



DARLES
CIGOGNES

The House of Storks

DAR LES CIGOGNES

The House of Storks



I must confess I do love the Mellah, the ancient Jewish quarter of the Medina. I love ambling through the narrow alleyways and the covered Bab Es Salam market, having tea on the sleepy Place des Ferblantiers lined by spice and metal-craft merchants, and having a sun-downer on one of the panoramic terrace cafés, watching Marrakech's famed storks.

The stork is holy in Marrakech, and there are laws ensuring their protection. Now iconic in the city, they represent good luck, though the origin of this belief is lost to myth and legend. Although storks are to be seen all through the Medina, many nests are clustered on the ancient crumbling walls of the 16th century Badii Palace. Nestled across from the historic ruins of the Badii, as well as the very much current Royal Palace of Marrakech, is Dar les Cigognes - The House of Storks.

This mainstay of Marrakech Riads was bought by the owners after experiencing a typical breath-taking sunset from the roof terrace. Dar les Cigognes gives you front row seats as late afternoon gives over to the soft hues of twilight, while male storks circle high above in the clear sky. Females, guarding their nests, cock their heads skyward and clap their bills. Perched on one leg, storks stand sentinel over the night.

The Riad itself dates back to the 17th century, and has served through the ages as the outer defences of the Palace Quarter; home of an illustrious spice trader; a Jewish physician's residence; and the hearth of two Berber families. Restoration and conversion into a modern comfortable guesthouse was completed by architect Charles Boccara with exquisite deference to Andalusian inspirations, mixed with traditional Moroccan handcrafted arts.



Accommodation varies in categories from superior rooms to suites. Dar les Cigognes also offers a private and secluded Riad nearby, 'Le Nid', a four-bedroom villa, located extremely close-by behind Place des Ferblantiers.

The rooms at Dar les Cigognes are equipped with independent climate control and very high quality bed linen.

The property offers free internet access.

Full meal services are available and the menu changes daily to provide fresh and seasonal options. Ingredients are grown locally and are organic. While fresh dishes are offered daily, special requests are also met. A sumptuous

DAR LES CIGOGNES

communal meal with fresh tanjias is offered on weekends at a nearby sister property, Riad Kaïss. Daily cooking classes at both establishments are also available and best requested in advance. Guests may also accompany the head chef on his daily rounds acquiring fresh ingredients in the local markets. Massages and a hammam are available, and beauty treatments are on offer. Sansoucci Collection has developed their own exclusive range of massage and bath products based on the local anti-oxidant Argan oil. All ingredients are organic. There is a small boutique

The guestrooms are organized around two central courtyards joined by an enclosed passage that bridges an alley of the Mellah. The themes of the eleven suites and deluxe rooms attest to the cultural heritage of the Riad, Marrakech and the region. Accompanying works of art and complementary *tadelakt* shades contribute to individual room themes: the mint-green Safi, the silver Argent, the mustard Bérbere. Moreover, the two courtyards feature discreet and comfortable alcoves for whiling away the hours with a good book, or a sumptuous home-cooked meal by the friendly kitchen staff.

A charming custom is shared on Saturdays, when Dar les Cigognes invites its guests and guests of an affiliated Riad to a buffet dinner of customary Moroccan salads and traditional slow-steamed *tanjias*, a hearty stew slow-cooked for hours over coals in a hammam. The delightful evening passes in the candle-draped main courtyard, complete with local Moroccan musicians.

Guest comfort at Dar les Cigognes is paramount, and features such as 300-threadcount Egyptian cotton bedlinen are taken as given. Further pampering is provided by hammam scrubs and invigorating massages with exclusive local oils and balms. Revived, one can lounge on the double-sized roof terrace, under lush palms, a casual scent of orange blossoms on the breeze, and enjoy the sun, the quiet and the panoramic view of the nearby Atlas Mountains. And, of course, the storks.

