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Reasons why Fès is our new favourite holiday destination

Marie Claire's Beauty and Style Director, Lisa Oxenham went souk-hopping in the centre of the undiscovered city of Fès and recharged her batteries at a lavish Givenchy Spa...

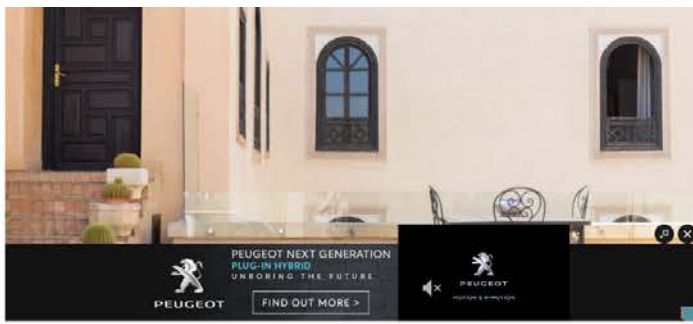
LISA OXENHAM
FEBRUARY 21, 2020 1:08 PM



Why go?

For a sense-engaging break spiced with the warmth and exoticism of Morocco. A 40-minute drive from the airport, **Riad Fès** offers elaborate, 'coffee-table book', 19th century interiors with panoramic roof-terrace views towering over the dense city, red earth and the Atlas Mountains. The French colonial complex is based around three courtyards decked with orange, lemon and bay trees, with a tranquil spa and an outdoor pool.



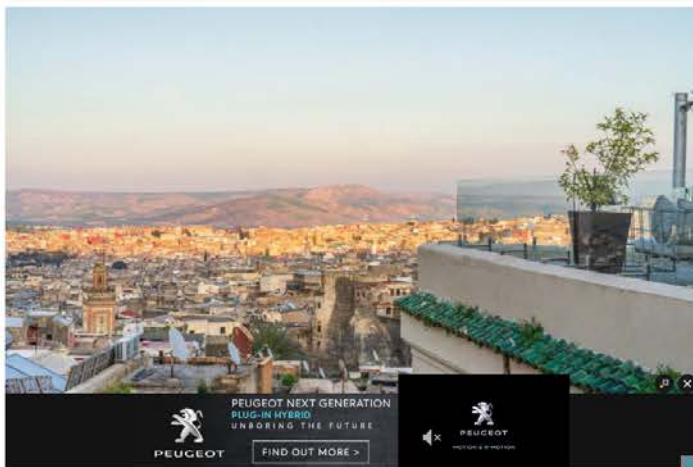


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When?

Fes is mostly a year-round destination. Spring and autumn sees the city at its best with guaranteed sunshine and perfect weather (days are warm, nights not too cold). At the height of summer daytime temperatures can reach a scorching 40°C and it's worth noting that shops and restaurants often close in the day during Ramadan (23 April – 22 May 2020). Winter is often warm and free of crowds, but there can be cloudy with rainy spells where temperatures drop dramatically at night and you'll need to wrap up.



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Stay at:

Riad Fès (Rooms from £190 www.riadfes.com.) has 15 rooms and 11 suites spread over three different courtyards (tip: try to bag one overlooking the spa – with beautifully carved doorways, hand-woven Berber rugs, massive beds with Egyptian cotton linen, large flat screen TVs, intricate tiling, carved plaster and beautiful furniture – you'll feel a bit more in the middle of things). Each room is intimate with a bath while the resort facilities include a pool area and roof terrace for outdoor relaxation. The estate is so well run and maintained, it's a welcome contrast to the frantic beeping of traffic in the centre of Fès, which isn't the cleanest city.

