



Tour Name

New York Times Journeys - The Secrets of Marrakech

Tour City

Marrakech

Tour Snapshot

Marrakech, Morocco's "Jewel of the South," does not just rely on its plethora of ancient attractions to entice 21st-century visitors. In recent years the city has busied itself by adding new museums, galleries and indie creative spaces that promote the work of talented local artists to its long list of must-see sights. Join us on this tour curated by Urban Adventures and *The New York Times*, as we stumble upon a secret garden in the heart of the old Medina, shop at a cutting edge souk away from the tourist traps, enjoy a traditional lunch with a Moroccan family and stroll around homes and museums that proudly display and demonstrate the region's scintillating history and dreamy Islamic architecture.

Highlights

- Visit the newly opened Le Jardin Secret to reveal the architectural nuances of a typical Moroccan riad and admire the tranquil gardens that were inspired by a Koranic verse
- Discover the astonishing architecture that had been hidden for years behind the walls of the Douiria Museum
- Savor a refreshing mint tea in a funky boutique cafe with just a hint of irony-infused kitsch

- Explore the striking art of North Africa collected by a celebrated Dutch anthropologist over the course of half a century

New York Times Exclusives:

- *Behind-the-Scenes Access:* Enjoy a delicious lunch with a Moroccan family inside their riad and see first-hand how traditional dishes are prepared outside of the tourist-filled hotels and cafes of the city
- *Hands-on Element:* Join the inspirational women of the Al Nour Association, all of whom live with a disability, and learn about the intricate embroidery techniques they apply to the textiles and clothing they produce and have a go at creating something for yourself
- *Local Interactions:* Meet talented artisans and local merchants in some of the most progressive and unique concept stores in Morocco and find out more about their work

Local Impact: How you taking this tour will benefit the local community:

- By taking this tour you're supporting the preservation of traditional crafts.
- A portion of your tour fee will be donated back to the Al Nour Association.
- All the stores and foodie spots we visit are 100% owned and run by locals, ensuring that local people benefit from tourism to their city. So any inclusions on the tour and additional purchases you make will directly benefit the local community..

Inclusions: Local English-speaking guide, entrance fees, lunch, mint tea.

Exclusions: Items of personal nature, additional food and drink, tips/gratuities for your guide.

Schedule details

- Duration:4 hours
- Meeting point:

In front of Dar El Bacha Musee Des Confluences, Route Sidi Abdelaziz, Marrakech 40000, Morocco.

View on [Google Maps](#)

- {label-what3words-location}
- Starting time: 9.00 AM
- Ending point:
Kosy Bar, Place des Ferblantiers, Marrakech.

Full Itinerary

Until recently Le Jardin Secret, one-time home to some of Morocco's most prolific political figures, was off-limits to travelers. An exquisite example of Islamic architecture and art, this grand riad laid dormant for half a century, its former glory fading amongst the bustle of the medina. In 2016, after a lengthy restoration program, it finally opened its doors to the public. It's an apt way to begin our Marrakech tour, providing a sound introduction to the Moroccan way of life (albeit on a grander scale than most local homes!). There are two gardens to explore, the 'exotic' garden which is home to plant species from all over the world and the more typical 'Islamic' garden whose purpose was to provide an oasis of peace and respite from the blazing African sun. The beautifully maintained grounds were inspired by a Koranic verse: "He will reward them for what they endured with a garden [in Paradise]." There's a tower here too (one of the last of its kind in the city) that boasts spell-binding views of the bustling medina below and of the iconic minaret of the Koutoubia Mosque.

After our introduction to Moroccan life at Le Jardin Secret, we will stop at the Al Nour Association to find out more about the inspirational project they run that provides local women, all of whom live with a disability, with the skills they need to take care of themselves and their families. Formed in 2013, the association supplies transportation, child care and free meals for the women who embroider clothing and textiles that are locally sold. We will join them in a hands-on embroidery session where you will see some of their intricate work up close.

Another architectural stunner awaits at the recently restored Douiria Museum in the Mouassine Quarter. A remarkable example of Saadian design from the late 16th to early 17th century, the building features a house and a *douiria* (reception area), making it more of a home than an actual museum. The property was purchased in 2012 by Patrick Manac'h, the owner and curator of the fascinating La Maison de la Photographie, who discovered the original tile mosaics, wood ceilings and colorful plaster carvings underneath years of paint and renovation and decided to uncover them so future generations could be inspired by them too.

