



JUSS LIKE THAT!

For some, Morocco may conjure images of Sam's Bar, Tommy Cooper and Rommel-inspired midnight flight, but for others it's about something else. *Kasha Van Sant* sinks into the heart of Fez

It is dusty and warm, and the weather despite having been morose has turned for the better. Like a gaggle of geese, weather patterns assimilate for days on end, or so the trusty guide Hassan informs us. "Now we have a few days of sunshine to enjoy." I am glad to hear it as I put my bag down in the cool hospitable foyer of Sofitel Palais Jamai, nestled in the old town of Fez. Hassan insists upon the fortune of this locale, right on the cusp of the Medina or old citadel. Apart from being fair game for the hawkers who can smell 'wealthy tourists' as they 'clack-clack' down the labyrinthine cobbled streets, this is *the* place to be.

After marvelling at what should be an NBA approved bed, from the balcony I gaze wistfully at the charcoal fires from the potteries, swirling upwards into the dusky sky and anticipate the call to prayer.

Without stating the obvious Fez is not Marrakesh, nor is it Tangiers or Casablanca. It slips under the radar and therein lies its charm. Relatively calm, it is a gemstone. The weary crew have much to see and we dine within the hotel after drinks in the saloon bar. Our very own Sam tinkling the ivories and motioning

to the barman for more drinks. Dinner is tagine and vegetables or bastilla - sweet pigeon or quail pastry or such variants. The Sofitel Palais Jamai may not know it but it has struck a blow for dying taste buds everywhere, as I unveil a fish tagine.

The next day spells a sightseeing tour through the ancient Medina. Adorned in his white djellaba, Hassan navigates us away from the cries of "beautiful ladies", to the Royal Palace, the old Jewish Quarter and the Synagogue complete with its weathered caretaker and ancient bridal cleansing pool. The Bou Inania Medersa mosque with its intricate woodwork and lunch in the ice cool grandeur of the Palais Mnebhi are the perfect antidote to the sun. A visit to the tanneries, seeing the wooden crafts at the Fondouk el-Nejjarine follows. If by day one you haven't tired of the repetitive cuisine, indulge in more vegetarian starters at the divine Riad Maison Bleue, with its stunning architecture and its bulging visitor's book, sit back on sumptuous cushions and rouse yourself into contemplating the trip back home... ■

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From top: Fez cityscape, Palais Mokri, Marché du Mellah

Must have accessory:

Yarok Chill After sun for those sun parched locks. Perfect if you are contemplating a trip to the hammam or a soak in the supersized Sofitel Palais Jamais bath tubs. Available from www.puresha.com

