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Marrakech/Morocco
The first time I traveled to Marrakech was with my parents and five siblings in the 1980s. We stayed at La Mamounia, when the legendary property was still a beloved annual retreat for fashionable Frenchmen with their wives (or mistresses). I vividly remember the Catherine Deneuve and Anouk Aimée look-alikes lounging by the pool, the scent of lemons emanating from the sprawling gardens, the calls to prayer that seemed to echo off the Atlas Mountains. The atmosphere—dripping with history, intrigue and glamour—deeply impressed my teenage self.

Since then I have returned to the city four times, watching it grow and change, all the while retaining its unique character and soul. At Indagare, we are often asked about so-called slam-dunk destinations, which offer such a variety of experiences, such depth and authenticity, that travelers across the board fall for them. Marrakech is one of those places. Its hotels showcase some of the world’s finest craftsmanship; its restaurants today feature an incredible variety of cuisines; and its sense of style and design, prevalent in Marrakech’s chic boutiques and labyrinth-like souks, is simply unparalleled.

This edition of Indagare’s Black Book focuses on one of my favorite cities in the world and on a handful of the most memorable Moroccan side trips. In the Marrakech report, we review the city’s top addresses, from palace-like hotels to hidden cafés, as well as spotlight city secrets shared by stylish expats and locals. (The rest of the issue includes travel dispatches from such destinations as Amsterdam, Cuba, Panama, Laos and Italy, among many others.)

Marrakech is one of those places where a traveler immediately feels part of a bigger story being told. The city’s past, present and future are tangible, whether you’re surrounded by the scents and sounds of lively Jemaa el-Fnaa square or lounging on a quiet rooftop looking towards the snowcapped Atlas Mountains. But it is also an evolving and exciting city where expats and locals are bringing new energy and style to its traditions. I, for one, cannot wait for my next trip.
About Indagare
Indagare comes from the Latin word that means to seek, scout, discover. Indagare Travel is a high-end travel company with robust online editorial content and a boutique in-house travel agency. We travel, we write, and we plan memorable journeys for our members. To learn about our travel community, visit www.indagare.com or call 212-988-2611. Annual membership rates begin at $325.

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At Indagare you can research ideas for a trip on our site and consult with a specialist on the phone or by email to create, refine or expand your itinerary. Our Bookings Team can help you with something as simple as a hotel room or as complex as creating a multi-stop itinerary. We also have special rates and amenities at hundreds of properties. Email bookings@indagare.com or call 212-988-2611.

Insider Trips
Insider Trips are special journeys designed exclusively for Indagare members. With their insider access, mapped-out itineraries and exciting immersion in far-flung destinations, the trips offer members a rich and rewarding way to explore the world. Upcoming destinations include India, Cuba and Russia. For more information, call 646-963-2242 or email info@indagare.com.

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Marrakech & Morocco Itineraries
The vacation was perfect, except that the days were too short. Indagare even managed to arrange perfect weather for us. Here is a rundown of the places where we stayed and the discoveries we made along the way.

Big Sur
I have been fortunate to stay in wonderful hotels in many fabulous places, and Post Ranch Inn is spectacular. It is truly magical and we felt as if we were floating in heaven. The staff is wonderful and the food is out of this world. We didn’t leave the property once, except to hike. Guests considering coming here should know that there are no television in the rooms, and the Wi-Fi is extremely slow. Although we never missed having a TV, I wish I had known about the Internet issues in advance.

Montecito
San Ysidro Ranch was incredibly romantic. We loved our room. We ate dinner on the terrace one night. The food and service were spectacular, and it is one of the dreamiest settings in the world. I would recommend Boathouse at Hendry’s Beach, especially for breakfast. The food is fine, but you go for the beach views and ocean air.

Postcard from California
Indagare member P.B. returned from a coastal holiday in California at Post Ranch Inn, San Ysidro Ranch and Shutters on the Beach. Here are her thoughts.
Los Angeles

I have been to Shutters on the Beach, in Santa Monica, many times and love it, but it was a definite adjustment after the tranquility and privacy of the other two hotels. Even superior rooms are quite tight here, but they are charming and lovely.

In L.A., I returned to Gjelina (1429 Abbot Kinney Blvd., Venice; 310-450-1429), one of my favorite restaurants anywhere. It is reasonable and has a great vibe. Highlights were the mizuna mushroom salad, the grilled kale, the snapper and the wild mushroom goat-cheese pizza. Katsuya (11777 San Vicente Blvd., Brentwood; 310-207-8744) was terrific, as always. Standouts here include the baked crab roll and the seared tuna with Japanese salsa. Huckleberry (1014 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica; 310-451-2311) was great for breakfast. The eggs over quinoa are divine. On this trip I did not have time to go to Capo (1810 Ocean Ave., Santa Monica; 310-394-5550), but I love its phenomenal Italian cuisine, and it is a short walk from Shutters. Also around the corner is Cora’s (1802 Ocean Ave., Santa Monica; 310-451-9562), another great spot for breakfast.

One day I hiked West Ridge and Paseo Miramar and went for lunch at the organic A Votre Santé (13018 San Vicente Blvd., Brentwood; 310-451-1813). The atmosphere is low-key, but you often see celebrities here. John’s Garden (3835 Cross Creek Rd., Malibu; 310-456-8377) in Cross Creek Mall is a great spot to pick up a beach picnic lunch. Also in Cross Creek is Planet Blue (3835 Cross Creek Rd.; 310-317-8566), which sells nice candles and Julie Hewett lip balm. Finally, no trip to L.A. is complete without an ice blended at Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf, which has several locations.
food and wine

Culinary Travels

Indagare members are often reporting back on their best dining experiences—at old favorites and new discoveries. Here are some recent recommendations.

**Hamburg, Germany**
“We stopped by the old-world Fairmont Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten (9-14 Neuer Jungfernstieg; 49-40-34-940) for tea one day. We also loved dinner at a modern restaurant called Meatery (49 Drehbahn; 49-40-30-999-595).”

**Vienna & Salzburg, Austria**
“My favorite discovery was the restaurant Steirereck (2a Am Heumarkt; 43-713-31-68) in Vienna, where we had one of the greatest meals of our lives. In Salzburg the Sacher Hotel (5 Schwarzentraße; 43-662-889-770) and the Pfefferschiff (3 Söllheim; 43-662-661-242) restaurants were outstanding.”

**Edinburgh, Scotland**
“Dinner at Number One (1 Princes Street; 44-131-556-2414), at the Balmoral Hotel, was perfect for a special night out. The contemporary cuisine was tremendously good, the service was professional yet comfortable, and the decor manages to be both sexy (I went with my husband) and cozy (and with my mother).”

**Rome, Italy**
“A fabulous new discovery in the Italian capital is Gli Ulivi (23 Via Luciani; 39-06-3260-0301). The owners also have a beautiful boutique hotel in Umbria. The innovative cuisine at the Rome restaurant is heavenly.”

**Ambergris Caye, Belize**
“Unlike other Caribbean islands we have visited, Belize has very good food. Our favorite restaurants were Caliente (Beachfront at Spindrift Hotel, San Pedro; 501-226-2170), Red Ginger, in the Phoenix Resort (506-226-4623) and Blue Water Grill (Beachfront at the Sunbreeze Hotel, San Pedro; 501-226-3347).”

**Aeolian Islands, Italy**
“On the island of Salina, we had a great lunch at Signum Hotel (15 Via Scalo; 39-90-9844-190) and discovered a delicious bakery with Italian...”
cookies called Cosi Duci (9 Via San Lorenzo; 39-90-9844-358). In Canetto, on the island of Lipari, we also had a fantastic granita at Tano’s (Piazza San Cristoforo; 39-90-9812-755).”

Napa Valley, California
“Napa doesn’t have a late-night scene, but Bouchon (6534 Washington Street, Yountville; 707-944-8037) is open until 12:30 a.m. It has an incredible wine list and a beautiful seafood bar. Bouchon Bakery (6528 Washington Street, Yountville; 707-944-2253) is a great place to pick up coffee in the morning. I also love Brix (7377 St. Helena Highway, Napa; 707-944-2749) and Redd (6480 Washington Street, Yountville; 707-944-2222), headed by our own star chef, Richard Reddington.”

Beijing, China
“If time is short, I would recommend Da Dong (No. 3 Tuanjiehu Beikou, Chaoyang; 86-10-6582-2892) for Peking duck and LAN Club (4/F, Twin Tower, B12, Jianguomen Waidajie; 86-10-5109-6012) is like nowhere we’ve ever dined. The food at the Aman at Summer Palace (15 Gongmenqian St.; 86-10-5987-9999) was excellent, too.”

Florence, Italy
“The food at Villa San Michele (4 Via Doccia, Florence; 39-55-56-781) was delicious, and the restaurant had incredible views. The thing to order there is Chianina beef, as this is what the region is famous for. The breakfast spread was one of the most impressive I have ever seen.”

Sydney, Australia
“We took the ferry to Manly Beach and spent a day cycling to the top of the rock, having lunch at Hugo’s (Manly Wharf East Esplanade; 61-811-68-555), which apparently won the best pizza in the world competition and which was awesome.”

New York, New York
“French cuisine doesn’t have one authentic line: there are brasserie, bistro and bourgeois dishes (like veal chop with mustard sauce). One great brasserie is Quatorze Bis (323 East 79 Street; 212-535-1414).”

Bangkok, Thailand
“Sra Bua (Siam Kempinski Hotel, 99 1/9 Rama 1 Road; 66-2162-9000) is co-owned by Chef Henrik Yde-Andersen who also owns Copenhagen’s Michelin-starred Kiin Kiin. It’s Bangkok’s first molecular gastronomy restaurant, and not only is the decor chic but the food and presentation create a dazzling experience.”

Tuscany, Italy
“I loved Il Pellicano (Laclita Barcatello, 58018 Porto Ercole; 39-0564-858-111). We ate all our meals on site, and they were fabulous.”

Read many more restaurant tips, including interviews with culinary insiders, on Indagare.
Havana has been high on my travel list for years. My grandmother used to talk about going in the early 1950s, when the city was at the height of its glamour. From her stories, it sounded like the best of Vegas and Miami, with European and Caribbean influences and, of course, Cuban music, cigars and rum. So when the Obama administration reinstated travel licenses for People-to-People Cultural Exchanges, we immediately enlisted help from one of the best insiders doing cultural trips to Cuba to put together a special Indagare itinerary. (In fact, one of our team was on the first flight of People-to-People travelers, which landed in Havana in August to scout for us.) Our group of sixteen flew direct from JFK to Havana on one of the regularly scheduled charter flights that cater to Cuban-Americans. We had all heard that visiting Cuba was like stepping back in time, and that experience actually began when we boarded the ancient unmarked clunker from the 1970s. Over the course of the next four days, we explored the cobblestoned streets of Old Havana, with its glorious colonial buildings, in the company of a local architect; were given a lesson in Cuban art by a curator of the Museum of Fine Arts; visited Ernest Hemingway’s perfectly preserved estate in the countryside; tried to learn to salsa dance to the music of members of the Buena Vista Social Club; and met with Cuban artists and foreign ambassadors, who gave us a sense of everyday life—its challenges and privileges. For example, since food is scarce and there really is no concept of private property, even farmers cannot slaughter the cows they keep. In fact, the penalty for killing a cow is twenty years; for killing a person it is only eight. So maybe it shouldn’t be surprising that cows have a “habit” of wandering onto train tracks: once they are killed, a whole village can dine on beef.

