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LivingAdventure's Custom Travel Guide

Marrakesh

Things to Do Tips

La Menara Gardens & Bassin

Source: Marrakesh Things to Do by SirRichard; Aug 25, 2002

Description: LA MENARA This huge bassin is a bit out of town, some 4 kms west of Djema el Fnaa through the gate next to Mamounia Hotel. A nice walk if it's not too hot. Bus 11 takes you there from the Koutubia too. Free entrance, a pleasant place to have a walk in the evenings to see the sunset. You can feed the fishes that live there, bring some bread.

THE SOUKS
This huge popular...

Source: Marrakesh Things to Do by SirRichard; Aug 25, 2002

Description: THE SOUKS This huge popular shopping center is a real must, even if you don't intend to buy anything (though if you enter, you'll end up buying!). You can start heading north from Djema el Fnaa, through the Souk Semmarine Street. There are plans of the souks, but you'll get lost anyway, so just wander around, and when you feel hungry, ask someone for the Djema el Fnaa Square or just take a taxi!!

Djemaa el-Fna... from above

Source: Marrakesh Things to Do by mafi_moya; Mar 15, 2004

Description: After you've wandered around the stalls, gorged on all the mouthwatering food and watched everything on the square it's time to retreat to one of the many cafes and watch the goings-on from a distance. In terms of views, though not of food, the best are the rooftop cafes. From here you can see the entire square: the smoky and brightly lit food stalls are the centre, but circles of locals form all around the square watching storytellers and actors, and around the edges are the juice stalls selling fresh orange juice. On the northern side are the souks - full of anything you could possibly want to buy, and lots of things you definitely don't! There are tourists aplenty in Djemaa el-Fna and it's tempting to dismiss it all as a commercial show, but the stories are all in Arabic and Berber and plenty of locals come here regularly as well. The monkeys, snake charmers and fortune tellers seem purely for the benefit of tourists though and you might find one evening here is enough - although most vistors come back night after night.

Al Koutoubia

Source: Marrakesh Things to Do by mafi_moya; Mar 15, 2004

Description: Who says size doesn't matter? The Koutoubia is far and away the largest and most prestigious mosque in Marrakech. Many say it's the most important in the whole of the Mahgreb. At 70 metres tall the minaret dominates much of the city skyline and can come in very useful if you get lost in the maze of the Medina! At night it's illuminated and towers above the smoke filled air of Djemaa el Fna. It's a great place for evening people watching, especially from the ice cream parlour across the road! Like nearly all mosques in Marrakech, it's closed to non-Muslims. But it's definitely worth a good walk round. It was built by the Almohads in the 12th century and remains in perfect condition, although the zellij tiles that decorated the walls are no longer there. Unusually, each face of the minaret is of a different design. If you know a little Arabic you'll see the name is derivative of 'books' - the mosque was built close to an old booksellers' market. There are also some gardens which are apparently well worth seeing, but they were closed while I was there.

The Oldest University in the World?

Source: Marrakesh Things to Do by aaaarrgh; Nov 14, 2004

Description: You will see postcards around Marrakech of the series of Moorish arches spanning a narrow street. They mark the entrance to Medersa Ali ben Youssef. It lies at the very northern edge of the souq area, next door to the Ali ben Youssef Mosque. The Medersa was once a great college of theology and religious law. Our Moroccan guide told us that it was part of the oldest university in the world, dating from the 9th century. You can believe this if you want! The present building was constructed in 1565, and Marrakech was apparently founded in 1062. Islam had spread across the whole of North Africa by the 7th century, so maybe the guide was right. Medersa Ali ben Youssef surrounds a grand courtyard. Very tranquil, very cool, with a shallow stone pool. The lower walls are decorated with mosaic, showing the many different stars of the Islamic religion. The upper walls are covered with intricate stucco work. The roof is made of carved cedar wood. The upper floors that look out over the courtyard are filled with dozens of tiny cells, to house the students. You can go into almost all of them. A few are furnished. There is a small shop selling postcards and souvenirs. The entrance fee is very cheap, I can't remember exactly how much - we visited as part of a wider tour of the old city!

