

HAUTES VACANCES™

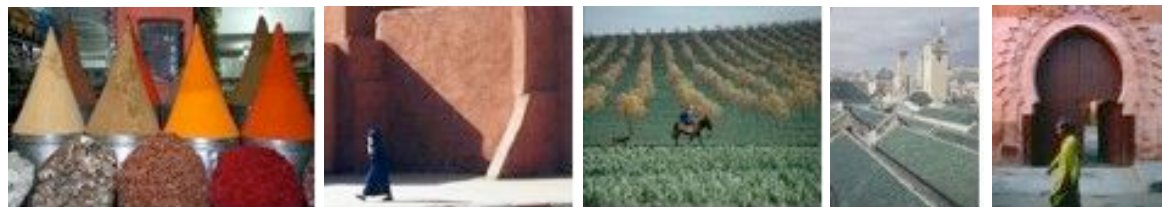
BOUTIQUE GAY TRAVEL

Moroccan Spice Experience 11 – 20/22 October 2009

The "Hautes Vacances Moroccan Spice Experience" will be a unique and exclusive journey that brings you closer to Morocco's culture, sights and cuisine.

Welcome to a fascinating mix of Arab, Islamic, Berber, African and European influences. Explore cobalt blue skies, spectacular landscapes, medieval cities, ancient monuments and Morocco's world famous bazaars and souks.

With every day of your Moroccan Spice Experience you will meet an extraordinary array of people, taste incredible foods and sample an amazing culture. Enjoy a shisha with your fellow Hautes Vacances travelers and live life to the fullest...



Day One

Casablanca

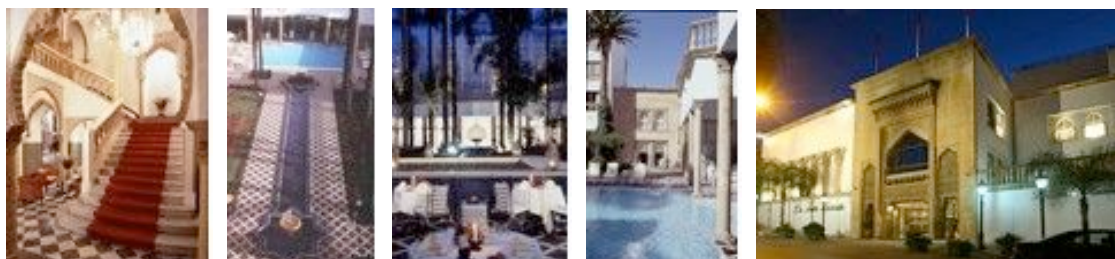
Your North African Spice journey commences on arrival in Casablanca. You will be met and transferred by air conditioned luxury minibus to Rabat where you will spend one night at La Tour Hassan Hotel in a Superior Room one night on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis. Meet your fellow Hautes Vacances travelers for a drink at the hotel bar and enjoy dinner at La Maison Arabe.

About the Tour Hassan Hotel: Founded in 1914 in the Hispano-Moresque style, La Tour Hassan Meridien has recently being renovated, but has jealously kept its Moorish style, with its Andalous house, gardens and fountains. The hotel reflects perfectly the rich mixture of the Moroccan way of life, pride in its history and culture.



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Day Two

Casablanca ~ Fes

After breakfast this morning the Hautes Vacances group will enjoy a tour to Meknes, a city founded in the 9th century by Zenata Berbers. Sightseeing in this former Imperial City of Morocco includes the old ramparts; the Agoudal Basin which was used to water the royal gardens and amuse the favourite concubines; the Moulay Ismail royal stables, granaries, and House of Water (Dar el Ma) which were built in the 17th and 18th centuries to house, feed and water the sultan's twelve thousand horses. The nearby Roman ruins of Volubilis are impressive with over 30 mosaic floors dating from 25 BC.



Continue to Fes where you will be transferred to Riad La Maison Bleue for your two night stay in a Deluxe Room on a bed, breakfast & dinner basis. Enjoy a welcome drink on the rooftop terrace with views across the ancient walled city.

Long a centre of Islamic learning, Fès is one of the most dramatic and exotic cities in the world and La Maison Bleue is the best place to immerse yourself in its extraordinary atmosphere. An 18th century palace built in 1900, this house belonged to a judge and famous professor, Mr Bel Arbi El Alaoui. The famous Moroccan philosopher Lahbabi Aziz grew up here and was nominated for the Nobel philosophical award. The architecture of the Riad Maison Bleue is of pure Andalusian style with orange trees surrounding the swimming pool on the ground floor patio, all surrounded by pillars of blue and green mosaics.