One of our daily privileges was dining in the different paladares (restaurants in private homes). On our second night we climbed the grand but dilapidated stairway of a beautiful Baroque building in Old Havana, past columns...
with peeling paint and murals of Che Guerva, to pass through a carved wooden door into a dining room with fabulous food. Another day we pulled up to a house in a residential area to find art-filled rooms and an open kitchen. The next day we had one of our most memorable lunches on the top floor of an apartment building whose rooms had been converted into the chic Café Laurent. In a country with food rationing, how were they able to whip up such glorious meals? Cuban ingenuity. No wonder the Cubans are known for their national pride. You can see their resourcefulness in the hundreds of American cars, their 1940s and '50s bodies powered by parts salvaged from Russian and Chinese models. “We don’t have car mechanics,” our guide told us. “We have car magicians.” And it’s true: the entire city feels like a vintage-car rally.

Just a few days before we arrived, it had been announced that Cubans would be allowed to own cars, which really means that they have the right to sell them and keep the profits. A similar bill regarding real estate had been passed just weeks earlier, and citizens are thrilled at what these loosening of restrictions will mean. Still, average Cubans will not be allowed to buy new cars; only the elite, such as doctors and artists who earn foreign currency, may purchase the 2012 Mercedes. Confused? That is Cuba—a place where little is simple and where layers of meaning and mystery unfold.

The photographer Michael Dweck spent months in Havana shooting his wonderful new book Habana Libre, which documents a side of the city rarely seen. It is the world of artists, musicians and the privileged class. Yes, in this socialist country everyone is not equal. Many of Dweck’s subjects are free to travel to Europe and the States, but they return to Cuba. Their ties of kinship to their families, friends, neighbors and countrymen are stronger, perhaps because of shared hardships. Cubans’ sense of loyalty is fierce, as evidenced by both the touching reunions at the airport each day and by the refusal of those who left after the revolution to return while Fidel is alive. It may seem contradictory, but it’s Cuban. Consider the words of Graham Greene, whose classic Our Man in Havana still resonates: “When we are not sure, we are alive.” We certainly felt alive in Havana.

Read more about Cuba, including Why Go Now, restaurant and activities recommendations and an interview with photographer Michael Dweck, in Indagare’s Cuba Report.

Cuba Insider Trips 2012

“I would highly recommend traveling to Cuba with Indagare above any other company,” says a member who attended the first Indagare Insider Trip. “In fact, I have already steered friends away from booking generic trips with others.” Despite the easing of certain travel restrictions, Cuba remains extremely difficult to access, and few companies are able to obtain licenses. Thanks to Indagare’s connected specialists, both access and an extraordinary visit are available to our members. If you would like to join one of our Insider Trips in 2012, contact our Bookings Team: bookings@indagare.com or call 212-988-2611.
Loving Luang Prabang

Laos’s former royal capital has a gorgeous Mekong riverside setting and incredible cultural sites. Simone Girner gets the lay of the land.

When an Indagare member recently returned from a trip to Southeast Asia, including Laos, she confessed that at first she “didn’t get” Luang Prabang, the former royal capital and bustling present-day town in the north of the country. I know exactly how she felt. My first impressions of the melodically named place were of intense exhaust fumes (tons of tuk-tuks), crowds (November is high season) and an overwhelmingly compressed layout centered on three main streets jam-packed with small guesthouses, restaurants, shops, cafés and haphazard businesses.

On day one my husband, Julian, and I toured with an excellent guide trying to see as much as possible, New York City-style. We visited some of the stunning wats (temples), the Royal Palace and the Museum of Ethnology and climbed Mount Phou Si in the center of town for views. By the time we stopped for a late lunch at Bat Vat Sene, housed in a charming restored colonial house, I was exhausted and dusty. I pride myself on being a traveler who can easily figure out how to get off the beaten path and escape the crowds, but this seemed impossible on the small peninsula tucked between the Mekong and tributary Nam Khan Rivers.

The second day we had made plans to head out of town to Elephant Village, a center started by a German traveler who has made it his mission to improve life for some of Laos’s much-abused logging elephants. We had both wanted to bike to the camp, but I was feeling under the weather and opted for taking a van, while Julian was picked up by an Elephant Village guide who was to lead him on the one-hour tour. Two-and-a-half hours after I arrived at the scenic camp, perched high above a riverbed, I began to wonder seriously where in the Laotian jungle my husband had ended up. Julian finally did make it; there had been some misunderstanding about his bike and he had ended up waiting for nearly an hour for everything to be resolved. Again, the New Yorkers in us grumbled at what we had started calling “Laos time.”
On our third day, we rose at 5:45 a.m. and rode our bikes into town. Even at this hour, people teemed in the streets. Hunched-over old ladies were preparing breakfast, monks clad in saffron-colored robes were heading to the wats for the daily alms offering, school kids chased each other, the front door of nearly every home was thrown wide open. We biked in silence, the light slowly rising, the river shifting like molasses, the air filled with southeast Asia scents. We stopped at a French bakery, sipped steaming cappuccinos and nibbled on croissants (Laos was part of French Indochina for sixty-one years). We strolled on, pushing our bikes past temples and pagodas, bookstores and gardens, stopping here and there to sit, observe, talk. Moving at this pace, we started seeing the town’s small treasures: the wooden balconies of the colonial houses; the tidy school uniforms and neatly braided hair of the groups of girls; crumbling courtyards lined with crimson and purple flowers; tiny balls of fresh sticky rice laid out in front of serene Buddha statues. It was my “aha” day, with no agenda, no trying to make New York City time happen in Laos. I met the town on its own terms, and it revealed itself in layers I had not thought possible just days earlier. Even the tuk-tuk traffic grew on me (after all, there are very few cities, even in Southeast Asia, where you hardly see cars).

Luang Prabang is not as off-the-radar as it was a decade ago, but it retains something beautifully naive, untouched and pure. Luang Prabang retains something beautifully naive, untouched and pure, even though it’s certainly not as off-the-radar as it was a decade ago. Currently the small airport accommodates only propeller planes, limiting how many tourists can arrive at the same time (a new airport slated to open in 2014 is sure to change this). Also, although noting the friendliness of the locals in Southeast Asian destinations is travel journalism at its clichéd worst, in the case of Luang Prabang it is very true. In all my travels to this part of the world, I have never felt as welcome as I did here. At the night market, no one hassled me to make a purchase; the women,
many of whom belong to the hill tribes, simply smiled and let me peruse the wares. After the tour at Elephant Village, the guide looked at us and said, “Thank you for coming to Luang Prabang. Without you we would not have jobs” with such earnestness it made my heart skip a beat.

This sliver of a country lived through incredible adversity during the Vietnam War and a subsequent oppressive Communist regime. But at least in Luang Prabang, you sense a deep and transcending spiritualism. Most boys spend some of their lives as Buddhist monks, and local support for the monasteries is universal, so everyone is invested in these age-old traditions. And although the daily alms giving has, sadly, been turned into a bit of a show by tourists who cannot refrain from pointing safari-style photo lenses at the quiet procession, the ritual’s integrity remains beautifully intact (just look at the serious faces of the boy monks, often barefoot and with shaved heads, many as young as twelve years old).

If I had one piece of advice for visitors to Luang Prabang, it would be to go now. I hope this special place could always retain its profound soul, but only time will tell what an influx of investment (much of it is coming from China), bigger planes and more tourists will do to it.

On our last day, Julian and I often spotted the newly arrived—rushing, frantic, obviously overwhelmed—and exchanged knowing smiles, thankful that we had been let in on the Luang Prabang secret. I get it now. And I cannot wait to return.

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**Luang Prabang Tip Sheet**

Laos’s ancient royal capital can easily be toured in three or four days. For a good balance between sightseeing and relaxation, book a hotel outside of the town’s bustle.

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**Stay (Design Mavens)**

*Amantaka*

Within easy walking distance of the town’s buzzing heart but far enough away to give guests a sense of space, the Amantaka has fifteen white-washed buildings with low red-tile roofs that are clustered around a massive green courtyard with a large pool and terrace. If you come expecting Southeast Asian lushness, you will be disappointed. But anyone familiar with the brand knows that the luxury is in the details and the unbeatable service. Read Indagare’s review.

**Stay (Romantics)**

*La Résidence Phou Vao*

One of the first hotels to open in Luang Prabang, in 1992, La Résidence has been managed by Orient-Express since 2006 and is folded into nearly five acres of gorgeous gardens. Most of the rooms are housed in French-colonial buildings that run down a hillside. The lush setting keeps 20 gardeners and three full-time florists employed; suffice it to say that especially at night, illuminated by lanterns, the property is supremely romantic. Read Indagare’s online review.

**Eat**

*Coconut Garden*

Housed in a colonial building with a garden out front and in back, Coconut is a great spot for an alfresco lunch or dinner. The menu focuses on Laoian cuisine; try such specialties as sun-dried buffalo, minced chicken (laap) and fish steamed in banana leaves. When I went, the steamed lemongrass stalks stuffed with pork was so good we ordered another serving right away. At night the garden is lit with lanterns shaped like stars. Read Indagare’s online review.

**Day Trip**

*Elephant Village*

Travelers who are interested in elephants and believe in supporting a company that gives back to the local communities will love Elephant Village, about a forty-five-minute drive from Luang Prabang. The half-day tour includes a pick-up at your hotel, the transfer to the village and a thirty-minute ride, crossing into the Nam Khan River. Those interested in a more immersive elephant experience can sign up for the multiday mahout course. Read Indagare’s online review.

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Read more about Luang Prabang in Indagare’s online report. If you are planning a trip to Southeast Asia and would like help with your itinerary, contact our Bookings Team by emailing bookings@indagare.com or calling 212-988-2611.
You Asked: Boca Grande

An easy spring weekend getaway the whole family will love? **Amelia Osborne** recommends one of her family’s favorite escapes.

Driving over the single-lane swing bridge connecting Boca Grande to mainland Florida, I always feel my New Yorker blood pressure drop. Arriving at this barrier island, framed by the Gulf of Mexico, is like going back in time; its understated peacefulness has kept me coming back at least once a season for my whole life. The old-Florida feel of Boca Grande’s **Gasparilla Inn & Club**, built in 1913, inspired its motto: Florida as it was meant to be. The majority of visitors to the Gasparilla Inn have been coming for multiple years—if not multiple generations—since 1913. An ideal spot for families looking for sunshine between October and May in a convenient location (Tampa, Sarasota and Ft. Myers airports are all close by), Gasparilla consists of comfortable, if bare-bones, rooms in the three-story plantation-style main inn and seventeen cottages. The cottages, which provide more privacy and each consist of two king-size rooms, two twin rooms (all en suite), two lanais (screened-in porches) and a spacious sitting room.

The club boasts seven clay courts and a Pete Dye-designed golf course, as well as two pools, a croquet court and a luxurious spa. Guides are available to take anglers sport fishing in the gulf or the harbor (Boca Grande is the tarpon-fishing capital of the world), and the island has even caught on to the trendy new aquatic activity SUP (stand up paddle-boarding.) Bikes and golf carts most definitely have right-of-way on the island, and the inn can arrange for bike, golf cart and rollerblade rentals. Guests have the choice of à la carte or all-inclusive meals, with breakfast and dinner in the inn’s dining room or Pink Elephant restaurant and buffet lunch at the Beach Club. **Rooms from $250 per night.**

500 Palm Ave, Boca Grande, FL 33921; 941-964-4500. Read Indagare’s online review.

**Who Should Stay/Not Stay:** Gasparilla Inn is not right for everyone. It’s decidedly old-school so those expecting a polished look and feel, as well as round-the-clock services and amenities will be disappointed.