Address: Next door to Mosque Ali ben Youssef

Directions: Very north of the souq (bazaar) district. Look for the series of arches that mark the entrance to the Medersa.

Phone: + 212 (0)44 39 09 11/12

Le Jardin Majorelle

Source: Marrakesh Things to Do by mafi_moya; Mar 15, 2004

Description: Jacques Majorelle was a French painter who lived in Morocco most of his life until the 1960's. I haven't seen his paintings but if they're as good as his garden design then the guy must have been a genius! In a small plot of land right in the middle of the new city, behind the high walls lies a garden that's like coming across an oasis in the middle of the Sahara. It's so well designed that I really wasn't surprised to find that the gardens are now owned by another famous Frenchman - the designer Yves Saint Laurent. With Marrakech being the 'Red City' the bright blue and yellow villa in the middle makes a stunning contrast. (The villa also serves as the Museum of Islamic Art, well worth a look in its own right.) Streams and fish-filled pools flow through the garden, which contains plants from as far away as cacti from North America and tall bamboo trees and pink bougainvillea. This was undoubtedly one of the highlights of my time in Marrakech and I went back a couple of times. The gardens are beautiful and incredibly peaceful but not particularly big and you'll need to go early or it'll be filled with coachloads of tourists. Have a look at my travelogue for some more photos of the gardens.

Directions: It's a bit of a trek through the New City, but it's worth it! From the main bus station head up Route Principale 24, turn left up Blvd Allal el Fassi, then left down Avenue Yacoub el Mansour. It's down a lane on the right.

Saadies Tombs

Source: Marrakesh Things to Do by diageva; Jan 9, 2004

Description: The Saadies Tombs, one of the most wonderful example of the architecture of saadies period, where hidden under earth and walls by sultán alauí, trying to erase the tracks of its predecessors saadies. Thank god, they where not destroy as other places because is a holly place ... It is a costum to try to destroy every sing of predecesor diferents dinasties ... :(((Nowadays, despite of its value, they are not all the conservated they should be ... 8:30- 11:45, 14:30- 17:45 10 Dirham

Address: Rue de la Kasba

Directions: in the old Medina. I founded difulcult to find the place throught the medina ... the easiest way to accede to the site is through the entrance of the medina's wall Bab Agnaou ... walkink to the door, buy bus, horse carriage or taking a pettit taxi.

Palais de la Bahia - "The Brilliant"

Source: Marrakesh Things to Do by suvanki; Feb 12, 2005

Description: This 19th century Palace is well worth a visit (I ended up making 2 visits, once independently, once (unintended) as part of a guided tour) The Bahia Palace was home to the Grand Vizier of Sultan Moulay al - Hassan, Si' Ahmed ben Musa or Bou Ahmed. Restoration work is ongoing (it was destroyed after Bou Ahmeds death) The rooms (nearly 150!), housed Ba Ahmed , his 4 wives and 24 concubines plus servants and guards. to be continued....

Address: Bahia Palace,Riad Zitoun el Jedid

Rahba Kedima Square

Source: Marrakesh Things to Do by diageva; Jan 10, 2004

Description: As you walk through the souk you will arrive to a beautiful square. Beautiful not because its architecture but ... for all what you will find there ... This square was the old slaves market, and nowadays is a place where you will see men and covered women sitting at the center selling their things ... wool hats, birds, handmade things ... and surrounded by little shops with medicines, magic things ... everything you need to get of an illness....:))

Directions: 150 m from the entrance to the souks

Souk el Kheir.

