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## 48 Hours in Marrakech

Spending a weekend in the sun-dappled ochre corners of Marrakech, with its colourful spices, leather slippers, twinkling lanterns and pottery tangines, is possibly one of the best gifts you could give to yourself.

(<https://www.luxos.com/>)by Lavinia Pisani 16 May 2018

**W**ith a 2-3 hour flight from most European cities, the former imperial city is both accessible and exotic. Whether for a short gateway, or a longer road-trip exploring snow-capped Atlas Mountains, Atlantic Ocean or Sahara Desert, to land in the Red City will be a delight for all senses.

Reaching the walled Medina, from the recently inaugurated Marrakech Menara Airport, is simple. If you don't feel like testing your negotiation skills right away with a cab driver, arrange a pick-up with the hotel; especially if you are staying in a riad nestled in one of the mazelike alleys in the historical centre. Once settled in, head to Jemaa el-Fnaa and start to get acquainted with the rhythms.



Part of the UNESCO World Heritage site since 1985, the square is world-famous as a neuralgic point for tradesmen, snake charmers and musicians. Today, it still represents the core of the charming chaos that is typical of Marrakech.

Before walking in the narrow and winding streets of the Souks, head to Café France rooftop for a cup of mint-tee or light lunch. After having observed the dynamism of the main square, enter the hallowed confines of the overwhelming, but beautiful, souks.

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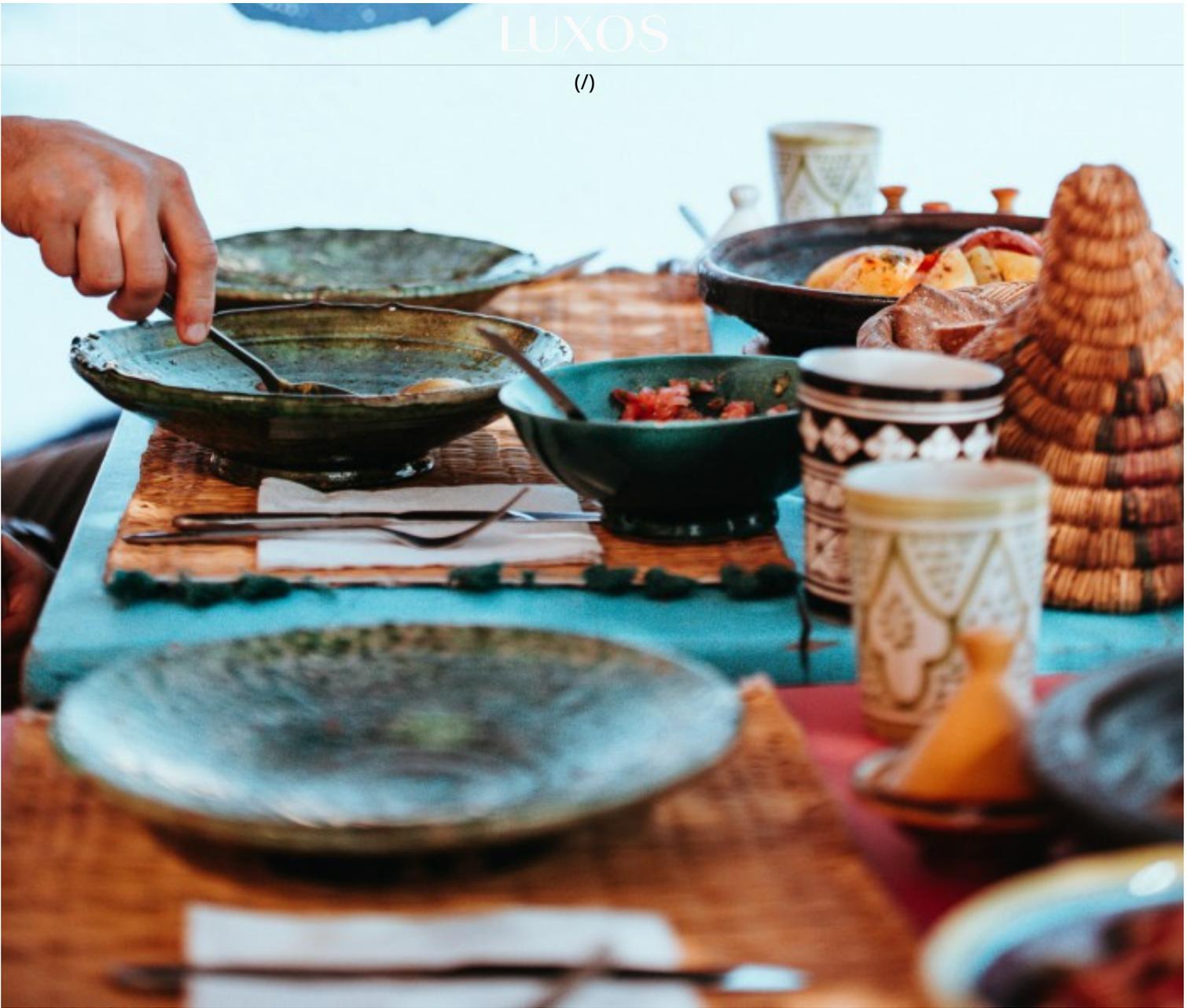


