



HEAVEN SCENT At the Villa des Orangers, the entrance is lined with candles and after dark the courtyard is ringed with dozens of flickering nightlights, making it one of the most romantic riads in Marrakesh

Win a 15-day trekking holiday in the High Atlas Mountains

The Sunday Telegraph has teamed up with leading footwear manufacturer Hi-Tec Outdoor and Exodus Travel, the UK's number one adventure tour operator, to offer one lucky reader the chance to win two places on a fantastic Moroccan adventure.

The winner and a friend will enjoy a 15-day, fully-supported trek through the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco, including an optional climb of Mount Toubkal, North Africa's highest peak. The trek will take in some

of the most remote and unspoilt areas of this breathtaking mountain range and, to finish off, there will even be time for a day exploring and shopping in the souks of Marrakesh before the flight home.

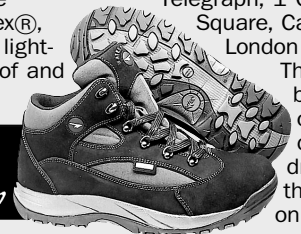
The winners and five runners-up will also take home a pair of Hi-Tec's latest walking boot, the Ravage Sympatex®, worth £60. This lightweight, waterproof and stylish boot is

guaranteed to keep your feet cool, dry and safe at all times, whatever the weather or terrain.

To enter, just tell us which mountain can be climbed on the Moroccan trek? Answers on a postcard to Morocco Competition, Travel Desk, 12th Floor, Sunday Telegraph, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DT.

The winner will be the sender of the first correct entry drawn from the postbag on Friday.

exodus
The Different Holiday



Behind the blank walls lies a world of tranquillity

A riad is an urban house, typically built around an open courtyard planted with citrus trees, often with a central fountain. All the rooms are arranged around the courtyard, with windows overlooking this cool inner sanctum.

To the outside world, the riad merely presents a heavy door and blank walls, which makes the ornate interiors – the *zelige* (traditional mosaic) floors, *tadlakt* (smooth, shiny plaster) walls and *zouak* (intricately painted) woodwork – all the more entrancing, though you might find it a little disconcerting not to be able to see the outside world from your bedroom window.

The majority of the riad hotels are recent restorations, with six or seven guestrooms. This results in a really personal service. Some are tucked away at the end of an (apparently) nameless alleyway, some are on main thoroughfares (which does make them easier to find by taxi). Most serve excellent local food though they are usually run

as *maison d'hôtes*, requiring guests to indicate each day whether they intend to dine in or not; and many can be rented in their entirety. An ability to speak French helps as not all hotel staff speak English.

Here are five of the best riads among the several dozen in Marrakesh. All are within a short walk of the Djemma el Fna main square. Where appropriate, details of operators offering packages are included.

Tranquil

Riad Noga 78 Derb Jdid, Douar Graoua (00212 4437 7670; www.riadnoga.com). In the visitors' book, guests frequently describe the Riad Noga "as an oasis in the chaos that is Marrakesh". A cliché but true: to reach this lovely riad you must negotiate a labyrinth of narrow, high-walled lanes leading away from crowded Djemma el Fna.

The central courtyard, with its orange trees and cosy recess seating, is as peaceful as the lanes outside. Through an archway is a second courtyard with a bar and swimming pool

while up on the roof are several pretty terraces with views over the medina and up to the Atlas Mountains.

The seven guestrooms are simply decorated, with rugs scattered across tiled floors, little vases of roses and dishes of sweet pastries and beds piled with cushions (ask for the Red Room, which has an open fireplace and a striking cupola ceiling in the bathroom).

Breakfast can be taken on the roof terrace or at any of the small tables dotted around the riad, while dinner – perhaps a delicious lamb and almond tagine – is served in the cosy, candlelit dining room. **Cost** Doubles from about £93 a night; Red Room, from about £136 per night; Scott Dunn World (020 8682 5010; www.scottdunn.com) offers four nights' b & b at Riad Noga for £595 per person, including flights and transfers.