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It is a place of peace and relaxation worthy of the thousand and one nights. The knowledge of Moroccan craftsmen is evident here in the curved plaster and cedar wood, pieces of traditional furniture and the Arabo-Andalusian penmanship and fabrics. This afternoon you have the opportunity to walk to the northern rampart to watch the sunset before returning to your riad for dinner this evening on the terrace of Riad La Maison Bleue.

Day Three

Fes ~ Old City

After a Moroccan breakfast of fresh fruits, wild honey, freshly baked bread, yoghurt, dates and hot brewed coffee, step into one of the world's last surviving medieval towns, Fes.

This journey will take you on a labyrinth of paths and alleyways through a time gone by, finding old mosques amongst stores and markets filled with shoppers, donkeys and people going about their daily routine. Included will be a visit to Dar Mokri, an 18th Century building, a gem of Islamic and Arabic Architecture taking in a walk through the Medina, visiting Zawiyya Moulay Idriss II (Islamic School), Kairouyine Mosque & University, Souk Attarine – the premier grocery and spice seller, the Fes tannery, a selection of spice and perfume markets and the mandatory Skali carpet emporium – Dar Ibn Khaldoun. During your walk you will observe the communal bread ovens and the making of ouarka & trid pastries, and will have the opportunity to taste the vast selection of olives, dates, pastries and fruits found in the depths of the Medina. The impressive labyrinth of souks have been declared by UNESCO to be one of the world's cultural treasures. Your tour also allows photo stops at the imposing gate of Bab Boujloud, the splendid fountain at Place Nejjarine, the ancient ramparts, and the beautiful front entrance of the Royal Palace.



Enjoy a snack in the souk before spending the afternoon at leisure - we recommend you enjoy a Spa.

Don't eat too much as dinner this evening will be hosted at La Maison Bleue Restaurant – a gastronomic delight! The restaurant is located in the original La Maison Bleue hotel next to the Bab Boujloud, one of the main gates to the medina. The hotel is owned by the Mehdi Mohammed el Abbadi, grandson of the original owner.

Originally built in 1915 as a private mansion for Sidi Mohammed el Abbadi, one of the city's leading lawyers, the hotel has an unassuming entrance. This leads mysteriously down a long narrow passage which opens into a stunning interior courtyard, surrounded by salons decorated with tiles and mosaics and furnished with brocaded divans. And it is here that you



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will dine, enjoying La Maison Bleue's exceptional food: couscous with sultanas; chicken and lamb tagines; cornes des gazelles; and pastilla with almonds.

Tagines are a specialty throughout Morocco with La Maison Bleue serving some of the finest you will taste. The word "tagine" refers to the finished dish as well as to the earthenware pot, topped with a conical lid, in which it is cooked. Tagines are flavoured with exotic herbs and spices, made of meat, fowl, or seafood, and fresh seasonal vegetables or fruit. Tender cubes of lamb or beef, are simmered with many ingredients including, prunes, honey and sesame seeds in a sauce lightly scented with cinnamon; other flavours consist of chicken and preserved lemons fragrant with saffron and ginger. Another specialty is the pastries, from honey pastries and crumbly almond cookies, to delicate half moons filled with almond paste. Most meals are accompanied by glasses of sweet mint tea, the national drink. Dinner is a full production with waiters in baggy pantaloons serving you whilst you are serenaded by "gnouas", Berber musicians from the south. Bismillah! as the locals say - may you enjoy this meal!



Day Four

Fes ~ Casablanca ~ Marrakech

A small breakfast pack has been prepared this morning as you depart early for Fez Airport for your flight to Marrakech via Casablanca. Your Royal Air Maroc flight AT441 departs Fez at 6:00am and arrives Casablanca at 6:45am. Remain in transit for your flight to Marrakech. Your Royal Air Maroc flight AT401 departs Casablanca 8:50am and arrives Marrakech at 9:30am.

On arrival in Marrakech you will be met and transferred to La Sultana for your three night stay in a Deluxe Room or Suite on a bed, breakfast, lunch & dinner basis.



A destination in itself after 2 years of stunning renovation with Historical Monuments, **La Sultana** captures the charm of luxury riads from a bygone century. Discerning travellers are lured by the fairytale atmosphere and luxurious interiors found in each riad, which are more



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like private homes, but still feel part of the deluxe hotel. Limited rooms and suites add to the exclusivity.

The historical atmosphere and beautiful surroundings add to the overall experience of La Sultana, which houses treasures and an art collection. The spacious terraces offer a 360° dazzling view set off by the snow-capped Atlas Mountains, historical attractions and Royal Palaces.

