

TRAVEL MARRAKECH

Earlier this year I took a trip to Marrakech, my third, but this time I was looking to set aside my backpacker cred in favor of upscale indulgences suggested by the local French expats. I've mapped my favorites, but each of these was selected for its unique creative vision. I'd like to think these little spots are indicative of a nouvelle French wave re-fashioning Marrakech into the new Tangier, but it may also just be a circle of friends working to make their dreams come true. **MARINA GARCIA-VASQUEZ**

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KSAR CHAR-BAGH

This private palace in the Palmeraie is where rock stars and kings check in for the down-low royal treatment. The retreat is reminiscent of the Moorish Alhambra castle in Granada, Spain. Owner Nicole LeVillair and her husband Patrick designed the palace from the ground up, seeing to every

luxurious and immaculate detail, from the Versace goblets to the olive trees. We had a chauffeur pick us up in the only London taxi in Marrakech. For a moment we felt like bona fide rock stars — then we met the real VIPs when we arrived. +212.44.32.92.44 ksarcharbagh.com



KECHMARA



French brothers Pascal and Arnaud Foltran make Marrakech modern with their sleek bistro café. In the trendy neighborhood of Guéliz, Kechmara is the place to chill out and catch your breath after braving the hot sun and snake charmers of Jema el Fnaa. The furniture — 20th century modern designs from Verner Panton and Eero Saarinen — is reminiscent of something you'd find in LA, while the menu is French Bistro with a Moroccan spin. This place gives you a little taste of home while you are deserts and oceans away. 3 Rue de la Liberté +212.0.44.42.25.32



KAMAR STUDIOS

When these sound designers aren't spinning house or Arabic lounge for premier parties, they are producing *gnawa* trance music with Morocco's finest *gnawa* masters. Their latest effort, *Marrakech Undermoon*, takes electronica on a spiritual journey. Every party they spin for is the place to be seen in Marrakech. Check out when they'll next be at mega-club Pacha. kamarstudios.com



RIAD MAGELLAN

Of the 800-plus riads to choose from in the Medina, Magellan owners Stephanie and Philippe run a discreet and affordable but fashionable guesthouse in the very heart of Marrakech. The upbeat duo is connected to the local art and music scene, which makes heading out in search of a party easier than staying in to enjoy the comforts of the riad. If you are fortunate, Philippe will recommend his favorite dirt-cheap restaurants right off the Jema el Fnaa. 62 Derb El Hammam +212.0.44.37.60.70 riadmagellan.com



KULCHI

This designer boutique is best known for trendy Marrakech boho threads produced by über-hip independent designers, all friends of owner Florence Taranne. Here you will find caftans from sari fabric, leather hand-

bags, and dresses made of Nigerian fabrics. Your visit here will remind you why dressing up in costume when you were young was so liberating. No° 1 Bis Moul Laksour +212.0.44.42.91.77

