

*Spa report*

*Dar Les Cigognes, Marrakech, Morocco*



ROOMS are priced from €190 per night for bed and breakfast, excluding taxes. Marrakech is a three-hour flight from Ireland and the hotel is a ten-minute drive from the airport. To book, visit [www.lescigognes.com](http://www.lescigognes.com)

**Luxury for money**

A SMALL boutique hotel with 11 bedrooms, each decorated in a modern Moorish style. The African sitting room, library and numerous 'bhous' (open-air living spaces) provide plenty of places to relax. The pretty roof terraces are overflowing with flowers and have spectacular views of the city and the Atlas Mountains.

excellent good not good

**The wow factor**

IT'S hard to beat the exotic appeal of Marrakech. Dar Les Cigognes, named House Of Storks after the huge birds that nest precariously on the towers of the royal palace opposite, is perfectly located to visit the historic sites and to enjoy the buzz of the ancient kasbah and the bustling souks.

excellent good not good

**Slim or sin?**

WITH an excellent chef who even gives cooking lessons to interested guests, it is hard not to sin. This is the place to try some Moroccan specialities, either served in the cosy restaurant just off the lantern-lit courtyard or under the stars on the roof terrace. Mediterranean cuisine is also available and everything is made with fresh ingredients.

slim..... sin

**Pamper rating**

THE hamman, a traditional Moroccan steam room, and spa are for the exclusive use of hotel guests and are an ideal antidote to a day of sightseeing or shopping. It is difficult not to feel like a queen as you sit in the red marble room having a 'beldi' rubdown with black soap and follow it with a long soak in the spa bath. Finish off with a massage in the beautiful treatment room.

excellent good not good

**And for the other half?**

IN THE winter, skiing is just 45 minutes away. Golf, horse riding, quad biking, balloon trips, camel rides or a helicopter excursion over the desert can all be arranged through the hotel.

excellent good not good

**Staff attentiveness**

A GREAT team of friendly staff make you feel welcome from the moment you step into the hotel. There is always someone on hand to bring a traditional mint tea with home-made pastries or a freshly-squeezed fruit juice. If you prefer hassle-free sightseeing, the hotel can arrange carefully selected professional guides.

excellent good not good

**Range of treatments**

EXCLUSIVE to residents of the hotel, the range of treatments is limited, but personal with two in-house professionals. You can add a herbal body wrap or special clay hair mask to the hamman experience. Manicure, pedicure, facials, waxing and henna tattoos are all available in addition to a variety of massages.

excellent good not good

**With hundreds of sites to choose from, the internet is now the best place for beauty exclusives says KAY MONTANO**

**F**INALLY I've succumbed to the idea of shopping online. I know I sound a bit behind the times, but I've always felt that part of the pleasure of treating yourself to a new lipstick or skin product is all about that unexpected, indulgent find that you pick up on your way to buy something far more practical.

The simplicity of shopping online to buy mundane items like beds, fridges and food staples — and avoiding the soulless-ness of retail outlets in the process — makes a lot of sense, but surely beauty products require a more appealing environment?

Well, just to prove me wrong, it seems that online beauty sites are becoming the hottest boutiques on the internet.

I recently worked on images for Zuneta.com, the latest beauty 'e-tailer' which, in the words of its founder Zu Rafelet, is 'a portal to help women understand products'.

Zuneta.com is a cross between a magazine, a beauty boutique and an online 'clinic' and this is what makes it a good home for hot, yet hard-to-find brands. Top sellers include Butter London's formaldehyde-free nail products (priced from €13), the Becca make-up range, and the first ever range by the Vogue cover queen of nail technicians — Marian Newman.

Clicking on to the Chanel.com beauty website takes you to the cyber space home of Chanel, an ultra-chic, seductive website with the very latest make-up and fragrance collection.

No surprise there. But I also noticed an array of items that I've never seen in the stores, such as an essential make-up case and a glamorous brush kit, plus there are easy-to-follow video clips on how to apply make-up.

Another interesting aspect of buying from beauty websites is being able to



Picture: SCOPE FEATURES

**WEB OF BEAUTY**

support smaller, natural skincare companies, such as Rhodestoheaven.com, that rely on mail order.

Currently only available at stores in London, this high quality skincare brand was created using no parabens, petrochemicals or synthetic perfumes.

But don't be fooled by the simple packaging, these are luxurious products. The evaporating effects of heating on the skin makes the All In One Lip Plumper just what we need right now, while the Rose Facial Wash is gentle and lasts for ever because no cheap bulking agents are used to dilute the formula.



If, like me, you love to peruse the wares of fancy department stores, but cannot bear to be stalked by hard-selling, overly made-up staff, then Cultbeauty.co.uk is the site for you.

Often referred to as the 'Net-a-porter' of beauty websites due to its abundance of best brands, this site has everything an insider uses. From cult status bronzing powders (Nars Laguna, €25) to silk pillows by Silkskin (to stop morning facial creases!) to the A-listers' favourite pick-me-up, Emergen-C, it has the lot.

But be warned, even cyberspace has queues — there is currently a waiting list for hot new bespoke perfume Boadicea The Victorious (€500). If that's the case, you can use Beautie to find out which stores stock your favourite brands and do it the old-fashioned way.

**CATWALK CATCH-UP**

**I SPENT** Paris Fashion Week, working backstage at the shows. So what are key looks to keep an eye out for?

**RED MOUTHS** Stained lips, smoky eye combo at Nina Ricci; painted on doll-style with nothing else at A.F. Vandervorst.

**GHOST-CHIC** Models at Anne Valerie Hash strode the runways with bleached-out faces, void of colour. At Bruno Pieters, the girls' pale faces were starkly

drawn with black eyebrows. The starkest faces were at Rick Owens, where the models were positively Bergman-esque.

**HEALTHY NATURAL** There was some sign of life at Givenchy and Balmain, as healthy glowing skin complemented the rock chick collections.

**FUTURISTIC** Faces with sharp eyeliner at Karl Lagerfeld and contoured faces with whitened out eyebrows at Balenciaga.

