



KASBAH DU KTUBKAL

MOROCCO'S PREMIER MOUNTAIN RETREAT

October 2025

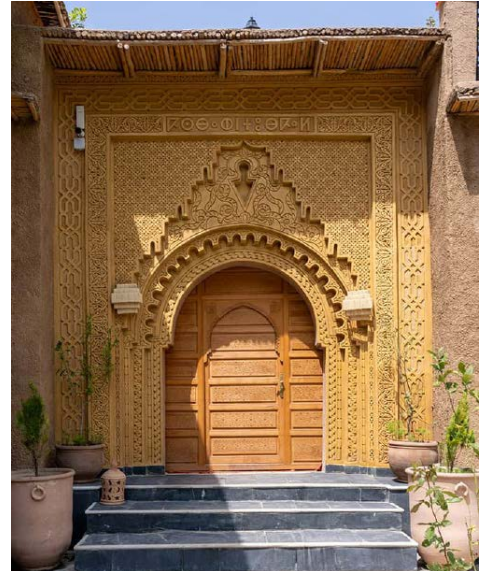
All Done and Dusted!

The Kasbah returns to it's former beauty - And More!

Profuse apologies for the late arrival of this issue of the newsletter, but there's nothing like a good excuse to get you off the hook – and we've got one!

We've been working on a special project for the Kasbah to go with its rebirth since the disastrous earthquake of September 8, 2023, that rent much of the High Atlas asunder. Without realising it at the time, in some ways it was a silver lining, allowing it to rise from the tumble of debris to become the glorious mountain getaway that welcomes you back; a new dining room, lots of smaller salons for peace and quiet, a towering new belvedere with 360° views, shady terraces – but most of all, the stunning oval infinity pool with views across the Imlil Valley to the mountains beyond.

But it isn't just the physical structure of Kasbah du Toubkal that's been developed. We've taken the opportunity to adapt our offers to make your stay at the Kasbah even more enjoyable than before, and to create a new, expanded Kasbah Library, with five themed booklets for you to delve deeper into the world of our Berber Hospitality Centre and discover that a stay at Kasbah du Toubkal is *'much more than just majestic mountains'*.



KASBAH DU TOUBKAL

When Irish Eyes Are Smiling

There doesn't appear to be any record of how much of a plan Christopher Columbus had when he slipped anchor in Palos, Spain, other than the idea of 'Go West, young man' to discover a quicker route to the spicy wealth of the Indies, discovering instead a plot of land that eventually became America.

Things might have been different if he'd had a quick chat with Mariam Ryan, as her husband, Seamus O'Neill, did after he'd spent three weeks researching the family's fortnight's holiday in Morocco.

"He would have had us moving location every night. We would have been in the Sahara, we would have been in the mountains, we would have been in Marrakesh, we would have been in Tangier, so when he came to me with the itinerary, I shot it down immediately, and I said, no, absolutely not practical because you're packing and moving every day, and we don't pack lightly. So, no, we decided that in order to get a feel for a place and a better experience, we'd do at least three nights in each destination.

Miriam's red pen rearranged the trip to four nights in Agadir, three in Essaouira, (beach, water, the girls like water, the 'girls' being daughters Kim and Debbie O'Neill), three at Kasbah du Toubkal, ("We definitely like mountains and hiking"), before ending their hols with three nights in Marrakesh, Miriam having always wanted to see the 'Rose City'. "And certainly this has been our highlight so far," she says, as she dangles her feet in the Kasbah's oval infinity pool, with its beautiful mountain view. "This is exactly what we're looking for, right in the



mountains, away from everything, and once we saw it, it was like, yeah, that's definitely the place for us"

"And the stories of the work that they do to support the local community and the ambulance, we just couldn't look past that," chips in Seamus.

"We expected a very nice property with nice views, but it just blew our minds when we walked through the door. Right from when you come in the gate and you see how well manicured the gardens are, and it's a real feast of the senses as you walk up and then you come through to the pool. I think our daughter's jaws almost dropped when they saw the pool and the fact that they could lean on the infinity side of it, with views across the valley, and it's just been fabulous to be able to sit outside by the pool at night."