Guests have access to a wealth of resources. Enjoy the outdoor heated pool or jacuzzi, sample inventive cuisine under vaulted ceilings or alfresco, experience a spa treatment or lounge in the sun in contemporary comfort. At La Sultana, you will be reminded of one of the meanings of Riad – a Garden of Heaven - where you've already arrived.

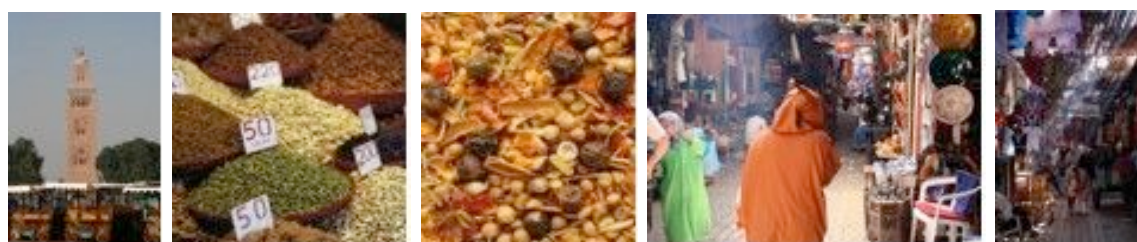


After settling in to your riad, and following tea and light lunch/snacks, you will depart on a **guided walking tour through the colourful souks**.

What better way to be immersed in the life of Marrakech! Divided into smaller souks according to goods sold, this grand labyrinth features hand-crafted goods such as babouche slippers, wooden carvings, brassworks, ironworks, bronzeworks, jewellery, kaftans, carpets and pottery. Additionally, keen shoppers may be interested to visit the best galleries for leather, antiques and hand-crafted gold jewellery.

Your tour will end at the famous Jemaa El Fna Square, the ancient meeting point of the tradesmen in Northwest Africa. Enjoy the hustle and bustle as the square comes to life at sunset.

Enjoy dinner at Stylia where you will enjoy a traditional Moroccan dinner in a converted 15th Century Palace buried in the depths of the Medina. Among the richly decorated mosaics, ornate plasterwork, zellij tiles and carpets of rose petals, you will feast on traditional Moroccan classics such as pastilla, tajine and Moroccan honey pastries.



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Day Five

Marrakech

After breakfast this morning you will undertake a Cooking Workshop at La Maison Arabe. Known in the past as one of the most famous and legendary restaurants of the African continent, La Maison Arabe today offers cooking workshops designed for the amateur and professional alike - for anyone who wishes to discover the pleasures of Moroccan cooking and become familiar with one of the great cuisines of the world.



The workshops are conducted by a dada (traditional Moroccan cook), and are organized around easy-to-use modern equipment. Detailed preparation and cooking instructions are provided and at the end of your workshop you will dine on the meal you have prepared!

This afternoon is free to explore the Medina and enjoy the architecture and colourful people, to indulge in a spot of shopping, or to return to La Sultana and relax.

Dinner this evening will be hosted at La Sultana. In an historical atmosphere by the Royal Saadian Tombs, the French Chefs at La Sultana will treat you to their specialities such as 'duck foie gras half-cooked with apples from Ourika' or 'leg of lamb with honey tajine - a real delight.

Day Six

Marrakech

Tour the Menara Gardens, where you will see the small Saadian pavilion mirrored in its still waters with the Atlas Mountains and olive groves in the background. This pavilion was used by sultans for romantic interludes. Next, you will cross to the Agdal Gardens and continue along the old city ramparts, proceeding to the lush botanical Majorelle Gardens, which were privately owned by Yves St Laurent. Here you will stop for a stroll.



Lunch will be included today at Le Grand Café de La Poste - one of the best restaurants in Marrakech. With a colonial-era feel and great French-Moroccan food.



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Enjoy an afternoon at leisure before dinner this evening is at the fabulous Le Tobsil restaurant, considered to be the best restaurant in Marrakech. A small, intimate restaurant offering superb traditional Moroccan cuisine and located in the Medina. You will be offered a vast array of dishes including wonderful salads, tagines, couscous, fruit and desserts. The surroundings are straight out of an Arabian Nights fantasy; fountains, lanterns, mosaics, cushions, low candlelit tables strewn with rose petals, belly dancers and traditional musicians. Enjoy!

