



Photo credits: Kristy Alpert

# A Weekend in Marrakesh

BY KRISTY ALPERT

Referred to as the Red City, Marrakesh is an exotic destination with an aroma and flavor equally as vibrant as the hue for which it's known. Manicured rose bushes and fragrant orange trees scent the air as you walk through the streets of this city, where ancient walls set apart the lively souks (i.e., shopping markets), colorful food markets, and charismatic riads of the old city from the trendy cafes, high-end shopping, and luxury accommodations of the new city.

Almost everything about Marrakesh is a contrast. Tagines come out hot with a surprising blend of salty meats and sweet fruits; rustic clay walls get a burst of color and texture from radiant fabrics draped from above; and even steamy, sun-soaked days become balanced by breezy and cool nights. The city has a flavor that begs to be savored in person, and with Ryan Air offering round trip flights from Frankfurt Hahn airport (and amazing tour operators like [Sahara Experience](#) doing the hard work and planning for you), it's easy to get a taste of the city over a quick weekend break. Here are a few tips from Sahara Experience on where to eat, stay, and play while in Marrakesh.

## Stay

Marrakesh's signature blend of exoticism and antiquity goes far beyond the bustling Medina and labyrinth of souks; in fact, many of the city's historic buildings have been converted into riads and boutique hotels inside the old town. One of the better riads is the [Riad Star](#), where American-born French dancer and singer

Josephine Baker once called home in the 1920s. The Riad Star is attached to what used to be the old palace, and today offers seven guest rooms with an amazing restaurant, hammam, and tons of modern amenities (i.e., air conditioning, loaner cell phones, WiFi, concierge services, rooftop terrace with fireplace, yoga in the courtyard, etc.).



Palais Namaskar

For luxury accommodations outside the city, the [Palais Namaskar](#) is a destination in itself. This five star resort is a member of the Leading Hotels of the World and features 41 guest rooms, suites, villas, and palaces with sumptuous soaking tubs and outdoor plunge pools. Even if you don't stay there, make sure to make it to the Sunday Garden Party for a Moorish feast of Moroccan cuisine laid out among a series of low tables lined with overstuffed pillows for lounging in the afternoon sun.

## Eat

Dining in Morocco is an event. Order a coffee for breakfast and you'll likely be treated with plates of local fruit,

homemade pastries, and maybe even a bowl of homemade yogurt ... if you're lucky.

If you're adventurous, you can't go wrong eating anything that strikes your senses in the souks and street markets (tagines, grilled brochettes/skewers, fried calamari and chips, etc.). But for more formal fare, check out [Café des Espices](#) in the Medina for fresh sandwiches, salads, and hot tea served Moroccan style with fresh mint and a heap of sugar, or book a table at [Dar Moha](#) Restaurant where famous acts like Ray Charles and Stevie Wonder once dined poolside.

## Play

From getting glitzy at the [Palais Bahia](#) to strolling among the vibrant vegetation of the [Jardin Majorelle](#) (purchased by Yves Saint-Laurent in the 1980s and currently the site of the fashion designer's scattered ashes) to dodging snake charmers and street performers in the UNESCO World Heritage site Medina, there is a ton to do to fill a day in Marrakesh. Sahara Expeditions can arrange a walking tour with a guide through the Medina and can help navigate the back alleyways and lead you to the best deals and more reputable (i.e., no termites, quality craftsmanship, inexpensive finds, etc.) through the souks.

*For more information or to book your custom Marrakesh vacation, visit [sahara-experience.com](http://sahara-experience.com).*