Source: Marrakesh Things to Do by belgianchocolate; Apr 15, 2005

Description: If you want to go really local , have a look at this souk. We had to look for the entrance at first and were a bit shy to go in. This souk has more than one entrance by the way. This souk is where the local housewives do their shopping. I never saw a butcher with the meat so fresh....it was running around under the counter. You could take it home dead or alive. I didn't went in too deep. I was feeling a bit sick from the first steps. The intense smell of fish....the chickens , the dirty floor. (I'm sorry , I have a really sensible scent) If you look sharp at the left down corner of the picture you can see a sheeps head - the blood has to come out. They are cooked in one piece. You can order them cooked on the 'Jemaa-el-fna' square.

Address: Av. Houmman el Fetouaki

Musee de Marrakech

Source: Marrakesh Things to Do by mafi_moya; Mar 14, 2004

Description: Even without the interesting displays the museum would be well worth a look as it's contained in beautiful 19th century Mnebhi Palace, complete with fountains in the covered courtyard and colourful tiled zellij mosaics on the walls. The golden colour scheme and glass dome roof make it distinctive from most other riads. After independence the palace became Marrakech's first school for girls and only became a museum in 1997. Displays of paintings, photos, textiles and other artworks are housed in halls leading off from the central courtyard. The old hammam (baths) and kitchen are also used for exhibitions. If you're tired after a long day sightseeing then this is a wonderfully relaxed and cool place to chill out and you can slump into the big comfy chairs and watch a video about the city. There's also a very nice terrace cafe and a souvenir shop with some great books.

Directions: The museum is on Place Ben Youssef, at the north end of the Djemaa el Fna souks. It's right by the Ben Youssef Medersa and mosque.

The Mellah

Source: Marrakesh Things to Do by Bigjones; Dec 11, 2003

Description: The old Jewish district in Marrakesh. Most of the people living there now are Muslims. The atmosphere is a bit different than in the rest of the city. The streets are narrower, the buildings seem higher and very crowded reflecting the conditions of many Jews who lived there until the 60's. There are still synagogues there but the one you can visit doesn't worth it (see Tourist traps). This district is always lively thanks to the kids playing on the street. But be carefull, most of them already received money or other things from tourists and won't let you go until you give them something. But I don't know if it's a solution to give them something because they will always ask for more. Think of the tourists who will come after you ;-) You'll see that some kids are only nice when they expect something and they insult you if you don't give anything.

Address: Near place des Ferblantiers

The excursion

Source: Marrakesh Things to Do by Cool-123; Feb 25, 2003

Description: I joined a 3 days excursion from the Ah Lee hotel which is in the town centre. It will take you to see the landscape and have a camel trip to the desert. We had a night in the desert. At the beginning, you can't take much stuff with you because you will take the camel not by car. We left our luggage in the house. I suggest you bring with your jacket because it is cold at night. Also, your camera with enough films. We had dinner in the camp site. Somebody will prepare the hot dishes and serve with bread. Then you have to think about where to sleep. You can either sleep inside the tent or outside it. I slept outside the tent so that I can see thousand of stars on the sky. On the next day morning, I got up around at five to see the sun rise. It is fantastic. Then we will take the camel back to the house and had breakfast. The places we had been to: Ait Benhaddon, Ouarzazate, Vallee du Draa, Zagora, Gorges du Todra, Gorges Du Dades, Vallee du Dades

Short Hike in the Atlas Mountains

Source: Marrakesh Things to Do by Iolarwood; Apr 24, 2005

Description: If you fancy a short active break out of Marrakech, a trip up the Ourika Valley to Setti Fatma with a mountain hike from the village up to the cascades above is very enjoyable and can easily be managed in a day trip. We travelled up by Grand Taxi and hired a guide - and got stung on both, I think. From later enquiries, I'd say you can get a taxi from Bab Rob (appropriate name!) outside Marrakech to Setti Fatma and the return trip 4 hours later for around 450 dirhams for up to 4 people (the locals pay 20 dirhams oneway and travel 6 to a taxi). A guide for 4 hours for around 200 dirhams. In both cases, you'll have to argue the price down to this.

Address: Take a petit taxi to Bab Rob

Directions: In the Atlas Mountains about 50 kms south of Marrakech

Your Notes: