

DIRECTORY

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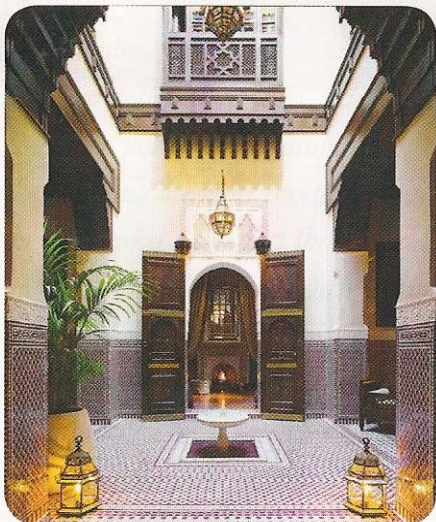


AHEAD BY A NECK

If any travel company might inspire non-riders to jump into jodhpurs it is the aptly-named In the Saddle. The British operator has just released its first book of riding holidays worldwide: a neat, pocket-sized volume detailing trips from family learn-to-ride weekends to month-long journeys in remote regions. Practical descriptions of each trip are accompanied by photographs that make one want to saddle-up instantly: cowboys on sun-drenched ranges, girls galloping on empty beaches, gauchos trundling across the golden Argentinian pampas. Holidays are not restricted to only the horse-mad; itineraries might include such activities as city excursions and swimming with dolphins. From £503, for a seven-night stay in France, excluding flights (01299 272 997, www.inthesaddle.com).

Gee up, giraffe Game spotting near Macatoo Camp in Botswana

MACATOO IN THE SADDLE



RIAD FIT FOR A ROYAL

When the King of Morocco, His Highness Mohammed VI, puts money behind a new hotel, you know it's going to be pretty luxurious. Which the Royal Mansour in Marrakesh certainly is. For a start, there are no "rooms". Accommodation consists entirely of 53 private riads, from spacious double apartments to small palaces, some with separate entrances to ensure total privacy. Staff pathways in the 3.5-hectare grounds are situated underground in tunnels, so waiters are neither seen nor heard (a bit of a shame, given that uniforms have all been made by Albert Oiknine, fashion designer to the Moroccan aristocracy).

The interiors of the riads are as rich and lavish as the private pools and bedouin tents outside: all silk-covered walls, tiled fireplaces and jewel-coloured throws and lamps. To top it all, menus are being supervised by the three-Michelin-starred chef Yannick Alléno, with food delivered to wherever guests desire: by one of the pools, in the two restaurants, or on the roof terraces of every riad, with views over the desert to the Atlas mountains.

The drawback? As ever, the cost. Suites are from £1,149 b&b a riad per night: the highest rate for accommodation in the medina. Alternative hotels for visitors wanting a five-star experience, but not necessarily their

own palace, might be the centrally sited La Mamounia (www.mamounia.com), recently given a theatrical makeover by Parisian designer Jacques Garcia, or the new Mandarin Oriental Jnan Rahma (www.mandarinoriental.com), set in 130 landscaped acres in the Palmeraie, due to open in the autumn.

A couple of tips: don't even think about going in high summer, when temperatures soar into the forties. And be prepared for the hordes of young women who will no doubt invade this year, following the release of the film *Sex and the City 2*, part of which was shot in the medina. Royal Mansour (00 212 529 808 080, www.royalmansour.com) opens on July 1.