

Client: Great Northern Hotel Yellow News
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CHECKING IN

ONE OF OUR BUSINESS TRAVELLERS JETS OFF TO THE EXOTIC CITY OF MARRAKECH FOR A TRUE TASTE OF ARABIAN HOSPITALITY, WHILE THE OTHER STAYS CLOSER TO HOME AT A LUXURY COMMUTER HOTEL

LA SULTANA

MARRAKECH IS ONE OF THOSE PLACES WHOSE NAME ALONE EVOKES THE EXOTIC APPEAL OF THE ORIENT AND, AS SUCH, IT MAKES THE PERFECT add-on short break destination for those travelling to Morocco's business hubs such as Rabat and Casablanca. La Sultana is a five-star property that is a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World consortium and it epitomises the best traditions of Arabian hospitality, cossetting guests in an oasis of calm and beauty.

This is certainly no cookie-cutter chain hotel, it actually incorporates five *riads* in one, (a traditional Moroccan-style house built around a central courtyard, open to the elements) each with its own unique style; there are delightful design touches to discover round every corner and fascinating nooks and crannies add interest. The Leopard

Room where I'm staying has warm, earthy tones, rose petals strewn on the floor and Clarins products in the bathroom; this is Arabia as reimagined by a designer of the calibre of Pierre Yves Rochon.

At dinner on the rooftop that evening, an *oud* player adds to the ambience, enhanced by twinkling, star-shaped lanterns,

THE GREAT NORTHERN HOTEL

COMMUTER HOTELS USUALLY HAVE AN AIR OF ECONOMY ABOUT THEM, SOMETHING THAT INDICATES THEY'RE DESIGNED FOR THOSE ON THE go. The Great Northern Hotel is situated high on a pedestal compared to most of its kind, with super-swish interiors and amenities that scream luxury.

Each of the hotel's 91 guest rooms feature an instant espresso machine, minibar and toiletries. Plus, there's a pantry on each floor, where guests can treat themselves to a wider selection of coffees, vintage candy and cake – all included in the cost of the room.

My partner and I are put up in a

Cubitt room, which is the largest of the three types at the hotel. Saying that, it provides as much space as a standard room at other properties. The difference here is in the attention to detail; every aspect of the design is well thought out, from the cream leather headboard to the extra set of pull-down blinds behind the blackout curtains that let in natural light while offering privacy from the busy square outside. Our bathroom as the call to prayer echoes across the rooftops. The staff are effortlessly courteous: warm blankets are brought when an electrical storm starts up unexpectedly and catches us out in our flimsy, warm-weather clothing.

The food takes indigenous influences and puts a Mediterranean spin on them, hence that classic local pie dish, *pastilla* here filled with foie gras and couscous with fish and shellfish, served in an iconic tagine, yet reminiscent of Spanish paella. Dessert again mixes in cultural elements: a perfectly ripe portion of raspberries come with a chocolate replica of a red fez hat, while creamy French Vacherin mixes in cinnamon and dates.

This charming property translates authentic Moroccan style into international luxury to stunning effect, providing an upscale and inviting sanctuary in the heart of this mesmerising city.

Colette Doyle

La Sultana, Rue de la Kasbah, Marrakech 4000, Morocco; lasultanahotels.com; +212 524 388 008. Prestige and Prestige Deluxe rooms start from MAD3,250 a night depending on the season, (approximately £212) based on two sharing with breakfast included

features a large walk-in shower, while others have a deep roll-top tub.

We're booked in for dinner at on-site restaurant Plum + Spilt Milk, where the atmosphere is relaxed but the service is top-notch. My pea soup starter is just the right size to leave room for the whole lobster and skinny fries I've ordered for

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mains. My companion goes for the same with a starter of chicken pâté. We finish the evening by sharing a house speciality – baked Alaska with raspberries, which is briefly set alight when it arrives at our table. The whole meal is incredible.

Located 25 yards from the Eurostar terminal at the heart of King's Cross St Pancras station, the property is ideal for business travellers looking for an easy-to-book place to stay the night before an early train.

Molly Dyson

The *Great Northern Hotel*, Pancras Road, King's Cross London NIC 4TB; 020 3388 0800; gnhlondon.com. Couchette room rates start from £165 a night

