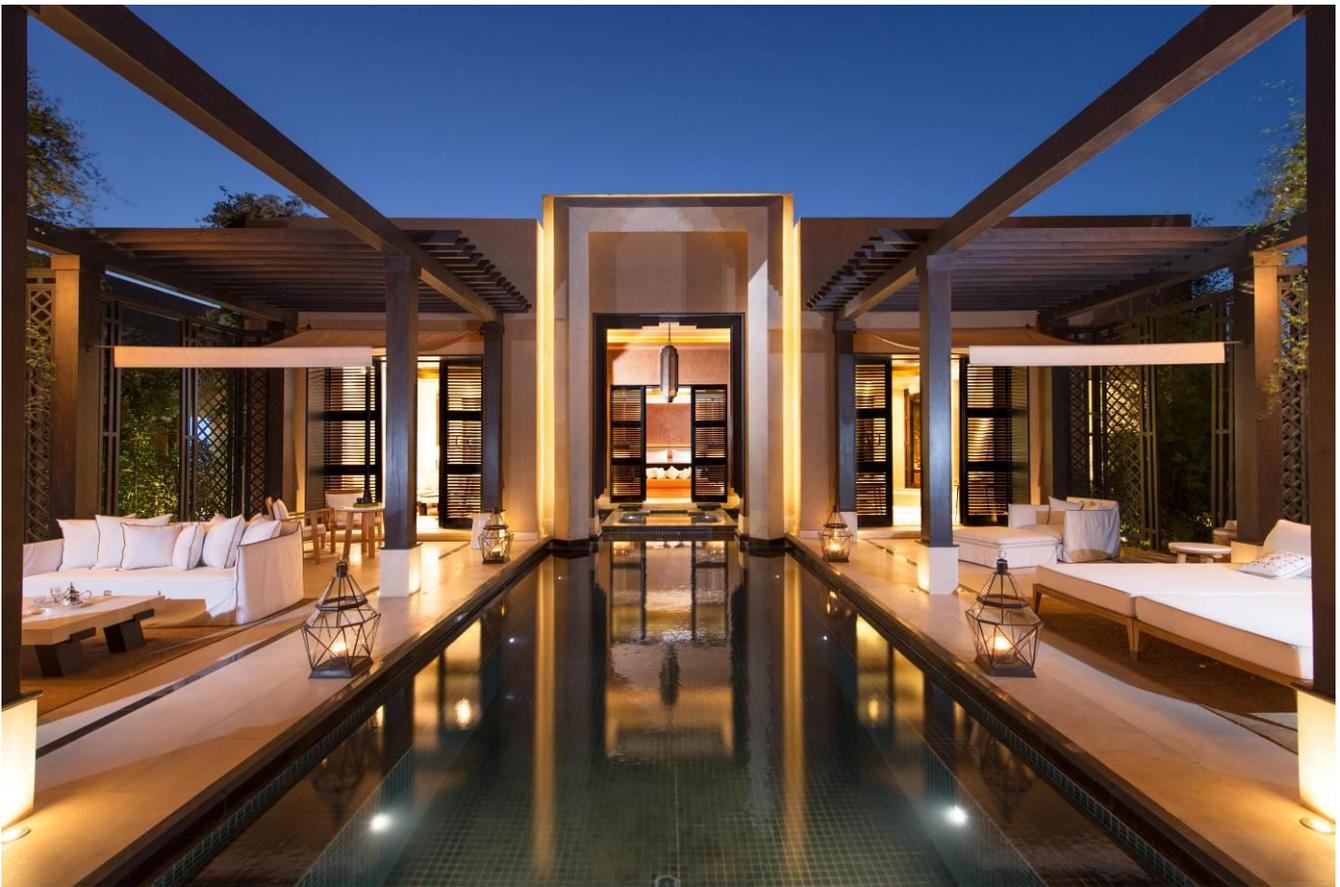




Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech
Press Kit



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OVERVIEW OF MANDARIN ORIENTAL, MARRAKECH

Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech marks the debut of Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group in Africa. A modern and elegant resort nestled in the heart of 20 hectares of olive groves and gardens featuring 100,000 fragrant roses, the property celebrates the rich Moroccan heritage through subtle Berber references.

The resort redefines luxury hospitality in the Red City by way of accommodation made up solely of private villas and suites set in lush greenery.

A new dining experience comes through three restaurants and bars, among which the restaurant *Mes'Lalla* led by Chef Meryem Cherkaoui.

The Spa at Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech offers the renowned signature treatments that have made the group's international reputation, as well as treatments inspired by Moroccan traditions.

