

# the **S**aturday

Your weekend starts here • [thesun.co.uk/travel](http://thesun.co.uk/travel)

**NEWS**

**HELLO** – is anybody there?

With a bit of luck, you are reading this while on holiday.

The great exodus began yesterday after many workers realised that by booking just three days' leave they could have a break of 11 days because of the

Easter, Royal Wedding and May bank holidays.

VisitEngland say 10.3million of us are taking a break in the UK and a further two million are estimated to be heading abroad.

John McEwan, of travel association ABTA, said: "The Royal Wedding bank holiday has given a boost to bookings."



**NEWS**

**LUXURY** hotel chain Von Essen have gone into administration.

Their holding company is reported to have missed payments on loans worth £250million. A spokesman for administrators Ernst & Young said individual hotels were unaffected and would carry on as normal. He added:

"The hotels have got their own sources of finance that allow them to continue to operate. They will honour all bookings and continue to take new bookings."

Von Essen run 29 properties including Cliveden, Berkshire, pictured who have introduced the world's most expensive afternoon tea at £550 for two.

**HOT SPOT**

IT'S 28°C in GRENADA – seven nights' all-inclusive at the 4★ LaSource, Grenada, is from £1,279, leaving Gatwick between May 11 and June 22. See [tropicalsky.co.uk](http://tropicalsky.co.uk) or call 0844 332 9349.

**HOT SPOT**

IT'S 26°C in EGYPT – seven nights' all-inclusive at the 4★ Amwaj Blue Beach in Soma Bay is from £350, leaving Gatwick on May 3. See [thomascookstyle.com](http://thomascookstyle.com), call 0844 412 5970 or visit Thomas Cook.

Edited by **LISA MINOT**



# travel

5 pages of holidays

## TIME TO UP THE ANTE IN ANTIGUA

**... ANTIGUA ANTICS:** Seven nights' all-inclusive at the 4★ Verandah, Antigua, costs from £999. Leaves Gatwick between June 1 and 15. See [tropicalsky.co.uk](http://tropicalsky.co.uk) or call 0844 332 9349.

**... AMSTERDAM AWAY-DAYS:** Four nights' room-only at the 4★ Westcord Fashion Hotel is from £290. Leaves Luton on May 5. See [ebookers.com](http://ebookers.com).

**... EASTBOURNE BOUND:** Four nights' half-board – including drinks at the bar from 7.30pm to 10.30pm, a glass of wine with dinner, tea and biscuits and nightly entertainment at the Bay Burlington Hotel – is from £199. The deal includes luxury return coach travel and sightseeing excursions to Brighton, Bexhill-on-Sea and Alfriston. Offer is available throughout May. Call 0844 209 7143, go to [shearings.com](http://shearings.com) or call into a travel agent.

**LATES FOR...**

**... CRETE ESCAPE:** Seven nights self-catering at the 4★ Koni Village, Stalis, is from £141. Leaves Gatwick on May 6. See [directholidays.co.uk](http://directholidays.co.uk) or call 0844 879 8191.

**... HAMMAMET TIME:** Seven nights' all-inclusive at the 4★ Sentido Phénicia, Hammamet, Tunisia, costs from £378. Leaves Manchester on May 8. Go to [thomascookstyle.com](http://thomascookstyle.com), call 0844 412 5970 or just visit the nearest Thomas Cook or Going Places outlet.

**... TURKISH DELIGHT:** Seven nights' all-inclusive at the 3★ Marmaris Park is from £265. Leaves Birmingham on May 14. Call 0871 423 8642 or see [monarch.co.uk](http://monarch.co.uk).

**... COSTA BLANCA BARGAIN:** Seven nights' self-catering at the 3★ Buenavista Apartments is from £145. Leaves Gatwick on May 4. Call 0871 423 8642 or go to [monarch.co.uk](http://monarch.co.uk).

**... TERRIFIC TENERIFE:** Seven nights' self-catering at the 4★ Barcelo Varadero Hotel is from £198. Leaves Manchester on May 2. See [onthebeach.co.uk](http://onthebeach.co.uk) or call 0871 911 0202.

## FAB FOOD, MARVELLOUS MESSAGES AND BEAUTIFUL BEACHES

**ON a balmy Moroccan evening we stepped off the plane at Marrakech airport... to see snow.**

Leaving Britain we hadn't expected that in this warm part of the world but the beautiful view was the Atlas Mountains topped with the white stuff.

Visiting them, we were told, is best in spring when the almond blossom is particularly fragrant and the temperatures are comfortable. My

partner Ben and I wanted to experience the old Moroccan way of life, so we booked riad (traditional) accommodation through [hipMarrakech.com](http://hipMarrakech.com).

