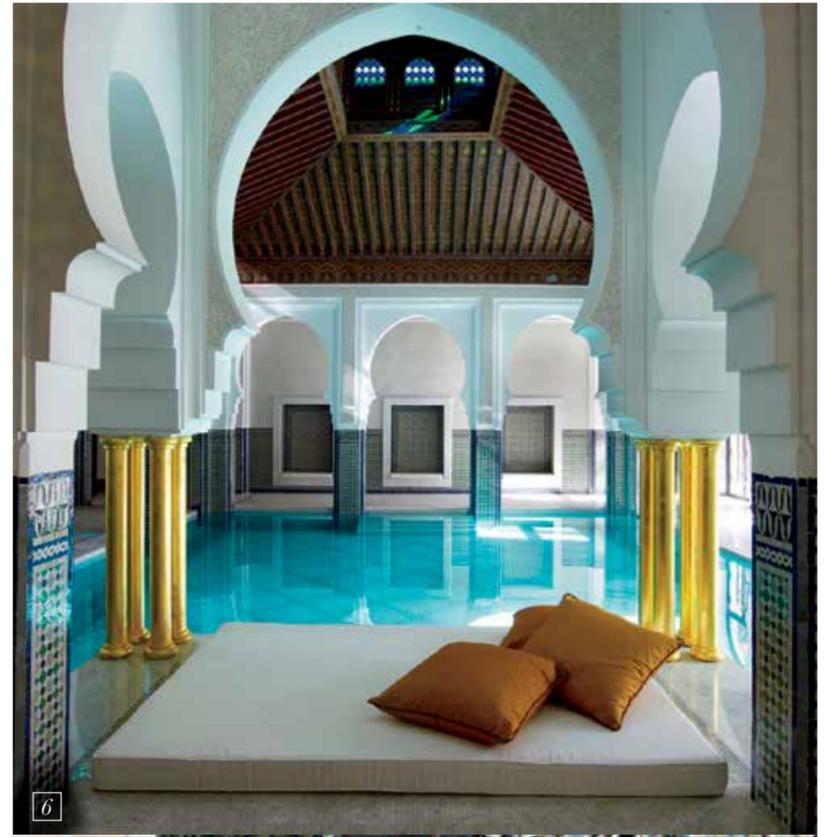
**6 LA MAMOUNIA** Following a three-year refurbishment overseen by legendary designer Jacques Garcia, the grande dame of Marrakesh hotels offers unparalleled luxury. La Mamounia's outdoor pool is tiled in Murano glass, while the inside pool forms part of a luxurious 27,000-square-foot spa. (Avenue Bab Jdid, Marrakesh-Maroc, +212 524 38 86 00; [mamounia.com](http://mamounia.com); from \$670)

**7 JNANE TAMSNA** Brad Pitt and Donna Karan are among the boldface names who've enjoyed the house-party vibe at this hotel created by French-Senegalese designer Meryanne Loum-Martin. Twenty-four rooms are spread over five properties in the city's exclusive Palmeraie district. (Douar Abiad, La Palmeraie, +212 524 32 84 84; [jnane.com](http://jnane.com); from \$310)

**8 DJELLABAR** Pop art hangs beneath exquisitely plastered Moroccan ceilings in Djellabar—created by Claude Challe, the man behind the Buddha Bar phenomenon. Enjoy cocktails, dinner and dancing alongside Marrakesh's most fashionable insiders while it's still under the radar—this restaurant, bar and terrace have yet to hit the guidebooks. (Villa Bougainvillée, 2 Rue Abou Hanifa, Hivernage, +212 524 42 12 42; [djellabar.com](http://djellabar.com))

**9 33 RUE MAJORELLE** This chic concept store sells a collection of housewares and fashion ranging from simple tea glasses to high-end tailoring handpicked by stylist Monique Bresson and produced by designers and craftsmen who are either local or influenced by Morocco. The shop and its snack and juice bar are interconnected by a salon containing paintings, photography, sculpture and furniture. (33 Rue Yves Saint Laurent, Majorelle, Marrakesh-Maroc, +212 524 31 41 95)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, PREVIOUS PAGE: DOUGLAS FRIEDMAN; COURTESY OF ATIKA; DOUGLAS FRIEDMAN (2); THIS PAGE: COURTESY OF ANSSON SMART; DOUGLAS FRIEDMAN (3).



