

Marrakech

IN MOROCCO





Marrakech



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Editorial

The Pearl of the South



Bab Agnaou leads to Marrakech's main palaces

The moment the traveller sets foot in Marrakech, he is awestruck by the contrast in colours – the ochre of its adobe city walls, and its bougainvillea-covered exteriors, from behind which great bouquets of palm trees and lush greenery burst forth. A magnificent array of architecture set against the snow-capped peaks of the High Atlas Mountains, beneath a brilliant blue sky that reveals the city's true nature – a luxuriant, sun-soaked oasis, heady with the scent of the jasmine and orange blossom that adorn its gardens.

Within its adobe walls, in the sun-streaked shade, the medina's teeming streets are alive with activity. A hubbub of voices calling back and forth, vibrant colours, the air filled with the fragrance of cedar wood and countless spices. Sounds, colours and smells unite gloriously to compose an astonishing sensorial symphony.

Marrakech, city of legend, cultural capital, inspirer of artists, fashions and events; Marrakech with its art galleries, festivals, and exhibitions; Marrakech with its famous names, its luxurious palaces and its glittering nightlife. Marrakech, tourist capital for over a hundred years, cunningly blends the treasures of its age-old heritage with the vibrant energy of living cultures.

Yes, Marrakech is an unforgettable experience. New discoveries await you every time you return – and many have returned never to leave.



A city with a thousand years of history behind it



Marrakech, a thousand years of history

Marrakech has seen 5 dynasties come and go, each one leaving their indelible mark on its destiny. It was founded in 1062 by the Almoravids, whose greatest legacy was to bring water to the city, harnessing spring waters through an ingenious system of wells and piping networks. We owe them the city's Palmeraie, its gardens and orchards, and the many other amenities that led to its development and influence. Under their rule, Marrakech became the capital of Morocco.

The Almohads took over the reins in the 12th century, improving irrigation systems, enlarging the city walls, creating the town's first hospital – presided over by the great scholar and scientist Averroes – and, among other monuments, leaving us with the magnificent Koutoubia.



The Bahia Palace

Following this great period in the city's history, the Merinids conquered the Moroccan south in 1269, turning their backs on Marrakech and making Fez their capital.

When the Saadians from the Souss region came to power in 1554, the city regained its former status as capital of Morocco. A new era began, reaching its peak during the reign of Ahmed El-Mansour, known as El Dehbi, "the Golden", because of the fabulous wealth he amassed in Sudanese gold. He had the vast and luxurious El Badi Palace built, a replica of the Alhambra, adorned the city with mosques, fountains, and medersas (Koranic universities), and commissioned a magnificent necropolis in which the leading members of his dynasty were to be buried – the Saadian Tombs.



The Saadian Tombs are a magnificent royal necropolis in which the Dynasty's major monarchs are buried



In the 19th century, under the Alaouite dynasty, Moulay Slimane rebuilt the Ben Youssef Mosque and created the Menara Gardens, and Moulay Hassan and his son Moulay Abdelaziz edified the sumptuous Dar Si Said – the Bahia Palace. Following construction of the new town, Guéliz, in 1913, and of the Mamounia in 1923, Marrakech began to attract artists, writers and members of the world's high

aristocracy... The painter Jacques Majorelle laid out his famous garden there in 1931. Winston Churchill first stayed in the city in 1935, on a painting holiday, and went on to become a regular visitor, referring to his "beloved Marrakech" in his memoirs. And so many other famous names have also fallen under the city's spell and contributed to its international renown.

Not to be missed out on



The Koutoubia, Marrakech's "spiritual lighthouse"...

Most of the city's "unmissable" sights are to be found within the old city walls – the Koutoubia, the great square of Jemaa el Fna and the Menara are all symbolic of Marrakech.

The Almohads started on the building of the Koutoubia in 1150, and it took them 40 years to complete. With its simplicity of design, highly sophisticated decoration and perfectly balanced proportions, it is regarded as one of the Maghreb's most beautiful monuments. It served as a model for two sister mosques, the Giralda in Seville and the Hassan Tower in Rabat. Its 77-metre minaret can be seen from 25 kilometres away and, lit up in the evenings, it becomes the city's "spiritual lighthouse".