*located o
with del
handicra
and fash
The Riad
of excurs
Marrake
the surro
such as s
and sigh
Marrake
nearby re
and walk
Mountai
driver an
be arrang
conveni
workshop
througho
at Dar le
including
photograp
website fo
events (pa*



RIAD KAÏSS

*The Magic of
Eight Lamps*

RIAD KAÏSS

The Magic of Eight Lamps



It is my first night in Marrakech and my first in Morocco, and I alight from an airport cab in the chaos of cross-roads that comprise Marché el Mellah, deep in the Medina. I am bid follow a gentleman in traditional Jellabah down a warren of quiet alleys and into the dark. A few minutes and a handful of turns later, we arrive at a nondescript door. Once through, I am standing before a fascinatingly tranquil courtyard complete with a softly gurgling fountain, a waft of jasmine on the slight breeze, and an array of small candles punctuating the mysterious night shadows.

This is my first glimpse of a Riad, my first hours in the Magreb, and my first contact with warm welcoming Marrakchis. A young woman guides me to a cushioned nook in a second courtyard, where stacked trays of small sweets await me. Mint tea quickly arrives. I am captured by the flicker of the small lamps against the intricate tilework. Gentle North African rhythms pulse from some hidden speakers. This is check-in at Riad Kaïss.

There are eight lamps hanging by the entrance door, signifying eight guest rooms in this very stylish and thoroughly curious establishment. Riad Kaïss comprises three floors centered around two adjoining courtyards, and the consistent pink theme running throughout, acknowledging the hues of the Medina and Marrakech's status as 'The Red City', assures that you are never quite sure exactly where you find yourself. Far from being unsettling, Riad Kaïss allows you to lose yourself within its tranquil walls and yet still feel at home.

The multi-level roof terraces contribute to the maze-like quality of the Riad. For those seeking escape and relaxation, whether



Riad Kaïss is composed of two connecting courtyards and has nine guest rooms, each richly decorated and original with a blend of traditional Maghreb and African furnishings. They vary in categories from superior rooms to suites. Some rooms can be twinned for parties travelling together. Riad Kaïss also offers a private and secluded Riad nearby, 'Le Nid', a four-bedroom villa, located just behind Place des Ferblantiers. The rooms at Riad Kaïss are equipped with independent climate control and very high quality bed linen. The property offers free internet access. Riad Kaïss offers full meal services and the



RIAD KAÏSS

allowing the day to slowly trudge past as you take a leisurely breakfast in a curtained nook; lounging with an engaging book on the very upper tented sun terrace; taking a requisite refreshing plunge in the smart dipping pool; or enjoying afternoon tea around traditional bronze low tables, Riad Kaïss is the perfect tonic to the energy and amusing anarchy that Marrakech offers just outside the Riad's walls.

Indeed, many of the Riad's features, public sitting and dining areas, spa, hammam, and the pool itself seem at first hidden. In fact they are designed to maximize privacy and quiet, and their remoteness prompts further exploration into this uniquely designed building.

The accommodation ventures from a modest twin room to a grand honeymoon suite with its own private balcony complete with lounge chairs and tented bed, lest one be tempted to sleep under African stars. A ninth grand suite, presumably with a ninth symbolic lamp at Riad Kaïss' main entrance door, has been added for those who enjoy the modesty of a Riad with the comfort of a grand resort. Perched at the height of the upper roof terrace, it is accessible by a lower entrance and is set off from the roof terrace as an exquisite retreat.

The Riad furnishings are an inspired mix of traditional Moroccan hand-craftsmanship with African artifacts, whose original founder Parisian Christian Ferre meticulously scoured the markets of North Africa to acquire. Inspired by the rebirth of Riads happening in Marrakech in the 1990s, Monsieur Ferre built his own perfect version and then moved in. You'll want to as well.

products based on the local anti-oxidant Argan oil. All ingredients are organic.

There is a small boutique located on the premises with delightful handicrafts, jewellery and fashions.

The Riad offers a range of excursions within Marrakech and also in the surrounding areas, such as shopping and sightseeing in Marrakech, golf at nearby resorts, and tours and walks in the Atlas Mountains. A private driver and car can also be arranged for ultimate convenience. Various workshops are conducted throughout the year at Riad Kaïss, including pottery and photography. Check the website for events (page 230).

