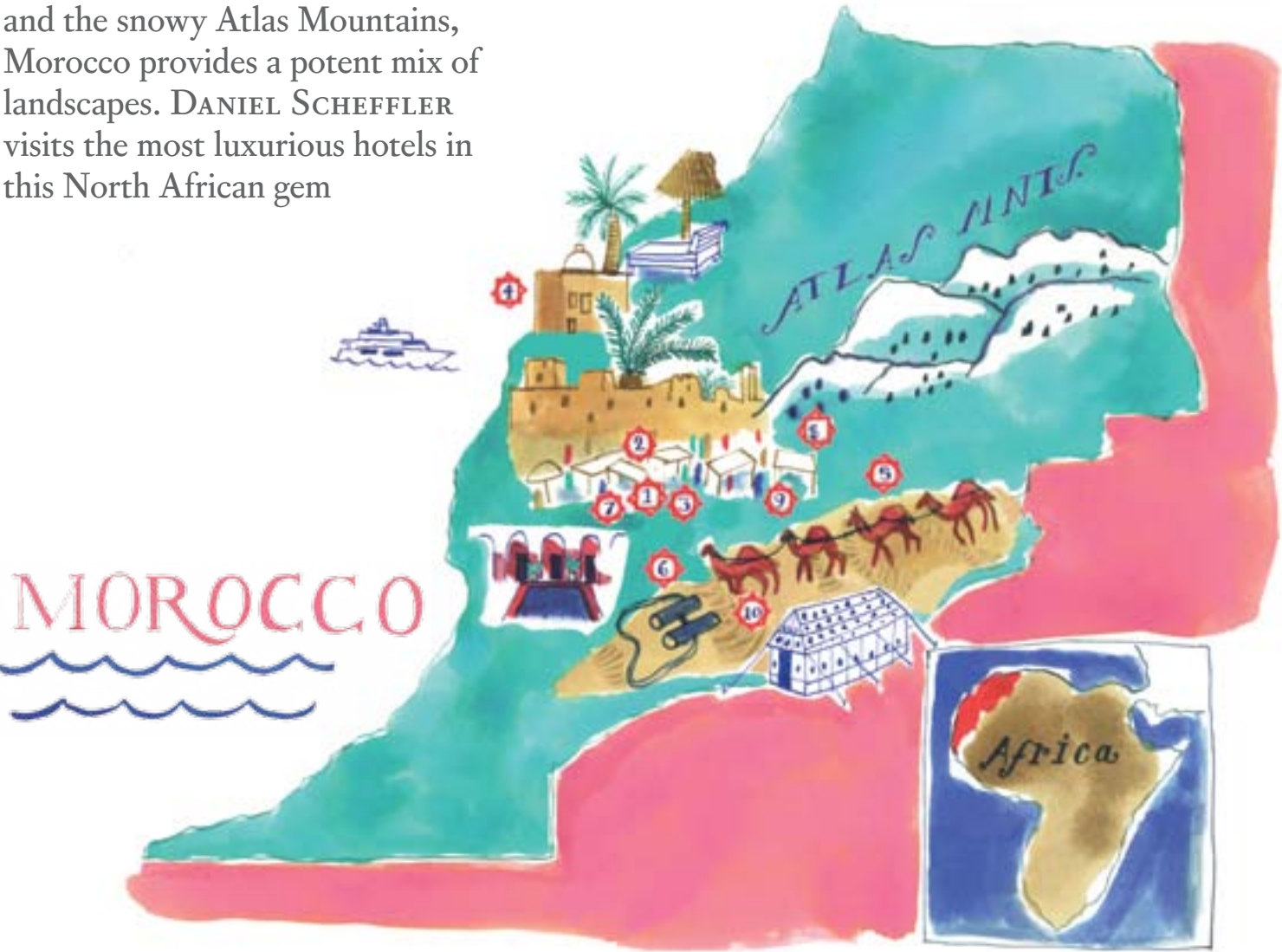




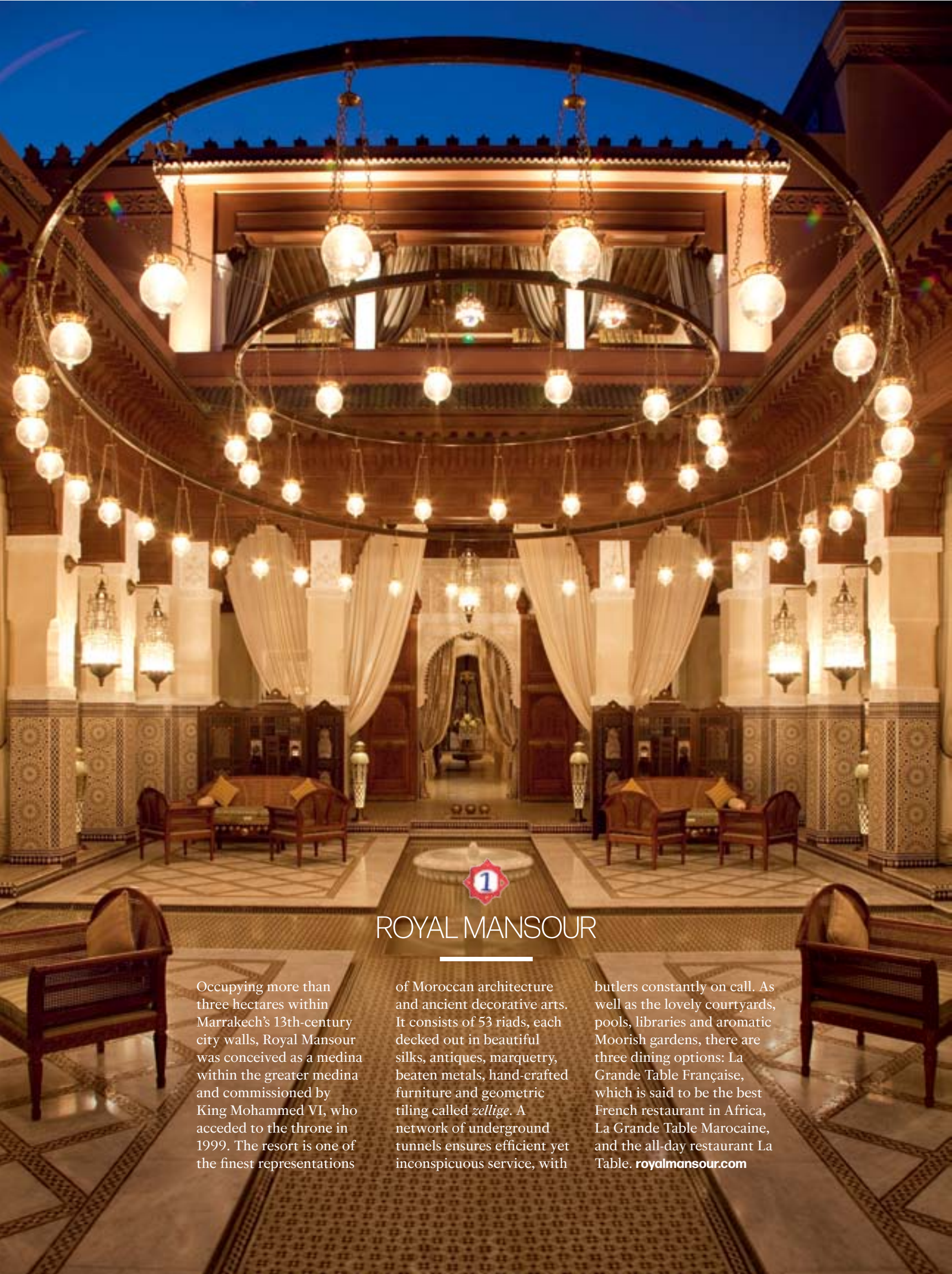
Moorish Dreams

From ancient trading cities and secluded beaches to desert dunes and the snowy Atlas Mountains, Morocco provides a potent mix of landscapes. DANIEL SCHEFFLER visits the most luxurious hotels in this North African gem

- ① Royal Mansour
- ② La Sultana
- ③ Riad Mena
- ④ La Sultana Oulidia
- ⑤ Dar Ahlam Maison des Rêves
- ⑥ Kasbah Tamadot
- ⑦ Selman
- ⑧ Kasbah Bab Ourika
- ⑨ Amanjena
- ⑩ Erg Chigaga Desert Camp



IMAGES COURTESY OF (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT): KASBAH TAMADOT; ROYAL MANSOUR; RIAD MENA; DAR AHLAM MAISON DES RÊVES; KASBAH TAMADOT; RIAD MENA; SELMAN; LA SULTANA OULIDIA; DAR AHLAM MAISON DES RÊVES



