

DUMMY SLUG

Harper's BAZAAR

ESCAPE

WORDS: LOUISE NICHOL AND ROSENA MCKEOWN. FASHION EDITOR: ALASTAIR MCKIMM. MODEL: MARYNA LINCCHUK

MAGICAL MAJORELLE MOMENTS

As fashion revisits 1970s Morocco and make-up icon Bobbi Brown turns to MARRAKECH for her A/W11 beauty inspiration, *Harper's Bazaar* checks into the city where eastern exoticism meets European elegance

Photography by LACHLAN BAILEY

Marrakech might be known as the red city, but in *Bazaar's* eyes it would be more accurate to describe it as a perfect creamy pink, which just so happens to be our favourite colour. Indeed, the bohemian 1970s glamour that runs through the autumn/winter collections steps straight out of Morocco's second city and its glamorous heritage, marrying Parisian elegance with African authenticity. As well as the rosy ochre-hued buildings nestling at the foot of the snow-capped Atlas mountains, drink in the vibrant blue accents painted in homage to artist Jacques Majorelle, whose blue-walled cactus garden was saved by Yves Saint Laurent and now hosts a memorial to the late designer as well as his impressive Islamic art collection.

In the city centre, one-humped dromedaries jostle with 1970s Mercedes-Benz cabs (which are licensed to carry five passengers, so prepare to be squeezed). Alternatively, take an elegant horse-drawn carriage to the legendary Djemaa El Fna square and marvel at the dramatic Koutoubia mosque. The square leads to the treasure-trove souks, where you can have your own *Sex and the City* moment among the leather, carpet and metalwork sellers (*Bazaar* recommends visiting with a hotel-approved guide). Here's where to stay, shop and spa...



'For the ultimate contact experience opt for an intense hammam ritual in the spa at La Mamounia'

INTO THE BLUE Le Spa at La Mamounia is famed for its world class facilities



KALEIDOSCOPE NIGHTS Sofitel Marrakech Palais Imperial (above) provides the perfect backdrop for parties

Best for... EXTREME LUXURY

LA MAMOUNIA

Even the water flowing from the taps seems laced with fragrance, such is the sensory envelopment of La Mamounia. Five senses hardly seem enough to fully experience this mythical place, built in 1923 and renovated over three years to reopen in 2009.

Your sense of sight is instantly soothed by escaping into eight hectares of 18th century gardens blooming with bougainvillea and 700-year-old olive trees, all tended to by the green-jacketed Atelier Vert gardening team. Even the gym, two converted squash courts painted in the blue of Yves Saint Laurent's nearby Majorelle gardens, is a visual delight, while an in-house Dior store is decorated with pictures of traditional Berber dress. Every view is chic, from the chocolate brown Havaianas lying pool side, which are provided in guest rooms, to the Moroccan artworks in the lobby.

The Berber craft techniques used in the Jacques Garcia-designed interiors create surface texture crying out to be touched, while outside you'll be caressed by the water in the swimming pool, which is cleansed with ozone rather than chlorine for a properly purifying dip. But for the ultimate contact experience, opt for an intense hammam ritual in Le Spa and emerge as soft and fresh as a baby.

Smell is just as precious as sight and touch, particularly in the spa, which has such a heavenly scent that the temptation is to never

stop inhaling. Indeed all public spaces are scented with a signature fragrance created by renowned nose Olivia Giacobetti. Delicious.

That the only sound is the occasional purr of the hotel's Daimler chauffeuring guests up to the gate, and the light chirruping of birds hopping from fountain to patio, is an achievement in itself, given the hotel's proximity to Djemaa el Fna, the insanely bustling square in the medina. Silence, a rare commodity in Marrakech, is golden.

Finally, taste the lobster pastille at Le Marocain restaurant for a haute cuisine take on the local staple. Thirty types of vegetable and 15 varieties of tomato are grown in the grounds, so the hotel's six eateries serve dishes that are about as fresh and local as is possible.

Upon checking out, use your sixth sense to foresee a return visit as soon as possible. From Dhs3,000 a night (+212 524 388 600; mamounia.com)

ALSO TRY:

ROYAL MANSOUR

Owned by His Majesty the King of Morocco, the world's first handmade hotel is made up of a village of 53 private riads. Each riad is on three storeys arranged around a courtyard with a top floor tented roof with private heated swimming pool. Chanel products are used in the spa – we rest our case. From Dhs8,000 a night (+212 5 29 80 80 80; royalmansour.com)



HOME COMFORTS Secret Garden provides a perfectly private retreat

Berber buys

Princess Lalla Soukaina Filali and her mother Lalla Meryem (below) are becoming international style icons, thanks to their exquisite way with a kaftan. Get the Moroccan look with these inspired finds.

