



House call

Hip havens: Riad al Bartaal, above; Riad de L'Orangerie, right

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Get to the heart of Morocco – stay in a stylish riad: it needn't cost the earth, says **Caroline Bromham**

Officially, a riad is “a traditional Moroccan house with an internal garden”. For travellers, though, these typically Moroccan houses constitute a magical escape from the throbbing city streets. Inside, you're never sure what you might find, and thanks to the recent vogue for restoring ancient riads, it could be a lantern-lit restaurant, or an intimate hotel with just six rooms. One thing's for certain: you've not fully experienced Morocco until you've stayed in one. From Marrakech to Fes, here are some of the most stylish and affordable options:

RIAD DE L'ORANGERAIE, MARRAKECH

You can sense the effort – and air miles – that London-based owner Cyril Bernard has ploughed into l'Orangerie. On the gorgeous rooftop terrace, there's not a kilim or cushion out of place, and in the seven bedrooms (each named after Arabic spices), not a wooden dresser or local artwork that's not been lovingly hand-picked. The whole place has a special *World of Interiors*-style feel. It's a rarity for a medina hotel, but Cyril has also found room for a gorgeous mosaic swimming pool. Afternoon tea on the patio when you come back, hot and weary, from the souk is a delightful treat, too. A real find. *Doubles from £104. (00 33 6 23 92 40 05; www.riadorangerie.com)*

RIAD FAWAKAY, MARRAKECH

If the interiors in this stunning three-bedroom riad were for sale, the place would be empty. Design-tourists won't know what to do with themselves at Fawakay, with its Notting Hill-meets-nomad style – there's nothing for it, but to plunder the souk and emulate the look back home. The best bit of all: Fawakay is rented as an entire riad. *From £200 per night. Sleeps six. (00 212 723 99 580; www.riadfawakay.com)*

RIAD CASCADES D'OUZOU, HIGH ATLAS

Don't expect mobile or internet reception up here –

you're up almost 1,000 metres above Marrakech. What brings people to Ouzoud are the “cascades”, or waterfalls, and the incredible mountain views. Sit up on the rooftop lounge and see snow-capped peaks in one direction and the desert in the other. Rooms are simple but stylish and the French food is amazing. Hole up here for a break from the city.

Doubles from £49. (00 212 62 14 38 04; www.ouzoud.com)

MADADA MOGADOR, ESSAOUIRA

Another style temple, this time in the French vein, run by a former air stewardess. The riad's interiors – white canvas daybeds on the roof, mushroom-hued linens in the bedrooms and serene stone floors that sweep you effortlessly from room to room – add up to an oasis of calm. It may not conform to the traditional riad aesthetic, but in its location by the rugged Atlantic, it's perfect. *Doubles from £88. (00 212 24 47 55 12; www.madada.com)*

THE TEA HOUSE, ESSAOUIRA

What else would you expect from a former fashion editor? Owned by Alison Macdonald, The Tea House, a tiny hotel within a former Jewish merchant's house, is chic in the extreme, with lovely salmon-coloured tadelakt walls, faded blue woodwork and stained-glass windows. It can be rented as two separate two-bed apartments, or in its entirety, for travellers who want to live like locals. *Doubles from £50. (00 212 24 783 543; www.theteahouse.net)*

RIAD AL BARTAL, FES

Moroccan purists call Fes the “real deal” – its souk is less touristy than Marrakech's; the feel more authentic. The same could be said of Riad al Bartaal, restored, though not renovated, within an inch of its life. Ancient mosaic floors and walls remain, while dyed drapes hang from the ceiling. The effect is colourful and warm. Fatima reigns over the kitchen and once guests have eaten here, they rarely venture elsewhere. *Doubles from £56. (00 212 35 63 70 53, www.riadalbartal.com)*