1

ROYAL MANSOUR

Occupying more than three hectares within Marrakech's 13th-century city walls, Royal Mansour was conceived as a medina within the greater medina and commissioned by King Mohammed VI, who acceded to the throne in 1999. The resort is one of the finest representations

of Moroccan architecture and ancient decorative arts. It consists of 53 riads, each decked out in beautiful silks, antiques, marquetry, beaten metals, hand-crafted furniture and geometric tiling called *zellige*. A network of underground tunnels ensures efficient yet inconspicuous service, with

butlers constantly on call. As well as the lovely courtyards, pools, libraries and aromatic Moorish gardens, there are three dining options: La Grande Table Française, which is said to be the best French restaurant in Africa, La Grande Table Marocaine, and the all-day restaurant La Table. royalmansour.com



2

LA SULTANA

Set in Marrakech's golden triangle of historic sites—adjacent to El Badi Palace and a short walk from the Bahia Palace and Jemaa el Fna square—La Sultana charms visitors with its privacy and authentic Moroccan aesthetic. The location, where the city's cognoscenti have come out to play for centuries, is filled with Moorish and Berber history. Each of the hotel's 28 rooms is individually designed around a sculpture or piece of art to reflect

the area's heritage, and staff deliver delicious tasting menus directly to the private terraces. If you love to people-watch then head to one of the numerous shaded balconies and gaze down at the colourful riot of street vendors and donkeys below. Pink marble walls and floors set the traditional spa apart, and therapists use spices and ancient perfumes as part of the relaxation and healing process. lasultanahotels.com





RIAD MENA

This five-bedroom riad, or traditional courtyard house, nestles between the narrow lanes of the bustling medina of old Marrakech. Refurbished by designer Romain Michel-Ménère, who is based in the city, and the art-loving owner, Philomena Schurer Merckoll, the exclusive property was originally

a private home and opened its doors in June. Most of the hotel's produce, including olive oil, herbs and honey, is sourced from its own spectacular permaculture farm just outside the city in the Ourika Valley. Guests can spend the heat of the day relaxing in the hammam, getting lost in a library,

or cruise out to the farm to swim in the natural pool, picnic under olive trees or practise yoga on a terrace overlooking the Atlas Mountains. In the evening, local chefs prepare traditional fare, such as tagine and couscous, and old films are screened in the courtyard under the stars. riadmenaandbeyond.com

IMAGES: RICHARD POWERS



LA SULTANA OUALIDIA

There's something gentle and poetic about La Sultana Oualidia, set on the Moroccan riviera. With just 12 suites, the quietly elegant hotel sits on the edge of Oualidia lagoon overlooking salt marshes and the wild surf beyond a rocky breakwater. Each room is designed in neoclassical style and has a private terrace with a seawater Jacuzzi, ideal for afternoons of doing absolutely nothing. Expect

all your senses to be stimulated at the spa, which uses natural products such as olives, lemons and Argan oil. Sunshine hours, of which there are plenty, are spent bobbing in the ocean or lounging on a soft linen daybed on the beach. In the evening, fresh seafood is served by candlelight in Berber tents pitched on the sand. A celebration of the simple life. lasultanahotels.com