Moroccan bag, Dhs800, Day Birger et Mikkelsen

Terra Indigo palette, Dhs270, Guerlain

Desert Plum lipstick, Dhs130, Bobbi Brown (from November)

Argan oil, Dhs125, Kiehl's

Suitcase, Dhs13,950, Tod's

Best for... BOUTIQUECHIC SECRET GARDEN

Part of the giant Palmeraie Golf Palace & Spa complex, Secret Garden combines all the mod cons and convenience of a super-resort with the privacy and personal touches of a private residence. Which means that your live-in butler is not only available to serve up sorbet while you bake by the private pool or whip up any breakfast you desire, he can also install Wi-Fi boosters in any of the villa's seven-plus rooms that you desire, all in the blink of an eye. The 600sq-m residences comfortably sleep six in three ensuite double rooms, although you could happily double that number and still have room to spare, thanks to the lavish majlis, library and spacious roof terrace (complete with Jacuzzi). If you're really pushed for space, there's also the in-villa spa and hammam. Secret Garden is set away from the main resort, tucked away at the end of a long drive way, its entrance concealed by a picturesque chandelier-lit gateway framed by blue and white drapes. So while you can observe the resort's golf course, a stone's throw from your terrace, you're saved the post-round dissection in the corridors and bars of the main hotel.

That said, the resort's facilities, including a world-class gym and spa and a happening Nikki Beach franchise, are a mere golf buggy hop away. The perfect compromise between solitude and convenience? We think so. Villas from Dhs5,370 a night including airport transfers (+212 524 33 43 43; palmeraiemarrakech.com)

ALSO TRY:

LODGE K

A tented Arabian nights dream property in the heart of the Palmeraie palm grove with exceptional mature gardens. Each of the five rooms is a decadent luxury tent from 80 to 200sq-m, with fabulous ornate bathrooms. The Lodge's main salon and restaurant has views over the impressive circular swimming pool making it a really exclusive chill-out destination. From Dhs1,500 a night (+212 660 15 39 24; lodgek.com)

Best... PARTY PALACE

SOFITEL MARRAKECH PALAIS IMPERIAL AND SOFITEL MARRAKECH LOUNGE & SPA

The perfect detox/retox destination, Marrakech's double-hitting Sofitel property combines the pool-centric Palais Impérial, where well-heeled locals come to pose and play, and the more zen Lounge & Spa, where they recover the next day. Start your day with lunch at the Palais pool where a trio of classical guitarists segue into dance tracks at the zenith of afternoon before fading into chill out tunes as the sun sets over the Atlas mountains. After dark, the pretty people descend on



ART OF CALM
The Four Seasons
Marrakech
is a haven of
relaxation

Getting
THERE

Emirates operates daily flights to Casablanca for around Dhs4,380 return. Arrange a hotel transfer for the two-hour drive to Marrakech from around Dhs750 each way.



'Have your own Sex and the City moment among the leather, carpet and metalwork sellers in the treasure trove souks'

Best for... **FAMILY**

FOURSEASONSARRAKECH

Because this is a Four Seasons property you know you're getting a classy, considered resort – perfect for calming down excitable children after the chaos of nearby Djemaa El Fna square. With clay tennis courts, two pools – one for adults and one for families – and a dedicated Kids for all Seasons club for little ones, Four Seasons is the perfect base from which to explore the cultural cacophony of Marrakech en famille, while still squeezing in time to relax, safe in the knowledge that the children are having a wonderful time in the

hands of the hotel's enthusiastic staff. Set over a whopping 40 acres, the hotel is filled with walkways, courtyards and arcades, designed to mirror the maze-like interior of the medina. Book a horse-drawn carriage tour and be collected from the lobby by your guide who will accompany you to the square, hopping off to delve into the incredible metalwork, lighting and textiles shops by foot. The souks offer layer upon layer to explore, and having a guide who knows the ins and outs makes an enormous difference. Fortunately, Four Seasons' concierge knows the best in the business. Extravagantly dressed water sellers, eerie snake charmers and colourful monkey handlers may look intriguing but all will be after your dirhams in the flash of

a camera. Don't be perturbed by the constant jangling of coins, however, it doesn't come from beggars but heralds men selling individual cigarettes to those trying to cut back on the smokes by not buying full packs. If the street food of the square does not appeal, drive back to the hotel for dinner at Bleu d'Orange and a taste of Southern France, then head upstairs for drinks at rooftop bar Zest once the kids have gone to bed. *From Dhs1,960 a night (+212 524 359 200; fourseasons.com/marrakech)*

