

Folklore Fox

Atlas Kasbah Eco Lodge – Morocco

When I think of the perfect holiday, I imagine hazy, lazy days, drifting in and out of snoozing and basking with a book in the sunshine. Fresh, authentic foods with feasts that last hours. Tranquility, peace and a sense of wellbeing that leaves you fully relaxed and recovered and ready to head back to the stresses of home, work and normality.

I'm not really one for 'Party- Holidays' (after an unfortunate trip aged 17 which involved 9 girls, 3 prescriptions and Magaluf) so have made a vow to myself that every year, when the masses jump on-board an Easy-jet flight to a favoured Brit holiday destination, I will turn off my phone, email, wifi and take myself off in search of that little-bit-of-calm. And so far, no where has done that better than the Atlas Kasbah Eco Lodge in Morocco.

Perfectly perched in the High Atlas Mountains, just far enough from civilisation, nestles this idyllic family-run inn with values just as beautiful as the scenery. Rolling peaks of a dusty red, with the occasional olive tree, form the back-drop to the first Eco-friendly retreat in the Middle-Eastern sunshine. Fully self-sustained, the Atlas Kasbah grows its own produce on the surrounding acres, is powered by solar energy and provides jobs for the local Berber villagers. The owners, Helene and Hassan, are passionate about caring for the environment, but certainly not in an invasive way towards their guests. They recognise first and foremost that this is your holiday and go out of their way to make sure you have a good one! But hey, if you're reducing your carbon footprint and doing a little bit of good whilst relaxing in the sunshine, that can't be a bad thing right?!

The Kasbah is visually beautiful, as would be expected from Moroccan architecture. Stepping in through the solid dark-wood door you are warmly encompassed by a mosaic courtyard complete with fountains trickling from the walls and creeping flowers hugging the orange brick. Helene and Hassan not only have an eye for the environment but also for interior design! Billowing fabric of oranges and reds hang from the ceilings and perfectly frame the open windows. Traditional Berber clothing and jewellery make for authentic decoration and intricate lanterns hang dormant in the mid-day serenity. The infamous Moroccan authenticity flowed into our room, with a wooden four-poster bed framed with orange silk and Berber inscriptions delicately painted on the walls. A brass-frame sofa was set by the open window and scattered with beautifully embellished cushions. This is the perfect tranquil environment to relax and recuperate.

But over the breath-taking scenery and spell-binding interior, what stands out most when reflecting on our time at the Kasbah is the warm, welcoming staff who go out of their way (even in 42oC heat!) to make sure you have the most comfortable and enjoyable stay. Every morning, Brahim would have our table on the patio set for breakfast. With freshly squeezed juice, home-made peach, pumpkin, strawberry, beetroot jams, honey fresh from the bee-hives to be enjoyed with freshly baked flatbreads, breakfast would last a good hour as we sat in the quiet watching the rising sun spread its rays across the surrounding mountains. A perfect start to a lazy day relaxing on the terrace.

As the sun set, we would retreat to our room to lounge for an hour or so, reading or napping before dinner. Showering was an indulgence in the natural products provided my the Kasbah; olive soap and clay scrub which was kind to both our body and the environment. We would make our way down to the intimate dining room to enjoy the delicious home-cooked feasts. Three courses of traditional Moroccan Berber dishes made with organic ingredients and fresh produce. The Kasbah serves up a killer tagine, our favourite being a slow-cooked chicken seasoned with citrus fruits, olives, dried fruits and capers. With more freshly baked bread washed down with a variety of mint teas, we'd head to bed content with a full tummy and smug that we'd found such a perfect retreat.

If you're not content with just relaxing in the sunshine for days on end, the Kasbah offers cookery courses, day trips and pottery classes amongst other activities. The most we managed was to venture to the Hamman (a Moroccan steam bath with essential oils)!

The Atlas Kasbah is the most idyllic, tranquil haven to spend a week unwinding. It leaves you with a sense of wellbeing that, I believe, is the most important quality to take from a holiday. It's the kind of place you want to tell everyone about, but at the same time, keep secret for only you to enjoy...

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