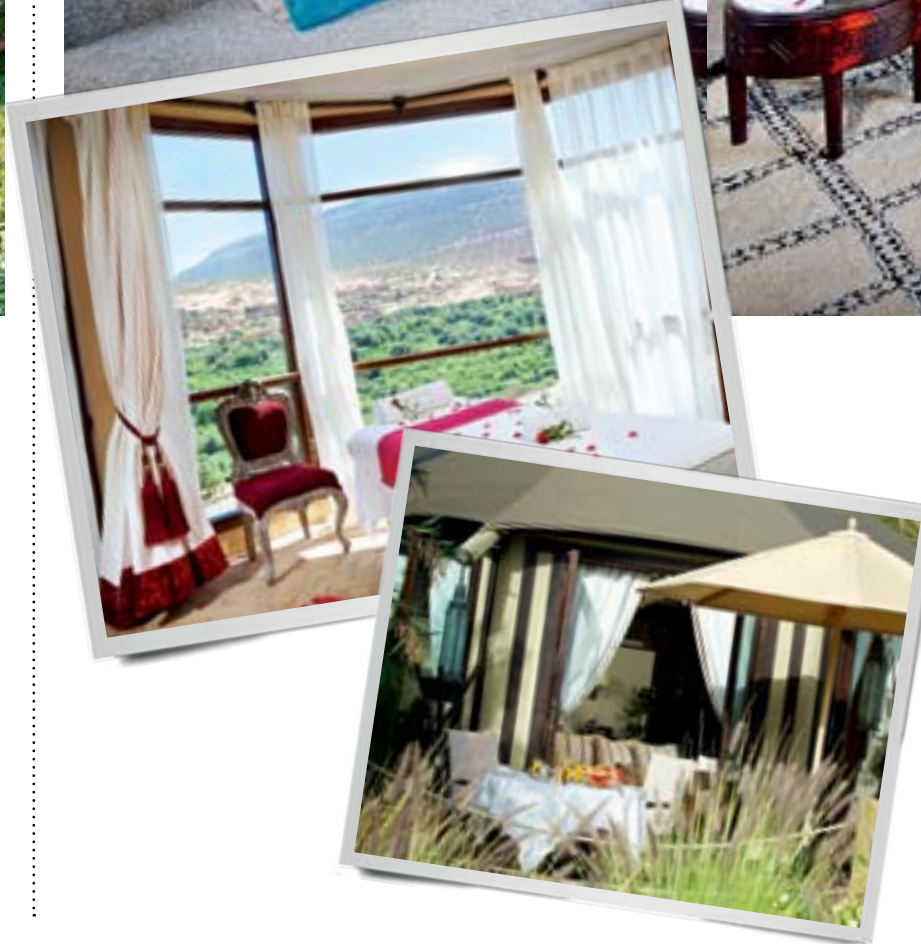




DAR AHLAM MAISON DES RÊVES

This restored 19th-century red-brick kasbah is in Skoura in the south, between Ouarzazate and the Atlas Mountains, an area central to Arabian fables and which was the hunting ground of medieval sultans. The Dar Ahlam is set in a lush palm grove and surrounded by date palms, roses, almond trees and secret gardens. The name means “house

of dreams” and the hotel is imbued with a playful, whimsical air by its Parisian owner. As well as the nine suites and three private villas, all refurbished with French flair, guests can also stay in a luxury desert tent with en-suite facilities and a terrace ideal for watching the sands change colour with the movement of the sun. maisondesreves.com



KASBAH TAMADOT

Owned by Richard Branson, this hilltop palace offers magical, luxurious interiors and unforgettable views combined with as much adrenalin-filled adventure as you could want. The hotel, with only 27 bedrooms, has a relaxed, convivial atmosphere and feels like an oversized country house, complete with peacocks wandering the garden. The decor—a mix of African, Indian and Chinese—is colourful and effortlessly simple, and there’s a full range of activities, from tennis, quad biking and trekking

to hot air ballooning and a two-day hike to the top of nearby Mount Toubkal. Asounfou Spa delivers unbeatable pampering, such as the *yazire* treatment (*yazire* is the Berber word for rosemary), a moisturising massage with rosemary and warm oils. As 15 per cent of the proceeds from treatments goes to developing sustainable enterprises in the local community, you can feel virtuous if you give in to the urge to return to the hammam every day. kasbahitamadot.virgin.com



SELMAN

The work of French designer Jacques Garcia, the Moorish-style Selmán is a calm oasis a few minutes' drive from Marrakech's riveting medina. With 56 rooms and five riads, the family-owned resort is large but seductive. Every space is filled with diverse textures and fine detail, from antique carpets and suede-covered walls to ebony-stained plasterwork and the blackest lacquer. The romantic gardens are ideal for a gentle stroll, while the 16 Arabian horses in a paddock nearby cry out to be taken for a sunset ride. The French kitchens serve delicious contemporary fare. And there's the Chenot spa; while Henri Chenot's renowned resort in the Italian Alps has long attracted the diehards of detox, the focus here is on unwinding and slowing down to the pace of life under the African sun. selman-marrakech.com



KASBAH BAB OURIKA

In the foothills of the Atlas Mountains at the apex of the lush, beautiful Ourika Valley, this earth-coloured retreat blends into its dramatic surroundings. Berber villages are visible in the distance and olive groves, rose bushes and lemon trees populate relaxing gardens that provide fresh

produce for the kitchen. Hills roll up to the snow-capped peaks, and deck chairs at the pool are perfectly positioned to take in the vistas. Most of the 15 rooms and suites have private balconies as well. Decorated by Romain Michel-Ménier, they come with unique craft items: leather bed

heads, bright fabrics, outdoor day beds, comfortable chairs and oversized cushions. Imagine sipping herbal tea on the terrace as the sun sets across the mountains and the stars come to life, followed by fresh seasonal delicacies served by candlelight. kasbahbabourika.com