Five-star luxury

Villa des Orangers 6 Rue Sidi Mimoun (44 384 638; www.villadesorangers.com). The 16-

room Villa des Orangers is made up of two large houses, with two sizeable courtyards and has direct access onto a main street. It is probably the most romantic riad in Marrakesh – the entrance is lined with candles and at night the main courtyard is ringed with dozens of flickering nightlights while local musicians croon a medley of Moroccan favourites. You can opt to have supper in one of the sumptuously upholstered courtyard recesses rather than the dining room. Then drift back to your room and hang the "do not disturb" fez on your door.

There is a rooftop pool and some rooms have private terraces. **Cost** Doubles from about £193; suites from £253. Scott Dunn World (020 8682 5010; www.scottdunn.com) offers four nights' b & b at Villa Des Orangers from £795 per person, including flights and transfers.

Inspirational

Dar les Cigognes 108 rue de Berima (4438 2740;

www.lescigognes.com). Named after the *cigognes*, or storks, that sit on the ramparts of the Royal Palace opposite (like the Villa des Orangers, Dar les Cigognes has street access), the former merchant's home has been beautifully restored by a dedicated team of local craftsmen using traditional techniques.

Each of the five guestrooms exemplifies a different decorative style, from the richly coloured Sahara room with a desert landscape painted on blue walls, to the ethereal Silver room with silver-coloured walls, pale tiled floor and draped baldaquin bed.

The public rooms are all equally stunning – anyone interested in Moroccan design will find it difficult to drag themselves away. **Cost** Doubles from £80 a night.

Glamorous

Riad Kaiss 65 derb Jdid, Riad zitoune Kédim (4444 0141). It took its French architect owner Christian Ferre three years to restore this gorgeous riad, where fountains play in the grand

courtyard. Besides its eight bedrooms, a large salon on the first floor and hung terraces, there is a swimming pool, hammam, and a rooftop tea pagoda. At every turn there is some new decorative effect to admire or handwoven fabric to covet; traditional lamps and porcelain are everywhere and piles of books and magazines cover every surface. **Cost** Doubles from £62 a night. Four nights' b & b with Morocco Travel (020 7352 5589; www.realmorocco.com) costs £562 per person, including flights and transfers.

Simple

Dar Al Assad 29 Derb Hajra, Dabbachi (4442 7065; www.ilovemarrakesh.com). Room numbers seem to be anathema in a riad – the painter/decorator owner has named his four guestrooms after precious stones – amethyst, ruby, jade and emerald.

The riad is not exclusively Moroccan in appearance – there are decorative influences from Asia, America and Europe – and although there is no pool,

there is a very pretty terrace and lovely patio. **Cost** Doubles from £80 a night.

Rent the whole riad

Riads lend themselves perfectly to being rented out in their entirety – for family get-togethers, for example, or for special anniversaries – and are particularly suited to those who want the freedom of a rented villa with the service of a hotel. Marrakesh Riads (4438 5858; www.marrakech-riads.net) currently has five renovated riads, all within walking distance of the Djemma el Fna, which you can stay in on a b & b basis (for between £30–£93) or rent whole.

Dar Zelije, for example, has four rooms, two with private terrace, and costs from about £337 a night while the more modest four-room Dar Yasmin costs about £156 per night.

Riad Souika, available through Morocco Travel (www.realmorocco.com) is a three-room riad within the medina with a courtyard fountain, sitting room

with TV and fireplace, fully equipped kitchen and two terraces.

It comes with the services of a Moroccan houseman to prepare breakfast and drinks and costs £535 per person for four nights, based on six sharing between now and April 9, including flights and transfers.

For details of other riads in Marrakesh, contact Morocco Travel (020 7352 5589; www.realmorocco.com) or visit www.riad-2000.com, which lists almost every riad in the city plus prices and has an online booking facility. Villa specialists The Owners' Syndicate (020 7801 9802; www.ownerssyndicate.com) also offers riads in Morocco.

Getting there

British Airways (0845 773 3377; www.ba.com) has daily flights to Marrakesh from Heathrow and five flights a week from Gatwick, operated by GB Airways, from £288.