



Bolthole

In the land of jagged mountains and market hagglers, we find the most peaceful corner in the world, by **Natasha Paulini**

TIGMI, TAGADERT, MOROCCO

Why: Clear blue skies, amazing food and temps of a perfect 25°C every day – who wants to wait for London to groan slowly into summer gear? Tigmi (“my house”) dates back to 1840 when it was built for the local *kadi* or judge and lies 15 miles south of the city on the brow of the Berber hamlet Tagadert on the Haouz plain.

Retreat: Don’t let the exterior fool you. As with so many North African dwellings, the breathtaking features lie inside the burn-sienna mud walls – warren-like corridors leading to quiet arches, sunlit alcoves, cascading flowers and cool, covered walkways. Testament to owner Julian Robbins is his commitment to local workmanship. Traditional building methods were employed in the hotel’s



conversion: original features such as the wooden herringbone patterned ceilings are carefully conserved, while wall tapestries created by an on-site weaver hang on every wall.

Relax: Sun-worshippers can lounge-hop between two terraced pools, one quiet and shaded by orange trees; the other offering views of both olive-tree dotted plains and snow-capped peaks. Tigmi also boasts a new spa, with all the usual body-beautiful suspects on offer, but make time for a hammam. Strip down to just bikini bottoms in the heated tiled room and let Karima lather you up with black soft soap before scouring away with a glove and bathing you in a warm pool. It is relaxing, in an abrasive sort of way, but rest assured you will never feel so clean or smooth in your life.

Venture out: A complimentary minibus trundles day-trippers down to Marrakech to the famous Jemaa el Fna square, its labyrinthine alleyways of market stalls and their brazen holders. For those looking further afield, the Gnaoua festival in Essaouira on the coast (100 miles west of Marrakech) is a melting pot of music and African magic, and an absolute must-see.

Dine: Options abound. Tigmi’s flexibility and cater-to-every-whim staff is what sets this resort apart from others, and this is most evident when hunger pangs descend. Breakfast is held in the dining room, arched windows flooding the space with light. If the weather is deemed mild enough, you’ll find the morning’s spread on a roof turret – an al fresco breakfast with



spectacular views is our idea of a heavenly wake-up call. Lunch is at your leisure (order the Berber burger: it’s not what you expect, but totally delicious), however chef Brahim’s dinner is where Tigmi excels. Each night is a different three-course traditional Moroccan feast – the first night’s crisp fish *pastilla* parcels were amazing – with a rotating menu of steaming tagines as mains. On mild nights, enjoy your Moroccan feast by candlelit on the terrace under about a zillion stars.

What’s stopping you? Morocco is a mere four hours away, so not much. Flights start at £108 to Marrakech flying Ryanair (at time of print), and Tagadert is just 15 miles from the capital.

How much? A standard room in medium season is 1,900 Moroccan dirhams (around £150) on a half-board basis. tigmi.com