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THE TIMES SPA GUIDE

Palace Spa, Hotel Es Saadi, Marrakesh

A favourite among the Hollywood set, this hotel and spa is a luxurious haven offering some of the best treatments in the world

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Es Saadi is a grand hotel located just outside the medina in Marrakesh

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In a nutshell

Anyone who knows anything about beauty knows about the Palace Spa. This does not only mean beauty editors from the glossy magazines, but also the super-*soigné* Parisians who come here to relax, recharge and enjoy some of the best treatments in the world.

It's a large, well-established, state-of-the-art spa that is one of the big selling points for this grand hotel just outside the medina. It was built in the 1950s as a casino (which only adds to the old-school glamour of the place) and converted to a hotel in the 1970s.

The Palace is large, with a hydrotherapy pool, yoga studios and treatment rooms. It also houses the first Christian Dior Institut outside France. The hotel runs yoga retreats throughout the year — usually with Le Tigre, a fashionable French yoga club — but it can also organise yoga instruction for you whenever you like.



Stay in one of the villas in the hotel grounds

What's it like?

This is first and foremost a hotel, with a fabulous spa attached, which means that you can have a wellness break without being surrounded by healthier-than-thou types in towelling robes. The spa is grand scale with a large hydrotherapy pool, a hammam, saunas and steam rooms as well as a gym and yoga studio. You could spend a week or a long weekend (as I did) to suit your needs for detoxification, or just a reset and relax. You can have a health break that's as restrictive as you decide. I took the lead from the French yoga bunnies there at the same time as me and had a splash of red with dinner. It's all about balance here.



Relax in the hotel's vast, luscious gardens

The treatments

The array and standard of treatments available are pretty outstanding. People travel from all over the world for the Dior treatments and I met several repeat customers. The Palace's signature massage is tailored to your needs. I wanted the stress pummelled from my back (don't we all?) and my wish was granted. My favourite treatment, though, was the dreamy and soothing Micheline Arcier facial, a 50-minute French-style facial (which means *lots* of skin-lifting massage) using the aromatherapy oils best suited to my skin.

Who goes?

This is one of Marrakesh's most well-established luxury hotels and is well-known among the Hollywood set. Leonardo DiCaprio has stayed in one of the beautiful villas in the grounds, as has Martin Scorsese. Tom Hiddleston spent quite some time here, filming the "Cairo" hotel scenes for *The Night Manager*.



The rooms are all large, high-ceilinged and airy

What are the rooms like?

The suites overlook the hotel's vast, luscious gardens. From some of the balconies, you can just about see the Atlas Mountains in the distance. The rooms are all large, high-ceilinged and airy, decorated with earthy colours and only subtly Morocco-influenced in design. There is also a handful of villas and bungalows in the grounds.



The chef at La Cour des Lions creates clever twists on Moroccan classics

What is the food like?

You can enjoy fine and delicious food at La Cour des Lions, the hotel's top-floor, top-notch dining option, where the chef, Fatéma Hal, creates her clever twists on Moroccan classics. Or there's Lagon & Jardin, the healthy option, with all the superfoods and organic goodness you can imagine. However, it was the breakfasts that stood out for me. Es Saadi is home to the breakfast buffet of my dreams, with every type of nut, grain, pulse, juice and fruit imaginable. As well as all the marmalades, jams and honeys on earth. I developed an addiction to warm Moroccan pancakes spread with argan oil nut butter (more moreish than it sounds) and local honey. Or you can have a fry-up – also delicious.

The lowdown

Book through Classic Collection Holidays (0800 2949323; classic-collection.co.uk), which offers three nights at Es Saadi Palace, Marrakesh from £866 B&B, or seven nights from £1,272pp B&B. Price is based on two adults sharing a junior suite, and includes return flights from London Gatwick (other UK departure airports available) to Marrakesh and private transfers.