Jemaa el Fna is the living heart of the city, and is on UNESCO's Oral and Immaterial Heritage list. It owes its fame to its size, its bustle of activity and its unique atmosphere. Open only to pedestrians, it is a whirligig of people to meet and sights to see, scattered with

restaurant stalls offering an endless variety of food and drink. Jemaa el Fna really comes to life at night, with locals and visitors alike flocking to the terraces of the cafes that surround it. There are storytellers to listen to, fortunetellers to consult, acrobats to marvel at, and, of course, the famous Gnaoua dancers, leaping hither and thither to the hypnotic rhythm of their "krakachs" (metal castanets).

If it's a bit of peace and quiet you're after, then the Menara Gardens are just what you're looking for. The Almohads built a graceful summer pavilion there in the 14th century, its reflection shimmering on the waters of an artificial lake surrounded by an immense garden planted with olive trees. As night falls, the place becomes a wonderland, aglow with every shade of gold. The lake serves as a reservoir for irrigating the olive grove, and is supplied by a 700-year-old hydraulic system that harnesses water from the mountains and brings it in through 30 kilometres of pipes.



The Menara, for peace, tranquillity and quiet meditation



The Ben Youssef Medersa



The Dar Si-Said Museum

The Ben Youssef Medersa was built by the Saadians and is an undisputed jewel of Moroccan architecture, a great Koranic university composed of marble, stucco, mosaics and carved cedar wood, and which attracted students from throughout the Muslim world. Facing it, the Almoravid Koubba (or Koubba Ba'Adiyin), built in 1064, is all that is left of the Almoravids and their architecture. The nearby M'Nebhi Palace has been superbly restored and now houses the Marrakech Museum and its exhibitions of contemporary art and Moroccan cultural heritage.

Located near Bab Agnaou, the Saadian Tombs are a royal necropolis (14th to 16th century) adorned with

columns of Italian marble and topped by a finely worked cedar wood cupola. Not far away stand the imposing ruins of the El Badi Palace, once regarded as the wonder of the Muslim world and a source of meditation on bygone glories. Only its high walls remain, popular as a nesting place for the region's storks.

Just round the corner from the Bahia Palace and its gardens, the Dar Si Said Museum houses rich collections of popular arts and crafts from Marrakech and the surrounding Berber regions. Also close by is the Dar Tiskiwin Museum, home of the Bert Flint collection and a perfect complement to Dar Si Said.

A first look around the city and its surroundings



The Marrakech Theatre

Marrakech is really two cities standing side by side – the old town within its historic walls and the new town with its districts of Guéliz and l’Hivernage, and intersected by Avenue Mohammed VI. The city covers a good deal of ground, and is ideal for exploring on foot, by bicycle or by barouche, the traditional Marrakchi way of getting from one place to another.

Marrakech lies open to the air, and boasts numerous gardens and green spaces in its old and new towns alike. The Majorelle Garden, Àrsat Moulay Àbdessalam Park, the gardens of the Bahia Palace, and the Menara and Agdal orchards – each, in its own unique way, a haven of peace, relaxation, and pure delight!



The Palais des Congrès contains 17 meeting rooms of various capacities, adjustable to suit a wide range of situations



Marrakech, an oasis at the feet of the snow-capped Atlas



The Marrakech Palmeraie covers some 14,000 hectares, comprises over 100,000 trees, and is very well worth a tour in the traditional barouche. It is irrigated by means of “khattaras”, an ingenious system of underground pipes supplied by ground water.

The old town’s adobe walls are 19 km long and include a score

of gateways (“Bab” in Arabic). It takes a good two hours’ barouche ride to get all the way round them – provided you don’t make too many stops along the way, that is! Make the tour in the late afternoon, when the light is at its best. The gateways stand watch over all who enter and leave the city. Some, such as Bab el Debbagh and Bab Agnaou still preserve their original architecture.

Arts and crafts – the city's designer souks



The Moroccan caftan has inspired the greatest names in the world of fashion

There's nothing like wandering through the medina's souks if you want to get a real idea of the richness of Marrakchi craftsmanship and of the extraordinary know-how of the city's master craftsmen. These are some of the finest souks anywhere in Morocco, renowned for their diversity and lively atmosphere. They are organised by corporation – souk Cherratine for fine leather goods, Zrabi for carpets, Fekharine for pottery, Sebbaghine for dyers, Seffarine for copperware, and so on... The "mâalem" (master craftsman) is keeper of age-old know-how and the secrets of his craft.