"They actually didn't know anything about it," says Mariam, picking up the story. "They hadn't seen any pictures. Kim doesn't want to know where we're going, she just wants to wait and see, to be surprised, whereas I'd be a bit more curious. With teenagers, we wanted them in adjoining rooms or side by side, and they have the perfect arrangement at the Kasbah because they have two double rooms adjacent to each other facing the mountains but separate from the other bedrooms. So it was just perfect.

"One of the things that attracted me to the Kasbah was I thought there was no Wi-fi here, and I thought that would just be wonderful for our teenagers, but there is. And in fact, they ended up with the best signal on their phones while they've been in Morocco. They've been reading their books,



they've been on their phones a bit as they always are, but we took them on two hikes and as always they complain in the beginning, but then they really enjoy it, you know, and are fascinated by the people and the animals."

What parents like on holiday and what teenagers like can be oceans – or in the case of the Kasbah – mountains apart, and while Morocco has been called 'the most exotic destination only three hours from London', there's also a life that isn't reflected in the tourist brochures. As Seamus points out, it's the other side that can sometimes give an understanding of how life can be without the trappings that many cultures see as necessary for happiness.

"Something that's really important for us as parents



is for our girls to see just how other people live and how lucky we are. Like we went through some villages and there seems to be almost nothing, and that's the thing that has really struck us, just how happy the Moroccan people seem to be with so little. It's a lesson to us all I think, just how privileged we are and how we should be so

grateful for everything we have compared to what other people have."

On a lighter side, Mariam admits to confusing restaurant staff in Agadir when she ordered a vegetable tagine.

"Myself and the two girls are vegetarians, but we're vegetarians who don't like vegetables, which is a bit of a challenge. We tend to cook a lot of ethnic foods, so we would have some staple Moroccan dishes in our repertoire of recipes – tagine and couscous and Moroccan bean casserole. In Ireland, if you had tagine, you'd have couscous with it. But here I caused great confusion in the restaurant when I asked for couscous with my vegetable tagine. The waitress didn't understand so she brought a second waitress out because she thought there was something wrong. But what I didn't realize is there was potatoes in the tagine, and I need a carbohydrate to go with the vegetables. It ended well, with smiles all round."

Thankfully, it was a lesson learned for when the family arrived at the Kasbah.

"The food here has been excellent, very flavorful, and the breakfasts are some of the nicest breakfasts we've ever had in a hotel – and we've had plenty of experience with them, staying in a different places."

As Mariam and Seamus prepared for their final walk before their ride to the big city delights of Marrakech, Seamus makes a point that is probably very close to the minds of parents taking teenagers on holiday.

"I think the beauty here is you can do quite long walks or you can do short walks and loop around and you don't really lose your orientation because you're in this valley and you can pretty much see the Kasbah from every angle. This morning we wanted to take a final hike but we didn't really want to leave Kim and Debbie alone, but we felt they were safe here because the staff are so friendly, so hospitable, very much attentive to all of our needs.

"I would say the Kasbah is a wonderful place for families to visit, even families with teenagers because you've got the quietness, calmness and safety of a place like this, way up above a village and the benign chaos outside.

"We will be back because we would love to hike more. It's just been magnificent. We've really, really enjoyed the peace."

Thanks to Mariam and her red marker pen.



Imlil's New Ambulance Takes To The Hills



On 7th July, 2025, Abderrahim Ajdaà accepted the keys for the new ambulance that would serve the mountain communities of the Imlil Valley in the High Atlas. With more than two decades of experience driving the often rough terrain, first as a taxi driver, then as the driver of the ambulance that serviced the remote mountain villages, he still takes great joy in the important and sometimes imperative role as first medical contact with people, often friends as well as patients, who might have no means to get treatment other than by mule-back or a crowded mountain bus, often nothing more than a well-worn van.

But getting the funding for the specialist vehicle has been a long road itself, especially the one-thousand kilometer bike ride Mike McHugo made in sometimes turbulent storms to kick the fundraising off. Thanks to a joint venture between the Eve Branson Foundation and the generosity of Kasbah du Toubkal's guests through the 5% levy that has been the basis of so many community projects in the Imlil Valley, (and Mike's extraordinary rain-soaked 1000km fund-raising bike ride), the new ambulance to serve the mountain communities and visiting tourists is being fitted out to deal with the unique environment of the High Atlas Mountains. Once behind the wheel, Abderrahim's current vehicle, which has covered tens of thousands of kilometres providing a sterling service, will be handed over to another locality to continue its important work. The Eve Branson Foundation is well known in Morocco, with its mission to create opportunities for local people in the High Atlas Mountains which can make a meaningful difference to their families

and community, developing initiatives in four key areas: artisanal training; environment; healthcare and education.