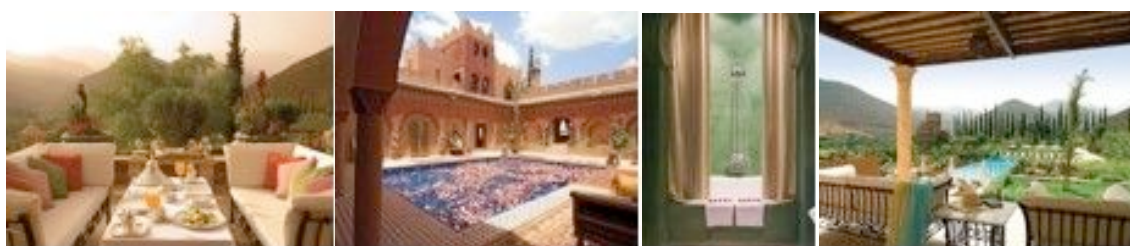


Day Seven

Marrakech ~ Atlas Mountains

Enjoy breakfast in your Riad before departing for Imlil at the foot of the Atlas Mountains. Along the narrow road you'll see old women carrying bundles of sticks, men in djellabas steering donkey-powered carts and late-model SUVs negotiating the perilous hairpin turns. Once you reach the foothills you will see how the mountains on one side fall away to a deep river valley, with small villages visible beyond. Mount Toubkal, the highest peak in North Africa at 4,165 metres looms in the distance, snow-capped for much of the year.

Enjoy lunch at Kasbah du Toubkal before being delivered to Richard Branson's sprawling Kasbah Tamadot for your two night stay in a Deluxe Room or Suite on a bed, breakfast, lunch & dinner basis.



The sprawling Kasbah Tamadot, built as a Berber chieftain's palace, is an extensive complex of rooms, gardens, staircases, terraces and courtyards, combining elements of Oriental, Berber, Islamic and Moorish design. Look for ornate mosaic tiling, lacy wood and stucco carving, lots of jewel tones and traditional tadelakt-plastered walls.

Stepping inside is like exploring Ali Baba's cave: The resort is packed to its 18th-century wood ceilings with treasures from Africa, India and the Far East. Outdoors, you'll find lush cactus gardens and rose beds, fragrant fruit trees and magnificent vistas in all directions. When night falls and all the lanterns are lit, Kasbah Tamadot becomes a glowing oasis under a sky thick with stars.

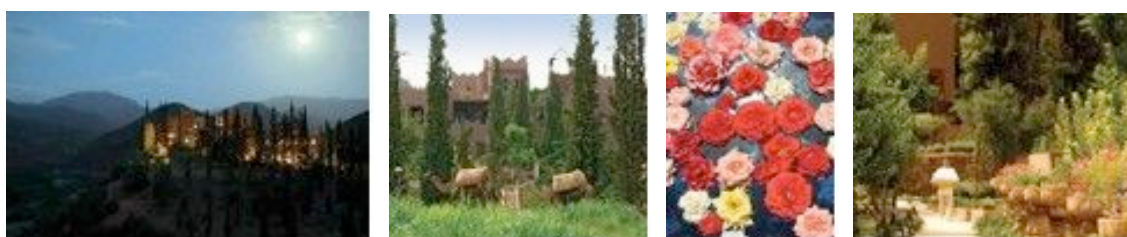


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The 18 rooms and suites mix traditional Moroccan materials, soothing colours and all the modern conveniences. Most have a balcony or terrace; all are air-conditioned. Each room has satellite radio and a CD player; and in the library you'll find the top-100 discs from the Virgin Mega Store charts.

Bathrooms are large and quite luxe, with deep tubs sunk into alcoves, powerful showers, good lighting and locally made lotions served up in sleek glass tubes. Babouches (slippers) and Berber-style ponchos are provided; the slippers you take home with you, the poncho you leave behind or buy.



Thanks to chef Jean Mundell-Murphy, a young South African trained in Britain by Michelin three-star chef Raymond Blanc, the food here is a major draw. Look for deeply flavoured Moroccan dishes (tagines simmered over glowing coals, silky lamb shanks, couscous and pastilla), and European classics spiced with ingredients the chef discovered while working for Branson in South Africa and the Caribbean. The wine list includes an equal number of Moroccan and French labels, with a smattering of Italian, Spanish and Chilean.

Guests are welcome in the kitchen and cooking classes can be arranged. In the morning, head for the roof to watch Jamila bake bread in her traditional wood-fired ovens.