## ESSAOUIRA

Sea and sky may have worked their way into every fiber of Essaouira, but the picturesque crumbling white walls and azure woodwork of its houses will never get a makeover. Why? Because this sea town is way too relaxed for all that. Surfers head here for the swells, lovers of *gnawa* music converge on their spiritual home and others just kick back, relax and shoot the Atlantic breeze.

**10 SEAFOOD STALLS** The best of the day's catch—from spider crab and red mullet to lobster and *gambas*—is on offer at this string of fresh fish stalls lining the town's quay. Pick what you want, sit down at a wooden table while your lunch is grilled and watch waves crash against Essaouira's ancient medina walls as seagulls dance in the blue sky above.

**11 HEURE BLEUE PALAIS** If Heure Bleue's rooftop pool and palm-fringed courtyard are made for sunshine, then its Salon Anglais is the ideal winter retreat. Guests sip cocktails on a leather chesterfield while live music plays in this *Out of Africa* meets a gentleman's club-style spot. (2 Rue Ibn Batouta, Bab Marrakech, +212 524 78 34 34; [heure-bleue.com](http://heure-bleue.com); from \$370)

**12 LA GAZELLE D'OR** A 150 miles south of Essaouira and a world away is La Gazelle d'Or. Set in an estate filled with orange groves and bougainvillea, this is where statesmen and socialites alike come to unwind. Tennis, golf practice and swimming are available. Or just walk through the rose garden before relaxing with a massage in the hotel's aromatherapy spa. (P.O. Box 260, Taroudannt, +212 528 85 20 39; [gazelledor.com](http://gazelledor.com); half-board for two from \$740)



1971XAN Room

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## FEZ

If any city represents the gritty heart of Morocco, it's Fez. No cars travel the twisting streets of its ancient medina, and a silence thick as velvet falls when braying donkeys and hammering craftsmen finish their day's work. A spiritual and cultural capital, the city is home to Koranic schools, Sufi singers and some of the finest handicraft in Morocco. And among all the history, there are places where Fez is being reinvented.

**13 RIAD FÈS—RELAIS AND CHÂTEAU** Old-world and modern come together at Riad Fès. Parts of the building, dating back to the 18th century, showcase the best of Fassi craftsmanship while a recently opened renovation houses a sleekly modern swimming pool and adjoining glass-walled bar. Sigourney Weaver and Bono are among those who've visited. (5 Derb Ben Slimane, Zerbtana, +212 535 74 10 12; [riadfes.com](http://riadfes.com); from \$190)

**14 LE JARDIN DES BIEHN** Antiquarian Michel Biehn decamped from Provence with his wife, Catherine, and brought a lifetime's collection of artifacts he'd acquired. Nine rooms, five of them suites, host everything from Yemenite silk robes to concubines' chairs from a Beijing palace. (13 Akbat Sbaa, Douh, +212 664 64 76 79; [jardindesbiehn.com](http://jardindesbiehn.com); from \$160)

**15 PALAIS FARAJ SUITES AND SPA** Step through the doors of Palais Faraj and into a riot of zellige tiling and intricate plasterwork set off by cedar, marble and sumptuous color. Designed by Arab Andalusian specialist Jean-Baptiste Barian, the hotel has a bar overlooking the rooftops of the medina and a spa that recently opened. (16-18 Quartier Ziat, Derb Bensouda, +212 535 63 89 41; [palaisfaraj.com](http://palaisfaraj.com); from \$260)

**16 THE RUINED GARDEN** After having cut their teeth on the London restaurant scene and painstakingly restoring the garden of a crumbling yet enchanting riad, John Twomey and Robert Johnstone are set to open The Ruined Garden next door to their boutique guesthouse, Riad Idrissy, in September. Locally inspired lunch dishes, afternoon tea and traditional spit-roasted *mechwi* lamb suppers will be served. (15 Derb Idrissy, Sidi Ahmed Chaoui, Sij, +212 649 19 14 10)

**17 HASSANKABIL** The son of a master silk weaver is internationally celebrated for reviving age-old techniques at Kabil's studio Dar al Tiraz. There, he hand-produces the intricately patterned and colored lampas fabrics that Fez was once famous for. The technique, historically used to make belts for noblewomen, now allows Kabil to create prized pieces of art. (By appointment only. +212 655 23 81 35; [contact@dar-al-tiraz.com](mailto:contact@dar-al-tiraz.com))

