

FOUND

PARIS

Home & heritage



It was an Italian friend who tipped us off to what is one of the most captivating new hotels to have opened anywhere in the world during the year or two, the Italo-Moroccan Filali family's **La Fiermontina Ocean**, a seaside compound of 11 suites and two villas with private pools and four traditional houses near the coastal town of Larache, 45 minutes south of Tangiers in Morocco.

Hidden away in the country near the ocean, the hotel is decorated with a mixture of Moroccan furniture and craftsmanship and Dolce Vita vintage Italian furniture as unique as it is casually chic.

"A great hotel is where you meet interesting people and learn something new," Yasmina Filali said over a glass of chilled Moroccan rosé on one of the terraces with sweeping seaviews the night we arrived. "This is our ambition for La Fiermontina Ocean."

Filali and her family carefully considered what kind of a hotel they'd build on a large plot of land originally bought 30 years ago to build a house for themselves before deciding to create **an eco-resort that could serve as a model for a new type of rural tourism in Morocco.**

"Implementing what we've learned through our Orient-Occident Foundation, which we established to promote cultural exchanges between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, we understood the region needed protected status as a natural park," Filali continues. "Then the struggling local villages had to be intimately and organically involved with our project to build a hotel. While some villagers work at the hotel, others are employed by the Parc Naturel Régional – Les Dunes de Khemis Sahel. We look at every family on a case-by-case basis to see how we can help, and we're also developing a cooperative staffed by local women to produce honey, jam, couscous and other products for sale."

In addition to a beach club, hammam and restaurant, **the heart of the hotel is the Maison du Cadi, a memorabilia gallery of the Filali family's fascinating history and heritage.** It was the meeting of Yasmina's grandmother Antonia Fiermonte, a passionate Catholic raised free-thinking painter from Puglia, and Cadi Thadi Filali, a professor of Koranic law, that created this cosmopolitan family's Italian-Moroccan background. It also explains the menu of Italian and traditional Moroccan dishes in the hotel's restaurant, and why the Filali family owns several hotels in Lecce and one in Paris.

So maybe this summer, instead of yet another weekend in Trouville or week on the Ile de Re, you'll hop an easy flight to Tangiers, and do your beach combing on a vast empty honey-colored Moroccan strand groomed by refreshing Atlantic breakers instead. —*Alexander Lobrano*

→ **La Fiermontina Ocean** (Larache) • NR 260, Houmat Eljediane Centre Sahel • Rooms from 515 € August wknd.