AMANJENA

This desert resort is set in an oasis of palm and olive trees on the hot, dusty road from Marrakech to Ouarzazate, a spot where tired travellers have fortified themselves for centuries. Designed by American architect Ed Tuttle, every arch, fountain and stone courtyard of the Amanjena pays homage to the past. The Aman DNA of unobtrusive, efficient service combined with the silence of the surrounding Sahara create a sublime feeling of privacy. The rose-hued pavilions are inspired by the colours of

nearby Marrakech, known as “the red city,” and are embellished with lovely *zellige* tiles. Each of the 32 luxurious pavilions opens onto the 27-hole golf course or olive groves. They are all decorated with understated Moroccan elegance and subtle details. Enjoy the clay tennis courts and golf, have a swim, relax in the traditional spa, or head out on a bicycle through Berber villages to take in the surrounding beauty—before dining on excellent Moroccan and Mediterranean fare. amanresorts.com



ERG CHIGAGA DESERT CAMP

In the Sahara close to the highest dunes in Morocco, Erg Chigaga comprises nine luxury sleeping tents, all with en-suite bathrooms and powered by solar energy. They are set around a central Berber communal room, which is furnished with traditional mattresses, carpets and pouffes. There are also open-sided tents with sun lounges, sofas, chairs and hammocks. The spacious accommodation tents feature elegant bedrooms and sitting rooms with wall-to-wall kilims. Local Berbers lead walking and camel excursions into the desert, including overnight treks and options to stay in two smaller camps about one hour by foot from the main camp. Dinner is an extravagant affair of traditional dishes served by candlelight. Days and nights somehow feel dreamily longer here—and that’s exactly the point.

desertcampmorocco.com



TAILORED TOURS

No time to organise a trip yourself? Whether you’re planning a romantic escape, a getaway with friends or something in between, these agencies can show you the most marvellous parts of Morocco

ABERCROMBIE & KENT

This consistently outstanding travel company is offering three tours across the country this year: Splendours of Morocco, limited to 18 guests, Imperial Cities, limited to 24 guests, and The Desert, a private camel-back trip across the Sahara with Berbers from the area. abercrombiekent.com

ARTISANS OF LEISURE

Artisans of Leisure prides itself on the personal relationships it has developed with drivers, chefs, artists, therapists and hotel managers across Morocco. It specialises in guided visits to kasbahs, souks and medinas across the country. artisansofleisure.com

HERITAGE TOURS

This high-end organisation provides exclusive private tours around the country with itineraries that reflect the clients’ interests, passions and thoughts about travel. It also provides a helpful reading list a month beforehand so travellers can acquaint themselves with local history and customs before setting out on the journey. privatetravel.com

LAWRENCE OF MOROCCO

This family-run business has offered tailor-made Moroccan holidays since 1966 and is renowned for its local knowledge. It offers treks across the Sahara Desert, art tours in Marrakech and stimulating hikes in the Atlas Mountains. lawrenceofmorocco.com

CONTRIBUTORS



EXPRESSIONIST MASTER

Based in New York, Haitian photographer Dimitri Hyacinthe has a fine arts background and is influenced by expressionism in his craft. He manages to capture his models’ emotions and presents unique subjective perspectives. He has photographed for magazines such as *i-D* and *AnOthermag.com*. This month he shoots our trendy minimalist *Grey Matter* fashion spread (p.xxx).



SERIOUS TRAVELLER

A writer who splits his time between New York and London, Daniel Scheffler’s interests are travel and sociopolitical issues. After a career in management consulting, Daniel has written for publications such as the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*. When not on a plane he’s hunting for unusual blends of coffee and new forms of yoga and meditation. Daniel is currently working on a memoir. This month, he takes a tour of Morocco’s most exclusive luxury resorts and hotels (p.xxx).



VINTAGE HEAT

Ron Contarsy is a leading international fashion photographer. He recently launched Highmark Studios, a full-service photo/video-production firm operating in New York and Los Angeles. Ron first shot for popular ski magazines while competing in skiing events, before being bitten by the fashion bug, and his work has appeared in publications such as *Elle*, *Vogue* and *Amica*. This month, Ron turns up the heat with layered vintage prints and soft textures in our *Style with Bite* fashion shoot (p.xxx).



ART OF INVESTING

An art adviser and auctioneer with more than 15 years of experience, Jehan Chu founded Vermillion Art Collections, is a director of Para/Site Art Space and has lectured at Sotheby’s Institute of Art and Art Basel in Hong Kong. A graduate of Johns Hopkins University, he is also a bitcoin investor and has founded numerous bitcoin institutions and events. In this issue, Jehan demystifies bitcoin and explains why the currency is important (p.xxx).