The Souks, the districts into which the city centre is subdivided, are organized based on the type of product that is produced and sold by locals. Among the endless offer of fabrics, spices, olives, terracotta tagines, handmade rugs, wrought iron lanterns, jewellery, leather purses and slippers it will be impossible to leave with empty hands.

Moroccan vendors can be incredibly persuasive and without even noticing, you may end up in one of the tiny shops wanting to buy one thing, leaving with four. How did that happen? Well, that's part of the fun.



Savour the smell of spices, follow the colours and strut through the bamboo-covered souks. When you feel like re-emerging in Jemaa el-Fnaa, ask locals for directions or start walking towards the dome of the Koutoubia Mosque.

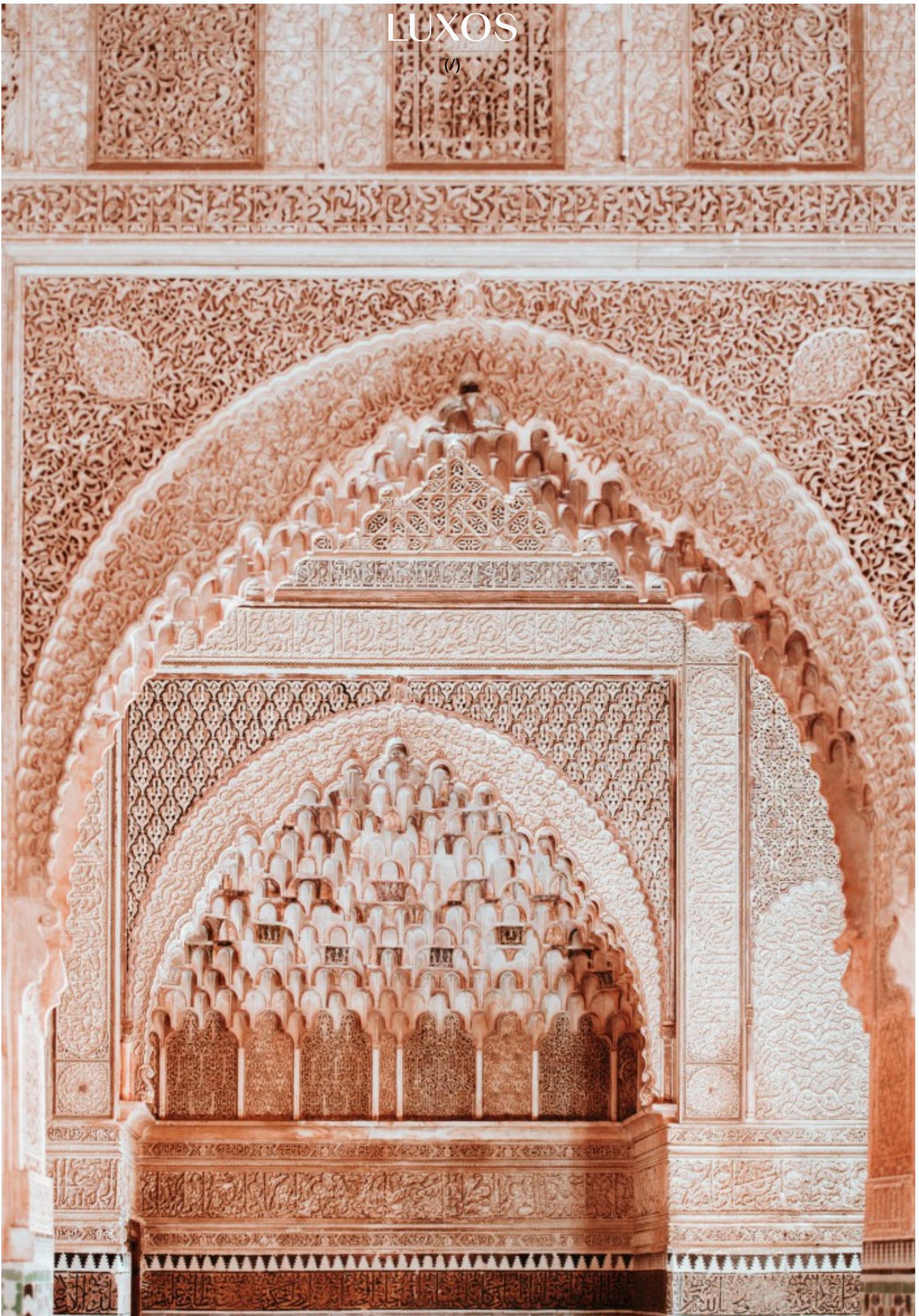


Built around 1150, the Koutoubia Mosque is the largest in the entire city. Situated less than 200 metres from the main square, its minaret is the oldest of 3 great Almohad minarets left standing in the world; it dominates the landscape with its 65 metres of exceptional beauty.

Before deciding to leave the souk, consider resting at a rooftop terrace of Le Jardin or The Nomad. After all that walking, your body will be grateful. If it is dinner time, look for the wooden-door of Ksar Es Saoussan to have an exclusive dinner inside of a lavish Moroccan house dating back to 1500, where the gardens and tiles in Marrakech are as famous as the souks. (Reservation is mandatory). Otherwise, if you are more of a street food kind of person, the characteristic food stalls in Jemaa el-Fnaa that emerge as the evening draws, will please you also.

