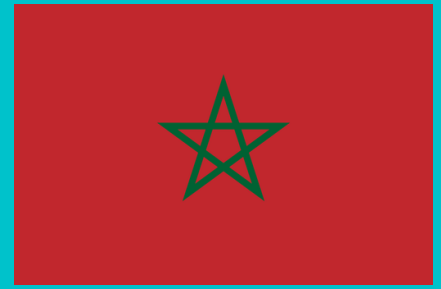




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TOUR UPDATE



The Newsletter of mikesworldtour

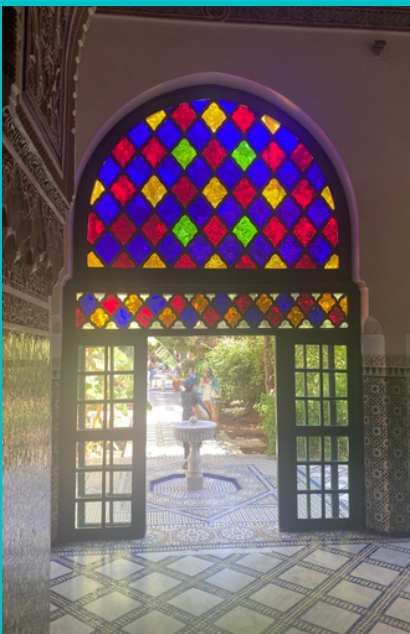
Tour Highlight:

September 2022, Marrakech
Morocco



Continent #5!

Contributed by Michael Davis



A QUICK HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, & SOCIAL OVERVIEW

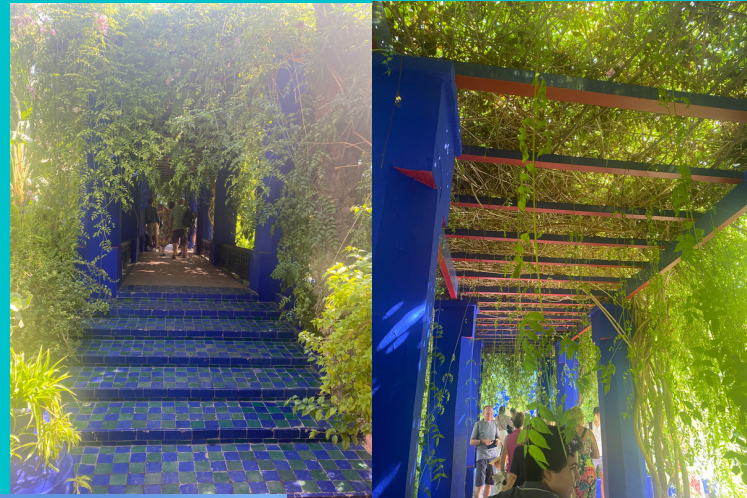
Morocco has a constitutional monarchy whereas the ultimate authority within the country is with King Mohammed VI. In 1912 Morocco became a protectorate of Spain and France where the French picked the Sultan to lead the country. After World War 2 there were many protests for independence, and the French exiled the current King Mohammed V to stop protests. This did not work as protests increased, so they brought back Mohammed V who declared independence in 1956. Since then Morocco has been modernizing, but has still focused on retaining its culture which captures the attention of visitors. Freedom House give Morocco a classification of partly free with a score of 37. This is due to the lack of universal political rights as well as limited opposition to the ruling party. There is also limited representation for minority groups mainly the Amazigh which constitutes over 40% of the population. Morocco also has an ongoing conflict over the contested territory south of the country known as Western Sahara leading to more political instability and conflict within the country.