David Assabbab, General Manager of Kasbah Tamadot is quite clear about the reason the Foundation agreed to be associated with Kasbah du Toubkal in funding the ambulance.

"It's Mike. He's an amazing human beast. He just keeps insisting, and his relentless effort to fund-raise for a good cause gave us the energy and the motivation to find funds. This is just the beginning of a beautiful collaboration story, and we'll hopefully work on many other projects. They are mastering the education field and we want to learn." The acceptance of the new ambulance took place in Asni, attended by British Ambassador, Simon Martin, one of his last official functions before his tenure as His Majesty's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco ends.

"I've been ambassador in Morocco for five years and since the very first month I've been here, I've had some great pleasure in visiting this Al Haouz region, and being involved in a small way and celebrating the many British connections here. The way that the region has bounced back from the earthquake is extraordinary. We've seen today the study center here which is supported by the local community and by Kasbah Tamadot and the Eve Branson Foundation helping young people to benefit most from their education. And also this ambulance is another contribution, so it's a joint venture between the local communities in Asni and two British foundations, the Eve Branson Foundation and the Kasbah with their British links.

To me it is just a marvelous pleasure to see this inter-relationship between this region and this region's British friends, and this is going to go on, I know.

"This contribution where it's most needed for people who are in urgent need of hospital treatment, for pregnant women who really need to deliver their babies in hospital. This facility now will allow that to happen, and it's a sense of great pride, but it goes on and on."

The Ambassador will soon be moving on, but how does he feel about his five years here, not only the contribution he's made, but the contribution that

Morocco and the Moroccan people have made to him. "Oh, they've taught me a great deal. Morocco is an unbelievably welcoming country, and you know, like everywhere else it has an amazing range of communities, of scenery, of populations, of livelihoods, and after five years I've realized this extraordinary diversity. You think it would create a jumble, but actually it's like the most beautiful piece of *les mosaic* with many, many small parts, but the overall impact is one of perfection" And has he enjoyed his time here? "I have, fantastically."



Another Chapter from the Silver Linings Playbook

The Imlil Valley is one of the few in the High Atlas that has its own ambulance, working day-in, day-out to ensure that people have access to medical treatment when they need it most. In normal times, the aging vehicle handled its wide range of callout situations well, but dealing with the terrifying results of the earthquake on September 8th, 2023 showed that the long-thought of replacement needed to take a big leap forward.

"It might seem like a cruel thing to say," says Mike McHugo, "but just as the collapse of part of Kasbah du Toubkal was the impetus for us to make changes we'd been thinking of for a while, the same applied to replacing the ambulance."

Through sponsorship of Mike's bike ride, private donations (some prompted by the banner that obscured work on the Kasbah's rebuild), funds from the 'Magical 5%' added to guests accounts, and a close working relationship with the Eve Branson Foundation, the idea became a reality.

However the money came, we are all extremely grateful to the kind hearts and open-hands of those who contributed to the welfare and security of the people of the Imlil Valley. And it goes further, because the ambulance that has served the community so well for many years will go on to serve another.

You can read the full story of Mike McHugo's bike ride [HERE](#)

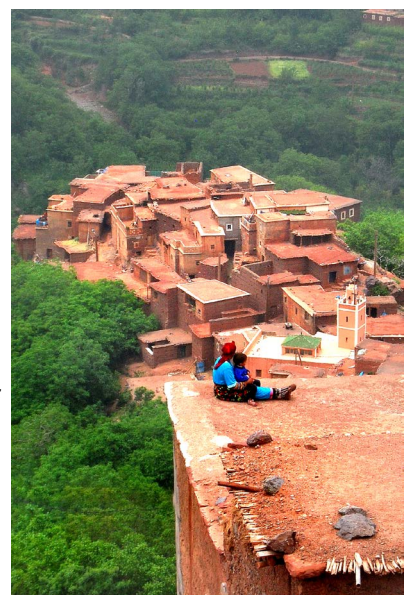
Amazigh villages and mountain scenery on a hiking tour in Morocco's High Atlas

Just two hours from Marrakech, the valleys of Morocco's High Atlas Mountains are home to incredible scenery, traditional Amazigh villages and a network of excellent and uncrowded hiking trails.