They have a free service to organise travel guides, restaurant bookings and taxis.

We reached Riad Chayma in Bab Doukkala through a lively food souk then an ochre passageway to an imposing doorway – this was where we were to stay for five magical days.

We were greeted by the concierge,

Abdul, who led us up a marble staircase laden with rose petals. Our room was stunning and decorated in traditional muted colours.

Dinner of chicken and lamb tagine on the terrace under the stars was a fairytale ending to our first day.

The next day we made a must-see visit to Nikki Beach. Just like its sister in Marbella, it's full of luxurious leather beds, soothing music and Balearic beats.

After catching a few rays we took our sun-scorched bodies to see the Atlas Mountains in all their glory.

An hour's drive led us to lunch at Riad Bab Ourika with views of the mountains.

It's great to spend the afternoon dozing by the pool, with only the sound of water, footsteps or the breeze.

Rooms are inexpensive, spacious and lunch is reasonable at around £10 for a main course.

We opted for homegrown olives, a "Berber burger" and a juicy tuna Nicoise salad drenched in olive oil. This was our favourite day by far.

The next day found us on a tour of Marrakech with a guide organised by [hipMarrakech](http://hipMarrakech.com) – this costs 30 to 40 euros.

He took us along winding streets, talking to us about the history of the city and the origin of the Berbers while saving us from locals flogging everything from scarves to bags to pouffes.

We stopped to visit Ben Youssef Medersa, an academic chapel and home to beautiful art and architecture.

It was more tricky to decide what to do in the evenings.

### Swanky

While the local cuisine consists of tagines, tagines and more tagines, or kebabs, there are lots of options for alternative fodder.

One night we dined at the swanky Maison MK, also a riad. It was featured on Jamie Oliver's Jamie Does... Marrakech. We were certainly not disappointed.

To experience a little nightlife and to swerve traditional Moroccan cuisine we went to restaurant-come-nightclub Bo Zin.

I had fillet steak cooked to perfection, washed down with three cheeky rose petal bellinis.

You **MUST** try a traditional hammam treatment as a couple – it'll leave your skin feeling lush by using black soap and rose scented clay.

We decided to have dinner at Les Deux Tours, a medieval-feel restaurant where chef Wolfgang Grobauer created some mouth-watering Mediterranean dishes.

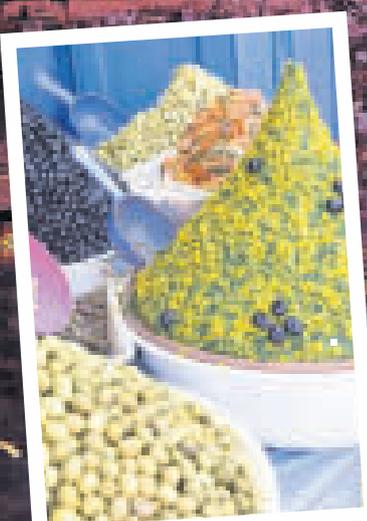
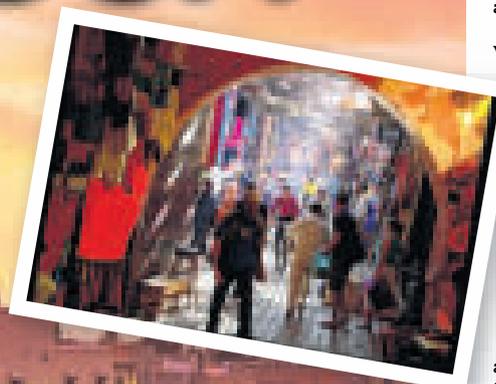
Dinner is served until very late and drinks continue to be poured until you decide you want to retire to your room.

We had a sneaky peek at a suite and were very impressed – seven out of 35 have their own pools! You can lose absolutely hours here – and we'll definitely be back.

Amid the madness of the souk and medina, the perfect way to unwind is retreating to the sanctuary of your room. So taking time out to stay at a beautiful riad is an absolute must.

**LAUREN NAYLOR**

# Marrakech excess



**GO: MARRAKECH**

FLIGHTS with Ryanair or EasyJet at [ryanair.com](http://ryanair.com) or [easyjet.com](http://easyjet.com). Riad Chayma, Les Deux Tours and all restaurants booked via [hipMarrakech.com](http://hipMarrakech.com), 020 8816 7065. Bab Ourika rooms from 150 euros, [babourika.com](http://babourika.com). HipMarrakesh book activities.