Marrakech, Morocco

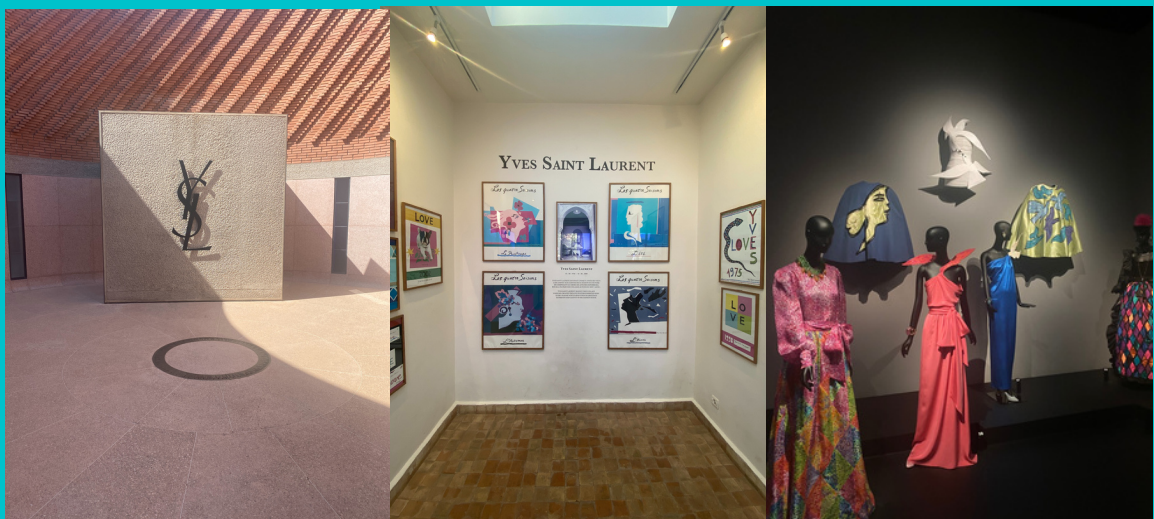
EXPERIENCES

MAJORELLE GARDENS & YSL MANSION

Over the span of 40 years, the Majorelle gardens were constructed by the French painter Jacques Majorelle in 1922. The garden is over 9000m in area, and in 1980 Yves Saint Laurent purchased the garden to stop hotels from purchasing it. He decided to live in Jacques house and renamed it the Villa Oasis. The gardens are enclosed by a huge fence, and create quite the mystery for tourists visiting.



YSL MUSEUM



The YSL museum was opened in 2017, and features over 5,000 items of clothing and over 15,000 accessories. It shows the history of YSL, and how it became the iconic brand that it is today. It also highlights the connection between the founder Yves Saint Laurent and the city of Marrakech in which he adored dearly. The museum also represents the French influence seen throughout Marrakech. The museum also has a library that contains books on Berber, Arabic, and Andalusian culture.

Marrakech, Morocco

BAHIA PALACE



The name Bahia in Arabic means brilliance which makes sense by the stunning architectural design and stucco walls within the palace. It was created in the 19th century and intended to show the Moroccan style and design. When Morocco gained independence it was used as the home of the Royal Residence until King Hassan II transferred ownership to the ministry of culture. There were rooms for the Sultan living there for all 4 of his wives (of equal size because they were each equal) and 12 rooms to share as well as a dining room. The oldest part was built in 1867 by Si Moussa who was a former slave that rose the ranks to be one of the Sultan's most important aides.

