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WINE ENTHUSIAST

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MARRAKECH

The mysterious North African city of medieval fortresses and souks entrances visitors with fine wines and foods.

Marrakech delights all of the senses—its exotic sights, sounds and smells have been enchanting visitors for centuries. Perched at the top of Africa in Morocco, but halfway between Europe and Arabia in both geography and spirit, Marrakech is a stunning destination for lovers of wine, food and culture.

Lodging: You'll feel like a sultan the moment you pass through the gates of **Hotel La Mamounia** (mamounia.com). Just steps from the hustle and bustle of the Djemaa el-Fna marketplace, La Mamounia's manicured gardens, intricate architectural detail and impeccable service illustrates why it was the choice of Sir Winston Churchill and Elizabeth Taylor. Dine at Mamounia's eatery, Le Marocain, and ask Head Sommelier Manuel Schott to pair Moroccan wine with traditional or contemporary cuisine. To get away from it all, visit the **Four Seasons Resort Marrakech** (fourseasons.com), where 141 beautifully designed rooms and villas surround a centrally located pool, bar and alfresco dining complex. Chef Francesco Montano and Sommelier Federico Colombo pair classic Italian cuisine with Moroccan and international wine from the 200-bottle list.



Around Town: Marrakech's main square, **Djemaa el-Fna**, is the center of this bustling city. Pedestrians, bicycles, taxis, horse-drawn carriages and donkey carts swirl around you in choreographed precision, while snake charmers, date and dried-fig vendors, monkey handlers, and dentists—yes, dentists—vie for your attention. A few steps beyond the square, lose yourself in the shopping bliss of the **souk**. Embroidered fabrics, hand-knotted carpets, pottery, leather goods and exquisite metal lanterns can be had at a fraction of their cost stateside. After shopping, visit **Jardin Majorelle** (jardinmajorelle.com), restored by Pierre Bergé and Yves St. Laurent, for a cup of mint tea and a stroll. The Saadian Tombs, the final resting place of the former ruling Saadi dynasty, and the El Bahia Palace are must-sees for lovers of Moorish architecture.



La Sultana
Marrakech



For La Maison Arabe Marrakech's Chicke Tagine recipe, visit winemag.com/cmarrakech

Wine & Food: Many of Marrakech's finest restaurants are housed in *riads*, which are former mansions converted into boutique hotels hiding behind high walls. Cuisine here is an inventive combination of Moroccan and French. Don't miss a cooking class at **La Maison Arabe Marrakech** (lamaisonarabe.com). Not only will you learn some great new cooking techniques, but you'll sit down with your international classmates and enjoy your delicious self-cooked lunch. If you arrive at **La Sultana Marrakech Restaurant** (lasultanamarrakech.com) around sunset, make sure to have an apéritif on the panoramic rooftop bar. The smell of fresh-baked bread and the sound of the muezzin calling the faithful to prayer are unforgettable. Both La Sultana and La Maison Arabe offer stunning accommodations within the medina. Visit Pierre Balmain's former riad, which houses **Dar Moha Restaurant** (darmoha.ma), and reserve a poolside table to start your romantic evening. Ask for Le Ferme Rouge's 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah or Thalvin's S de Siroua 2010 Chardonnay, two examples of fine Moroccan wine. A few hours by car will bring you to several wineries worth a visit, including Domaine des Ouled Thaleb and Domaine du Val D'Argan. Many employ French-trained winemakers who make quality wine in this unique terroir—not an easy feat in a country with vineyards situated between the Mediterranean Sea, Atlantic Ocean and Sahara Desert. —MIKE DESIMONE & JEFF JENSSEN

Cooking class at
La Maison Arabe
Marrakech