Today, fresh developments are afoot in the Moroccan craft industry – tradition revisited, a combination of ancient and modern that is producing a plethora of ingenious adaptations and resulting in a range of highly original top-quality work in line with



contemporary taste. A good many designers, Moroccan and foreign alike, are busy reinterpreting materials and traditions and coming up with creations that mirror the latest trends in fashion. Marrakech has become a temple dedicated to design, and although most creators have their outlets located in the new town, in Guéliz, they are also increasingly to be found at work in the medina.

More than ever today, Marrakech is a city of artists, as is evidenced by the many art galleries that have come into being over the past few years, providing elegant venues for painters, sculptors and visual artists to exhibit and sell their works. Marrakech's literary cafes are havens of peace where you can browse through books on Morocco and acquaint yourself with the latest exhibitions while enjoying a glass of mint tea or a fresh fruit juice.



Moroccan craftsmanship perpetuates age-old know-how, and is the very symbol of a living culture

Creating in nickel silver

The process for producing nickel silver, an alloy composed of copper, zinc and nickel, was perfected in 1819. Marrakech's designers have found a highly creative use for the material – hammered, polished and engraved, it is turned into caskets, dishes, mirror frames jewellery, trays, and a host of other decorative items. Easy to machine and weld, its silvery brilliance goes perfectly with other materials traditionally employed by the city's craftsmen in production of woodwork, copperware, brocade and pottery.



Shopping in Marrakech

The medina's traditional souks stand side by side with Guéliz's elegant brand-name boutiques. The great names in Western fashion are all represented here, with fine leather goods, clothing, jewellery, and shoes revealing the modern side of the red city.



When the sun sets, Jemaa el Fna comes to life

Marrakech, The Fiery



Parks open to the world at large

The Arsat Moulay Abdessalam Cyber park

Arsat Moulay Abdessalam is one of the oldest of the city's parks, dating back to the 18th century. Since its restoration, however, it also happens to be the most modern, with interactive multimedia terminals installed along its pathways and Internet equipment on hand boasting the very latest in technology. You'll find excellent virtual guides to the city and to the park itself, with full information on its history and the many species of flora to be found there, as well as on the city's cultural life.

The Bahia Palace

(Palace of "the Beautiful")

Build in the late 19th century by the architect El Mekki, as a residence for the Vizier, Ba Ahmed Ben Moussa, the palace is a true masterpiece, remarkable for the sophistication of its decor, its gardens, fountains and tree-shaded courtyards, and also for its architectural design. The palace was home to the Vizier's family, which included 4 wives, 24 concubines and countless children.

The layout of its rooms, doors and corridors was designed to ensure that each occupant could protect his or her privacy and avoid unwanted meetings with others who lived there. It took 7 years to build – a fact at the origin of the Moroccan expression, "the Bahia is finally finished", referring to any piece of business that has taken time to get done.

The Majorelle Garden

This enchanting spot, a symphony of light and colour, filled with exotic flowers and plant life and alive with birdsong and the murmur of fountains, was created by the French painter Jacques Majorelle, who came to live in Marrakech in 1922. The artist painted the walls of his Art-Deco villa and garden a vibrant and luminescent ultramarine. Set as it is in the heart of an ochre red city, his blue garden certainly raises a few eyebrows – it is, however, the blue of Marrakchi skies! The property now belongs to the Pierre Bergé-Yves Saint-Laurent Foundation, and houses a museum of Islamic art, along with the ashes of the famous couturier himself.



The Majorelle Garden

A fairytale world



The Popular Arts Festival

A welcome fit for a prince

Palaces to dream of, luxury hotels and elegant riads – the fairytale world of Marrakech begins with a magnificent variety of accommodation, equipped with every modern comfort yet enabling visitors to immerse themselves to the full in the local culture.

Marrakech, the jet set's playground

The city is a second home to the international jet set. Artists, sportspeople, businesspeople – all its great names flock to Marrakech to relax and relive its magic. With a little luck you might bump into

Brad Pitt, and there are more than a few shopkeepers who will proudly produce photographs of themselves posing alongside Paul McCartney or Jeremy Irons.

Marrakchi festivals

International Film Festival, Popular Arts Festival, Magic Festival, Laughter Festival, “Caftan” Soirée – Marrakech is the chosen venue for countless events. Whatever the time of year, you’ll be sure to find plenty of entertainment on hand, and an opportunity to party to your heart’s content.



The Marrakech International Film Festival



Marrakech in all its flamboyancy



Mouth-watering Marrakech

You have the choice of sampling delicious Moroccan dishes or the finest in international cuisine. You can dine in gourmet restaurants or seated beneath a star-studded sky at one of the stalls in Jemaa el Fna. Whatever you do, however, don't leave Marrakech without trying the great local speciality, Tangia Marrakchia, a real institution whose flavour is not just a matter of its ingredients, but also of how they are cooked...