**Indagare Tip:** Visit nearby islands Cabbage Key and Cayo Costa by boat. Guides can even motor down to the Florida Keys, about three hours each way.
Some vacation destinations are synonymous with European royalty: Sardinia, Gstaad, Mustique and Marbella. But Panama? The Central American country is only now coming online as one of the next It travel destinations (the New York Times named it as one of its top places to go in 2012). But one European prince has been under the spell of its untouched natural splendor for years. S. D. Prinz Maximilian Von Liechtenstein first visited Panama in 1999 and immediately was bewitched by its secluded, wild nature. Nine years later, in 2008, he started construction on a beachside home on the stunning Azuero Peninsula, which dips south into the Pacific Ocean. In designing the Spanish-style estancia, Prince Maximilian worked with a renowned architect to make sure the property would blend into the surrounding landscapes.

Today AMA Estancia is a true passion project: the 17,000-square-foot house, with stunning ocean vistas, includes a main villa with six guest rooms, as well as a pool house with one king-size room. Two beaches lie within thirty yards of the house, one a protected bay with calm water, the other more open, with waves ideal for surfing. The owner is also committed to an ambitious reforesting project, with some 60,000 native trees being replanted to help reconstitute the natural corridor and landscape of the region. Management is proud to arrange for walks or horseback rides along the beaches and through the property’s 450 acres for its guests. The prince spoke to Indagare about AMA Estancia, his love for Panama and the ecoprojects closest to his heart.

What’s the draw of the Azuero Peninsula?
The Azuero Peninsula is of exceptional natural beauty. The house is located on a gorgeous spot in front of rolling hills and between two very different beaches. One beach surrounds a little bay with a coral reef, and the other beach is wide and gets good waves. It has also attracted many sea turtles, which come to the shore to lay their eggs.

What vision did Annabelle Selldorf bring to the property’s architecture?
Annabelle took into consideration the land-
scape’s colors and the area’s materials. The house was built in a contemporary style, incorporating such classic Spanish elements as wood balconies and terra-cotta tiles. I like the simple but charming woodwork around the house, which adds a rustic yet sophisticated element.

**What inspired the reforestation project?**
A large portion of the AMA Estancia land was covered with a teak forest planted in 1994. Teak is an invasive tree in Panama, doesn’t provide any food to the local fauna and leads to soil deterioration over time. So we have been systematically cutting down the teak and reforesting the region with native species, thus connecting the patches of existing native forest and providing bio-corridors for monkeys, birds and other animals. To date, we have planted more than 40,000 trees, and we have 20,000 more to go.

**What should no AMA Estancia visitor miss experiencing during a visit?**
I encourage our guests to explore the area around AMA Estancia. Visitors can go horseback riding on the beach and along forest trails, go surfing, fishing and snorkeling. The rainy season, which lasts from May through November, is a perfect time for these activities and also for watching whales and sea turtles in the water in front of the house. On a culinary note, the tuna sushi and mango and passion fruit sorbets prepared by our chef are incredible.

**What are some other discoveries you’ve made in Panama?**
In addition to a trip to the countryside, I recommend taking a fishing tour through the Panama Canal and visiting the diverse town of Casco Viejo. Panama has been a melting pot for many ethnic and cultural groups for many years and is also home to a beautiful and isolated cloud forest, full of wildlife. From Volcan, the highest point in Panama, visitors can see the Pacific and the Caribbean Sea across the isthmus.

**What is the best time of year to visit?**
Summer runs from December through mid May and it’s ideal. I also recommend coming between late July and late September when the rains are not as strong and last for shorter periods. During this time guests might see whales right in front of the house.

**How do you see tourism developing in Panama?**
Although tourism in Panama is still relatively small and underdeveloped, I am hopeful that Panamanians will develop this sector carefully and not allow tourism to destroy the country’s beautiful nature and charm. I believe they have the ability to develop tourism in a sustainable and ecofriendly way.

AMA Estancia is Prince Maximilian’s private home, but it can be rented in its entirety by a group of friends or families traveling together. Contact the Indagare bookings team for an introduction or for more information, including rates: 212-988-2611.
Fashion Now: Filip + Inna

Innovative Philippine fashion label Filip + Inna was founded by Lenora Luisa Cabili, whose background in traditional dance inform the colorful collections.

Inspired by the designs and beadwork of tribes across the Philippines, Lenora Luisa Cabili (left) founded Filip + Inna in 2010, after a career spent in the Banyanihan Philippine National Dance Company. “The costumes we wore on stage greatly influenced the design and direction of Filip + Inna,” says Cabili. “In this day and age, when technology has replaced the work of the hands, wearing something handmade has a special feel to it; the embroiderer has spent time on it, so it becomes like wearable art.” The intricate beadwork is all done by hand, the subtle variations reflecting the techniques of different regional tribes, and the products are sent across the Philippines to be completed. Since only the highest-quality local fabrics are used, many pieces are one of a kind. Here are some of the highlights of this special collection, which is sold exclusively by the Indagare Souk (www.indagare.com/souk).

Lace Bolero
This lace bolero is adorned with stunning hand embroidery $550.
**Beaded Anya Dress**
This A-line dress, in a soft cotton chambray, has mother-of-pearl beadwork and embroidery. Stitching and embroidery also adorn the back of the dress. $395.

**Embroidered Biti Shorts**
These linen shorts are embellished with Philippine cross-stitch embroidery (available in other colors). $140.

**T’boli Beaded Belts**
The multicolored, beaded belts, made using traditional beading techniques, have cast-metal clasp closures and are all one of a kind. $90 (each).

**Dalisay Beaded Tunic**
In vibrant green, this tunic is adorned with beading around the neck, sleeves and hem. $240.
Amsterdam Shopping Walk

Indagare founder Melissa Biggs Bradley charts out the perfect shopping afternoon in the Dutch capital’s antiques-filled Spiegelkwartier.

When I have only a short amount of time in a city, I love to go to a street that delivers the quintessential soul of the place along with some great shopping in independent boutiques that feature products unique to the location. My favorite such streets always mix fashion and housewares stores with neighborhood cafés and quirky shops. On a recent trip to Amsterdam, I discovered my beloved Dutch stretch (actually two contiguous streets), which offers a perfect short walk for a couple, family or traveler on her own wishing to browse special shops and revel in the distinct charm and atmosphere of the city.

Spiegelkwartier, which means “Mirror Quarter,” encompasses five blocks on Nieuwe Spiegelstraat and Spiegelgracht (the latter has a canal running through it). Its charming gabled town houses are home to more than seventy art and antiques galleries, as well as chocolate and jewelry shops and lively cafés. It’s best to start at the bottom of Spiegelgracht, just two short bridges from the Rijksmuseum (finally reopening in 2013). Stop at Antiquariaat Hoogkamp (#27), a charming print shop selling maps and botanical and nautical prints, all of which can be framed on the spot within minutes. Farther along is Tamago (#13), a chic vintage shop where classic Chanel and Missoni meet cool young new fashion by designers like Charlotte Bialas and IVANAhelsinki. Still farther on are antique and art galleries with wonderful silver sets, porcelain worthy of museum collections and Oriental and tribal art, ranging from 18th century Japanese screens to such inexpensive collectibles as Buddha heads and African totems. On the same street across the canal are the gallery of contemporary jewelry designer and artist Anneke Schat (#20) and, for those with kids in tow, the whimsical toy store Tinkerbell (#10-12). For artisan accessories, the workshop of Cindy Jeurissen, Atelier Winkel, is located on Lange Leidsedwarsstraat, just off of Spiegelgracht (#145). The leather bags sold here are sewn on-site.

Across the canal (heading away from the Rijksmuseum), the street turns into Nieuwe Spiegelstraat, which holds several luscious
jewelry shops, such as the antique jewelers Binenbaum (#45), Mary Kaak (#47) and Il Putto (#28). Among the fabulous antiques shops are M.C. Gasseling (#66), selling Delft tiles starting at €40, and Staetshuys Antiquairs (#45), with an enormous range of antique globes and incredible vintage toy airplanes and trains. Good places for a take-out meal or sweet pick-me-up are Vanderdonk Chocolates (#72), Fior di Gelato (#56) and Lombardo’s (#50). The best options for a longer break and proper meal are Pompadour tearoom and Spelt (#5A). For a cabinet-of-curiosity type of visit, head to Keizersgracht and stop in Thom and Lenny Nelis Antiques (#541), which specializes in medical and pharmacy antiques, with displays of fossils, crabs and fish (sort of like a mini Deyrolle). Fashion shops of note include Jacob (#27), which features handmade men’s shoes and bags and Carmacoma (#78), the city’s version of Colette or Dover Street Market, a specialist in avant-garde fashion; it stocks clothes by Azzedine Alaia and Rick Owens. If you are shopped out by the time you arrive at the end of the arcade, you can duck into Spelt (Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 5A) for a coffee break.

Amsterdam Tip Sheet

You’ll have the most fun in the Dutch capital by blending into the local scene, whether soaking up the vibe at a canal-side café or by exploring on foot, bike or boat.

Stay
717 Hotel
If you have ever fantasized about living in an Amsterdam canal house on Prinsengracht (the city’s top avenue), this special boutique property with just eight suites is as close as you can get. Each of the rooms has a different layout and aesthetic. The canal-facing ones are huge, with beamed ceilings. The hotel has a pretty breakfast room but no restaurant and provides room service only for smaller requests, like wine and afternoon treats. It’s within walking distance of the canal belt and Museumplein. Read Indagare’s review.

Eat
De Kas
To enjoy a delicious tasting menu in a special setting, take a taxi to De Kas, in southeastern Amsterdam. The restaurant is in a soaring glass conservatory, making it a romantic spot for lunch or dinner during the warm summer months. For dinner, the menu is prix fixe only, consisting of five surprise courses that include vegetarian choices. The chef champions local ingredients, much of it plucked from the adjoining hothouse, where diners can see the produce for their dinners growing. Read Indagare’s review.

Break
De Jaren
This bright multilevel café-restaurant with beautiful canal views is a perennial favorite and buzzes all day. In the morning, you’ll find regulars who come every day and linger over one of the many papers that are set out on a large table, as in a library. At lunchtime, there’s always a race to secure one of the tables by the floor-to-ceiling windows. Later in the afternoon, you can recharge with a piece of one of the homemade cakes and a cup of strong coffee. 20-22 Nieuwe Doelenstraat; 31 (0) 20-625-5771. Read Indagare’s review.
Why Go Now: Nicaragua

Amelia Osborne discovers the country that’s emerging as one of the most exciting places for green-conscious travelers eager to get off the beaten path.

