

AMANJENA – MARRAKESH

As a donkey lugging a tattered old cart pulls up beside Amanjena's new BMW at a stoplight, the car's driver explains, "Marrakesh is a city of contrasts; that's what is unique here." Unique indeed. Marrakesh is a city thick with spices and smells, souks and the hymns of prayer poured out over loudspeakers. At once inspiring and overwhelming, calming and unsettling, the maze of red sand walls constructing the city's interior give no hint to the wonders of elaborate Riads tucked behind their unassuming facades.

Yet the density of these experiences—the olives piled high, the endless barrage of cushions, rugs, and slippers—are quickly forgotten driving out of the city toward the remote and unique Amanjena. Though pack mules and luxury cars coexist on the roadways there, beyond the gates of this palatial hotel the only contrast one is likely to find is the cool of the pool water against the heat of their skin.

The hotel, centered around a massive green reflecting pond, feels more like a private palace than a commercial venture. Lining the pond, palms gaze at their lean reflections while endless Moorish arches stretch into long corridors intent on framing every view with an eye for the dramatic. Surrounding these surreal visions, individual houses provide each guests with private living quarters fit with outdoor daybeds, fountains, and private gardens where meals can be taken in the privacy of one's borrowed home. Here, it's best to while away days by the pool, where people watching is at a premium. One afternoon, a pasty couple

with matching zinc-oxide covered noses lost themselves in Japanese comic books, while a handsome architect and his teenage daughter (or very young wife) socialized under sunhats. At night, guests wander out of their pavilions to find blankets and cushions set up on the lawn, where they are welcomed for cocktails and Moroccan folk music. A musician playing a homemade string instrument and whirling the black tassel on his Fez in delight could seem like a trite ploy but instead feels like a kind of velvety dream, only possible a certain distance from home.

Though many of the resorts guests may be basking in the 1%, the oddly low-key atmosphere makes sultan-worthy elegance feel both personal and down to earth. Aman hotels are a perfectly constructed dream about the way a life could be, but of course, what makes a dream so marvelous is that one has the contrast of waking up. ¹⁸

AMANJENA - ROUTE DE OUARZAZATE, KM 12, AMELKIS, 40000 MARRAKESH, WWW.AMANRESORTS.COM
18 SPACIOUS PAVILIONS & 6 MAISONS, JUST OUTSIDE THE CITY CENTER, FROM 800 € PER NIGHT