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Morocco

This stunning new hotel in Marrakech is fit for a king. Which is just as well since Mohammed VI of Morocco oversaw every last detail of the build. Even the gold leaf.



Watch out Marrakech aficionados, there's a new hotel in town; an establishment so ravishing it will have you weeping into your babouches and begging to be imprisoned like a princess in one of its towers. Introducing the Royal Mansour.

In contrast to many of the red rose city's trendy establishments, where you go to be seen and waft around in a designer kaftan while spotting celebrities at the breakfast buffet, at the Royal Mansour you might never see another guest. This is because upon arrival you are escorted to your own three-storey riad.

Forget suites or penthouses, these traditional Moroccan houses have it all: a living room, dining room, bar, library, touch-panel controls to close the roof if – God forbid – it rains. Some, including ours, even come with lifts. Opt for a two or three bedroom riad, meanwhile, and you'll find a lap pool and tented Bedouin chill-out area on your roof. When the sun goes down an army of butlers sneak in via a network of hidden passages to light open fires, so there's no danger of catching a chill while dressing for dinner.

Most guests choose to dine in the privacy of their riads, which is a shame considering the quality of restaurants on offer. There's La Grande Table Marocaine which serves traditional Moroccan food and La Grande Table Francaise, a gourmet French restaurant. Both are overseen by three-Michelin-starred chef Yannick

THE DETAILS

Royal Mansour
royalmansour.com
La Manounia
mamounia.com

Alléno (from Le Meurice in Paris), and open to non-guests.

Impressed so far? This is, after all, the King of Morocco's own pet project, so no expense has been spared. Indeed, Mohammed VI made it his business to directly oversee every detail of the hotel's inception from the pink gold leaf mirror in the main bar to the acres of ornate zellige mosaic painstakingly laid, piece by piece, by craftsmen around the rest of the resort. It took 1400 locals three and a half years to create this miniature Moroccan village consisting of 53 riads and a spa; it does have the feel of a medina – only a cleaner, shinier version without the street vendors, snake charmers and stray cats.

The only down side to the chosen style of architecture is that the riads don't get much natural light. In keeping with tradition, all windows face inwards to a central courtyard, which can feel a little

claustrophobic – especially in the smaller riads. I imagine this must be a bit like how Rapunzel felt up in her tower, yet I can think of nowhere more spectacular to let down my fair hair.

Beyond the gates of the Royal Mansour there is another address that cannot go unmentioned when speaking of Moroccan royalty: La Mamounia. Jetsetters come from all corners of the world to walk the corridors that Winston Churchill and Charlie Chaplin once walked, to sense the ghosts of glamorous parties past. They come to marvel at the Moorish architecture and at French designer Jacques Garcia's flamboyant interiors. They come for the sumptuous suites and the unfaltering service, but above all they come for the sense of drama and history. The Royal Mansour may be the newcomer in town, but it's already catching up on both counts. **LEO BEAR**