Very beautiful and very wild,” is how one American living in Nicaragua describes his adopted home. After my first visit there last month, I am in complete agreement and would add a few more descriptions: “untouched,” “serene” and “the next big thing.” Having spent some time in Costa Rica and southern Mexico, I had a sense of what to expect geographically, but I was most surprised by the many seemingly contradictory juxtapositions that define the country. Asking hotel managers and tourism experts about Nicaragua’s biggest challenge prompted the same resounding reply: “Foreigners misconception the country is dangerous.” I didn’t tell them that I had been one of these anxious foreigners. Informed about Nicaragua’s political issues over the past decades, I had safety concerns before my trip, but I was stunned when I ended up feeling more secure there than walking home in Manhattan. One local explained that Nicaragua has the lowest crime rate in Central America: because the culture is so used to being at war (bullet holes from the revolution of the 1970s are still visible on many building façades), communities band together, enforcing a very strong commitment to local security. I also wasn’t prepared for the scars the country’s political issues have left. Nicaragua is emerging from an era that witnessed a corrupt dictatorship, a government coup, a civil war and a period of anti-American socialism. But today capitalist ambitions exist alongside socialist attitudes. I found the state-run co-op bus system fascinating: it uses Russian school buses from the 1970s, but its drivers call stations ahead from their cell phones, competing for fares.

Another fascinating contrast is the country’s relationship with ecofriendliness and the green movement. I had always considered recycling a
developed-world’s dilemma, but Nicaragua is extremely concerned with its carbon footprint. It is the second-poorest country in the Western hemisphere (after Haiti), but despite, or perhaps because of this, the government and businesspeople are focused on sustainability, green building and maintenance. Another noticeable aspect is the importance that hotels place on helping their communities with donations, support of school and after-school programs and hiring local staff. Since my return, I have often revisited my favorite mental image from the trip. Driving along a dirt road heading to a spectacular and deserted beach, we passed four men on a rickety donkey cart. Barefoot and balancing surfboards under their arms, they waved to us, the only car on the road for miles. I couldn’t help but think this was the perfect metaphor for the country: They were moving along—slowly—using extremely outdated technology, all the while having a great time. There must be deeper meaning to the fact that while my behemoth of a van got stuck in a pothole, their wooden cart passed us, the men still grinning and waving.

Spotlight: Aqua

Eco-luxury Aqua Wellness Resort comprises twenty-five tree houses and sits on the protected Redonda Bay of the Pacific coast. The resort emphasizes nature, in particular the stunning ocean at its feet. The houses built on pilings amid the tropical forest and made of sustainable local wood and stone, feature rain showers and unchlorinated plunge pools. Ideal for families, the tree houses can accommodate several people and have kitchens, dining rooms and lounge areas. The Nicaraguan furnishings are comfortable, and the sweeping views of the rainforest and ocean act as the world’s most spectacular decoration. Read Indagare’s online review.

WHO SHOULD STAY: Families and those looking for a retreat where the emphasis is on wellness.

WHO SHOULD NOT STAY: Anyone with a problem with many stairs.

ROOMS TO GET: Those with ocean view, closest to the beach.

INDAGARE TIP: Wade into the ocean at night to see phosphorescent sea creatures.

Read more reviews in the complete Nicaragua Destination Report. If you are planning a trip, contact our Bookings Team (212-988-2611).
My Italy

Photographer Cynthia Lynn (www.cynthialynn.com) has traveled and worked all across Italy. In this photo portfolio, she captures the places that are most meaningful to her.

**Italian Magic:** Florence’s Duomo captured in late October. “You can see church goers filing into the building for mass, while a small group gathers just outside to take in the structure’s grandeur. A man whisked by on his bicycle, I presume on the way to work since he was riding with purpose.”
Town and country (clockwise from top):
“The town of Montalcino is well-known for its production of Brunello;” the cypress trees lining a road at Montalcino’s Poggio Antico vineyard, “one of the region's highest altitude producers; Hotel Splendido Mare, in Portofino, whose pool has amazing views; the Amalfi Coast from Positano’s Le Sirenuse: “It’s beautiful during the day, but at night the hills light up with life.”
What was your first really meaningful trip?
Our first big family trip was spring break on a ranch in southern Arizona, in the mountains near Mexico. A creek lined with cottonwood trees cut through the property, weaving a swath of emerald green through the desert landscape. Under the guidance of a fantastic team of cowboys, we rode horses all day, every day, cantering with wild abandon across vast open fields, splashing through the creek and climbing up the rocky mountainsides, all the while never seeing another soul. For a kid, the sense of adventure was simply thrilling. My mother had fallen in love with the American Southwest when she was a child, and she was quite moved to see her own children developing a bond of their own. I am counting the days until my children are old enough for us to do our own family trip there and keep the tradition going.

What was your favorite trip last year?
Visiting South Africa. I love hotels that are small and personal and have a soul, and I found so many wonderful examples of that in South Africa, like Grootbos, La Résidence and Royal Malewane. The landscape was magnificent, from the wind-carved sandstone on the shores near Gansbaai to the impeccably cultivated vineyards of the Winelands. And South Africans make great company—what a fun, adventurous bunch they are.

What was an excursion that surprised you?
When I was in Morocco in November, I spent a morning wandering through a Berber market in the Atlas Mountains. I was the only non-Moroccan there, and I was fascinated to see the sometimes hilarious juxtapositions of tradition and modernity. For example, in front was a parking lot for mopeds and cars, and in back was a parking lot for donkeys and mules. My guide taught me so much about local culture just by explaining the backstory of each stand we passed.

What are some great summer destinations for families?
I find the best family trips offer a mix of culture,
activity, relaxation and pampering, with a limited number of stops along the way. Here are a few of our favorite combinations: Istanbul, Cappadocia and a gulet along the coast of Turkey. Castiglion del Bosco, the fabulous Ferragamo property in Tuscany, and the Cipriani in Venice. Le Bristol in Paris, the Four Seasons Provence and the Hotel du Cap. For something more outdoorsy, we adore the Ranch at Rock Creek, in Montana, or an African safari.

**What’s a slam-dunk destination for you?**
South Africa is always a wow. It’s an incredibly diverse, enormous country that offers a thrilling combination of city, bush and beach. And, of course, Italy never fails to enchant.

**What is one piece of advice you would offer to our members?**
Before I was in the industry, I never bought travel insurance; somehow, it seemed like a waste of money or maybe even a scam of some kind. Now that I am immersed in trip planning every day and can see the consequences when people don’t buy it and some kind of surprise arises (a lost passport, a child getting sick, for example). I always travel with it, and I encourage others to do the same. Peace of mind is a beautiful thing.

**What is your favorite aspect of trip planning for members?**
It is particularly gratifying to be able to match members to the perfect guide. For example, no matter how many times you have been to the Louvre, a trip with our top guide there, who is a practicing architect, Fulbright scholar and incredibly knowledgeable and articulate, will make you see things in a whole different way. We have a wonderful guy in Barcelona who wins the hearts of kids every time, and someone whose tour of Pompeii is riveting. After visiting the British Museum, one of our members proclaimed that her guide was like “a modern-day Indiana Jones: engaging, witty and brilliant.” I find that even when people stay in the most fabulous hotels, when they come back from trips, they always talk the most about who they met along the way, so I love to connect them with really special people.

**Where are you dying to go next?**
Even though I was just there a few months ago, I cannot stop dreaming of my next trip to Africa. I would love to spend time in East Africa based at a mobile camp or see the Okavango Delta in Botswana or visit Tswalu, the Oppenheimer estate in the Kalahari Desert. Africa has definitely worked its magic on me.
There are some places that are not easily described. Just as there are some experiences that are not easily compared. Palais Namaskar is both. Proudly standing amongst the gems of the Oetker Collection - a one-of-a-kind collection of masterpiece hotels - Palais Namaskar is also a member of the esteemed Leading Hotels of the World.

Bringing together 12 acres of tranquillity and impeccable hospitality to create the most enigmatic 5-star retreat in Marrakech, Palais Namaskar has been designed around Feng Shui principles. Tranquillity and excitement jointly create an atmosphere of energy and inspiration where the encounter with oneself and others leads to perfect moments. This is the Namaskar Experience.
One of a kind

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This is the Namaskar Experience.
“Ultimately this city is about the magical mysteries of the intangible; an immersion in atmosphere and ancient rhythms.”

~ Thomas Hays, designer
Marrakech & Morocco Itineraries

Marrakech has it all: history, romance and atmosphere. Melissa Biggs Bradley, Eliza Harris and Daisy Finer go behind the scenes of this fascinating destination.

It’s clichéd to characterize a far-flung locale with adjectives like “exotic,” “intoxicating,” “alluring.” But in the case of Marrakech, all of these apply—and then some. Morocco’s so-called Red City has an incredible blend of history, romance and atmosphere. It also offers a memorable collision between tradition and modernity. On any stroll through the city, you can observe examples of these seeming contradictions playfully merging into a vibrant tapestry of daily life: a man in a dapper tweed blazer astride a donkey; women dressed in headscarves, tight jeans and heels; market stands piled high with local eggplants and baskets of henna adjacent to tables of used BlackBerries and cell phones.

Few cities can compete with Marrakech in terms of creative inspiration, so it’s no wonder that scores of artists, designers and fashion people have flocked here for decades. For one, the scope of Moroccan artisanship is baffling: some twenty percent of the country’s population support themselves with their craft-making, which includes intricate works in wood, plaster, glass and textiles. (To view incredible artisanship, just visit the restored La Mamounia hotel, which had thousands of the city’s best craftsmen working on its restoration.)

The city’s appeal also lies in the fact that it’s a theater of life a thousand years old and an apex of modern style. “Moroccan design is defined by strong architectural shapes, saturated colors, and complex patterns,” says hotelier and author Maryam Montague. “But the Marrakech spin freshens and modernizes the aesthetic and makes it more usable and accessible.” Where else in Africa can you plunge into a centuries-old souk, dodging donkeys before heading for drinks in a cool lounge restaurant? Much of the country’s transformation has occurred under the leadership of King Mohammed VI, an enlightened ruler who ascended to the throne in 1999 and whose reign has mostly been one of progress (the king also headed his own Marrakech hotel passion project; see p. 32).

Although traveling between other Moroccan destinations remains challenging because of less-than-ideal infrastructure, travelers who brave the lengthy journeys are rewarded with places whose very names evoke romance and adventure: Fez, Essaouira, Ouarzazate. And just a short drive from Marrakech itself rise the stunning Atlas Mountains, home to Berber villages that seem frozen in time and authentic resorts offering respite from the city’s bustle. For those looking for an indulgent time in a—yes—exotic and intoxicating place, it doesn’t get any better than Marrakech.

Whether you’re visiting for a few nights or planning a multicity itinerary, Indagare’s Bookings Team can help make your journey remarkable: 212-988-2611.

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**INDAGARE CHEAT SHEET**

Get...access with Indagare’s preferred guides (p.51)

Know...what hotels offer serenity in the bustling city (p.31)

Savor...the food and ambience at local spots (p.39)

Ride...a camel in the desert at La Pause (p.39)

Spend...the night in the striking Atlas Mountains (p.36)

Learn...about the city’s fascinating history (p.43)

Read...great authors like Wharton and Bowles (p.34)

Shop...for stylish finds in the souk and beyond (p.46)

Explore...Morocco beyond Marrakech (p.44)
WHEN TO GO
Avoid Marrakech during Ramadan, which is faithfully observed, meaning that many shops and restaurants are closed. The Islamic calendar is lunar, so dates shift from year to year; in 2012, Ramadan will start on July 20 and end August 18. It’s hot from June through August, but you can enjoy lounging at the pool as late as October and as early as March.

GETTING THERE
The easiest way to get to Marrakech from the U.S. is on Royal Air Maroc, Morocco’s official airline, which flies nonstop daily from Kennedy Airport to Casablanca; from there it’s a one-hour flight to Marrakech. However, flying on Royal Air Maroc is far from royal (even its business class is not very luxurious). For comfort, fly to London, Madrid or Paris and connect.

