



Catherine Scotto

# Morocco

Destination of Style, Elegance and Design

Photography by

Nicolas Mathéus

PRESTEL

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Dar D, created by Jean-François Mura (see p. 42).

← Berber rug from the Mrirt region.

← The Majorelle Garden in Marrakech (see p. 74).

# Morocco

## Back to the roots

My unexpected encounter with Morocco began during the first strict Covid-19 lockdown in Paris in 2020. For a long time I had stayed away from the Mediterranean shores, but this book turned everything upside down and I finally let myself be carried away by the current, just as my Spanish and Italian seafaring ancestors did in the 19th century when they landed in North Africa. Four generations later, all I have left of this colonial past is an album of faded photographs, a few books and a bunch of keys that will never again open any doors.

It took me two months of imaginary travel around the country to fill my 'travel diary', initially following all the well-trodden tracks. It was by taking some lesser-known 'back routes' in my library during quarantine, to which I had resigned myself, that I made my first major discoveries before eventually embarking on this journey with Nicolas Mathéus.

Once there, we discovered that other reckless adventurers had preceded us – for example, those crazy gardeners who managed to plant marvellous Gardens of Eden in the middle of the scree and the brambles. We discovered the work of young architects who built austere mud and brick houses in the middle of the desert as beautiful as ancient palaces. Finally, we met young Moroccans carried away in a burst of creative energy, who took on the revival of their ancestors' centuries-old workshops and reinvented traditional skills in danger of being forgotten.

'Here, we eat with our eyes,' says a Moroccan proverb. I invite you to follow in our footsteps to taste this new Morocco that I have been delighted to discover after such a long exile.

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Artist William Stuart Thornton's impressive pressed botanicals adorn every wall of the riad's library. The local furniture and the arbutus mirror were produced by the NOW on the Ocean studio ([www.now-ontheocean.com](http://www.now-ontheocean.com)) and painted in a colour palette devised by Gene Meyer.

## DAR HAMRA

'My house is alive. I like furniture that can be moved, that the colours change and that the styles and objects are fluid. I hate still-lives!'

Designer Frank de Biasi has lived in the heart of Tangier's kasbah since 2007, and an explosion of colour lies behind the estate's immaculate walls. The fresh, acidic range he developed with his partner, fashion designer and decorator Gene Meyer, has colonised every wall. Their forced exile during the Covid-19 pandemic increased their creative inspiration tenfold. Some of the furniture, sourced from all over the world for their American houses, was relocated to their Moroccan holiday home. They re-covered the settees with 1950s floral prints, and partnered 19th-century Scottish country chairs, upholstered in absinthe green silk, with turquoise blue lacquered pedestal tables. Bold coloured stripes adorn the bedrooms' walls and curtains. Dashes of yellow brighten up the ensemble.

The two Americans have travelled the world and found the inspirational artisans they were looking for in Tangier. The city where the Mediterranean meets the Atlantic Ocean also offers them a gentle way of life like no other. Every day is an opportunity for the designers to make new discoveries and their in-depth research into textiles and carpets led them to launch their own brand, Habibi Burton, to promote Moroccan creativity. They have been working on a number of design projects, mainly in the United States, but already they feel a desire to expand their horizons. 'I dream of one day owning a house in central India,' confesses Frank. 'It's the land of colour, and nowadays you can work from anywhere.'



The terrace is next to the famous Dar Zero and overlooks the roofs of the kasbah.