ALSO TRY:
RIAD DAR KARMA

Book all six of the bedrooms in Dar Karma for an indulgent family escape. Located in the ancient Kasbah district of Marrakech's old town, the riad has been beautifully restored with many original features, spectacular ceilings, doors and columns, so you can be sure the kids are getting a feel for authentic Morocco. *Individual rooms from Dhs500 a night (+212 524 38 58 78; dar-karma.com)* ■

LACHLAN BAILEY

Insider's
VIEW

Rosena and Fred McKeown, owners of concierge firm Boutique Souk, have lived in Marrakech for 10 years and reveal their top tips

Where to eat

■ For romantic dining head to **LE FONDOUK**. Located in a beautifully restored riad in the heart of the medina, this contemporary Moroccan restaurant has a menu with a mix of French and Moroccan cuisine; the service is impeccable and décor intimate yet chic. In summer, dining on the roof is a must. *(+212 524 37 81 90; fondouk.com)*

■ For atmosphere, people watching and great music the hot spot in town is **LE COMPTOIR**, the Momo of Marrakech. Every night there is traditional music, oriental dancers and then cool tunes to 1am from the resident DJ and often some special guests (Claude Challe of Buddha Bar regularly pops up behind the decks). There are both Moroccan and French options on the menu and guaranteed ambience every night of the week. Don't miss the very cool boutique, Kulchi, in the garden. *(+212 524 437 702; comptoirmarrakech.com)*

■ **Bô&Zin**, on the Route de l'Ourika, has a very Ibiza vibe. It is a very stylish restaurant that is host to many parties. There are Thai, French and Moroccan menu dishes and it is open seven nights a week. Saturday night is always rocking for cocktails and dancing the night away in the hip garden bar. *(+212 524 388 012; bo-zin.com)*

■ A romantic rendezvous for design lovers, **LE CRYSTAL**, the French fine dining restaurant at Pacha, offers great gastronomic food in a stunning dining room. The menu designed by the Pourcel brothers has a range of French/world food options and the environment is very relaxed chic. *(+212 524 38 8400; crystal.pachamarrakech.com)*

■ **LE GRAND CAFE DE LA POSTE** in Gueliz, the new town, is a colonial style French brasserie and the number one meeting place for the fashionable Marrakech set. Open from 8am for breakfast until after midnight for dinner, its upstairs bar lounge has a DJ every evening and is an ideal spot for a relaxed drink. *(+212 524 43 30 38; grandcafedelaposte.com)*

Where to shop

1. MINISTERO DE GUSTO
Alessandra Lippini, a former editor of Italian *Vogue*, curates great vintage jewellery and accessories, including gorgeous Chanel, Pucci and Yves Saint Laurent. The gallery is a truly funky space and Alessandra and her architect partner Fabrizio are two of the city's most charming and interesting people. *(+212 24 42 64 55; ministerodelgusto.com)*



SOUK IT UP
Fred and Rosena
McKeown at their
home in Marrakech

2. ATELIER MORO
Owned by Colombian ex-pat Viviana Gonzalez, Atelier Moro is an eclectic mix of traditional Moroccan clothes and accessories, with some Colombian and world travel finds. Look for number 114 on Place de Mouassine and knock to gain access to the second floor store. *(+212 24 39 16 78)*

3. AKBAR DELIGHTS
The first foreign-owned store in Marrakech's souks, this is a seriously luxurious collection; many of the tunics and coats are made of imported silks but all made locally by top artisans. Over in the new city, Akbar also has a showroom by private appointment and a diffusion line boutique called Moor selling beautiful cotton tunics and djellabas. *(+212 671 66 13 07; akbardelights.com)*

4. 33 RUE MAJORELLE
Opposite Yves Saint Laurent's Majorelle gardens, this is a hot new concept store with a carefully edited collection of some of the best Moroccan designers – djellabas, accessories and small furnishings – excellent! *(+212 524 31 41 95; 33ruemajorelle.com)*

5. FADILA EL GADI
Fadila el Gadi is perhaps the foremost designer of contemporary Moroccan womenswear. Her very beautiful work is on show at a private showroom in the new city. *(+212 537 81 16 29; fadilaelgadi.com)*

6. MUSTAPHA BLAOUI
The Moroccan Ikea! This is an Aladdin's cave of homewares, really worth a visit especially with his newly extended showroom. *(+212 524 385 240; 142-4 Bab Doukkala)*

Luxurious
tunics at
Akbar

Insider
TIP

Shops in the souk within the medina are open from 9am to around 8 or 9pm. Avoid shopping on Fridays when businesses close up for prayer.

Ministero de
Gusto is owned
by a former
Vogue editor