

# Hamмам – The Star of Moroccan Wellness

The enchanting land of Morocco presents a multitude of experiences, among which are its flourishing health and wellness offerings. The country has indeed seen developments in its tourism industry lately, and the local spas have particularly cultivated a significant market.

Morocco has proven to be a very desirable destination for travelers, despite not being known to be as sophisticated as its West Asian and Eastern European neighbors.



For one matter, the country's subtropical climate is an appealing attraction in itself. For another, many locals are fluent in Arabic or French, thus making it an ideal stop for Arabs and French-speaking tourists. The availability of affordable flights into the country has also made it more accessible, thus increasing the influx of visitors. With these current upward trends, Moroccan wellness tourism is foreseen to rival that of Tunisia's within the next several years. Currently, the country's wellness industry is one of the fastest growing markets in the MENA region, together with UAE and Israel.

Moroccan landscape boasts of numerous spas, hotels and resorts, each one a haven where visitors from over the world can take a refreshing, rejuvenating retreat. On offer are traditional therapeutic treatments that are distinctly Moroccan.

Beyond putting forth a remarkable spa experience, these establishments provide guests with a rich, cultural encounter: perhaps a taste of the local cuisine, or the delightful energy of a folk dance, and many other ways to revitalize the body or uplift the soul.

The most popular allurement is the hammam, or steam bath. It is a unique pleasure that every visitor should definitely try at least once. The traditional Moroccan hammam contains some ritual elements for relaxation and detoxification, starting with covering one's body in a mixture of water and ghassoul clay. This ghassoul clay (pronounced "rhassoul") is a special, organic material which draws out dirt and toxins from the skin, and is exclusively mined in Morocco's Atlas Mountains.



After this cleansing body mask, the participant is lathered with a black soap composed of olive oil and eucalyptus, to soften and prep the skin. What follows is a cool rose water rinse to soothe the body. The treatment is then finished with an indulgent argan oil rub. This luxurious oil is a product of Morocco, coveted throughout the world for its potent moisturizing and healing properties.

The various Moroccan wellness therapies make use of organic, native ingredients, many of which are produced only in the country. Apart from the ghassoul clay and the argan oil, spas also feature Rose Absolute essential oil from the Dades Valley, indulgent olive oil soaps, natural body scrub and an array of herbal remedies for the skin and hair.

Albeit growing steadily, Moroccan wellness industry and medical tourism still faces a number of challenges. One such difficulty is the lack of convenient cosmetic surgery facilities in the major tourist areas – however, that will be no longer a problem in a few years. New advancements are under way, including an upcoming medical hub to be developed by an Emirati corporation in Marrakesh. The impending improvements aim to draw foreign patients and retirees, and thus increase foreign interest and further enliven the country’s medical tourism.

Here is a selection of the most popular resorts, hotels and spas in Morocco that offer local ingredients:

### **Marrakech: Hotel Selman**

Situated at the foot of Morocco’s Atlas Mountains, Hotel Selman boasts of an enchanting milieu and charming accommodations, including five Moroccan riads. A riad is a traditional Moorish house with an interior garden and pool, embellished with ornate zellij tile. The hotel offers its guests hydrotherapy treatments, curative clay massages, and facial masks.



### **Marrakech: La Mamounia Hotel and Spa**

La Mamounia has garnered numerous awards through the years, not the least of which is the distinction of having the best spa in the world (as selected by the readers of Conde Nast). With such a reputation to uphold, La Mamounia can be expected to provide its visitors with the most divine Moroccan wellness experience.

### **Casablanca: Le Doge Hotel and Spa**

Secluded in a quiet avenue in Casablanca's Art Deco district, Le Doge is an exclusive escape composed of only sixteen suites. Each suite is uniquely designed to correspond to an Art Deco artist. Le Doge turns the hammam into a pleasure that one can share with a significant other, while keeping things private and intimate. This is because hammams at Le Doge are spacious enough to accommodate two individuals at a time, making it possible for a couple or a pair of friends to enjoy the treatment together.

### **Fes: Ain Azleten Hammam**

Ain Azleten Hammam allows tourists to experience the traditional ritual in a Medina-style bath house. The hammam provides services for men in the morning and late evenings. Women are welcome to enjoy the hammam experience in the afternoon.

### **Rabat: Hammam Lalou**

Popular with locals as well, Hammam Lalou is an authentic Moroccan steam bath. Patrons can lie comfortably on a heated floor as their bodies are smoothed by a black olive oil soap, with the help of a special exfoliating glove.

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