When you think of Marrakech, you may conjure up visions in your mind of the bustling medina and its legendary spice market. Our next stop is close to this world-famous market of spices, known locally as Place des Épices, but the focus at Souk Chérifia is on modern motifs. Here you will find traditional pottery, baskets and souvenirs but you'll also have the opportunity to visit small concept stores that proudly display current Moroccan designs too. Nearby Rahba Lakdima Sqaure is crammed with apothecaries that sell exotic and mysterious supplies to locals, as well as traditional spice mixtures and cosmetics to anyone. We'll chat to some local vendors here and learn a little about the mystifying products they sell. This is a great spot for argan oil products too, a much coveted product of the region that's formed from argan nuts and is still largely processed by hand in Berber co-operatives.

The Tiskiwin Museum, also known as Maison Tiskiwin and the Bert Flint Museum, is one of the finest museums in the country displaying artifacts from Morocco, the Sahara and other nearby areas of interest. Bert Flint is a Dutch anthropologist and collector of art who has become somewhat of a local hero after dedicating himself to the study of life in Northwestern Africa over the centuries. Each room features different historic objects, including carpets, fabrics, clothes and jewelry from a different town or region in the area.

Our next stop will be Riad Yima, an achingly hip cafe, boutique and gallery founded by the renowned photographer Hassan Hajjaj. His photographs are available alongside antique, vintage and upcycled items that dazzle with color. All your preconceived notions about Moroccan restaurants with their Arabian Nights fantasy of candlelit lanterns and belly dancers are turned on their head with a tongue-in-cheek sense of humor that sets this place apart from the rest. Mint tea is practically compulsory for all Moroccan tour itineraries, so we will enjoy a refreshing glass in the cafe.

Feeling suitably refreshed, our shopping spree continues at Chabi Chic, where the pottery, jewelry and clothing all have a hippie vibe. The store opened several years ago with the creation of a line of dishes that featured long-established Moroccan patterns and stripes, handmade by Moroccan craftsmen. Since then, the store has expanded its collection to include unusual and beautiful re-purposed kitchen items such as water carafes that have been transformed into vases and ceramic trays that have morphed into soap holders. If you're on the hunt for the perfect kaftan, Topolina, a store owned by a French designer with an "exquisite eye for color" (according to *Vogue*) features chic designs, plus shoes and other luxurious apparel for men and women. There will be time to make purchases in all the stores that we visit, should you wish to do so.

After a busy morning of sightseeing and shopping, we will satisfy our appetite with a traditional lunch. This won't be just any lunch mind you; rather than taking you to a restaurant, we want you to experience true Moroccan hospitality and home cooking,

so we will take you to a riad in the center of town to enjoy a freshly prepared feast with a local family. Aside from the main dish, which could be tagine, cous cous or lamb with prunes and almonds, most home cooking in Morocco includes a delightful abundance of interesting side dishes and, of course, the ubiquitous mint tea, prepared in an elaborate ceremony. As we eat, we'll get to know the family and learn more about their life in Marrakesh.

New York Times Reading List:

- [T City Guides: Marrakesh](#)
- [Morocco's D.I.Y. Dance Crews](#)
- [How Much Do You Know About Morocco?](#)
- [In Morocco, Exploring the Remnants of Jewish History](#)
- [At the YSL Museum in Morocco, Clothes Aren't the Only Highlight](#)
- [Queen Elizabeth I's Islam \(book review\)](#)

A [City Tour gift certificate](#) is the perfect present for any occasion. Select a specific tour and date, or choose the value and let the lucky recipient decide how to redeem it.

Additional information

Inclusions: Local English-speaking guide, entrance fees, lunch, mint tea.

Exclusions: Items of personal nature, additional food and drink, tips/gratuities for your guide.

Dress standard: Please wear casual and comfortable clothing.

Your Trip: For your New York Times Journeys/Urban Adventure you will be in a small group of a maximum of 12 people.

Confirmation of booking: If you have your voucher, your booking is confirmed. We'll see you at the start point. Get in touch if you have any concerns or require more information via the email address or phone number (business hours only) on your voucher.

Child Policy: This is a child-friendly tour. Children between the ages of 6 and 11 inclusively are permitted on this tour at the rate listed above. Please select 'child' above when booking. Children under the age of 6 are permitted to join this tour free of charge. Please inform us at the time of booking if you'll be bringing a child under the age of 6. You can do so in the special request box on the checkout page.

Dietary Notes

We can accommodate vegetarians and other dietary restrictions. Please notify us in advance if you have any dietary requests. You can do so in the 'Additional information' box at checkout, or by emailing us at info@marrakechurbanadventures.com.

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