

I'm a Morocco expert — these are its 20 best escapes

From stargazing in the Atlas mountains to a chic new hotel in Casablanca, Tara Stevens — who has lived and worked in the country for 15 years — picks her top trips



Kasbah Tabelkourt is located in southwest Morocco

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Fifteen years ago, I bought a house in the Fez medina and set about making a life, which now includes a tiny cooking school and private dining centre. What I've learnt since then is that Morocco is so much more than the sum of its parts. You won't find it by only exploring in the swirl of the central souks of Marrakesh — thrilling though they are — or on the back of a camel heading into a desert camp. But you might over the next mountain pass beneath a canopy of stars, in a remote lodge in the middle of a palm oasis, on a deserted beach where Atlantic waves thunder onto honey-coloured shores, or in the cumin-scented char of a lamb kebab cooked over charcoal in a petrol station on the side of a country road. To truly capture the heart of this complex, ever-evolving country, you need to travel beyond the celebrated cities and into its less-known corners.

These days immersive, people-focused experiences are Morocco's calling card. In Marrakesh that may mean hand-painting pottery with a resident artist or exploring the hole-in-the-wall workshops of the thousand or so artisans who reside in Fez. It could be a picnic lunch with a family in a remote Berber (also known as Amazigh) village, or mooching around the contemporary art galleries and architecture of its overlooked capital, Rabat.

Second cities such as Fez are gaining momentum as sophisticated destinations in their own right. The north is having a moment too, with meandering hiking trails through the Rif mountains and the newly fashionable Tangier. Meanwhile the regions south of Marrakesh, into the Anti-Atlas range and along the southern Atlantic coast, are an exotic temptation, revealing treasures galore in the form of rammed-earth lodges hidden deep within date palm oases or dreamy wellness retreats. Throw in the discovery of ancient crafts alongside a burgeoning contemporary art and architecture scene, and 21st-century Morocco is a potent blend of traditional and modern.



Since [the earthquake last September](#), Morocco is booming with travellers venturing beyond the established trails. According to figures from the Moroccan Tourism Observatory, the number of foreign visitors increased by 13 per cent to 10.9 million in the year to July, with Agadir, Marrakesh, Casablanca and Essaouira the fastest growing cities.

Come for the balmy temperatures and gold-spangled afternoons of autumn when the cities make for peaceful pootling and the beaches are still warm enough for paddling. Or the cool, crisp days of spring, when the countryside bursts with wildflowers making it ideal for hiking. Stay for the courtyard dars and riads, the rooftop restaurants and exuberant gardens, knowing that whatever happens it will never be boring.

- [Morocco travel guide: When to go, what to do and why you'll love it](#)

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1. A dazzling design villa in Tangier

Tangier, on the northwest tip of Morocco, is where the country's creative set are heading to open businesses such as the pioneering literary, graphic and culture centre Think Tanger (think-tanger.com); the Mothership art centre (mothershiptangier.org); and the excellent Alma café (almatanger.com). Completing the picture is the Dutch designer Willem Smit's five-bedroom art deco villa, Villa Augustine, in the tranquil Marshan neighbourhood, which opened in February 2023. Smit defies convention with his signature style that includes a dipping pool at the end of the living room, dual fireplaces in the dining room and bronze rolltop bathtubs in the bedrooms. Enjoy beanbag loungers on the rooftop and complimentary drinks and snacks throughout your stay.

Details Seven nights' B&B for eight from £3,023. Fly to Tangier

[Book a stay](#)

2. A luxurious escape on Larache's wilderness coast



La Fiermontina Ocean serves meals using ingredients sourced from their organic garden

ALESSIO MEI

On Morocco's dramatic Atlantic cliffs, La Fiermontina Ocean blends eco-conscious luxury with jaw-dropping natural beauty. It opened in spring 2023, and has 12 village houses and suites, each crafted with local materials that celebrate Moroccan artisanship and with sweeping ocean or garden views. An organic garden supplies fresh ingredients for farm-to-table meals, and guests get to immerse themselves in a variety of fresh-air activities, from surfing and horse riding along the rugged coast to breakfasts with local families and yoga on the terrace. It is a sophisticated jumping-off point for exploring northern Morocco's coast between the towns of Asilah and Larache — both great day trips — and the botanist Umberto Pasti's sublime wild gardens in the town of Rohuna (gardenofrohuna.com).

Details B&B doubles from £250. Fly to Tangier

[Book a stay](#)