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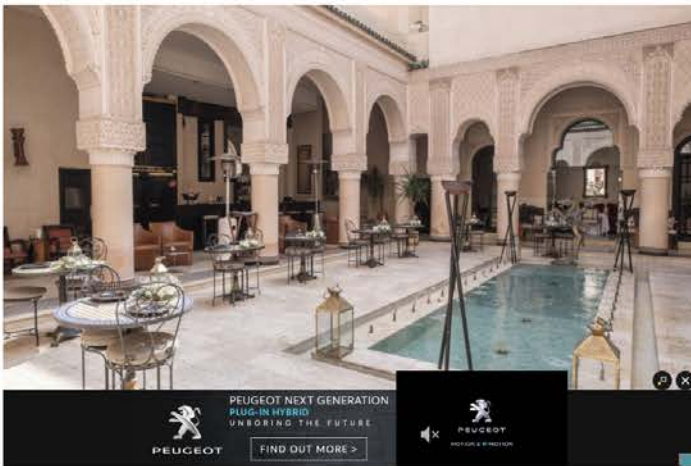
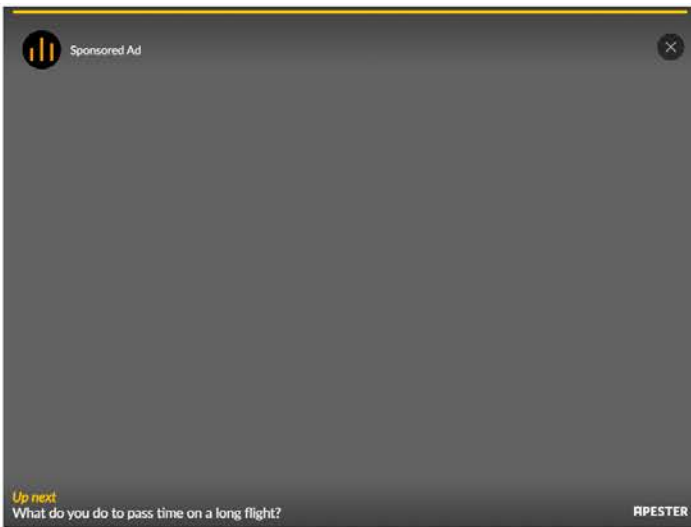
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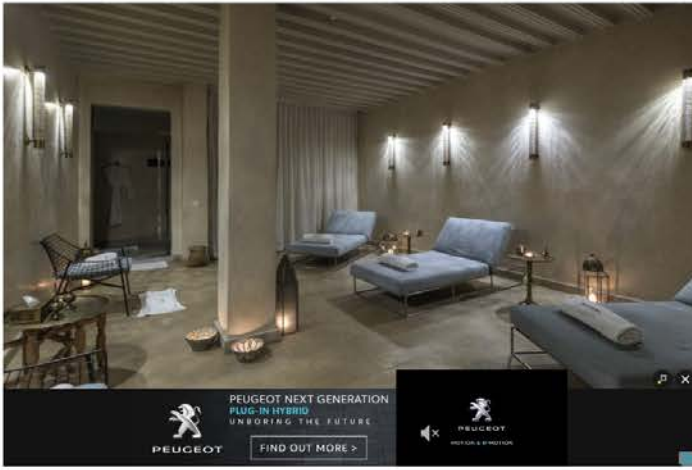


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You really must...

If you're looking for a cultured weekend retreat with sunshine then this is the place. The Riad is based in the centre of the ancient Medina so going out in search of treasures is a must. Close by in the [Hotel Sahrai](#) there's a blissfully hushed Givenchy [Spa](#) complete with hammams where no expense has been spared, from the intricately carved walls to the stone beds. The therapists deliver massages that are smooth, firm and steady (starting from 1000 MAD). I suggest going for a traditional hammam in the spa first to loosen up your body and melt away all the knots. The therapists are angelic and even multi-tasked to keep my daughter happy and content while I managed to relax.





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The recently refurbished Rias Fès Moroccan-restaurant served the perfect breakfast – a buffet-style feast of meats, cheeses, cakes and eggs. Grilled tomatoes and the freshly squeezed orange juice were particular favourites (being a creature of habit I asked for a **vegan** porridge and they didn't bat an eyelid, it was delicious). The traditional tagines for the evening meals were also delectable with spices and lemon, in an intimate and warm atmosphere.



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Bring home:

Good buys at the souks are aromatic Moroccan spice candles, great quality argan oil, carpets, tunics, hand-woven straw sun hats and rustic leather sandals. While brilliant for bargains, they can be a little daunting if uninitiated. Be prepared to haggle.

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