LAY OF THE LAND
The center of the city, both physically and in spirit, is the medina. Still surrounded by its 12th-century walls, it is about double the size of New York’s Central Park. Along its meandering narrow streets, visitors will find riads (courtyard houses), souks (markets) and hammams (baths). Many of the city sights are within the medina, including the Koutoubia Minaret tower, the 14th-century divinity college Ben Youssef Medersa and Place Djemaa el Fna, the city’s lively central square. It also contains many palaces, such as El Badi Palace, La Bahia Palace, El Makhzen and Dar Si Said museum. The Menara Gardens is in the medina, and the lush Agdal Gardens and historic Majorelle Gardens are just outside its walls to the north.

The Palmeraie is to the northeast of the medina (about a 25-minute drive away). An oasis of palm trees, it is home to many luxury hotels, golf courses and villas. Gueliz, the so-called nouvelle ville (modern city), lies northwest of the medina. An hour’s drive north of Marrakech is the industrial zone, Sidi Ghanem, home to design studios that make and sell carpets, ceramics and textiles. Marrakech taxis can easily take shoppers from the medina to this area. The Atlas Mountain range begins about an hour’s drive south of the city.

GETTING AROUND
Whether you stay in Marrakech or its environs, you will want to walk around the medina, so pack comfortable walking shoes. Islamic tradition is the rule here, so women should dress in a modest, non-revealing way. Crime is not a major issue, but there are many hawkers and beggars who will spot you as an easy mark if you come off as an obvious tourist, so stick to an understated style of dress (especially in terms of accessories). It’s not advisable to rent a car and drive yourself, as navigating the medina is complicated and local drivers can be quite aggressive; your hotel can arrange for a driver for a day, a half day or even shorter periods, and restaurants can call for taxis.
WHERE TO STAY

If you want to be within walking distance of the action, staying in the medina is your best option. If you prefer Atlas Mountain views, gardens and grown-up-size swimming pools, booking a hotel in the Palmeraie is the better choice. Or stay in the medina for a few nights before heading to the Palmeraie or a retreat in the Atlas Mountains (p. 36). Here are some of Indagare’s preferred options; many more, including privately owned riads, can be found on the site.

Luxury

La Mamounia

For decades this palace hotel was where all the luminaries stayed. Churchill roamed its gardens; Catherine Deneuve lounged by the pool. The grande dame ushered in a new era when it reopened in 2010 after a dramatic renovation. Designer Jacques Garcia, the man behind Paris’ Hôtel Costes, spent three years and more than $175 million to make almost every inch of the vast property hand-crafted. Some days more than a thousand artisans worked on-site laying tiles, piecing together wood marquetry walls, carving intricate arabesque designs into plaster columns and forging hundreds of lanterns.

La Mamounia boasts three three-bedroom riads, each with a Moroccan salon and private swimming pool; seventy-one suites and seven signature suites; two restaurants conceived by Michelin-starred chefs; and a 27,000-square-foot spa featuring everything from traditional hammam treatments to Shiseido facials. One area that has changed little is the gorgeous 20-acre garden, with its olive trees and orange groves. At the unveiling, Garcia said: “The

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Indagare Plus

Members who book through Indagare receive preferential rates and/or special amenities at the properties with the Indagare Plus symbol. The hotels in this report are rated as $$$ (expensive), $$ (moderately expensive) or $ (reasonable).
Mamounia is to Marrakech what the Louvre is to Paris: everybody comes to see it. Only here, some can stay. It’s like spending a night at the museum.” $$$, Avenue Bab Jdid; 212 (0) 524-388-600. Read Indagare’s review.

Le Royal Mansour
Three-plus years in the works, this is the King of Morocco’s personal passion project. It covers more than eight acres and is a showpiece of Moroccan craftsmanship. Hundreds of local artisans worked on the intricate interiors, which contain sculpted silver ceilings, pink-gold mirrored walls and mother-of-pearl inlays. The idea was to create a medina-like space, with guests checking in to their own riads. Many will find the seven-to-one staff-to-guest ratio and such service considerations as underground tunnels and secret elevators to access each room overwhelming (and somewhat over-the-top). To see the excess on display, book a meal or a spa treatment here. Michelin-starred French chef Yannick Alléno oversees the cuisine, making Le Royal Mansour a prime spot for food lovers. $$$, Rue Abou Abbas El Sebti; 212 (0) 529-808-080. Read Indagare’s review.

Villa des Orangers
Marrakech’s only Relais & Châteaux property, Villa des Orangers offers the most sophisticated riad experience in the medina. In what feels more like a tiny Moroccan palace than a typical town house, it combines exotic flair and quality craftsmanship with French l’art de vivre. From the tiled courtyard to the pool area, where chaise longues are shaded by olive trees, each corner of the property evokes a sense of place. Many of the nineteen rooms have fireplaces and balconies. There’s a small rooftop pool as well as an eighteen-meter one, adding a resort feeling to a property just blocks from bustling Djemaa el Fna. The tiny boutique stocks a lovely selection of top Moroccan finds. It’s the best of two worlds: an intimate atmosphere and central location. $$$. 6 Rue Side Mimoun; 212 (0) 524-384-638. Read Indagare’s review.

Best Hotels for...
-a grand experience: La Mamounia
-a romantic hideaway in the medina: Villa des Orangers
-a resort experience: Amanjena
-an unforgettable house party: take over Ksar Char-Bagh
-a perfect add-on: Kasbah Tamadot in the Atlas Mountains.
**La Maison Arabe**

This gem of a riad hotel, owned by a stylish Italian, is home to the medina’s first Moroccan restaurant. Rooms are on the small side, but the newest ones have pool views and decor that’s less cluttered than the Arab-Andalusian public spaces (note that the standard rooms do not have baths). Traditional crafts are displayed in a contemporary way. Other notable charms include a gorgeous hammam and a top-rated cooking school. The hotel also has a “country” annex outside the city that has a large pool area. $$$. Bab Doukkala, 1 Derb Assehbé; 212 (0) 524-387-010. Read Indagare’s review.

**Hideaway**

- **Amanjena**

  Situated on twelve acres outside the city and part of the Aman Resorts portfolio, this hotel deserves its awesome reputation. Created by Ed Tuttle, who designed most of Aman’s best hotels, Amanjena is built around a reflecting pool lined by palms. At night, amid the sparkle of dozens of lanterns, it’s simply magical. Rooms are huge, with private outdoor seating areas. The staff is excellent: your suitcase is unpacked for you, cold washcloths appear just when desired, rose petals float in the many pools, and sunbathers are served sorbet at teatime. There are two restaurants, two wonderful hammams and two golf courses nearby. The only downside to Amanjena is that it is a good twenty-minute drive from the medina, which means you spend some time in cars. The staff is able to arrange for guides (accompanied by drivers and air-conditioned cars) to take you to the souk or hiking in the mountains. $$$. Route de Ouarzazate, km 12; 212 (0) 524-399-000. Read Indagare’s review.

**Newcomer**

- **Four Seasons Marrakech**

  An Indagare member returned with a rave reviews of this resort, which opened in late 2011: “It was so much better than I was expecting: it had a true Moroccan feel, and the service was fabulous. It may now be my favorite Four Seasons; I would rate it above the George V in Paris.” $$$$. 1 Blvd. de la Menara; 212 (0) 524-359-200. Read Indagare’s review.

Many more reviews of places to stay in Marrakech, including the city’s best riads, can be found on Indagare. To speak with a travel specialist who can help plan your trip, contact Indagare’s Bookings Team at 212-988-2611.
What to Read & View

“If you have one day to spend in Morocco, spend it in Marrakech. It’s the most lovely spot in the world.” –Winston Churchill

FICTION

Larabi’s Ox: Stories of Morocco
Tony Ardizzone, 1992
These interwoven short stories focus on three Americans visiting Morocco for the first time.

Lulu in Marrakech
Diane Johnson, 2008
The author of Le Divorce sends another of her American ingénue characters into a foreign culture.

The Spider House
Paul Bowles, 1955
Bowles spent years traveling before settling in Tangiers in the late 1940s. The Spider House is set in Fez.

The Sheltering Sky
Paul Bowles, 1949
Alienated Americans travel to Africa to escape despair but find it follows them wherever they travel.

NONFICTION

A House in Fez
Susanna Clark, 2008
Clarke pens a poignant account of a year spent restoring an ancient riad in Fes.

A Year in Marrakech
Peter Mayne, 2003
Compelling writer Peter Mayne lived in India and Pakistan before moving to Marrakech. This book captures everyday life in the city.

Dreams of Trespass
Fatima Mernissi, 1994
Mernissi was born in a Fez harem in 1940, and her story and those of the women she grew up around reveals a rich and confounding culture.

Good Food from Morocco
Paula Wolfert, 1990
Having lived in Morocco for two years Wolfert brings together traditional Moroccan recipes.

Hideous Kinky
Esther Freud, 1992
Freud traveled to Morocco in the 1960s at the age of five with her hippy mother, and this evocative book recounts her travels.

In Morocco
Edith Wharton, 1919
The acclaimed writer’s muses on her travels in the country just after World War II.

Lords of the Atlas
Gavin Maxwell, 2004
A fascinating historical account of two warlord brothers and the rise and fall of the House of Glaoua.

DESIGN/STYLE

Living in Morocco
Lisl & Landi Dennis, 2001
This gorgeous book about Moroccan design focuses on the country’s distinctive arts, style and culture.

Marrakesh by Design
Maryam Montague, 2012
The stylish ex-pat captures the city’s famous sense of style in images and essays (read a Q&A with the author on page 52).

Shopping in Marrakech
Susan Simon, 2009
This great shopping guide provides colorful maps and plots walks to help you organize a jaunt.

FILM

Babel (2006)
A sniper’s bullet tears through a couple’s vacation in North Africa, setting off a series of events that spin into interlocking stories set in Japan, America and Mexico as well.

Hideous Kinky (1998)
The film version of Esther Freud’s memoir stars Kate Winslet; large parts of it were shot on location in Marrakech.

Casablanca (1942)
Star-crossed lovers Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman dodge sharp one-liners and bullets in North Africa during the early days of WWII.

The Sheltering Sky (1990)
Author Paul Bowles narrates this gorgeous adaptation of his famous novel, directed by Bernardo Bertolucci, and starring Debra Winger and John Malkovich.
Moroccan Cuisine

Jeff Koehler, the author of the new travel book *Morocco: A Culinary Journey with Recipes* spoke with Indagare about his love of Moroccan cuisine.

Is it true that Morocco’s cuisine acts as a road map to its cultural history?
Indeed. It’s built on a base of Berber cuisine—couscous and *tagine* are two of its famous dishes—and the Berber are credited with developing some remarkable flatbreads, soups and spit-roasted *mechoui* lamb, to name a few things. Numerous cultures have landed on Morocco’s shores, and each has left its imprint, including the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Arabs, Muslims and Jews expelled from Spain, the French and the Spanish.

What surprised you most as you were compiling this book and traveling in Morocco?
The contrasts of flavors. There just seems to be no end to original ways of combining flavors. They feel so modern yet are highly traditional.