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When in the heart of the Medina, El Bahia Palace is well worth a visit. The ornate 19th century palace is still used today by the Moroccan royal family, when visiting the city. Whereas the rest of the time, it is open to the public. The vast, intricately designed palace with 160 rooms and courtyards is a glorious example of the Alawite architecture, built between 1894 and 1900, for the concubines of Ahma Ibn Moussa. Another astonishing tile masterpiece is that of the Tombeaux Saadiens, the Sultan's mausoleum & cemetery gardens.

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Located in the Kasba residential district, walking around the fortified area is another experience worth seeking; especially when stopping at the Herboristerie Firdaous for quality Argan oil and lunch at Kasbah Café. While, less tiles and more fountains will be found at Jardin Majorelle.

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It took French painter Jacques Majorelle 40 years to create the enchanting garden that is so special to reach through a horse carriage ride from Jamaa el Fnaa. Inspired by an Islamic garden, featuring botanical species from around the world, the villa and the garden became renowned for its vivacious colors. In 1980, Yves Saint Laurent and his partner Pierre Bergé bought the Jardin Majorelle as a gift to the city.

Today, the villa hosts their memorial as well as the Berber Museum. Whereas at the corner of the same street stands the Yves Saint Laurent Museum with an inspiring collection of innovative sketches and moving garments.

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