Marrakech by night

When night falls in Marrakech, a new life begins. You've got all the exotically medieval ambience of Jemaa El Fna, of course – or perhaps you'd prefer an elegant evening at the casino? Or a cabaret show? A pub? A nightclub? Whatever you decide to do, you'll be spoiled for choice!

Marrakech in a new light



*Oukaimeden,
for skiing fans*

Golfing in Marrakech

You have four greens to choose from, each with the stately Atlas Mountains as a backdrop. The Marrakech Royal Golf Club (27 holes) is the oldest. Built in 1923, it has seen a host of illustrious players tackle its course, including King Hassan II, Winston Churchill, Lloyd George, and President Eisenhower. The Palmeraie Golf Club (27 holes) is a delight for players of whatever handicap, thanks to the diversity of its holes. The Amelkis Golf (36 holes) is a very popular course in a spectacular setting, while the Samanah Golf Club (18 holes) is a “desert course”, as is reflected by the cacti, palm trees, olive trees and other plant life selected to adorn it.

Skiing in Marrakech

From Christmas to Easter, you can take to the slopes at the ski resort



of Oukaimeden, located just 75 km from the city and equipped in full compliance with international standards. Its ski slopes lie between 2500 and 3200 metres above sea level, on the northern face. What greater pleasure than to spend the day skiing the mountainsides and then return to enjoy an evening’s entertainment in Marrakech! In the summertime, the same slopes are ideal for exploration on foot.

Well-being in Marrakech

To ensure you keep on top form, the city’s major hotels, along with its many fitness centres and specialised institutes and beauty salons, are equipped with state-of-the-art facilities and offer a full range of quality services, including hammams, saunas, jacuzzis, massages, spas, relaxation, and body and beauty care.



Getting into the swing with the Atlas Mountains in the background



Taking to the water in Marrakech

Among the city’s countless swimming pools, the Aquaparc is particularly well worth the visit for its toboggan slides, its immense wave pool, its two children’s lagoons and its half-kilometre of olive-tree bordered watercourse. For something still more out of the ordinary, drive 10 km along the road to Ourika and you’ll come to 80 metres of sun-soaked fine sandy beach, complete with deckchairs and Balinese beds, and with excellent restaurant service and entertainment on hand – a true haven of well-being!

Marrakech from the skies

If you want to appreciate the beauty of Marrakech to the full, then take to the skies!. From the silence of a hot-air balloon, you can drift over the imperial city as the wind takes you and look down upon the stunning contrast between its ochre walls and the countryside that surrounds them – a giddy spectacle of Berber villages, snow-capped mountain peaks and timeless desert. An unforgettable experience, which you can also enjoy by helicopter or ultra-light aircraft.

The hinterland – lakes, mountains and waterfalls



On the shores of Lake Lalla Takerkoust

Lake Lalla Takerkoust

A trip to Lake Lalla Takerkoust, 40 Km from Marrakech, makes for a refreshing outing, and you can explore the surrounding countryside on foot, by quad, or by cross car. Savour the local cuisine at one of the inns along the lakeshore, while enjoying the superb views they afford. 20 km further on, the Berber village of Amizmiz is well worth visiting for its splendid setting, its potteries and its Tuesday souk.

The Ourika Valley

30 km south of Marrakech, the Ourika Valley lies in the first foothills of the High Atlas, a

beautiful expanse of luxuriant green, its adobe villages clinging to the mountainsides. The “Jardin du Safran” in the village of Tnine-Ourika is a saffron farm open to visitors, while a little further on, the Bio-aromatic Gardens grow 45 varieties of aromatic and medicinal plants, which you are invited to taste as well as to smell. The terraced Timalizene Garden also offers visitors its special Berber tea, scented with home-grown herbs. The road stops at Setti-Fatma, at the end of the valley, but the more adventurous can continue on foot to the seven waterfalls that await their discovery.



A Berber village in the Ourika Valley



The Ouzoud Waterfalls

Morocco's most famous waterfalls are well worth the 150-kilometre drive from Marrakech. Once past the village of Ouzoud and its multitude of open-air food stalls, you carry on downwards, along a well-maintained road bordered with olive trees, until you come to the foot of the falls themselves. Some 110 metres high, their waters tumble from

one level to the next, their fine spray adorning the scene with a permanent rainbow halo. You can enjoy a swim there, while observing the antics of the local rhesus monkeys.