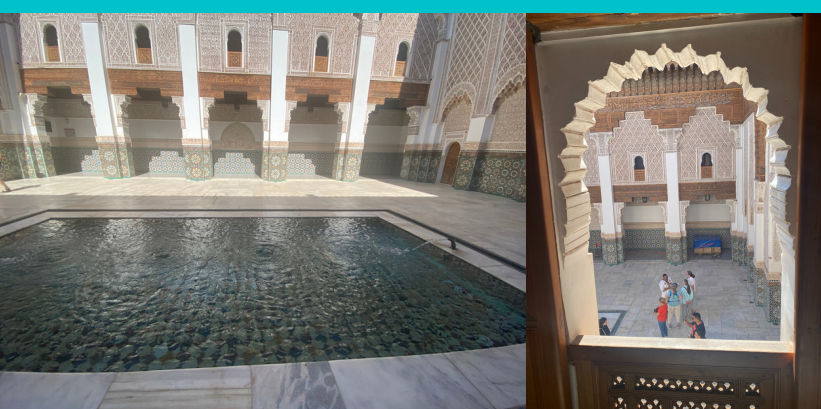
BADI PALACE

During the 16th century, the Sultan ordered the building of the Badi Palace. In 1696 the inside was stripped down left in ruins to what it is today. The palace was funded by the Portuguese and is home to 350 rooms. Under the palace are slave corridors where mainly Jewish slaves lived while the palace was in operational use. The palace was built with the most lavish materials, and had a major grand opening where people said it could be the 8th world wonder. However, a civil war in Morocco in 1603 caused the palace to begin to fall into decay. The palace was eventually stripped and the materials were brought to Meknes to build a royal palace there.



Marrakech, Morocco

MUSEUM OF MARRAKECH



The Museum used to be a palace that was converted into a girls school once Morocco gained independence in 1956. In 1997 it was converted to a museum and showcases the history and culture of the country. It also exemplifies the 19th and 20th century architecture that is featured throughout the country. For example the window to the left is very common throughout homes and Riad (more on that later) in Morocco.



BEN YOUSSEF MADRASA

Then Ben Youssef Madrasa is named after the Ben Youssef Mosque that is located directly next door to the Madrasa. It was founded during the Marinid Islamic dynasty which was known for its dedication to the arts and culture. The Madrasa is generally the center for community development as well as learning and worship. It was closed down in 1960, and reopened to the public as a historic site in 1982. It was also home to 800 students as a theological college during the 20th century. At the time it was one of the largest theological colleges in Northern Africa.

OURIKA VALLEY

The Ourika valley is located in the High Atlas Mountain region and is home to the Berber people. It is a well preserved valley due to its close proximity to Marrakech, and it provides expansive and breathtaking views throughout the region.



Marrakech, Morocco

IMLIL CASCADES & HIGH ATLAS MOUNTAINS

The High Atlas Mountain range is a region within Morocco that has some of the highest peaks within Africa. The Imlil cascades are located within the mountain and contain a set of waterfalls that provide natural drinking water for the villages within the region. It is common to see monkeys within the region as they usually sit on the irrigations canals that provide drinking water to the villages. It takes around 3 days to hike the top of mountain and there are villages on top that usually take in hikers attempting to summit the mountains.



CAMELS

Camels are an iconic activity many tourists do in Morocco as well as Marrakech. As a tourist it is important to find places that treat their animals well as well as provide a natural sanctuary for their camels. It is common to see Camels on the side of roads in Marrakech that are used for tourism. Camels are an important animal to the North African region due to their capacity to hold water and ability to walk far distances.



Marrakech, Morocco

FOOD



Food in Morocco is delicious and full of flavors. A very common dish is Tangia where a vessel type dish is used to cook food. Usually in this dish is a meat as a base as well as vegetables. The cool thing about this is that the dish is served in the same vessel that was used to cook it. Morocco is also full of sweet and spicy toppings that make dishes flavorful as well as represents the culture of the country. Aromas and smells are a big deal in Morocco, so many of the dishes come smelling full of flavors.

RIAD

In Marrakech there are not the huge hotels that are common in other tourism hotspots. Instead of major hotel chains there are Riads which are small guest homes that have 10-14 rooms. These houses are very historical and have beautiful architecture inside. In the past families would share the rooms within a Riad. We got super lucky because our Riad was completely empty except for us so we were able to explore all of the rooms. It also had this beautiful rooftop that had panoramic views of the entire city. When in Marrakech, Riads are definitely the way to go because they are generally cheaper than hotels as well as have free breakfast and comfortable rooms. Most Riads are located on long corridors within the city that are only accessible by foot. Our riad was about a 10 minute walk from the main street.



See You On the Next Stop on the Tour!