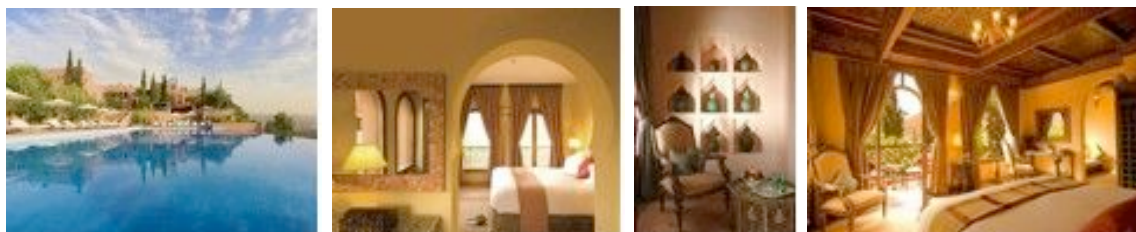
Day Eight

Kasbah Tamadot ~ at leisure

At leisure at Kasbah Tamadot. Despite the middle-of-nowhere setting, there's plenty to do. Take a mountain trek with an English-speaking guide, followed by lunch or tea in a dirt-walled Berber home. Scenic flights over the Sahara and hot-air ballooning can be arranged, as can golf and riding.

In the Virgin Touch Salon, get scrubbed with eucalyptus soap in the hammam, collapse on the massage table and follow up with a swim (there are indoor and outdoor pools), pedicure or facial. The gym is well equipped, and the two tennis courts are lit at night.

After dinner, kick back in the bar with a Cuban cigar, order the nargilla (water pipe) or snuggle up by the fire and pop in a DVD. A stay here is an experience you won't forget.



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Day Nine

Atlas Mountains ~ Marrakech

Morning departure from Kasbah du Toubkal for Marrakech. On arrival you will be delivered to Riad Calipau for your overnight stay in a Deluxe Room or Suite on a bed, breakfast & dinner basis.

Riad Calipau is ideally located in the Medina of Marrakech, 200m from Saadiens Tombs, between Palace of Hassan II and Mohamed VI Palace. Enjoy the afternoon at your own leisure.

Calipau Palace offers a combination of tradition and modern comfort with an air of luxury, peace and intimacy. Its location in the district of the kasbah means close proximity to all the main attractions. The 12 suites of the palace combine luxury and understated elegance and incorporate the Moroccan traditional decoration including tadelakt, marble, zellige and cedar wood. On the patio marvellous living rooms decorated in soft hues border the swimming pool and the 500m² terrace provides views of the Atlas mountains.

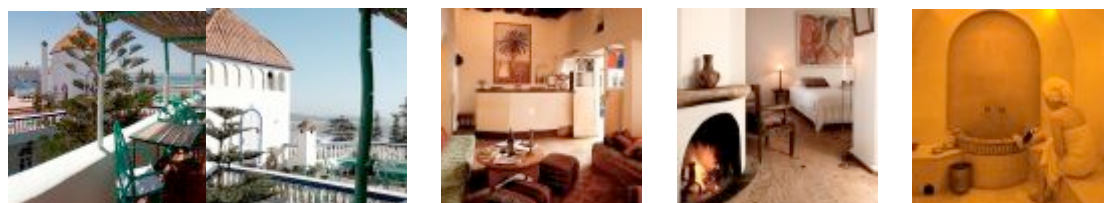
Lunch will be at your own arrangements today, enjoy the afternoon at leisure.



Day Ten & Eleven & Twelve

Depart Morocco or book extension

Depart early this morning for Marrakech Airport for your international flight or book an extension with us to the beautiful Essaouira. Stay at the Villa Maroc for 3 days of ultimate relaxation.



~ End of Arrangements ~



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Pricing Morocco Spice Experience

- US\$ 9,660 for nine days per person sharing. A single supplement of US\$ 2,950 applies. Extra charges apply if you book the extension to Essaouira.
- Your booking will include:
 - 9 or 11 nights boutique hotel accommodation in Casablanca, Fes, Marrakech and Kasbah Tamadot in the High Atlas Mountains including breakfast, most lunches and dinner at the best local restaurants. Book the extension to Essaouira and stay at the Villa Maroc for 3 extra days of ultimate relaxation.
 - Guided tours and excursions in Fes, Marrakech and the High Atlas Mountains including ground transport
 - Domestic flights
 - Cooking workshop at Maison Arabe
 - Concierge Service
- Additional costs:
 - International flights and air/ground transfer should you book the extension in Essaouira
 - Food, beverages and entertainment not included in detailed itinerary
 - Spa treatments

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Final prices are to be confirmed between Hautes Vacances and each individual customer and are subject to currency exchange rate fluctuations and the final number of travelers for each trip. Hautes Vacances highly recommends to take out travel insurance. Exclusions: Flights, airport transfer unless stated, visas, departure taxes not included in the ticket price, fuel surcharges introduced after the booking, travel insurance, meals unless included in itinerary, entertainment, drinks, medical expenses, personal purchases and tips.

