

Beautiful Blue Eyes

After six days in the cold and fog of the High Atlas Mountains, experiencing some of the strangest weather most Moroccans have ever seen at this time of year, I finally feel relaxed.

I take mint tea, sit in a Colonial easy chair at the side of the pool, nothing to disturb the silence other than the chirruping of birds and the low murmur of staff going about their business. The scent of citrus floats on the air, the sun filters through orange trees and a stand of bamboo.

I'm entertained by a young lady decked out in white who sits on the steps of the pool and leans

back, looking up, her left foot dangling languidly in the water. I follow her sight-line and

see a young man, presumably her partner, taking a photo. It's that sort of pool, and Les Yeux Bleus is that sort of riad. I begin to doze. Registration done, I'm shown to my room, a sumptuous ensemble of deep blue walls, armchair in lush pink velvet and a bed the size of a small island, on which I flop and continue my doze for another half-hour.

Recently renovated under the direction of Dutch interior designer Willem Smit, one of the most innovative designers working in



Marrakech at the moment, Riad Les Yeux Bleus is a delightful blend of traditional and modern, made vibrant and cosy at the same time with the use of rich colours – yellow, blue, green, deep maroon for the interiors that set off the opulence of the colourful decoration perfectly. I'm particularly taken by the beautiful blue and white hand-painted hexagonal floor tiles used throughout the riad, a complete change from the zellige mosaic tile usually found in ancient riads, and wonder how many

it took to refurbish the building. Each of the eight rooms distributed around two patios has its own character, some with an open fire, but all of them make you feel as if you want to curl up with a good book and let the day drift on by – although you would miss the escapism of the roof-top pool and terraces if you did.

Cooling in the pool

I drag myself from the lethargy of my island bed to the lethargy of the roof terrace, where I sit under an awning of woven camel's hair, the traditional material for a *jaima*, a Berber tent. I defocus my eyes and while I might not be able to imagine myself in the desert, I'm certainly in a more peaceful place than I usually find myself. The second, roof-top pool, is more

The peacefulness and comfy beds have that 'napping' effect



for splashing and cooling than taking photos, as the downstairs version is, and varying levels of terrace create lounging areas of long daybeds and shady canopied sofas, ideal for stretching out on if you think you can get away with it. The warmth of the early afternoon sun as I lean against the large cushions laid on the banquette of rich velvet makes me think that there is nowhere I would rather be at that particular moment. Warm colours everywhere, the



deep reds, maroon and light beige ubiquitous in Morocco. Bougainvillea of purple, orange and pink climb the walls of the three-storey building. Through a tiny horse-shoe-arch wooden door I glimpse a hammam, one of my favourite elements of Moroccan culture. I picture myself taking an aperitif later at the terrace bar.

Ten minutes to the Medina

Stirring myself, I take a walk into the narrow alleyways of the Medina. The famous Jmaa el Fna with its nightly open-air food stalls, the largest of its kind in the world, is only a ten-minute walk away, and after a pleasant hour gawping at the brilliance and colour of the tiny shops I wander back to LYB in time for a nap and to change for dinner (the peacefulness and



comfy beds have that ‘napping’ effect on me).

Dinner is served in the beautiful Beldi patio, smaller than the Pool patio and roofed-over to create an intimate sitting room with a wall-mounted fireplace as the centrepiece, that also serves as a dining room, but as I’m alone I accept the offer of a table set at the end of the pool. The twinkling of candle flame from the lanterns placed along the poolside reflect in the gently moving water, lulling me into a soporific state of mind, and pretty soon I’m back in my island bed, all thoughts of the previous six days in the cold and fog in the High Atlas banished from my mind.

*You can learn more about **Riad Les Yeux Bleus**, at their website [HERE](#)*

***Les Yeux Bleus** works in association with **Kasbah du Toukbal** on a number of tours that offer the best of exotic Marrakech and the beauty of the High Atlas Mountains, plus a visit to the fishing port of Essaouira. Click **HERE** to see the full programme.*

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