

# Kasbah du Toubkal press cuttings

Kasbah du Toubkal - Morocco's Premier Mountain Retreat - [www.kasbahdutoubkal.com](http://www.kasbahdutoubkal.com)

## ***From the Financial Times:***

KASBAH DU TOUBKAL, a stunning mountain retreat owned by a British company and run by local Berbers, that dominates the village, physically and economically.

Like most visitors, I came specifically to stay at the Kasbah. Once checked in at the office in the village, I waited for a porter with his mule to come and collect my luggage, and then set off on foot. The steep, 15-minute walk through apple orchards and groves of walnut trees was arduous enough to make it feel like the last stages of a pilgrimage—even though I had come most of the way from Marrakesh in a Mercedes taxi.

The Kasbah has a range of rooms to suit different budgets—from luxury villas to basic dormitories—and activities to suit all temperaments and abilities. You can loll around on over 300 square metres of roof terraces, drinking tea, playing chess, gazing at spellbinding panoramas of the mountains above and the working village below and just listening to the sounds of the valley. Or you can take a Berber-guided trek for as little as an afternoon or as long as a couple of days, and glimpse an insight in to the day-to-day lives of the Aït Mizane community that inhabits the valleys...

...by working in partnership with the villagers, Mike McHugo believed he could develop an innovative and sustainable destination to generate long-term benefits for the community, as well as a profit for his company.

So, how is it unique? First of all, the kasbah is managed by the local Berber community, rather than by professional hoteliers...

...In the meantime, this down-to-earth retreat in the extraordinary setting of the High Atlas mountains continues to set a benchmark for other tourism initiatives in remote areas.

Francesca Silvani, *Financial Times*, June 22, 2007

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## ***From the New York Times:***

KASBAH DU TOUBKAL, a mountain retreat in the High Atlas outside Marrakech...Filled with wild flowers, it opens onto splendid vista – reddish-brown mountains dotted with green walnut groves and boxy mud-brick villages, farmers tending sheep on distant hills and Mount Toubkal rising snow-capped and gray-blue in the distance... The Kasbah calls itself a 'Berber hospitality center' not a hotel. In the brochure, I found this rhetoric self-important; once there, I realized it was entirely accurate. Drinking syrupy mint tea on the terrace, I was a guest...I'm no sucker for eco-tourism boilerplate but I was impressed by the Kasbah's approach.

For two days, I sat in a canvas chair on that terrace, reading. The sounds of New York slowly dissipated until all I could hear was the 'Allahu Akbar' of muezzins echoing across valleys, the occasional crowing of a rooster, the barely perceptible rustle of a faraway waterfall...I looked up at the remote lodge, a lovely pink stone house atop the town's highest hill. It was worth the final push. Our bathroom had a marble tub and plenty of hot running water...After the calm of the Atlas, Marrakech was a blur...We felt as if we'd traversed a thousand years of human development in one long day.

Rachel Donadio, *New York Times*, 22nd October 2006

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## ***From TIME:***

HOW MANY MOUNTAIN REFUGES in the Alps offer rose water to sprinkle on your hands and face after a hard day's hike? If that and other traditional Berber touches sound tempting, then look no further...than Kasbah du Toubkal's recently opened three-bedroom lodge.

Tala Skari, *TIME*, April 18, 2007

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### ***From Wanderlust:***

ONLY A DAY EARLIER I'd been in the hurly-burly of Marrakesh, gazing longingly at the peaks of the Atlas Mountains so clearly visible from the city's rooftops. By teatime I'd escaped, and within two hours was at a quiet trekking lodge owned by the Kasbah. It felt as if I'd stepped back a century...

Set in the hillside village of Aït Aïssa in the Azzaden Valley, the trekking lodge looked similar to other village houses; however, inside there was solar-powered underfloor heating and huge bathtubs for soothing weary trekkers' limbs...

I was greeted with mint tea on arrival. "Berber whiskey," grinned the cook as he served us on the little terrace, which had stupendous views across the valley to the snow-capped Toubkal Massif. It was sunset, and the deep pinks of the hills turned to dark purple as the moon rose; a few lights flickered on—electricity has only recently come to the valley...

In the morning I woke early and was drawn back to the terrace like a magnet. As the sun's rays reached it, the village slowly came to life. A young girl, all in red, pulled a reluctant black cow by a rope, her younger sister attempting to encourage it from behind with a stick nearly as big as herself while also leading a large and very round sheep. A small white donkey made its way up and down a steep track, transporting rocks...

The backdrop was an abstract of bright sunshine and dark shadows, with the occasional flash of a woman's vibrant outfit. The soundtrack was one of crowing cocks, braying donkeys and the rhythmic thud of corn being pounded...

Rounding the hillside I caught my first glimpse of the Kasbah du Toubkal, perched on an outcrop of rock. Despite seeing many photographs, it still took my breath away. Guests were sitting on the terraces—and I couldn't wait to join them. The terrain doesn't allow for a grand front entrance. Rather, you approach by mule or foot, open a huge wooden door and then walk through the gardens to the main building. Inside, I was greeted in the traditional Berber way: with rosewater, for washing my hands, and with a date, to dip into a bowl of milk...

...today there is accommodation for all budgets, right up to a superb three-bedroomed house with floor to ceiling plate-glass windows...and all but the 'Berber Salons' have superb views...

Lyn Hughes, *Wanderlust*, August/September 2010

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### ***From Condé Nast Traveller:***

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, it is now possible to walk the mountains in luxury...

Behind me was London, life, a busy week: ahead a moment of escape...

...the Kasbah, has over the past few years have turned it into one of the world's great mountain retreats...Kasbah du Toubkal is successful for many reasons, one of the most important of which is the owners' decision not to do anything without the approval of the people of Imlil...as a result the Kasbah still feels part of the community.... The cloud burned off, revealing a sight of such beauty that I had to sit and stare at it for some time, to be sure I'd remember it... This was what I had come for: a taste...The real wonder of the lodge lies in the contrasts and combination that have made it possible...the knowledge that you have walked here...that you are just 5 hours away from London and yet along way from home: in remote Morocco, high up a mountain, soaking tired legs in a big, hot bath; close to the stars and yet tucked up in bed.

Anthony Sattin, *Condé Nast Traveller*, December, 2007

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### ***From Sunday Times Travel magazine:***

One of the first 'country' properties to spring up close to Marrakech, this converted Kasbah—once the home of a feudal chieftain—remains a perennial favourite...

Views from the rooftops and terraces are film-set spectacular, so it's hardly surprising Martin Scorsese used it...and on your doorstep are endless walking trails through the surrounding mountains...

Kasbah du Toubkal invites comparisons with Sir Richard Branson's Kasbah Tamadot, which you pass on the way. It's not quite as luxurious as Sir Richard's property, but it has far superior views and at half the price, it easily has the edge in authentic character.

Sana Butler, *The Sunday Times Travel* magazine, August 2010

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This is just a small selection of numerous press articles that can be viewed in the [press section](#) of the Kasbah du Toubkal website.