The luxury experience is completed by the group's unparalleled service, allied to the best traditions and hospitality of the Moroccan Kingdom.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Address

Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech

Route du Golf Royal

40 000 Marrakech, Maroc

Tel +212 5 24 29 88 88

Fax +212 5 24 29 88 89

Opening

3 October 2015

Website

www.mandarinoriental.com/marrakech

Location

Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech is on the Royal Golf road, a few minutes away from the medina. Close to the new shopping district of Gueliz and the trendy Hivernage area, it is just 15 minutes from Marrakech Menara International Airport.

Owner

Park Palmeraie S.A.

Operator

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group

General Manager

Mark S. Bradford

Director of Sales & Marketing

Emilie Pignol

Director of Communication

Émilie Pichon

Chef

Meryem Cherkaoui, Chef of the restaurant Mes'Lalla

Nicolas Warot, executive Chef

Design

Pascal Desprez, architect of the project

Gilles & Boissier, interior designers

Setting

With the snow-capped Atlas Mountains forming a breathtaking backdrop, Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech is surrounded by majestic gardens filled with olive trees and more than 100,000 fragrant roses.

Accommodation

- **54 private villas** of between 280-440m² with one or two bedrooms, a pool, hot tub and outdoor shower. Surrounded by a private garden, these cosy living spaces also feature outdoor dining.
- **Seven suites** of between 135-210m² with terrace, heated plunge pool and exceptional views of the Atlas Mountains.
- **Two Infinity Pool Suites** of 290m² with a large private courtyard featuring an 18m-long heated infinity pool.

Restaurants & Bar

The resort's three restaurants and bars offer innovative and diverse culinary concepts:

- the signature restaurant *Mes'Lalla*, overseen by renowned Chef Meryem Cherkaoui
- The *Salon Berbere*
- The *Pool Garden*

An in-room and in-villa dining service is also available 24 hours a day.

Spa

The Spa at Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech is spread over 1,800m² and features six spa suites including one for couples. Each suite has a terrace and private garden for outdoor treatments. The Spa also includes two luxurious hammams, an indoor heated pool, a fitness centre and a yoga studio, as well as hair and beauty salons.

Golf

Guests of Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech enjoy direct access to the Golf Royal and Golf Al Maaden courses, while the Amelkis course is also nearby. In 2015, Marrakech was named Best Golf Destination in Africa by the global trade association of the golf tourism industry, IAGTO.

Events & Celebrations

Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech offers a wide range of function rooms, available from 2016. In the meantime, the existing indoor areas can be configured to accommodate all types of private events, while the gardens can host up to 1,000 guests. The catering service provided by Chef Meryem Cherkaoui, combined with the enchanting evening lighting creates a magical ambience, as seen at the Dior party organised for the Marrakech Film Festival in December 2014.

Younger Guests

Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech offers dedicated services for children and teenagers, including special menus in all restaurants, baby equipment in the room and a babysitting service, as well as a large variety of traditional and electronic games.

Until the opening of the Kids Club in 2016, children's activities are organised exclusively during the All Saints, Christmas and Easter holidays.

Leisure activities

Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech offers its guests:

- An outdoor heated swimming pool of 610m² with a swimming area of 18m x 16m
- A jogging trail around the 20 hectares of the property
- Bike hire (subject to availability)
- Direct access to two local golf courses
- Cooking classes with Chef Meryem Cherkaoui
- Customised tours with private driver and guide in the Atlas Mountains, Essaouira, or the Agafay desert
- Direct access to quad, camel or horseriding
- Cultural visits to the medina
- Shopping trips to traditional markets and the new design district of Sidi Ghanem

INTERIOR DESIGN

Rustic yet sophisticated, the design of Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech was undertaken by the French duo Patrick Gilles and Dorothee Boissier. With its Berber and Arab-Andalusian influences, the feel is of relaxed luxury for the cosmopolitan traveller. Interior and exterior spaces co-exist and the focus is on essential materials rather than ostentatious affectations, with a particular emphasis placed on light.

Morocco's cultural diversity has been fused with Eastern and Western touches to give a sensation of travelling around the world as one moves through the main building. The villas, meanwhile, whose architecture recalls that of intimate riads, lend a timeless feel, while the suites, with their scenic views of the Atlas Mountains, immerse guests in the heart of the local landscape. The architecture of the spa, a tribute to the ancient mosques and cathedrals of Andalusia, encourages spiritual contemplation and deployment of the senses.