What are some of your favorite recipes?
I love the broad range of salads. The Moroccan tradition of both cooked and raw salads is rich, and I enjoy beginning a meal with a small dish of four or five examples, each with very different flavors: grated carrot and orange salad with a hint of cinnamon, which you need a spoon to eat; cucumbers in sweet marinade with oregano and black olives; carrot and cumin salad, in which the sweetness of the boiled carrots blends nicely with the paprika and cumin marinade; chilled sweet butternut squash salad with cinnamon; beet salad with green onions and fresh herbs.

What’s your Marrakech dining ritual?
My first night’s meal is usually at La Maison Arabe, but the second night I hit Djemma el Fna for dinner on the square—a bowl of snails with broth or some *harira* (an herb-laced tomato soup) and then to a stall called Hassan (number 31) for spicy grilled *merguez* lamb sausages eaten with disks of bread. I love sitting at the crowded stainless-steel counter amid the billowing smoke as the action of the square swirls around me. When I can, I try to have an afternoon snack of just-from-the-oven bread, some rather bold salt-cured black olives and a glass of sweet mint tea.

What is your best Marrakech secret?
I love AnaYela, a small but marvelous *riad* in a residential corner of the medina. It is hard to find, but inside it is one of the most luxurious, sumptuous and tranquil places I have ever been.

Cooking classes offer a window into the culinary culture of Marrakech. One of the best is hosted at La Maison Arabe. Contact Indagare’s Bookings Team (212-988-2611) for help arranging a class. *Morocco: A Culinary Journey with Recipes* will be published by Chronicle Books in May 2012.
destination report: day trips

Exploring the Atlas Mountains

Two resorts—one lavish and grand, the other boutique and understated—offer travelers stylish options for exploring this gorgeous region outside Marrakech.

Just a forty-five minute drive from the bustle of Marrakech are the majestic Atlas Mountains, home to spectacular landscapes and authentic Berber villages and markets. Many travelers choose to combine city touring with a few days of exploration here—their natural beauty make the Atlas Mountains a perfect spot from which to reflect upon the myriad impressions of Marrakech itself. Found­er Melissa Biggs Bradley writes this about an Indagare Insider Trip she led that ended in the region: “When we weren’t lounging by the pool or lingering over the delicious meals, our group spent time doing yoga, indulging at the spa and taking hikes, accompanied by porters and donkeys, up into the Atlas range. A highlight was a picnic by a river where wild mint and poppies bloomed.” Here are two Atlas Mountain resorts that offer vastly different experiences yet both embody the region’s special character.

Kasbah Bab Ourika

Although it is barely three years old, Kasbah Bab Ourika looks as if it had always been perched on its hilltop in the Atlas mountains. For one thing, it is built of the same red adobe as the surrounding Berber villages. An ecomind­ed approach extends to every detail of the hotel. Solar panels heat the water, which comes from a well. (It now also supplies the nearest village, so has been a game changer for the community.) The 20 guest rooms, though spacious, are simple and spare: there’s no TV, Wi-Fi or phone, no artwork on the walls, just a comfortable bed with Egyptian-cotton sheets, handwoven Berber rugs, big bathrooms with soaking tubs and views that take your breath away. The real luxury of Bab Ourika is the setting, which is unforgettable. On one side is Salt National Park, a spectacular red-rock canyon (reminiscent of Utah’s Bryce Canyon), where guests can go...
trekking with a guide on foot or on camels or mules. Turn your gaze, and the snowy Atlas mountains spread out before you, with Berber villages in the foothills and a verdant creek bed below. The food is excellent and the staff (mostly Berbers) lovely and warm, although quite leisurely in pace. A family-friendly oasis with a marvelous sense of authenticity, Bab Ourika is a great option for travelers who appreciate a rustic, low-key atmosphere. Bab Ourika; 212 (0) 668-749-547. Read Indagare’s review.

Kasbah Tamadot
Nestled in the foothills of the Atlas Mountains, with only a small Bedouin village for company, this fairy-tale palace retreat was described by one Indagare member as “practically note perfect.” It’s part of Sir Richard Branson’s Limited Edition hotel group, boasting the group’s signature mix of high luxury and authentic appreciation of location and community. The hotel is popular with couples and big family groups (children, playfully referred to as camels, are welcome at certain times of year), who enjoy the privacy of its location, the adventurous excursions and its spa.

All bedrooms are decked out in traditional Moroccan and Bedouin style, with antiques from around the world mixed in, and each of the fifteen ones in the main house has a unique view and layout. The most luxurious rooms are the Berber Tent Suites, which have private terraces, plunge pools and outdoor dining areas, as well as roll-top baths positioned to take full advantage of the stunning views.

Kanoun restaurant offers relaxed fireside dining with both local and international menus, plus a great selection of Moroccan wines. Guests can also eat under the stars on the rooftop or request a private picnic. There’s a range of activities, including tennis, biking and challenging hikes, like the two-day trek to the Toubkal peak, the highest point in North Africa. For something more relaxing, the Asounfou Spa (the Berber word for relaxation) is the perfect escape with an indoor pool, five treatment rooms, a sauna and traditional hamman. Asni; 212 (0) 524-368-200. Read Indagare’s review.

Read more about destinations beyond Marrakech on page 44. Contact Indagare’s Bookings Team (212-988-2611) for help arranging a memorable itinerary.
Marrakech provides a large variety of dining options, ranging from Moroccan tagines to French haute cuisine. You’ll likely want to eat breakfast in your room and lunch by the pool at your hotel, but plan ahead for dinner (for the better-known restaurants, it’s advisable to reserve at least a few weeks in advance). Few people eat early, as visitors and residents alike indulge in siestas, so book a table on the late side. Here are some of our top recommendations, most of which are perfect for lunch and dinner. Many more suggestions and dining tips can be found at Indagare.com.

**Top Hotel Dining**

**La Maison Arabe**

Le Restaurant, the fine-dining Moroccan restaurant of La Maison Arabe has been one of Marrakech’s best for years and is a great spot for a special dinner. The more contemporary Les Trois Saveurs is equally exceptional. Its name (“three flavors”) refers to the Moroccan, French and Asian-fusion cuisine. It is some of the most sophisticated and delicious food in the city. The dining room’s decor is a more modern take on Arabic style, but there are also tables set out around the pool. Medina; 1 Derb Assehbé, Bab Doukkala; 212 (0) 524-387-010.

**La Mamounia**

The poolside setting of Le Pavillon at La Mamounia is lovely for lunch, when you can escape the bustle of the medina at this stunning property. The Mediterranean buffet is expertly prepared. For dinner favorites are Le Marocain and L’Italien restaurants; at the latter, legendary chef Alfonso Iaccarino, who holds two Michelin stars on the Amalfi Coast, brings his trademark Italian home cooking to Marrakech. Avenue Bab Jdid; 212 (0) 524-388-600.
COURTESY © LA PAUSE-MARRAKECH

Ksar Char Bagh
Luckily for foodies, this hotel changed its guests-only dining policy a few years ago and now accepts outsiders for dinner in its magical restaurant, run by a chef who trained with Alain Ducasse and Joel Robuchon. Many of the herbs are picked from the on-property garden, and the menu changes often depending on what inspires the chef. Meals are served poolside, a romantic spot surrounded by verdant gardens. Djnan Abiad, La Palmeraie; 212 (0) 524-329-244.

Royal Mansour
Many travelers find the pomp-and-circumstance of this lavish property to be overwhelming for a stay here, but foodies and design mavens should definitely come for a meal. The restaurant’s menu was created by Yannick Alleno, the young chef who took Paris by storm when he won three Michelin stars at Le Meurice hotel. The three dining venues include La Grande Table Francaise and La Grande Table Marocaine. Both are open for dinner only. Lunch is served at La Table’s outdoor terrace. Rue Abou Abbas El Sebti; 212 (0) 529-808-080.

Villa des Orangers
If you have only one meal in Marrakech, whether lunch or dinner, make a reservation at Villa des Orangers, only a short walk from the buzz of Djemaa el-Fna and the souk but seemingly a world apart, thanks to courtyards of orange trees, lavender gardens and swimming pools. Lunch is served outside under a vine-draped arbor. 6 Rue Side Mimoun; 212 (0) 524-384-638.

Top Local Restaurants

Café des Epices
Right in the heart of the medina and the bustling souk is a hip café where you can get a quick bite without leaving the colorful whirl of the bazaar. The decor pays homage to the craftsmen at work in the area but has modern updates like WiFi and black-and-white art photos on the deep-red walls. The menu contains traditional Moroccan dishes. In good weather the best tables are those up on the rooftop terrace. You must try the spiced coffee with its hint of cinnamon, ginger and ginseng. Medina. 75 Rahba Lakdima; 212 (0) 524-391-770.

Café du Livre
This bookstore café is a favorite expat hangout and resource, since it carries hundreds of books and dozens of magazines in English.

Day Trip: La Pause
A great day trip is out to La Pause, a sort of boho eco-retreat in the Agafay Desert, a forty-five minute drive outside Marrakech. You can go for a delicious lunch and some hiking or camel or horseback riding in the afternoon. The Agafay Desert has breathtaking lunar landscapes, and La Pause itself is a peaceful antidote to the relentless cityscapes. There’s a small guesthouse, so spending the night is possible (the star gazing is incredible), but you will still get the thrill of the desert atmosphere and experience if you go for the day. Read Indagare’s online review.
French, Spanish, German and Dutch. There are comfortable club chairs for those who want to linger and read, as well as tables with chess sets, creating a clubby atmosphere. But the owners are as serious about good food as they are about literature. In the morning there are fresh pastries and a brunch menu, and in early evening, a tapas menu. Gueliz; 44 Rue Tarik ben Ziad; 212 (0) 524-432-149.

**Dar Moha**
French designer Pierre Balmain spent many years in Marrakech, and his former home in the medina is now one of the toughest reservations to get in the city. Located in a beautifully restored 19th-century riad, which was built for a secretary of the Pacha of Morocco, the restaurant is a hidden oasis of refinement. The cuisine gives a light spin to traditional Moroccan, offering a welcome change from more classic preparations. (Chef Mohammed Fedal, known as Moha, is the author of three cookbooks.) Request a table in the garden. 81 Rue Dar el Bacha; 212 (0) 524-386-400; www.darmoha.ma.

**Grand Café de la Poste**
The atmosphere of this colonial French café evokes old Saigon as much as it does Morocco. Ceiling fans whir overhead. The tiled floors may well have been laid in the 1902s, and wicker furniture and potted palms complete the scene. Ignore the somewhat kitschy vintage decor, though, and order some of the best French food in Marrakech. It’s most popular at lunch when the tables out front fill up fast and those lucky enough to grab them linger. It’s also a great spot to hear jazz after dinner. Gueliz; Corner of Blvd. El Mansour and Ave. Imam Malik; 212 (0) 524-433-038.

**Le Tobsil and Dar Yacout**
These two restaurants are Marrakech’s most famous. They’re also among the most touristy. Some diners embrace their Disneyfied version of Marrakech: buzzing, mobbed restaurants set in beautiful old riads with ornate decoration (once upon a time *New York* magazine food critic Gael Greene proclaimed Yacout one of the most romantic dinner spots in the world). Others leave horrified, describing the experience...
as akin to dining at Tavern on the Green. Come prepared with a reservation, or choose to stay away, but know that everyone will ask you about these, so it’s good to make a mental note. Le Tobsil: 22 Derb Moullay Abdullah ben Hessaien, Bab Ksour; 212 (0) 524-444-052. Dar Yacout: 79 Rue Sidi Ahmed Soussi, Arset Ihiri; 212 (0) 524-382-929.

