

GUIDE TO MARRAKECH

Lively *souks* swirling with spices; mesmerizing snake charmers and belly dancers; towering minarets and ornate architecture — Marrakech is a whirlwind of color, noise and excitement in the deserts of North Africa. Morocco's cultural melting pot, the city is influenced by a unique fusion of European, African and Arabic cultures. These days, the ancient city (which is a Unesco World Heritage Site) is embracing modernity too, with a new wave of young creatives driving the art, hotel and food scenes. But it's not all hustle and bustle; there's an abundance of green space in the city's tropical gardens, palm groves and golf courses, framed by the majestic Atlas Mountains and azure blue skies.

by Holly Rubenstein

WHERE TO EAT

Hailed as one of the most exciting new openings in the city, **Le Trou Au Mur** is a sophisticated spot that serves Moroccan favorites alongside more unusual, traditional cuisine. *Tride*, for example, is a delicious chicken dish encased in shredded pancakes that is historically given to women after childbirth. The wine list offers a selection of excellent Moroccan wines. You'll need to book ahead to

get a table at **Nomad**; this buzzing hot spot is housed in a former carpet store in the medina. Grab a seat on one of two roof terraces with views of the Atlas Mountains, and tuck into lightly spiced fish balls in tomato, red pepper and chickpea sauce, or the Agadir calamari with braised fennel. **El Fenn** is an Instagram-famous *riad* in the heart of the medina that attracts a boho-chic crowd. Known

for its photogenic emerald-green tiles and stunning red walls, its roof terrace restaurant overlooks the Koutubia Mosque, and serves modern Moroccan cuisine. On the menu is roasted duck breast with caramelized spices and *ras el hanout* vegetables, and beef tenderloin with coriander couscous. **letrouaumur.com**, **nomadmarrakech.com**, **el-fenn.com**



Just an hour's drive from Marrakech, you'll find the **Atlas Mountains**. Head towards the village of **Asni**, past the romantic Lalla Takerkoust lake and into the mountains. The journey itself is a spectacle and an insight into local life. Stop for a night at clifftop **Kasbah Tamadot**, a former governor's mansion-turned-luxury resort, owned by Sir Richard Branson. A night in a luxurious **Berber tent**, complete with private hot tub, unlimited minibar and expansive views of the snowy Atlas peaks provides an overwhelming sense of calm and a renewed connection to nature. **virginlimitededition.com**

GET OUT OF TOWN...



From top
Drift over the Red City in a hot air balloon; Yves Saint Laurent's vibrant botanical garden; scour the *souks* for spices

MARRAKECH NIGHTS



THE RIADS La Mamounia

Winston Churchill once described Marrakech as "the loveliest place on earth," and he always stayed at La Mamounia — The Churchill Suite is named in his honor. Within its 17 acres of lush, private gardens are three luxurious 7,535-sq-ft *riads*, offering a private and peaceful experience. Doors open onto a patio, terrace and pool, around which three bedrooms and bathrooms are arranged. Interiors are classically adorned with exquisite traditional tile work, sculpted wood and rich fabrics. A rooftop terrace overlooks the pretty grounds. It's hard to believe that the hubbub of the *souks* is a mere five-minute walk away, as it is so serene. A personal butler is available to guests around the clock. **From \$9,800 per night. Contact Pierre Jochem, general manager, informations@mamounia.com, +212 524 388 600, mamounia.com**



THE PENTHOUSE Mandarin Oriental

One of the newest additions to the hotel scene in Marrakech, The Penthouse at the Mandarin Oriental is an eight-bedroom suite spread over an entire floor of the hotel. It offers unparalleled views of the property's landscaped gardens (scented by more than 100,000 roses) and the snowcapped peaks of the Atlas Mountains beyond. There's a zen flow throughout the 12,249-sq-ft suite's various interior and exterior spaces, befitting of the Mandarin Oriental group — from heated plunge pools to dining areas and terraces outside to the interiors that blend traditional Moroccan touches with Oriental dark-wood furnishings. Bathrooms include integrated hammams. The 10-acre luxury resort is a 20-minute drive from the *souks* and main square. **From \$10,815 per night. Contact Jean Philippe Moser, general manager, momrk-reservations@mohg.com, +212 524 298 888, mandarinoriental.com**



GRAND RIAD Royal Mansour

Book the Royal Mansour's Riad d'Honneur (Grand Riad) for the ultimate luxury. This palatial four-bedroom property, which includes the 24-hour assistance of its own staff, is almost 20,000 sq ft in size and packed with elaborate plasterwork and tiling, carved cedar wood, sumptuous fabrics and decadent designs. Its spellbinding two-tier roof terrace offers panoramic views of the medina and Atlas Mountains, as well as a plunge pool, lounge and dining area. Downstairs includes a library, cinema, gym, hammam, spa treatment room and bar. Outside in the *riad*'s private garden is a palm-lined swimming pool. The hotel is situated within the medina walls, and it's a just a 10-minute walk to the main square and *souks*. Guests are greeted by a chauffeur-driven Bentley at the airport. **From \$45,500 per night. Contact Jean-Claude Messant, general manager, reservations@royalmansour.ma, +212 529 808 080, royalmansour.com**