Boissier wanted to allow guests to get lost in the shades of the desert and its rocks by way of the resort's archetypal motifs, rural materials and white bougainvillea and roses. "*The earth and sand were the major influences,*" says Boissier. "*Along with the colours of the street and traditional Berber women's clothing. The sand colour of the stonework combined with the large expanses of dominant green from the lush vegetation makes for a true dialogue and fluidity between the exterior architecture and the surrounding nature, while the pools give the illusion of an oasis in this 'living desert'.*"

"We are great admirers of Madrasa Ben Youssef Islamic College in Marrakech, and we wanted to lend the entrance a similarly perfect symmetry, with columns and dark wood frames, marble tiles, a tranquil pool painted in gold, carved fireplaces, large bronze bells and the distant view of the mountains. The restaurants, one decorated with lemon-coloured Zelliges tiles, the other with bamboo panels, recall the traditional colours worn by Berber women. The villas, meanwhile, are havens of peace, simplicity, privacy and comfort, with tadelakt plastered walls etched with Berber motifs. As for the spa, it is constructed from the signature, ubiquitous red bricks of Marrakech, making for a mystical architecture where light plays around the bronzed glass blocks of the massage cabins, moucharabieh screens, and fan vaults."

THE GARDEN AND THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech is set amid lush, lavish gardens surrounded by a walkway that allows guests to fully appreciate their charms. An avenue lined with palm trees provides a spectacular entrance, referencing the traditional Moroccan palm groves, while small mounds recall the dunes of the South Moroccan desert. Scattered among the palm trees, pink bougainvillea are cut into Japanese shapes in a nod to the group's Asian origins. No less than 100,000 different coloured roses of 30 different varieties adorn the garden, and each villa has a rose colour of its own. The gardens are home to orange trees, almond trees and many fragrant plants such as jasmine, rose geranium and night-blooming cestrum, so named because at night, its perfume is particularly pronounced, and can be recognised from up to 20 metres away. At nightfall, illuminated by countless candles and lanterns scattered throughout the property, the gardens hold a particular magic as the flowers and plants release their essences.

The garden's centuries-old olive trees (some of which are up to 600 years old) are now yielding a promising first crop for olive oil. Cactus and prickly pear, traditionally used as natural fences in mountain villages, also dot the area, and their fruits can be enjoyed in ice-cream in the restaurant, while the oil is incorporated into traditional rituals at The Spa.

THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

Lovingly and rigorously maintained, the vegetable garden supplies the kitchens of the hotel, and is densely populated with dozens of fruits and vegetables. Organic practices are encouraged; the compost is natural and no fertilizers are used. The plants are treated with natural concoctions such as neem oil, which, when mixed with black soap is an effective deterrent against caterpillars.

Among the highlights of the vegetable garden are:

- 90 varieties of tomato (black, red, green, yellow, blue and even bi- or tri-color tomatoes, known to be very rich in antioxidants).
- Aubergines, courgettes, beans, pumpkins (the traditional base ingredient of couscous), beets (white, red, yellow and striped), Swiss chard, carrots and artichokes.

Original and rare varieties include chaillotte (like a flat pear, but tasting like cucumber), cardoons, purslane (which are eaten in salads) and Armenian and Lebanese cucumbers.

- Herbs are also grown: notably absinthe, sage, rosemary, verbena, mint and lemon grass.
- The vegetable garden is open to all guests, and a cookery class with Chef Meryem Cherkaoui is also available. After picking vegetables and learning how to cook them, guests enjoy seasonal plates at a table set in the garden.

VILLAS & SUITES

With accommodation made up exclusively of villas and suites, Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech promises a new luxury experience, combining comfort and space, in total privacy.

Each villa is built in the Moroccan style around a private pool in a lush garden with fig, apricot and other fruit trees. The interior decor is a tribute to the fascinating culture and Berber tradition as depicted by traditional *tadelakt* motifs, mouth-blown vases and handwoven wool rugs.

To offer an experience resolutely oriented to well-being, the villas feature elegant marble bathrooms, with specially developed products by local paraben-free brand *Nectarome*. The pool and outdoor areas are an invitation to relax and unwind either in the warmth of the sun or in a shady alcove filled with traditionally designed cushions from Marrakech homewares label Moon Garden.

All the villas have an outdoor kitchen that allows the restaurant team to come and cook on site at guests' request. The ceramic dining tables are produced in Marrakech by the manufacturer Ceramic Loun, whose workshops in town are open to visitors.

Overlooking the resort, the nine suites offer spectacular views over the garden, with its 100,000 roses and centuries-old olive trees. In the distance, the Atlas Mountains form a romantic and soothing setting to contemplate from the terrace.