Shortly after 4.30am, the day's first call to prayer drifts across the mountains. A gauzy predawn light hangs over the Ait Mizane Valley, where a dozen villages are scattered across the rough slopes. Each settlement has a small mosque and an early-rising muezzin, whose wavering invocations roll out into the morning air. Twelve voices flow from 12 minaret loudspeakers, filling the sleeping valley with a river of song. In two hours' time, the sky will be busy with swallows and the ridges will be washed in sunshine, but for now the mountains stir with hazy shapes and half-awake mantras.



In Morocco, proximity on the map can be misleading. The valley sits barely 40 miles from the city of Marrakech but may as well be on a different planet. If street-level Marrakech is a whirl of thronged souks and bleating taxis, Ait Mizane Valley is its slow-motion antidote. The main village, Imlil, is a place where the smell of freshly baked flatbread drifts on the air, where you can stroll from cafe to mountain stream in two minutes and where your gaze is routinely drawn to the craggy crests overhead. The traffic jams and snake charmers of the city feel a long way away. ([Read on....](#))



THE KASBAH LIBRARY

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose

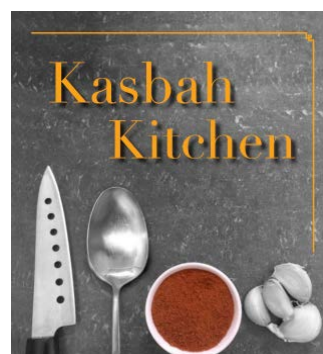
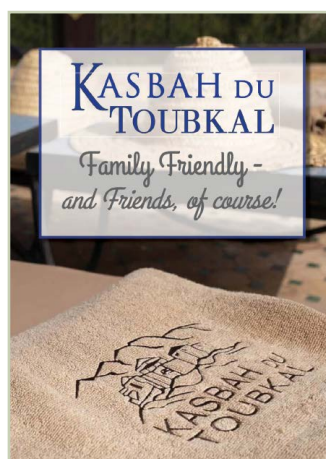
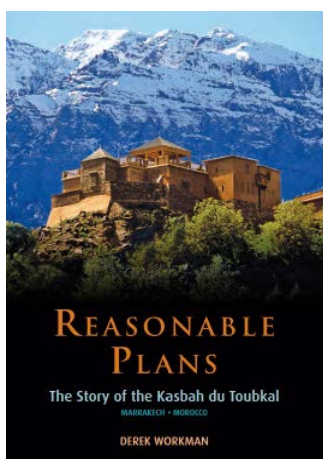
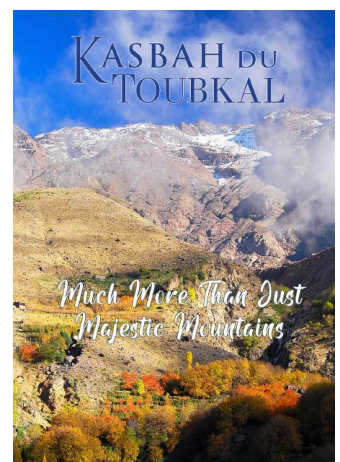
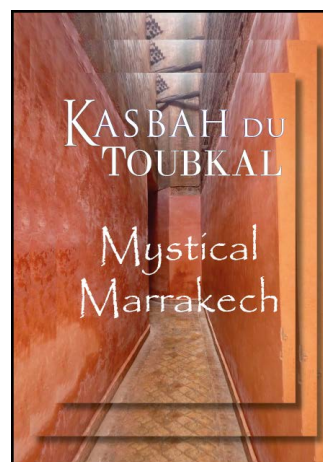
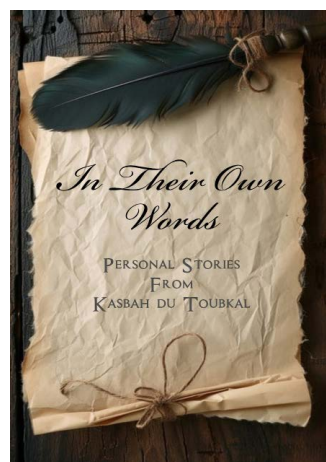
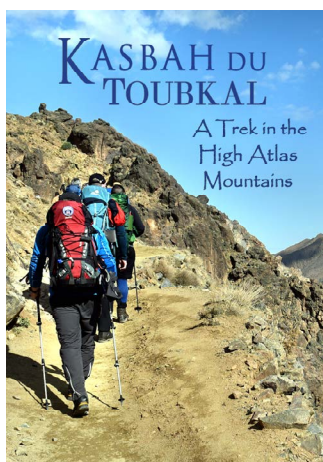
Looking back over almost eleven years of the Kasbah magazine and newsletter, with a large selection of brochures and booklets in-between, it's interesting to note that despite covid and the earthquake, so many of the places we wrote about are still the same; some have been updated, others continue as they were, but read an article from the first issue and you would most likely feel it could have been written yesterday. The treks haven't changed, the strolls around the Kasbah are as enjoyable and relaxing as they ever were, and the comments by guests show that they are still as enamoured by being here as they have been since we opened thirty years ago.

