

Kasbah du Toubkal
Telegraph Online
16 January 2026

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Kasbah du Toubkal

Imlil, Morocco



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8
/10

Telegraph expert rating

"This hilltop house-turned-hotel – way up in the Atlas Mountains – is reached on foot from the village of Imlil, and those who make the effort are rewarded with some of North Africa's best views. Not only is Kasbah du Toubkal a pioneer of responsible tourism, it also served as Martin Scorsese's "Himalayan" location for *Kundun*. Stays here script a story well worth telling."

Telegraph Review



Kerry Smith
Travel writer

14 January 2026 3:38pm GMT

9
/10

Location

Kasbah du Toubkal sits above the Berber village of Imlil and beneath North Africa's highest peak, Mount Toubkal, and the journey to reach it is part of the stay. After a 90-minute drive from Marrakech, porters strapped my luggage on top of sure-footed mules for the 20-minute uphill walk to the hotel.

The walled kasbah crowns the hillside, overlooking terraced valleys of juniper, walnut and apple trees, with dried riverbeds ribboned with green. Sir Richard Branson's Kasbah Tamadot lies down the road, but the views here are better.

8/10

Style and Character

Originally built in the 1930s as a summer house for a local chief, the kasbah is an imposing building with thick sandstone walls, square turrets and a rugged mountain backdrop. Owner Mike McHugo first arrived in the Atlas Mountains in 1972 and later bought the property with his brother to run an outward-bound school programme. Not long after opening as a hotel, the general manager of Marrakech's Amanjena famously called to enquire about hiring the roof terrace: Sting's daughter, having stayed on a school trip, had declared it the only place suitable for her father's 50th birthday.



Expect thick sandstone walls, square turrets and a rugged mountain backdrop at Kasbah du Toubkal

Today, the style is purposeful: stone walls, tiled floors, carved wooden doors, coloured rugs and wide terraces designed for sitting and looking out. Close to the epicentre of the September 2023 earthquake, the original building was destroyed and subsequently rebuilt. Africa's highest perched infinity pool was added at this point, improbably engineered, given that its materials were hauled up by mule and man.

There's a courtyard emblazoned with blossoms, and a roof terrace with vistas over the Ait Souka Valley. It's a hotel that operates without the usual luxury shorthand — no spa menus, no cocktail lists. Instead, it's expressed through space, silence and the team's knowledge of the mountains.



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8 /10 Service and Facilities

This is a mountain stronghold – a place shaped by the rust-red desert landscape, and the service is authentic, practical and deeply knowledgeable. Guides are local — my guide had grown up in nearby Asni — and treks are adjusted daily according to the weather and your energy levels. Facilities are intentionally limited, though they've been well-judged. The infinity pool is set dramatically against the mountains, there's a traditional Berber-style hammam, and chess tables for guests to enjoy.

For those wanting to head further into the mountains (or even climb Mount Toubkal), the Kasbah runs a small network of simple trekking lodges in the surrounding valleys, allowing guests to trek for one or two nights without camping. The logistics are quietly impressive – luggage is transferred overnight by mule and Berber meals are cooked en route – reinforcing the sense that this is a place run by people who know these mountains intimately. A small charge added to each stay supports local projects, including Education For All – an initiative that funds secondary education for local girls.

✓ Laundry

✓ Parking

✓ Pool

✓ Restaurant

✓ Steam room/hammam

✓ Wi-Fi

8/10 Rooms

Deluxe rooms are spacious, simple and stylish with bamboo ceilings, tiled floors with underfloor heating, Moroccan rugs, lantern-style light shades, and standalone bathtubs. Most have spectacular views, too. There are no televisions, and Wi-Fi is sporadic here, given the off-grid setting, but bluetooth speakers are provided, along with kettles. Robes and Moroccan slippers are supplied, and I found the nights to be profoundly quiet.

8/10 Food and Drink

Food is hearty, wholesome, and served with charming Berber hospitality. Breakfasts feature hard-boiled eggs, excellent homemade bread, yoghurt, dried fruit and nuts, while lunches on the terrace include Moroccan salads with rice, lentils and improbably red tomatoes, alongside generous chicken dishes (I shared mine with the resident cats) and fresh mint tea.

Dinners feature thoughtful local dishes: vegetable soups, slow-cooked tagines, olives and dates. Alcohol isn't served, out of respect for Berber traditions, though guests can bring their own if they wish.

8 /10

Value for Money

Double rooms from £175, year-round. Breakfast included (and a five per cent charge is added to bill to support Village Association community projects).

Access for guests with disabilities?

Access is challenging since the kasbah is reached on foot via a steep path, and the site has many steps and no lifts. The hotel welcomes guests with mobility issues, though it is important to understand what's involved in reaching (and staying at) the property, given its unique location.

Family-Friendly?

Yes. Children are welcome, guides are patient, and there is very little to break. Walking is central to a stay here, however, making it best-suited to families with older children or teenagers.

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