Terrasse des Epices
The perfect place for lunch if you are taking a day to shop in the souk, Terrasse des Epices has rooftop dining in a hip café environment. Owned by the same man who has the bustling Café des Epices in the Spice Market, it sits on the third floor of the building that houses the cool boutiques Lalla and Argane & Bain. On a sunny day you may find your meal stretching into a lazy afternoon. Don’t miss stopping in the shop downstairs, which sells lovely local pottery; all of the proceeds go back to the local community. 15 Souk Cherifia, Sidi Abedelaziz; 212 (0) 524-375-904.

Cocktails
The following restaurants have nice areas for cocktails either before or after dinner: Le Comptoir, where you should go after dinner; Grand Café de la Poste, whose upstairs lounge and outdoor terrace are great before or after dinner and which has good jazz in the evenings; La Mamounia, whose central bar is a see-and-be-seen spot for drinks; and Terrasse des Epices, which is particularly pretty at sunset.

Marrakech Musts
Indagare founder Melissa Biggs Bradley weighs in on what not to miss while visiting the Red City:

Have a meal... at glammed-up La Mamounia

Visit...Yves Saint Laurent’s Majorelle Gardens to see how good taste can flourish in Marrakech

Eat...a traditional Moroccan meal. It will drag on and may not convert you into a regular, but it gives you insight into the culture (try Dar Moha or La Mamounia’s Moroccan restaurant).

Shop...in the souk for crafts that reveal the artisanship that has been practiced here for decades.

Take a trip...to the Atlas Mountains to see the incredible landscapes and Berber villages.

Savor...great French food and a buzzing scene on the outdoor terrace at the Grand Café de la Poste.

Indulge... in a hammam treatment.

Lounge...on a rooftop at sunset to take in the city views with an Atlas Mountain backdrop.

Drive...out to the Palmeraie for a dinner or even a weekend to bask in the serenity of the palm grove.

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Many more restaurant reviews and recommendations can be found on Indagare.com. To speak with a travel specialist for help planning the itinerary for your trip, contact Indagare’s Bookings Team by emailing bookings@indagare.com or calling 212-988-2611.
WHAT TO SEE & DO

Says one of Indagare’s preferred Morocco specialists: “Marrakech is not one of those destinations where you check monuments off a list. It is about a wonderful immersion in a world very different from our own. The trick to getting the most out of a visit is not to dash into the confines of a museum; rather you should explore the city by wandering through the medina, looking about you and absorbing its exotic sights, sounds and smells. *A first-rate guide is crucial. Contact Indagare’s Bookings Team (212-988-2611) for an introduction to our preferred specialists, and read many more suggestions for activities on Indagare.*

Sights

Most of the historical sights to visit are within the medina. A good place to start is the towering **Koutoubia Mosque**, with its signature minaret (the inside can only be visited by Muslims). Westerners can and should tour **Ben Youssef Medersa**, a Koranic school founded in the 14th century. The medina also holds many palaces, including **El Badi**, which contains remnants of a palace commissioned in the late 16th century, and beautiful **La Bahia**, a striking example of 19th-century architecture that is surrounded by a two-acre garden. **Bab el Makhzen** is an elaborately decorated doorway leading to the Governor’s Palace that was once reserved for the sultans. The medina’s absolute must-see is **Djemaa el-Fna**. This lively square is the heartbeat of the city, and astonishing at night, when it’s filled with the scent of food—spicy sausages, mounds of snails and boiled sheep’s heads—from the stalls, all illuminated by gaslights strung up overhead. Drums roll. **Gnaoua** musicians from the country’s south sing in African and Arabic tones, dervish whirls accompanying their hypnotic cymbals. Snake charmers, witch doctors and fortune-tellers evoke a world of medieval magic.

**Museum: Dar Si Said**

This art destination houses the Museum of Moroccan Arts, the oldest museum in the city,
which is worth a visit if you have several days in Marrakech. The Berber artifacts are striking, as is the collection of adorned door and window frames displayed in the courtyard. Derb el Bahia, Riad Zitoun el-Jedid; (212) 524-442-464.

Garden: Jardin Majorelle
This botanic garden was designed by French expat artist Jacques Majorelle in the 1920s. The estate was bought in the 1980s by Yves Saint Laurent and his partner, Pierre Bergé, and today is open to the public. A museum exhibits the private art collection of the late French fashion designer. Don’t miss the well-edited boutique (see p.50). Photographers should visit in the late afternoon for the best light. Avenue Jacoub el Mansour; 212 (0) 524-313-047.

Family-Friendly
Two types of families visit Marrakech. Europeans looking for a sunny vacation will often choose a resort hotel in the medina or the Palmeraie, so their kids can play in the pool. The other type are families doing a cultural exploration of the whole country, with a multi-stop itinerary (see page 44 for suggestions beyond Marrakech). The best activities are orchestrated by a plugged-in guide or a concierge at one of the hotels used to welcoming families. Here are some options to consider.

In Marrakech: A cooking class; a tour of the souk with a family-friendly guide who can navigate the workshops as well as the auctions, so the tour has an educational aspect; a visit to one of the school or community projects.

Beyond Marrakech: a visit to the desert for a day or overnight, including a camel ride and a stop at La Pause (see page 39); a visit to the Atlas Mountains (see page 36) and one of the Berber villages, with their colorful markets.

Marrakech 101
The Berbers founded the kingdom of Morocco in 110 B.C., but it was quickly taken over by the Romans, who ruled the area from the Atlantic Ocean to the Nile until A.D. 429. Muslims and Arabs invaded in the 7th century, converting most of the Berbers to Islam. In the 11th century, the Berber Almoravid Empire consolidated Morocco into a single state and created Marrakech.

Its location between the Atlantic Ocean, the Atlas Mountains and the Sahara Desert made the city an ideal trading outpost, and rulers built red-clay walls for protection. During the Middle Ages when Marrakech was a center of trade, Morocco ruled over much of Spain and North Africa. During the 15th-century Reconquista, some 800,000 Muslims and Jews fled or were driven out of Spain, arriving in Morocco. The region remained Berber until the 1550s, when a series of Arab dynasties took over. Between the 8th and 16th centuries, the trans-Saharan trade route boomed, transporting slaves, textiles, spices and gold on camel from Arabia to Europe. In 1912 the Treaty of Fez divided Morocco into protectorates run by France and Spain. Marrakech fell under French rule, and to this day French is among the city’s main languages.

In 1956, Morocco gained independence and it is now ruled by a monarchy that’s been in place since the 17th century. King Mohammed VI, the descendant of generations of kings and sultans, has held the throne since 1999 and has received praise for relinquishing some of his power.
Itineraries Beyond Marrakech

For return (and even some first-time) travelers, Morocco has a wealth of inspiring destinations. Here are four to consider.

First, the bad news: if you want to explore beyond Marrakech, you have to accept that domestic traveling is neither easy nor glamorous. Morocco stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Sahara, and much of it is mountainous, so journeying between towns and regions is arduous and time-consuming. Flights often get canceled on short notice and many roads are unpaved. But if you are the type of traveler who can deal with last-minute itinerary tweaks and less-polished or -comfortable transportation options, Morocco holds a wealth of worthwhile experiences. Going with a trusted operator is crucial precisely because you want to be flexible on the ground and leave the details to a local. Here are four of Indagare’s favorite destinations beyond Marrakech. Indagare members planning a trip to Morocco who want to discuss itinerary options should contact our Bookings Team (bookings@indagare.com or 212-988-2611).

Essaouira
What: This seaside town has changed very little in the past decade, except for the addition of a few stylish riad hotels and one noteworthy shoe boutique.
Getting There: It’s a two-hour drive from Marrakech through not particularly interesting landscapes.
To Do: Travelers can have lunch at one of the half dozen seafood restaurants that ring the port (expect little charm but very fresh fish). There are some interesting shops, including a boutique owned by Miro Abihssira, who once worked for Agnès B., that sells dozens of styles of raffia shoes in fabulous colors.
Who Should Consider Going: Travelers in Marrakech for five or more days who are looking for a seaside escape from the city. Or those who want to take advantage of the helicopter excursion offered by the Amanjena (page 33).
Fes

**What:** Morocco’s second-largest city, whose walled city is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Fes has been called the Athens of Africa, in part thanks to its university, one of the world’s oldest.

**Getting There:** Direct flights between Marrakech and Fes don’t exist; you have to connect through Casablanca and then drive (about 2.5 hours). Alternatively, you can hire a driver and make the entire journey by car (or better, van), which takes five to six hours.

**To Do:** Fes’s centerpiece is the labyrinth like medina of Fes el-Bali, one of whose entrances is the much photographed Blue Gate. Other sights include Bou Inania Medersa (the Koranic University), the woodwork museum Fondouk Nejjarine and the city’s famous tanneries where leather-dying methods have remained unchanged since medieval times. Further afield, travelers can see Roman ruins at Volubulis (including incredible mosaics) and Meknes, a city that offers an incredible blend of Arab, Berber and French cultures.

**Who Should Consider Going:** Return visitors interested in Islamic history and civilization.

Gazelle d’Or, Taroudant

**What:** Situated in a former hunting lodge dating to the 1950s, this acclaimed resort (read Indagare’s review) is located just outside the walled city of Taroudat and is surrounded by a beautiful orange farm.

**Where:** A three-hour drive from Marrakech or a 45-minute drive from Agadir Airport.

**Features:** The thirty luxurious yet cozy cottages and suites have magnificent views of the Atlas Mountains. All rooms contain private patios and working fireplaces and are furnished with distinctive Moroccan furniture and design details. The grounds include clay tennis courts, a swimming pool and a croquet lawn. The spa offers massages and a traditional hammam.

**Who Should Consider A Stay:** Couples looking for a few days of serenity after visiting Marrakech. It’s also an ideal long-weekend getaway, especially for those based in Europe.

Dar Ahlam, Ouarzazate

**What:** This acclaimed Relais & Châteaux resort (read Indagare’s review) is perfectly situated between the High Atlas Mountains and the southern Moroccan desert in the region known as the thousand kasbahs. Stunning grounds captures the atmosphere of North Africa.

**Where:** A three-hour drive from Marrakech or a twenty-five-minute drive from Ouarzazate.

**Features:** Dar Ahlam’s gorgeous grounds are populated with palm trees and fragrant rose bushes, as well as almond, olive and date trees. Many visitors choose to stay put; but donkeys, camels or 4x4 vehicles are on hand to help guests explore the nearby Dadès and Draa Valleys. The staff at the hotel can also arrange for a tented-cabin experience in the desert under a breathtaking sky filled with stars.

**Who Should Consider A Stay:** Families and couples who appreciate having adventurous days and luxurious nights.

Indagare’s Bookings Team can help members plan detailed Moroccan itineraries, from simple day trips to multiday additional touring. Contact our team at 212-988-2611 or bookings@indagare.com.
WHERE TO SHOP

The main shopping areas include the medina; Guéliz (the new town) and Sidi Ghanem (the industrial zone.) In the medina you will find souks selling traditional crafts sold, as well as stylish boutiques owned by French and Italian expats. More of these are located in the new town, where prices are set and the ambiance calm. Many designers have ateliers in the industrial area but it’s worth a visit only to custom order or buy in bulk.

