

Midnight at the oasis

Juliet Kinsman | August 18, 2006

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THERE is no patch of the globe more deserving of the adjective exotic and now Morocco has the boutique hotels to match. Many riads -- traditional Moroccan houses with an interior courtyard -- have become stylish hotels.



Midas touch: Dar les Cigognes, a haven for romance

Owners use materials such as tadelakt, the ubiquitous smooth stucco, in pale pinks through to dark chocolates, often mixed with wrought-iron latticework and colourful zellij mosaics. Add luxurious fabrics, mountains of cushions, and orange blossom, and the allure of the country's lodgings is unrivalled.

CARAVANSERAI, PALMERAIE

Hip and utterly Moroccan, this retreat on the edge of a Berber village, olive groves and desert, is an example of the simplicity of form that makes structures here so special. The tadelakt lends itself perfectly to the sprawling layout, incorporating cushion-festooned terraces, hammam and indoor plunge pool. From \$380.

Best room: The Pool suite is like a private apartment, with lounge, circular boudoir and party-sized terrace.

Best meal: Don't blanch at the word "buffet"; here it means luscious banquets at breakfast and lunch.

www.caravanserai.com

DAR LES CIGOGNES, MEDINA

Charles Boccara, the Parisian architect responsible for some of this city's most chic retreats, has applied his Midas touch to a 17th-century merchant's home opposite the Royal Palace, transforming it into a boutique bolthole ripe to lure couples. From \$231.

Best room: Lovers of four-posters should pick the ruby-hued Harem, or the palace-view Silver Deluxe.

Best meal: Learn to cook like a local, thanks to a pre-dinner tutorial in making the perfect couscous.

www.lescigognes.com

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