Just a step away



Messages left 2000 metres up the mountainside by our distant ancestors

Tizi-n-Test and Tizi-n-Tichka

Two passes cross the High Atlas into the deep south. Tizi-n-Test links Marrakech to Taroudant while Tizi-n-Tichka takes you to Ouarzazate. The Tizi-n-Test road is one of the most spectacular in Morocco, climbing the mountain slopes through magnificent scenery to a height of 2092 metres and offering breath-taking views over the Souss Valley. The Tizi-n-Tichka road runs through the pass at an altitude of over 2300 metres, through mineral-grey lunar landscapes that gradually take on ochre tones as you descend to Ouarzazate.

Asni and Ouirgane

Asni, a little village on the Tizi-n-Test road, is famous for its bustling Saturday morning souk and its panoramic views. The region is a popular sport hunting area (with game including gabra partridges, wild boar, turtledoves and common quail). 17 km from Asni, the village of Ouirgane is set in alpine countryside and makes a very pleasant stop-off for the night, in one of its delightful little hotels, some of which are former hunting lodges.

The rock art of the High Atlas

The heights of the Atlas Mountains south of Marrakech boast some remarkable prehistoric rock carving sites – located near the ski resort of Oukaimeden, on the Yagour plateau and around Demnate (Jbel G'hat) as well as at Tizi N'Tirghist (2390 metres). The carvings, some of which are gigantic in size, decorate slabs of sandstone and depict weapons, battle scenes and animals as well as spelling out Lybico-Berber inscriptions similar to those found in the Moroccan Sahara. They are of uncertain date (possibly 1st millennium BC).

The Toubkal National Park

The Toubkal National Park begins in the central High Atlas, between the N'Fiss and Ourika Valleys. Its 38,000 hectares boast a remarkable biodiversity – green oaks, thujas, junipers and herbaceous plants, many species of birds of prey, including royal eagles, booted eagles and Bonelli's eagles, along with such rarities as Barbary sheep, lynxes and Cuvier's gazelles. Under the experienced eye of a mountain guide, you can make the climb in two days, with the night spent bivouacking or in a mountain hut.



A Berber village in the High Atlas

Information and useful addresses

Practical information

Entry formalities:

A valid passport for a stay of less than 90 days is required. An identity card may suffice, depending on country of origin, if the trip is organised by a travel agency for a group of over 8 people. A visa is required for some nationalities – enquire at a Moroccan consulate or diplomatic representation in your country. No specific vaccinations are required for entry into the Kingdom of Morocco. If you are bringing your pet along with you, however, you will need to be able to produce an anti-rabies certificate less than 6 months old.

Changing money:

Moroccan currency is the dirham, made up of 100 centimes. Foreign currency must be exchanged at banks or other accredited establishments.

Time zone:

Morocco is in the Greenwich time zone, and time is G.M.T.

Event Calendar:

January : Marrakech International Marathon
 February : "Coupe de l'Info" ski cup
 March : Morocco Classic Rally
 March : Magic Festival
 March : AWTÂR Haouz Cultural Festival
 April : Blue Cup
 May : Marrakech Grand Prix
 July : National Popular Arts Festival
 October : Ultra Trail Atlas Toubkal
 December: Marrakech International Film Festival

Useful addresses and contacts

Regional Tourist Office:

Avenue Mohammed V,
 Place Abdelmoumen Ben Ali
 Tel. (+212) 05 24 43 61 31
 Fax :(+212) 05 24 43 60 57

Regional Tourism Council :

Place Youssef Iben Tachfine
 Marrakech Medina
 Tel. : (+212) 05 24 38 52 61
 Fax : (+212) 05 24 38 52 49

ONCF Railway station :

Boulevard Mohammed VI
 Call Center : (+212) 08 90 20 30 40
 Website :www.oncf.ma

Ménara Airport :

Call center : (+212) 08 90 00 08 00

Golf clubs:

Golf d'Amelkis
 Palmeraie Golf Club
 Royal Golf de Marrakech
www.golfdumaroc.com

Weather forecast : www.meteoma.net

Office des Changes

(Currency regulation authority):
www.oc.gov.ma

Emergency phone numbers :

Police 19
 Fire Brigade 150
 Directory enquiries 160
 Road safety services 177





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WWW.VISITMOROCCO.COM