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**Marrakech A Riad Or A Kasbah For Your Stay?**

**By Ian Smith**

So you want to go to Marrakech for a vacation, or a weekend, do you stay in a hotel, a riad or a Kasbah.

You can stay in an hotel anywhere so why not try a Riad or a Kasbah.

A Riad is an urban house that is situated in the old city, or the medina. It is totally authentic old Morocco, totally tranquil, architecturally beautiful, very traditional, and often extremely luxurious with no money spared in the conversion. Because of the way that houses are designed you could pass one, and not know it was there, because they are inherently private and closed off, with no outside windows, the only access being down an alleyway, so no cars.

The riad is organised around a central courtyard, with all the rooms going off that, the kitchen and living rooms on the ground floor, and the bedrooms upstairs, often with a rooftop terrace covered by an awning, and meals are often taken there..

There will be a balustrade running right round the first floor, and the courtyard will have a central fountain, and orange and lemon trees.

Because of the thick walls, designed to keep out both the winter cold, and the summer heat, there is no sound of traffic.

A riad is the ideal place to stay if you want to be town, and no distance from all the action. Riads in Marrakesh include, Tigmi, Villa Des Orangers, Caravanserai, Riad Al Moussika, Riad Kaiss, but there are said to be over 300 foreign owned riads in Marrakech at this time.

An alternative is to stay in a modernised Kasbah, a real name from the Arabian Nights!!

A kasbah is one notch up from a riad, like a castle or a large fortified country house. Most are enclosed by high pisé walls — made from red earth mixed with straw — which were designed to protect those inside from attackers, and to guard the honour of the owner's harem. There are hundreds of kasbahs

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dotted across the south of Morocco, many dating back as far as the 14th century, some with beautifully carved walls, and a number of them have now been restored to their former splendour and have become Kasbah hotels, each different and within easy access to Marrakesh.

.The owner of Kasbah Agafay, one such beautifully restored Kasbah has had a genius of an idea, and he has opened a `club' in Marrakech, which is about half an hour away, and is called Kssour Agafay. In this way his guests can spend a few days unwinding in the country, then go to Marrakech for the day, leaving their shopping there, have tea, and generally treat it as a members club. The 15th century town house is bang in the medina and it doubles as a boutique hotel. You'll want to join so you can use the bar, sitting room, rooftop terrace and the six boldly coloured rooms.

This is a perfect arrangement with the fun of Marrakech, and the tranquillity and beauty of the Moroccan countryside, and the fascination of a beautifully restored Kasbah to go back to after the hustle and bustle.

Apart from Kasbah Agafay, you might care to look at Kasbah Tamadot, a Richard Branson inspiration, Kasbah Du Toubkal, which has no vehicular access.

Whether you choose a riad, or a Kasbah, or both you are assured of great comfort, superb food, and wonderful hospitality

Ian Smith travels extensively, and never pays the full brochure price, and his opinions on the best worldwide vacation spots are accepted by many people all over the world.

<http://www.worldwidevacationspots.com/categories/Vacations-in-Africa/Morocco>

## **A Quick Guide To Morocco**

### **By Chic Retreats**

Morocco has something of an aura about it - created mainly by the major tourist destinations of Marrakech, Casablanca, Fez and Rabat.

Where is it?

Morocco is on the North West coast of Africa, just across the sea from the southern tip of Spain. This means that it's easy for most Europeans to reach by plane and even by road or train. Its proximity, mixed with its unique style and culture make it an increasingly popular destination.

Where can I stay?

There are a number of small, exquisite boutique hotels in Morocco. It seems to have the boutique style and attention to detail all wrapped up, making it difficult for the traveller to choose which unique hotel to stay in. There's the Dar Zemora in Marrakech which has just five rooms, but where the decoration,

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furnishing and service ensure that you have the best of both worlds - a perfect place to stay, with the many attractions of Marrakesh just around the corner. Alternatively, stay in the Kasbah du Toubkal in the Atlas Mountains, which reportedly has the best views in North Africa, and where your stay is enhanced by the informal feel of the hotel and the services offered. Surrounded by the peaceful beauty of the landscape, it is a place that has inspired anyone who's stayed there. Whether you want to stay in the hustle and bustle of Marrakech, on the beaches of Essaouira or in the heart of the mountains, there's a perfect hotel waiting for you.

What can I see?

Wherever you're staying, you should make an effort to visit Marrakech. The coming together of civilisations, conquerors and craftsmen makes it a truly eclectic city, yet one that's bound together by the beauty of its buildings, the simplicity of its crafts and the awe of its visitors. Its souks, or markets, which are organised by trade, are a fascinating insight into the life of Marrakech's residents and an experience not to be missed. Spend some time in the Place Djemma El Fna - the city's main square, where regular entertainment keep the crowds amused, and then walk through the streets of the old town, taking in the magnificent medieval buildings and romantic gardens. The rest of Morocco holds its own delights - the whitewashed buildings in the simple coastal resort of Essaouira, the regal buildings of Rabat or the market town of Tata in the Sahara - you will find plenty of reasons to return to Morocco.

How do I get around?

You can hire a car in Morocco, as driving is fairly easy and it will let you explore more of the area around your chosen destination. Petrol can be expensive, so it may be wise just to hire a car for a day or two rather than for your whole stay. Morocco operates a system of shared taxis, which works out pretty cheaply and is fairly straightforward to use. Alternatively, try the bus network, which is generally comfortable and, although they may reach their destination later than a shared taxi, it will be a smoother, safer ride. If you're travelling between cities, then choose the trains, which are also comfortable and affordable.

Chic Retreats is a worldwide collection of cool, smart hotels with less than 30 rooms and an eye for design and style. Visit the website at

<http://www.chicretreats.com>



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