

Frivate world
Ezzahra, Marrakech

Set in an oasis outside the red walls of the bustling medina, life happens in dreamy slow motion at this romantic Moroccan villa

Words by Delilah Khomo

Named after the orange groves that encircle it, Ezzahra is a fantasy villa straight out of Arabian Nights. A retreat as languid and sultry as the clouds of rose blossom that float on the breeze, here time is measured by the steady thud of oranges as they fall from the branches, or the slow whip-whip of the ceiling fans on the vast veranda, the villa's hub. Built by the Gibraltarian hotelier Brian Callaghan, who has been coming to Marrakech since its bohemian '60s heyday, every detail bespeaks a passion for Moroccan arts and culture, from the refined orientalist decorative detail to the North African specialties such as pastilla au lait and fish tagine. Seven spacious bedrooms are built around a central courtyard, while a separate villa, Alkhozama, is set amid lavender hedges, with one bedroom opening out onto its own 40-foot pool. Behind its high walls, the pace of life at Ezzahra is as slow as that of the tortoises who colonize its hedges. Yet it is also a place to party, with a Berber tent seating 40 being the most sensational backdrop complete with fire-eaters and dancers. With low cushions and brass tables, the tent overlooks a pool lit by hundreds of lanterns at night. Up to 17 staff maintain the estate, including three in the hammam and spa, where you can enjoy rhassoul clay treatments, rejuvenating black-soap scrubs and massages on a whim.

Ezzahra sleeps 14, from £2,064 per person per week; Alkhozama sleeps four, from £2,625 per person per week. Meals, treatments, transfers and more are included; ezzahra-morocco.com; email: brian@caletahotel.gi

On PORTER's to-do list

HEAD to the roof terrace for a sundowner shaken by butler Mohammed, who crafted his skills at Marrakech institution La Mamounia. SHOP at the famed interiors store Mustapha Blaoui for opulent brocades, lanterns and Moroccan treasures like those that adorn Ezzahra's walls. PLAY an outdoor game of chess on the life-size, *Alice in Wonderland*-style checkerboard. BOOK a table at nearby Beldi Country Club for a change of scene and a beach-club vibe around the pool

(beldicountryclub.com). ENJOY a weekend's hiking in the romantic epic wilderness of nearby Atlas. Natural High Safaris (naturalhighsafaris.com) will source the best guides, provide comfortable circus-style campaign tents and incredible feasts.