Medina

Aya’s

Nawal El Hriti designs sophisticated caftans and djellabas, all hand-embroidered with silk thread by Berbers and with variations like deep necklines. The clothes are more expensive than those in the souks but they’re high-quality. Opening hours can be sporadic. 11 Bis Derb Jedid Beb Mellah; 212 (0) 24-383-428.

Akbar Delights

Around the corner from the Djemaa el Fna square, Akbar Delights sells stylish kaftans and Moroccan-influenced fashion. When Yann Dory and Isabelle Duchet-Annez, a worldly brother-and-sister team who settled in Marrakech, opened Akbar in 2004, it was the first boutique in the souk owned by expats. Place Bab Fteuh; 212 (0) 671-661-307

Atelier Moro

With no sign on the door, Atelier Moro is not easy to find, even if you have the address. It’s worth ferreting out, because it is one of the best shops in the city, selling original designs, as well as top-quality crafts made by other designers. 114 Place de Mouassine; 212 (0) 524-391-678.

Indagare Tip:

Hang out at Bab Hotel (Angle Blvd. Mansour Eddahbi and Rue Mohamed El Beqal) in Guéliz while waiting for the shops along Rue de la Liberté to open in the afternoon. While there, don’t miss the boutique of Moroccan designer Faldi El Gadi on the premises.

Au Fil d’Or

This small shop has a cult following among repeat visitors to Marrakech. The owner makes kaftans, shirts and jackets with traditional elements but a flair that appeals to Western customers. Head to the lower floor to view samples, and if you do not see exactly what you want, it can be made within a few days. Medina. 10 Souk Semmarine; 212 (0) 524-445-919.

Bazaar Jouti

At this sliver of a shop, Mohamed Karimi sells an edited selection of carpets. He will explain each one’s origins and dying techniques, and you’ll pay a fraction of what you would at home, if you could find one. He keeps his best stash in a private showroom nearby, so if you are looking for something special, ask him to take you there. 16-19 Souk des Tapis, Rahba Lakdima.

Beldi

Considered the haute couturier of Marrakech, the wizard behind Beldi sells kaftans that are all made of the finest silks and crêpe de chine with detailed embroidery. Many expats come to order custom pieces made with vintage fabrics that he imports. 9-11 Rue Mouassine, Bab Fteuh; 212 (0) 524-441-076

Bouriad Karim

This boutique is boho heaven, with sequined and embroidered caftans, linen dresses and stylishly cut jackets, djellabas, sparkly slippers and top-quality knock-off designer handbags. The staff at the boutique can also alter things overnight and make products from scratch. Rue Fatima Zahra, near Dar El Bacha; 212 (0) 524-386-517.

Herboriste du Paradis

The staff of this herbal-medicine shop will give short tutorials during which they explain the all-natural potions, from migraine cures or potent sexual stimulants (which believe it or not, a woman in a traditional djellaba will discuss). 93 Place Ben Youssef; 212 (0) 524-427-249.
Kif Kif
French expat Stéphanie Bénetière works with local artisans to create beautiful clothes for men, women and children, as well as housewares, which she sells in her three boutiques in Morocco (Marrakech, Casablanca and Essaouira). It's the place for one-stop gift shopping. 8 Derb Laksour, Bab Laksour; 212 (0) 61-08-20-14.

KIS (Keep It Secret)
Originally a by-appointment store launched by Brazilian jet-setter Adriana Bittencourt, KIS is now open to the public. The collections are still edited with a keen sense of style and include the wares of Moroccan designer Karim Bouriad, Stella H and Toile et Cuire leather goods, as well as some stylish clothes and accessories that were designed exclusively for KIS. 36 Rue Fhal Chidmi; 212 (0) 673-480-018.

Lalla
Under the design label Lalla, French party planner and stylist Laetitia Trouillet purveys charming handbags, from straw bags with metallic embellishments to silk-pouch evening clutches with tasseled zippers. Souk Cherifia, 1st Floor, Sidi Abelazziz; 212 (0) 6-661-477-228.

Ministero del Gusto
When Italian Vogue sent editor Alessandra Lippini to Marrakech in the early 1990s, she fell decided to buy a house and moved. Now she and her partner, Fabrizio Barrini, run a showroom out of their house and work on private interior-design projects. There’s no better place to see traditional and modern Moroccan-made furniture than at the Ministero del Gusto, or “Ministry of Taste.” By appointment only. 22 Derb Azzouz el Mouassine; 212 (0) 524-426-455.

La Porte d’Or
A favorite of international interior designers, this gigantic shop in the middle of the souk is filled with kilims and textiles, antique doors (which make great tables) and dramatic, chunky ethnic jewelry. 115 Souk Semmarine; 212 (0) 524-445-454.

Zenobie
Zenobie sells lovely purses and housewares. A whole wall showcases elegant teapots. You’ll also find shawls, intricate necklaces and beaded bags. Other treasures to look for are the delicate carved-wood boxes. 7/9 Souk Kchachbia; 212 (0) 666-078-087.
Guéliz / New Town

Atika
This nondescript shoe store carries leather and suede shoes for men, women and children. There are exact copies of Tod’s driving shoes, as well as attractive replicas of other classic designs. All are well made and priced. 34 Rue de la Liberté; 212 (0) 524-436-409.

Boutique Fadila el Gadi
The modern Moroccan fashions of Fadila el Gadi are sold at the boutiques at La Mamounia and Ksar Char Bagh, as well as at this small but exclusive boutique in the Bab Hotel. Here you will find her embroidered coats, sheer silk kaftan cover-ups, printed blouses and one-of-a-kind leather bags and chunky beaded accessories. Angle Bd Mansour Eddahbi & Rue Mohamed El Beqqal; 212 (0) 524-435-250.

Michèle Baconnier Boutique
French expat Michèle Baconnier’s charming boutique is replete with colorful treasures, from leather slippers with embroidery and extravagantly embellished kaftans to silver Berber jewelry. In addition to the clothing, Baconnier sells fantastic Suzanis, linens and ceramics. 6 Rue Vieux Marrakchi; 212 (0) 524-449-178.

Côte Sud
Shop for a range of modern Moroccan housewares, fashion and gift items, including metallic leather bags, tasseled terry robes, stylish scarves and bright leather poufs. Maison Rouge next door has the same owner. 4 Rue de la Liberté; 212 (0) 524-438-448.

Moor
After the great success of her Akbar Delights boutique, Isabelle Duchet-Annez opened this

Marrakech Glossary

Argan oil: Oil from the kernels of argan trees, used in cooking and cosmetics.
Bab: gateway
Babouche: slippers, usually made of leather
Bejmat tiles: neutral colored hand-made tiles from Fes, often used for flooring
Dar: a traditional Moroccan house
Djellabah: a long caftan with sleeves and a hood
Fondouks: rooming house, inn
Geps: stucco or plaster carved into intricate patterns
Hammam: spa with different temperature rooms
Hanbel: striped Berber blankets
Harissa: a paste of chili peppers, garlic, olive oil, cilantro and caraway.
Kasbah: a walled city or fortress found in North Africa
Medina: a walled old city
Mellah: Jewish neighborhood
Parterres: a landscaped garden with daybeds
Poufs: round leather or fabric-covered ottomans
Riad (or riad): a house with a courtyard
Souq or Souk: market
Souq Joutia Zrabi: carpet souk
Souq Chenatine or Semmarine: leather goods souk
Souq Smata: slipper souk
Tadelakt: a plaster made of ground limestone used for interior and exterior walls.
Tagine: a stew made in a clay pot with a triangular lid.
Zellij: enameled terracotta tiles used in decorative mosaics for floors, walls or on furniture
spotlight: top shops not to miss

au fil d’or for moroccan cashmere jackets; bazar jouti for carpets; boutique bel hadj and el abidi nasser edine for jewelry; beldi andbouriad karim for traditional kaftan/cover-ups; akbar delights (left); boutique fudila el gadi and kis for more upscale, embellished kaftans; lalla for bags; chez zoe for terry towels and kids’ tasseled robes; atika for suede slippers; michele baconnier, moor and atelier moro for accessories and house wares; mustapha blaoui for furniture; and, of course, the souk for fun gifts.
Indagare Insider Access

Our travel experts can help craft your journeys, from a simple hotel reservation to a multistop Morocco itinerary. For Indagare members there is no bookings fee.

Morocco is one of Indagare’s most beloved destinations, and Marrakech in particular continues to enthral members and staff. Indagare has hosted several Insider Trips to the Red City, culminating in a couple of days relaxing in the Atlas Mountains. The itineraries of these special journeys are packed with behind-the-scenes access, including a private trunk show, a cooking class with a well-known chef and cocktails in the private home of a stylish expat. An Indagare member who participated on one of the trips, raved: “In the course of one week you felt as though you had learned more about the country than you would if you lived there for a year.” Insider Trips are open to members, and alumni of previous trips are given priority. We can also re-create an Insider Itinerary for private groups.

Morocco is a layered, complex destination, so it helps to have a trusted advocate to help with the details of a trip there, especially if you are planning to explore beyond Marrakech. Indagare members can also work with our Bookings Team on creating the ideal itinerary. Besides matching travelers with the hotels and resorts that are right for them, our team can pull together inspiring activities, whether you’re looking for historic, cultural or culinary tours; provide dedicated drivers and informed guides who bring the city to life; and give advice on where to eat and how to organize shopping excursions. One member wrote after returning from Morocco: “I had a fabulous trip planned with Indagare. There is so much to see—visually and culturally—and the cities and towns provided massively different experiences.”

Through our network of excellent contacts, we can connect travelers with the top international specialists and insiders. For help with making your next Morocco itinerary special, call 212-988-2611 or email bookings@indagare.com.
Q&A with Maryam Montague

The stylish expat and hotelier behind Peacock Pavilions shares her favorite Marrakech secrets and discusses her new book, Marrakesh By Design.

How did Peacock Pavilions come about?
I’m an enthusiastic stylist and decorator, and I met my match when I married an architect/builder. Together we were able to design, build and decorate Peacock Pavilions with a main pavilion and two guest pavilions, all located in a private olive grove. It feels much less like a hotel and much more like a friend’s stylish and eclectic space.

What should no first-time visitor miss?
The Ben Youssef Medersa, an old Koranic school. You’ll find on display incredible mosaic tile, sculpted plaster and carved woodwork. The Moroccan craftsmanship is nothing short of awe inspiring.

What is your favorite Marrakech “secret”? 
Flower Power Café. This organic café serves up freshly made salads, sandwiches and baked treats. Best of all, it’s located in an enormous and beautiful plant nursery. I feel as if I’m in my own little jungle oasis whenever I’m there.

What is your favorite Marrakech ritual?
The Moroccan hammam! I’m convinced that this is the world’s best beauty treatment. After a steam and a scrub, my skin glows and feels brand-new.

What is the best item you’ve picked up in a Marrakech souk?
Moroccan textiles. From old hand-woven blankets, to sequined wedding throws, to vintage embroidered caftans—I love them all. (It doesn’t hurt that they’re so easily packable.)

Read the complete interview with Montague, as well as interviews with many more Marrakech insiders, at Indagare. For help with your next trip, contact our Bookings Team: 212-988-2611.
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To purchase back issues of the Indagare Magazine ($10 apiece), send an email to info@indagare.com or call 212-988-2611.
Marrakech...lay stretched before us like one immense terrace circumscribed by palms. The sky was pure blue verging to turquoise green where the Atlas floated above mist; and facing the celestial snows stood the Koutoubia, red in the sunset. - Edith Wharton