For travellers looking to totally switch off, the Infinity Pool Suite, adjacent to the Spa, promises a rejuvenating experience for body and mind, with its 18-metre long heated pool a particular draw.

RESTAURANTS & BAR

Mes'Lalla by Meryem Cherkaoui

Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech features three restaurants for guests to enjoy a diverse array of dishes.

The *Mes'Lalla* restaurant serves traditional Moroccan cuisine with contemporary touches, under the leadership of renowned Chef Meryem Cherkaoui. A native of Rabat, Cherkaoui is a keen proponent of her native culinary heritage and offers a contemporary interpretation of Moroccan classics. Reviving local recipes of fishermen and farmers, she harnesses the richness and diversity of popular cuisine, bringing a street-food touch to her cooking. The result makes for the refined but casual discovery of an exceptional culinary heritage, with a particular focus on organic products grown on-site and by local farms or cooperatives.

Through her 'Tradition' and 'Signature' menus, Cherkaoui offers seasonal dishes that draw on the 'locavore' trend. Signature dishes include Harira Royale with parsley and mint froth, served with a 'vierge' condiment; and Barley berkoukech with cracked Mes'Lalla olives and squid cannelloni stuffed with smoked aubergine, and sweet and sour confit.

An eclectic wine list complements the menu via a fine collection of red, white and rosé Moroccan wines, as well as a selection of Lebanese, Italian, Spanish and French bottles.

For this signature space, design duo Gilles and Boissier opted for a chic, relaxed, natural atmosphere, with contemporary reminders of Moroccan crafts: floors of black and white mosaics; hand carved wooden features; shelves embellished with antiques from nearby souks; walls adorned with traditional warm H'ssira straw mats incorporating subtle Berber motifs. A row of columns inspired by Arabo-Andalusian architecture runs down the restaurant, which is separated from the neighbouring Salon Berbère by high, crenellated doors, a reference to the arches of the old mosque of Cordoba.

The name *Mes'Lalla* refers to the fresh green olives, gathered mainly around the city of Meknès, and gently crushed with a flat stone before being stored in large traditional jars. After being covered with water, which is refreshed every other day over an eight-to-ten-day period, they reach the perfect degree of bitterness. A little-known technique, the olives form a traditional component of classic Moroccan dishes such as chicken tagine, and are a basic ingredient in many of Meryem Cherkaoui's recipes.

Open every night from 7:00 pm until midnight, Mess'Lalla can accommodate 56 guests indoors, 14 at the bar and 50 covers on the terrace. The restaurant welcomes hotel guests and non-residents.

Le Salon Berbere

Adjacent to Mes'Lalla, the *Salon Berbere* offers an exceptional view over both the resort's blue and green pools and the Atlas Mountains, and makes for a lively dining room that evolves throughout the day. Ideal for breakfast, where the buffet includes many traditional Moroccan specialties such as Msamen – small squared-pancakes that are eaten hot with a little honey – as well as Western dishes. The wooden buffet table, its top carved from a block of marble, was designed by Gilles & Boissier, and is transformed into a pastry counter for afternoon tea, when the restaurant takes on the feel of a tea room, with sweets and delicacies displayed under stylish glass bells, for eating in or takeaway. The atmosphere changes again at sunset, as Salon Berbere morphs into a champagne bar, perfect for a pre- or after-dinner drink.

All day service from 7:00 am until midnight, Le Salon Berbere can accommodate 40 covers, including seating for 20 outside.

The Pool Garden

Beside the main pool, the *Pool Garden* offers a refreshing spot to enjoy lunch outdoors. The menu offers a selection of healthy dishes designed around fresh fruits and vegetables sourced directly from the vegetable garden. Light Mediterranean-inspired dishes such as crunchy vegetables with anchovy dressing or sweet red pepper gazpacho are complemented by the fish of the day from the seafood grill, or the truffled croque monsieur.

The small islands on the water ponds can be used for a quiet drink or a more private lunch, while a handful of tables in the shade of the bougainvillea complement those of the adjoining garden.

The restaurant is open daily for lunch from 12.00pm to 4.00pm and hosts 53 covers. Service around the pool operates from 7.30am until sunset.

In-Villa 24-hour Dining

Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech offers a refined menu to enjoy within the peace and privacy of the guest villas and suites. Among the dishes available are Caesar salad with Oualidia lobster, French caviar served on blinis, and paella-style saffron risotto.

From breakfast to dinner, discreet service is provided by staff who can also cook on site or organise a barbecue or traditional Moroccan dinner on the terrace with such classic dishes as Marrakech Tanjia or olive-and-chicken Tagine.

