



Footprint Focus

Marrakech, High Atlas & Essaouira

Julius Honor

*"Sets the pace for
the rest to follow."*

Michaël Palin



Marrakech listings

For hotel and restaurant price codes and other relevant information, see pages 10-16.

Where to stay

Marrakech p26, maps p32 and p37

It is a good idea to reserve rooms, as demand for accommodation can outstrip supply in Marrakech, especially around Christmas and Easter holidays. Riads aside, the larger upmarket hotels are located in 3 areas: in the Hivernage garden city area and along the neighbouring Av Mohammed VI; in a development on the Casablanca road in the Semlalia neighbourhood; and in the Palmeraie east of the city. Hivernage is close to Guéliz, and a short taxi ride into Jemaâ el Fna in the old town.

There is a lack of stylish mid-range hotels in the medina; those that do exist are mostly grouped around Riad Zitoun el Kedim, to the southeast of Jemaâ el Fna, but they tend to fill up far in advance. There are, however, some good medium-priced hotels in Guéliz, the centre of the *ville nouvelle*.

The vast majority of cheaper hotels are 5 to 10 mins' walk from Jemaâ el Fna, in the alleys off Rue Bab Agnaou (Av Prince Moulay Rachid), Riad Zitoun el Kedim and the Kennaria neighbourhood behind the Café-Hotel de France.

Riads in the medina

Always double-check your riad reservation at peak times of year (end of year holidays, Easter, May/June).

€€€€ **Dar Les Cigognes**, 108 Rue de Berima, T0524-382740, www.lescigognes.com. Open since 2001, **Dar Les Cigognes** is a luxurious take on the riad-cum-boutique hotel. With just 11 rooms and suites, an award-winning restaurant and cooking school, full-service spa and a superb location next to the palaces, it is one of the very few riads in the old town with street access,

making it very easy to find. Emphasis on service. Part of the Sanssouci Collection. €€€€ **Le Nid**, 40 Derb Saka, Mellah, T0524-382740, www.lenid.co. This luxurious modern 4-bedroom riad adjacent to the spice souks offers a 24-hr butler, personal chef, cinema room and sun terrace. Ideal for families or small groups. Part of the Sanssouci Collection.

€€€€ **Maison MK**, 14 Derb Sebaai, Quartier Ksar, T0524-376173, www.maisonmk.com. Vibrant, bright and exceedingly hip, the 6 suites of the luxurious **Maison MK** combine traditional riad decoration standards – *tadelakt* and wrought iron – with contemporary Moroccan design elements and all mod cons. So funky is the place that even the mint teapots are bright coloured and two-toned. The cinema room has a 2.5-m screen as well as an Xbox and you can put in advance requests for what you'd like in your minibar. Each room has iPod and mobile phone. For 22,000dh you can have the whole riad. Minimum stay of 3 nights, price includes airport transfers.

€€€€ **Riad Charai**, 54 Diour Jdad, Zaouia, T0524-437211, www.riadcharai.com. The former residence of the Pacha of Marrakech's secretary, this elegant boutique riad sleeps up to 16 people in enormous suites, of which some have twin bed arrangements. Decor is full of velvet tones and sultry low-level lighting, and lounge areas and terrace are beautiful. Service is top-notch. There's a hammam, a massage room, a spectacular, turquoise pool (4 m by 9 m – unusually large for a riad) and a huge garden patio. Situated north of the souks, it's a good 15 mins' walk to the main Jemaâ el Fna square.

€€€€ **Riad El Fenn**, Derb Moullay Abdullah Ben Hezzian, Bab el Ksar, T0524-441210, www.riadelfenn.com. Possibly Marrakech's most spectacularly luxurious riad, **El Fenn** also does the simple things well. The design is striking – deep red wal

coexist with more classic riad style, and a fine collection of contemporary art adorns the walls. There are 21 rooms, most of which have private fires, and one of which has a private, glass-bottomed rooftop pool, through which sunlight streams into the room below. Owned by Vanessa Branson, but run with laconic French style, **El Fenn** has some great ecological policies: it uses solar panels and has its own organic garden outside the city which provides the riad with fresh produce. There is a fine restaurant and bar, loads of cosy cushioned seating nooks and 3 pools with shaded terraces. The only danger is that once inside, you'll hardly want to venture out!

€€€€ **Riad el Ouarda**, 5 Derb Taht Sour Lakbir Taht es Sour, Zaouia el Abbasia, T0524-385714, www.riadelouarda.com.

Around 2 courtyards, the larger of which has a small pool, Ouarda has 4 double rooms and 5 suites, all with their own theme. There's a modern feel to the place; plain white walls and low furniture laid out with pebbles combine with restrained use of traditional Moroccan tiles and fabrics. Some suites have their own patio and open fireplace. Twin bed arrangements possible. Located on the northern side of the medina, it's a fair way from the majority of tourists.

€€€€ **Riad Enija**, 9 Derb Mesfioui, Rahba Lakdima, T0524-440926, www.riadenija.com. 15 rooms and suites with fabulously extravagant metal-framed and 4-poster beds around a truly jungliferous courtyard. Swiss- and Swedish-managed, every room is done in a different style, though all share a sense of exotic romance: modern European touches mix with an extravagance of tiles, arches, carved plaster and draped fabrics. Not all rooms have en suite bathrooms, though some have their own private veranda. Central location in medina and excellent service, with breakfast included. Annoyingly, prices are not shown on the website.

€€€€ **Riad Kaiss**, 65 Derb Jdid, Riad Zitoun Kedim, T0524-440141, [\[kaiss.com\]\(http://kaiss.com\). Open since 2000, **Riad Kaiss** was once a wing of the Vizier's harem. Opulent and decadent in equal measure, with 9 rooms and suites, hammam, full service spa, and pool, it's on a quiet side street just steps from Jemaà el Fna. It also has an award-winning restaurant and cooking school. Part of the Sanssouci Collection.](http://www.riad</p></div><div data-bbox=)

€€€€ **Riad Zolah**, 114-116 Derb el Hammam, T0524-387535, www.riadzolah.com. Exemplary service sets **Zolah** apart. There are complimentary *babouches*, a mobile phone is lent to guests in case you get lost, and the welcome is warm and friendly. It's also exceptionally beautiful: one courtyard has 4 orange trees, the other a plunge pool, and the 17th-century building retains some original plasterwork. Alan Keohane's black-and-white photos of Morocco decorate the place, there's a selection of Moroccan wines, 3 rooms have working fireplaces, and spectacular silk drapes and romantic lighting add to the special atmosphere. Free Wi-Fi. Free airport transfers.

€€€€-€€€ **Riad Africa**, 94-95 Derb Sakka, Riad Zitoun Lakdim, Tel: +44(0)20-7193 2461, www.riadafrica.co.uk. Individually decorated a/c rooms, with iPod docking stations, have en suite bathrooms with *tadelakt* walls. A plunge pool is set in an attractive palm-filled courtyard. There's a fresh juice bar and rooftop garden, and a massage room with hammam. Moroccan breakfast, Wi-Fi and mobile phones provided for contacting staff whilst out are included in the price. Dinner is also available.

€€€€-€ **Equity Point Hostel**, 80 Derb el Hammam, Mouassine, T0524-440793, www.equity-point.com. 300 m from Jemaà el Fna, this is a hostel by name but a riad in style, with lamps and arches, sofas and cushions, big mirrors and shiny red-walled bathrooms. You can stay in an en suite double for about the same price you'd pay in a riad proper (€€€€), or go budget in an 8-bed dorm (€). It's open 24/7, and breakfast and internet is included. Comprehensive online booking system.