We've worked our way through over a decade of material to bring you five new brochures; guests

personal stories of both the Kasbah itself and the trekking it's world famous for; the sometimes overlooked side of Marrakech, and much more, bringing you right up to date with details about how the Kasbah isn't just for trekkers or seekers of tranquility, it's as much for family and friends to enjoy time together, whether it's for a celebration or simply to enjoy spending time away from the hustle and bustle of daily life.

The biggest change has been the rebuild of the Kasbah, but the staff are still as caring, the food still a delicious and traditional, and the welcome is still as warm as ever.

As the saying goes, ***Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose***; the more things change, the more they stay the same.



*Click on the covers
discover more.....*





In the High Atlas Mountains, this 15-room hideaway has long been favoured as much by hikers as by down-to-earth honeymooners. Upping the Kasbah's appeal is a new peak-perched pool.

No Wheat, No Worries: A Gluten-Free Guide for Foodies in Morocco



While most traditional Moroccan sweets include wheat, there are many bakeries and cafes that have delicious gluten-free versions.

Morocco Launches UNESCO Food Heritage Project to Protect Culinary Traditions



Morocco will work on identifying traditional food practices and developing local systems to preserve and promote them.



Morocco overhauls hotel rating system in major tourism reform



Morocco has taken a decisive step in overhauling its tourism industry, signalling a new era aimed at raising industry standards. Even traditional accommodations like Riads and Kasbahs will be included, with their distinctive cultural charm better recognized and evaluated within the new structure.



Jardine Majorelle unveils first-ever pavilion with botanical art exhibition

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MOROCCO IN THE MEDIA



Morocco deploys mystery guests to raise hospitality standards



Morocco's tourism booms with 8.9 million visitors in first half of 2025



Souss Massa: Morocco's Culture-Rich Wonderland for Adventure Enthusiasts



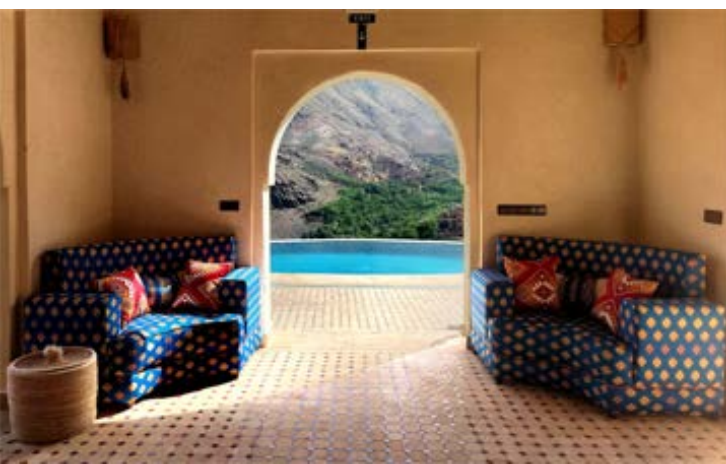
Morocco Among Top Most-Booked Winter Getaways for British Tourists



Morocco launches online portal for access to historic monuments



A new green escape opens in Marrakech with the launch of 'Jardin Ocre'



An insight into the Imlil Valley and Berber Culture

IMLIL VALLEY

THE HEART OF MOROCCO'S HIGH ATLAS MOUNTAINS



THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE REGION

BY IT'S ONE WORLD TRAVEL | SPONSORED BY THE ASSOCIATION BASSIN D'IMLIL & KASBAH DU TOUBKAL