**18 COIN BERBÈRE** If searching for vintage caftans in Souk des Caftans and old silver in the stalls at Place Seffarine isn't your thing, head to Coin Berbère. The three Bouzidi-Idrissi brothers have amassed a collection of antiques, including ornate wooden doors and intricately woven carpets. (67 Talaa Kebira, Haddadine, +212 535 63 69 46)



PREVIOUS PAGE: DOUGLAS FRIEDMAN; THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ALBERTO COTO/GETTY IMAGES; ERIC MARTINEZ/COURTESY OF LIBRAIRIE DES COLONNES; JULIETTE PARSOT/COURTESY OF DAR NOUR

## TANGIER

Tangier's signature grit-meets-glamour has long made it irresistible. Gangsters, spies, beatniks and the rich and famous flocked to the city after it was made an international zone in 1923, and the party didn't stop for three decades. Now Tangier is on the upswing again, counting Roger Vivier's creative director, Bruno Frisoni, and Yves Saint Laurent's former partner Pierre Bergé among those who have bought homes here.

**19 DAR NOUR** It's all about the sea view in Tangier—and especially at Dar Nour, where guests can enjoy a stunning panorama. Matt Damon is among those who've stayed in the riad's rooms, which are styled with finds from the souk. Down the road, Dar Nour's sister restaurant, Salon Bleu, also offers views of the distant Spanish headlands. (20 Rue Gourna, Kasbah, +212 662 11 27 24; [darnour.com](http://darnour.com); from \$80)

**20 NORD-PINUS-TANGER** Perched on the seawalls at the highest point in town, this former pasha's palace is one of Tangier's most stylish addresses. A favorite among fashion and art insiders, it has five bedrooms with suites, a restaurant and a roof terrace that offers breathtaking views. (11 Rue du Riad Sultan, Kasbah, +212 661 22 81 40; [info@nord-pinus-tanger.com](mailto:info@nord-pinus-tanger.com); from \$230)

**21 LA FABRIQUE** New York City loft style meets traditional French cuisine at the popular La Fabrique. A bar and lounge accompany the restaurant, where French classics with a modern twist are served. (Résidence Salima 1-7, Rue d'Angleterre, +212 539 37 40 57)

**22 VILLA JOSEPHINE** Set in the exclusive area below Tangier where King Mohammed VI's palace is situated, Villa Josephine has just 10 suites and a very intimate feel. There are beautifully manicured gardens and a pool with expansive views of the bay. (231 Route de la Vielle, Montagne, Sidi Masmoudi, +212 539 33 45 35, from \$315)

**23 LIBRAIRIE DES COLONNES** The iconic bookstore is a vibrant component of the city's legendary literary scene, especially after the fresh refurbishment that bibliophile Pierre Bergé helped with. More than 6,000 titles are stocked, from English, French and Spanish classics to works by both established and up-and-coming Arab writers. (54 Boulevard Pasteur, +212 539 93 69 55)

**24 L'OCEAN RESTAURANT AND BEACH CLUB** Tangier insiders head to this bistro on a beach just outside of town, where fresh fish is served on a terrace set against a backdrop of sand and sea. Specialties include lobster salad, red tuna and fresh seafood tagliatelle. There's also a beach club. (Place Sidi Kacem, +212 539 33 81 37)

**25 LAURE WELFLING** Welfling's expert eye was honed during her days as an interior designer in Paris, and her shop is now filled with fashion, accessories and housewares. She designs high-end caftans and handbags, while her artist husband creates sculpture and ceramics. (3 Place de la Kasbah, +212 539 94 97 89)

**26 BOUTIQUE MAJID** Owner Abdelmajid Rais El Fenni has been in business for more than 40 years and is always on hand to offer advice over mint tea. You might need it considering the three stories of his Boutique Majid are a treasure trove of antique silk textiles, Berber jewelry, carpets and ceramics. Mick Jagger and Leonardo DiCaprio are among the famous who have visited. (66 Rue les Almouhades, +212 539 93 88 92)

—MEGAN LLOYD DAVIES

BRAIRIE DES COLONNES

