

VANTAGE

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Tides of Change

Catwalk trends to put a spring in your step

In Focus

David Bailey on life behind the lens

Heart & Sole

Manolo Blahnik's love affair with London



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Travel news

By Amelia Mayes

HOTSPOT

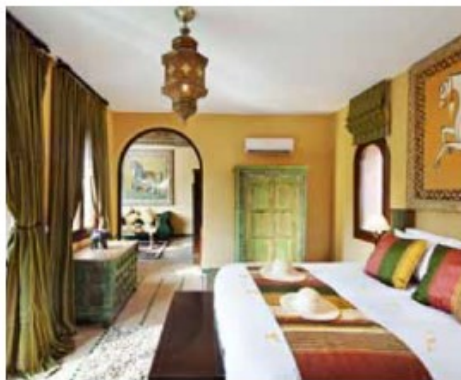
Marrakech

Shop for exotic spices in the souks, be entranced by snake charmers and tarot card readers in Jemaa el-Fna square, or get lost in the maze-like medina of this colourful city

WHY Famous for its bustling markets and lively culture, Marrakech promises an abundance of exotic sights, sounds and smells. Whether you head off the beaten path to go trekking in the Atlas Mountains, or end up bartering with street vendors inside the ancient medina walls, Marrakech's diversity will keep you on your toes. Before the ferocious desert heat of the summer sends thermometers soaring, the sunny but temperate spring climate is perfect for those looking to explore without having to the run for shade in the covered souks. Make sure you pay a visit to Jardin Majorelle, the beautiful oasis once owned by Yves Saint Laurent, to relax under its vibrant primary coloured archways filled with exotic species of plants.

STAY Situated at the foothills of the Atlas Mountains, the Kasbah Tamador hotel sits in a lush valley, surrounded by stunning views towards Jebel Toubkal, North Africa's highest peak. Inside you'll find just 27 rooms and suites, including nine luxury Berber tents, each adorned with an exquisite range of Indian, Arabian and Far Eastern artefacts. Tense tourists can take a trip to the Asounfou Spa and Hammam to indulge in holistic treatments, while foodies can discover new delicacies at the hotel's restaurant, Kanoun. There are also peaceful gardens for strolling in, a roof terrace and two beautiful pools from which to admire the breathtaking scenery, with a fresh mint tea in hand.

From £445 a night, kasbamtamadot.virgin.com



Bay watch

Enjoy the views of Vicomté bay, Solidor bay and the ramparts of Saint-Malo from the Aquarium Terrace at Brittany's latest opening, Castelbrac. The hotel's 25 rooms and suites are peppered with vibrant, retro prints, and are all pointed towards the sea, which supplies much of the produce for the in-house restaurant. Le Pourquoi Pas has swiftly become a foodie destination since the hotel opened quietly to the local market last summer. Chef Julien Hennot works with the best producers in the region, to offer simple, exquisitely presented dishes, served in a beautiful light-filled dining room overlooking the harbour.

Rooms from £215 a night, castelbrac.com



Baroque and roll

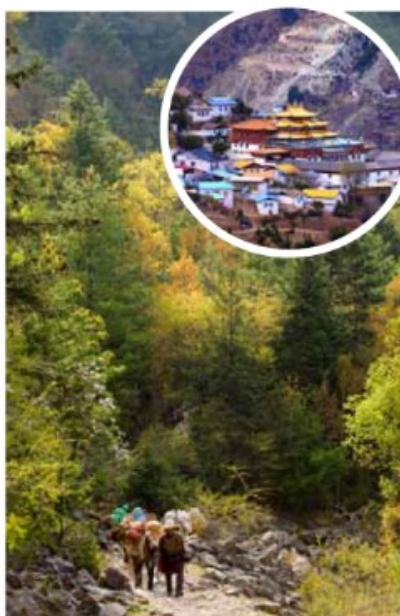
With its ancient whitewashed hill towns, stone trulli huts and miles of coastline along the heel of Italy, rustic Puglia has plenty to offer those looking to escape from it all. Masseria Trapanà, a beautiful 16th century house just outside the town of Lecce, is set in 60 hectares of olive groves. The nine-suite bolthole, made from Tufo and Pietra Leccese stone, has been restored to its former glory with vaulted ceilings, frescoes and tranquil gardens filled with orange, lemon and pomegranate trees. Just a ten minute drive from the Adriatic coast, Masseria Trapanà has partnered with a number of exclusive beach clubs; while back on site, cooking classes will be introduced later in the year, as well as Hatha yoga, in-room massages and reflexology.

From £284 for a Garden Room trapana.com

Perfect blend

Oenophiles have long sought out the vineyards of Bordeaux, Napa and Cape Town on pilgrimages to satisfy their palates. Now those who prefer their tipples of the oolong, lapsang souchong or jasmine variety can take their taste buds on a journey of discovery too. LUX® Tea Horse Road Benzilan is located in a mountainous valley on an ancient trade route through the provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan and Tibet. For tea-totallers it's also the ideal location for exploring the sacred glaciers of the Meili Snow Mountain found nearby. Relaxation is high on the agenda at the traditional Tibetan-style retreat: meditate with the in-house master, join local monks for their daily chant, or try your hand at traditional handicrafts.

From £95 a night, luxresorts.com



Spring into action

SHORT HAUL

Fitness on demand

Villa specialist and concierge service Dynamic Lives is giving clients the opportunity to create their own health retreat in Ibiza. Dubbed the 'DIY detox', guests can choose to stay in modern apartments or 100-acre vineyard estates and request personal trainers, swimming instructors and yoga teachers. On the relaxation front, meditation gurus are available while beauty buffs aren't neglected either, with the offer of collagen-boosting facials and anti-ageing skin peels. On the dietary side, chefs are on hand to whip up clean-eating and vegan regimes.

Villas from £7,000 a week dynamiclives.com



LONG HAUL

Alive and kicking

In a country of luxurious hotels Panacea has held its own. The resort in Koh Samui is known for its enormous villas that each come with ten staff, tropical gardens and a private swimming pool. Panacea takes its name from the Greek goddess of healing, and it has just launched a Retreat of Champions. The five-day fitness package is dedicated to Muay Thai and kickboxing; guests can train on a hilltop overlooking the Gulf of Samui, or in the two main stadiums designed for the ancient martial art.

Package from £751 panaceasamui.com