THE SPA AT MANDARIN ORIENTAL, MARRAKECH

A sanctuary of well-being, The Spa at Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech was designed by French duo Gilles & Boissier, who took inspiration from the architecture of cathedrals and historical mosques in Andalusia. The sun-drenched entrance opens onto a pool and fountain, engendering a cool and soothing atmosphere, while Marrakech's ubiquitous red bricks cover the walls and columns. The overall effect lends a warm and elegant atmosphere to this temple of well-being where the architecture and layout are designed around the five elements and play with the five senses.

A corridor whose arches seem to go on forever, winds through the spa, and eventually leads to a heated indoor pool of 70 square metres whose bay windows offer a majestic view of the gardens. Embellished with a white carved stucco ceiling marked by modern, graphic lines, the room has also a large brick fireplace, further enhancing the warm and serene atmosphere.

With a total area of 1,800m², the Spa has six treatment rooms including a couple's and a single spa suite, each with vitality bath, and a Thai treatment room, featuring their own private garden where guests can choose to enjoy their treatment next to the olive tree. Two luxurious Moroccan hammams dedicated to the traditional black soap scrub, a hairdresser, a beauty salon including pedicure and manicure studios, and a modern fitness centre complete the offer.

Among the treatments at The Spa at Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech are:

- Customised facial treatments highly based on the philosophy of the French brand *Biologique Recherche*, and aligned with the Mandarin Oriental's comprehensive approach to regeneration of body and mind.
- Treatments inspired by Moroccan traditions with products from local organic brand *Nectarome*.
- Mandarin Oriental Signature treatments combine the powerful effects of oriental meridian massage with the therapeutic benefits of custom-blended essential oils, to

provide simple, effective and authentic treatments for which the Group is renowned. Natural ingredients such as argan oil or a mixture of verbena and grapefruit from the vegetable garden are incorporated with the bespoke products used for signature MO treatments which have been developed by *Aromatherapy Associates*.

The Partner Brands in details

Biologique Recherche

Behind the story of *Biologique Recherche* is a single family – a biologist, a physiotherapist and a doctor – who combined their knowledge and passion for wellbeing to create a groundbreaking brand in the world of skin care.

“There is no secret formula or magic” says Dr Philippe Allouche, Innovation and Creative Director. “The products are created on the basis of complex research, followed by meticulous evaluation of the skin and the adaptation of the treatments to the patient’s individual needs by qualified therapists.”

With over 35 years of expertise, *Biologique Recherche* combines a clinical approach to beauty care with pure, concentrated, almost raw products, and original and thorough protocols.

This methodology consists of three basic phases:

- Evaluation of the skin: a specific approach incorporating physiological, behavioral and tactile elements that identify the skin type, to formulate the most appropriate treatment.
- The initialisation phase: personalised preparation of the skin according to a precise and rigorous ritual.
- The care phase: “reconditioning” the skin, helping it to express its self-healing power through skin care products that feature highly concentrated active ingredients.

Nectarome

Founded at the foot of the Atlas Mountains, in the Ourika valley, *Nectarome* creates 100% Moroccan-made products. The development team is trained in aromatherapy and specialises in essential oils, working in a bio-aromatic garden to deliver healthy wellness products that are natural, native to the Moroccan soil and produced with respect for the environment.

Nectarome combines the wisdom of ancient Moroccan tradition with modern knowledge of aromatherapy and herbal medicine. Its mission is to heal the skin and awaken the senses by harnessing the secrets and benefits of Moroccan cosmetics married with modern scientific techniques. The brand also aims to contribute to sustainable development and the socio-economic development of the region, and recruits staff from the adjoining village of Tnine Ourika.

Aromatherapy Associates

Mandarin Oriental's signature product line has been developed specifically for the Group by the award-winning UK Company *Aromatherapy Associates*. Each aromatherapy-based product has been created according to the Oriental principles of the five elements: wood, fire, earth, metal and water. Bringing together the purest plant and flower oils from east and west, the blends reflect the unique balancing properties of each of the elements. From the stimulating influence of earth to the releasing force of wood, each blend lends its own restorative effect depending on the needs of the individual.

All treatments begin with a private consultation with a spa therapist to determine the present state of well-being. The treatment and oils are then tailored to each guest to leave body, mind and spirit in perfect harmony.

The Spa at Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech also offers retreats dedicated to well-being.

"The Berber Experience" is a healthy programme for those who want to discover more about themselves and learn and maintain a healthy lifestyle through relaxation and recovery from stress. The programme offers a discovery of the people, life and culture of the Berber mountain villages. Guests will discover the crafts of the Berber villages, including the drying of traditional colourful Moroccan rugs, and will sit down for breakfast and lunch featuring Berber tagine, couscous and grilled meats, accompanied by traditional breads, Moroccan salads, fresh fruits and classic mint tea.

The programme includes (3 or 5 day programmes are available):

- Transfer from airport or hotel
- Two nights accommodation
- Breakfast, lunch and dinner created by Chef Meryem Cherkaoui
- Use of spa facilities: steam bath, indoor heated pool, fitness centre
- Discovery tour and guided bike ride in the Atlas Mountains
- Berber lunch in the mountains
- A luxurious hammam
- A massage with argan oil
- A facial with natural products

MARK S. BRADFORD, GENERAL MANAGER

Appointed in May 2014, Mark S. Bradford is the General Manager of Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech, the hotel group's first destination in Africa.

As part of his mission, Bradford is responsible for positioning Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech as one of the leading luxury resorts of the Red City, embodying tradition, elegance and refinement.

Bradford has over 15 years of experience with Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group. Prior to his appointment at Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech, he held the position of Hotel Manager at Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok and General Manager at Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi, Chiang Mai, Mandarin Oriental, Manila and Mandarin Oriental, Jakarta.

Born in Switzerland, with Scottish and Irish origins, Bradford holds an MBA in Hospitality Management from the Lausanne Hotel School and speaks fluent English, French and German.

MERYEM CHERKAOUI, CHEF OF RESTAURANT *MES'LALLA*

A native of Rabat, Meryem Cherkaoui left Morocco to enrol at the L'Institut Paul Bocuse cookery school in France.

She then continued her training at such prestigious institutions as Hôtel Majestic in Cannes and Hôtel de Crillon in Paris. In 2002, Cherkaoui decided to return to her home country where she opened her own restaurant in Casablanca – La Maison du Gourmet. It rapidly became a gastronomic reference point, blending French techniques with native flavours.

In September 2009, she received the Entrepreneur Spirit Bocuse & Co trophy and the same year she was inducted into Les Maitres Cuisiniers de France. Cherkaoui has participated in several French TV shows including MasterChef and conducted cooking demonstrations and events throughout the world.

In 2010, she created the Saveurs des Chefs workshops, enabling her to pass on her expertise to amateur and professional cooks alike.

Constantly in search of exceptional, new, local products, Cherkaoui and a group of friends created Dima Terroir Maroc to support women's cooperatives, by showcasing their products and distributing them, and donating a portion of the profits to improve the producers' working conditions.

Today, through the hotel's *Mes'Lalla* signature restaurant, she offers a restaurant in her image – welcoming and generous.

GILLES & BOISSIER, INTERIOR DESIGNERS

They say that opposites attract. And so it proved with Patrick Gilles and Dorothee Boissier, whose complementary skills and mindsets led to a rich, inspired, creative dialogue: a mental ping-pong which gives shape to their ideas. If the use of noble wood and clean lines forms Gilles' grammar, Boissier plays on colours, spatial fluidity and innate elegance. Together, they create a harmonious whole.

Since 2004, Gilles & Boissier have imposed their style on many international projects: from residences to hotels, luxury boutiques to contemporary restaurants. Winning the customer's trust is integral to their projects – as with Remo Ruffini, CEO of the Moncler group, who commissioned them to design not only the clothing brand's boutiques, but also his own extravagant private residence on Lake Como.

Gilles and Boissier attach particular importance to the artistic interpretation of the local culture, as can be seen throughout the interiors of Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech. It's a timeless yet rigorous approach that has earned them international recognition.

www.gillesetboissier.com

THE FAN OF MANDARIN ORIENTAL, MARRAKECH

In addition to the registered trademark logo for the Group, all Mandarin Oriental hotels are encouraged to find their own unique fan to reflect the individuality of their property. Each hotel's fan is sensitively linked to the environment in which it resides, taking into account the exclusive attributes of the culture in each location. Colours, designs and prints are carefully chosen in collaboration with local artists, historians and graphics experts. Originality also plays a key role in determining the desired fan for each hotel.

The fan of Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech, which sits in the lobby, was designed by Zineb Joundy and constructed by Maison Duvelleroy. It is directly inspired by the grey and white tones of the hotel, with saffron highlights.

The "Palmettes" of the fan are strikingly large (60 cm), and feature a subtle rhythmic alternation between the palms of grey silk and white silk. Each palmette is lined with a paper core and black *bordure* while alternate palmettes are embroidered with cotton thread in grey and saffron in a traditional Berber design.

The stained wooden frame has been adapted to the desired shape, painted in black and decorated with a grey straw marquetry and saffron created specifically for Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech. Finally, a black ribbon and hand-painted taupe palm leaf are tied together around the base, while a second black and white ribbon surrounds the bespoke oversized tassel. The piece bears the stamped rivet of a daisy, the signature of the Maison Duvelleroy. It took more than 100 man hours to produce.

Maison Duvelleroy

Fan makers to royalty in the 19th century, Duvelleroy is the only Parisian fan house to have survived from this era. In 2010, Eloise Gilles and Raphaëlle de Panafieu joined forces to restore the range as fashion accessories in a modern style, through the design of fan couture and headdresses for ceremonial accessories.

Zineb Joundy

Zineb Joundy a passionate and hedonistic globe trotter, collects snippets of culture and contributions that she gleans from Indian or Turkish souks, which she then integrates with the traditions and origins of her own country, to develop her elegant creations.

As an emblematic figure of Moroccan couture, both nationally and internationally, Zineb Joundy lives among a confluence of cultures and within the enlightened intelligentsia of the Arab-Berber traditions and civilization, and it is this, which has helped to mould her unique and vibrant fashion talent

After graduating from the “Ecole de la Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne”, Joundy took her first steps in the world of high fashion under the attentive eyes of Karl Lagerfeld and Lanvin. Her avant-garde collections have been exhibited in Paris, London, Addis Ababa, Oman, Aman, Istanbul and Bahrain. She also presented her creations of Caftans in the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

In 1998, Zineb was elected Commissioner of Fashion for the Year of Morocco, which was celebrated in France.

DESTINATION MARRAKECH

Marrakech, the unforgettable

"Marrakech is simply the most beautiful place on earth to spend an afternoon"

Sir Winston Churchill

"When I discovered Morocco, I realised that my own chromaticism was that of zelliges, zouaves, djellabas and caftans. The daring designs of mine, I owe to this country – the violence of the agreements, the insolence of the mixtures, the ardor of the inventions. This culture has become mine.

"For many years, I found in the Majorelle garden an inexhaustible source of inspiration and I often dreamed of its unique colours."

Yves Saint Laurent

The Red City evokes strong sensations, from the grace and freshness of the blue Majorelle Garden, and the refinement of the riads, to the power of the walls surrounding the medina. The same sensations are there in the contemplation of the eternal snows of the Atlas Mountains on the horizon, or in the Berber villages and valleys, which rise from the gates of the city to the slopes of Toubkal. Ancient trading post between East and West, artistic crossroads, cultural melting pot and a global destination for travellers, Marrakech holds new discoveries for every visitor.

Just as Yves Saint Laurent did, more and more artists and entrepreneurs view Marrakech as a destination in which to give free rein to their inspiration. Botanical workshops, art galleries, literary cafés and restaurants are just some of the destinations which create a creative ferment of art, design, architecture, interior decoration, fashion, crafts and gastronomy. With the constant irrepressible energy of the famous Jemaa El-Fnaa as its epicentre, Marrakech has taken its place among the cities of the world that inspire and amaze in equal measure.

A thousand years of history in five visits

It was almost a thousand years ago – 1062, in fact – that Youssef Ibn Tachfin, the first emir of the Almoravids, founded Marrakech as the capital of an empire stretching from Barcelona to Ghana.

Five visits to cover ten centuries of history:

- . The rose garden surrounding the Koutoubia mosque and minaret, the jewel of Arab-Andalusian art.
- . The Arab-Andalusian Bahia Palace, with its gardens, patios, and 150 richly decorated rooms, complete with gilded and inlaid painted wooden ceilings.
- . The beautifully decorated mausoleum that is the Saadian Tombs.
- . The Ben Youssef Madrasa Islamic school – once the largest in North Africa, and another gem of Moorish architecture.
- . The Museum of Marrakech, in Dar Menebhi Palace (next door to Ben Youssef Madrasa), which chronicles the treasures of Moroccan cultural heritage.

Shopping in the souks of Marrakech

When we speak of the souks of Marrakech, we speak about 40,000 artisans, split into neighbourhoods and businesses: dyers, metalworkers, blacksmiths, leather workers, weavers and jewellers, producing fabrics, clothing, carpets, spices and slippers. The tanners and dyers' souk intoxicates visitors with the colorful skeins of wool and the smell of leather drying in the sun. In the souk of the Tallendiers, craftsmen work yellow and red copper with incredible skill. In the Zrabia Souk, leather goods sit alongside caftans and rugs. In the Souk Kassabine, just steps from the Jemaa El-Fnaa, the scents of spices fill the air, making for a beguiling experience. This is a world where, behind the screams, the smells, the crowd, the bartering, reigns an extraordinary social structure in which one can get lost for hours.

Shopping in Sidi Ghanem

The design district of Sidi Ghanem is just a few kilometres from the city centre, and is a place where the most daring new design showrooms are grouped. This trendy artisan shopping area provides a link between traditional and modern Moroccan design. Here, designers, artists and artisans have moulded ancestral knowledge with international trends across all trades: metalwork, leatherwork, weaving, tableware, jewellery, furniture, lighting... Every year in March, the Salon Riad Art Expo, open to professionals and the general public, provides a deserved showcase for the creativity of Marrakech.

With festivals, Marrakech welcomes the world

Designer shops, show rooms, international summits, fairs and festivals demonstrate the attractiveness of a city that is increasingly attracting investors and entrepreneurship. The strategic priority now is to make this momentum sustainable, via a development that benefits the local population.

Among the major events which reflect the new-found international interest in Marrakech are:

- . Riad Art Expo in March – the exhibition of the art of living brings together designers, decorators and landscapers, and is perfectly complemented by the April Jardin'Art.
- . Caftan, In April – Morocco's haute couture event for fashion designers.
- . In June, the Marrakech du Rire, organised by Jamel Debbouze, precedes the National Festival of Popular Arts, transforming the main sites of the city into scenes of dancing and singing.
- . The Marrakech Art Fair, which attracts dozens of contemporary artists and art galleries around the world, opens autumn's cultural line-up.
- . Increasingly well-known, the International Film Festival of Marrakech ends the year in style.

Marrakech, the garden city

To temper the Moroccan sun, Marrakech offers shade, calm and cool thanks to its 100,000 palm trees and its extensive gardens. The latter were introduced by the Almoravids, who in the second half of the 11th century, made an oasis of Marrakech. A century later, their successors the Almohades irrigated the city by designing a hydraulic system, fed by the waters descended from the Atlas. Now over 700 years old, the system remains in place, supplied by the great reservoir basin of Menara. Meanwhile the Jardin Majorelle (www.jardinmajorelle.com), created in 1920 by the painter of the same name, and then restored by Pierre Bergé and Yves Saint Laurent, is home to 300 species of often exotic plants, and a collection of over 400 objects collected by the two patrons of the Museum of Islamic Art

Golf courses

It is for good reason that The International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO) announced Marrakech as the 2015 Golf Destination of the Year for Africa & Gulf States.

Marrakech's ten golf courses are spectacular. Marrakech Royal Golf, the oldest, was established in 1923, while Golf Palmeraie, designed by the renowned Robert Trent Jones, is undoubtedly one of the finest in Africa. Arguably the toughest course is the Amelkis, created by architect Cabell Robinson, which offers a topological and technical challenge. The courses are constantly being refined – Golf Samanah was designed by Jack Nicklaus' design agency, while Atlas Golf Al Maaden combines the harnessing of nature with technical innovation at the foot of the Atlas Mountains. All ten courses are maintained with the utmost care and commitment to sustainable development. Guests of Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech enjoy direct access to the Golf Royal and Golf Maaden courses, while the Amelkis course is close by.

DID YOU KNOW ?

1. Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech is the group's first property in Africa.
2. Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech has 65 heated pools – the largest number of any resort in Marrakech.
3. Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech's gardens are home to more than 100,000 fragrant roses. Each villa benefits from its own individual floral colour.
4. The olive trees in the garden herald from the Atlas Mountains. Some are over 500 years old, including the one which stands in the middle of the golden pool at the main entrance.
5. Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech's vegetable garden provides more than 90 varieties of tomatoes, including an astonishing blue tomato with exceptional antioxidant properties.
6. Marrakech is a garden city, with 67 parks covering 284 hectares, the highlight being the Agdal Gardens, one of the oldest in the world. Each spring the Garden Art festival is held, devoted to the art of gardening.
7. Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech is located on the Royal Golf road, home to the oldest and most iconic golf courses in the Red City. Marrakech has several internationally renowned golf courses and was named best golf destination in Africa in 2014 by the global trade association of the golf tourism industry, IAGTO.
8. The name of the Mes'Lalla restaurant refers to the traditional method of preserving fresh green olives in large jars. Gathered mainly around the city of Meknès, they are gently crushed with a flat stone and covered in regularly refreshed water, for 8-10 days, after which they reach the perfect degree of bitterness.
9. 50,000 zellige tiles adorn the hammams of The Spa.
10. Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group's emblem, the fan, has been rendered in a unique creation for Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech. Designed by Zineb Joundy and constructed by the Maison Duvelleroy, it required more than 100 hours of production.