

ISSUE 53 ... NEW YEAR 2026

# LIVING IN



**FREE**  
... PASS ME ON  
WHEN YOU  
HAVE  
READ ME!

# SUFFOLK

**Gainsborough's House ... the road ahead**

**Feeling good ... the blind physio**

**Shaping up ... the clay museum**

**WINNER!**  
...EAST ANGLIA'S  
BEST ADVERTISING  
PUBLICATION

# THREE HOURS TO PARADISE!

*Living In...* editor Angela Hagan is still floating on air after a lavish, battery-recharging stay on the west coast of Morocco ...

**T**he unforgiving east wind and icy rain battered us as we dragged our suitcases up to the concourse at Stansted airport. It wasn't the best of starts. I'd just stepped off a frantic magazine deadline and the adrenaline was refusing to abate. Combined with the few hours' sleep before this early morning flight fuelled by a motorway coffee resembling hairspray, I wondered if it was all worth it.

Had I known what lay ahead, I would have happily samba'd complete with maracas in hands and fruit on my head, straight onto that plane.

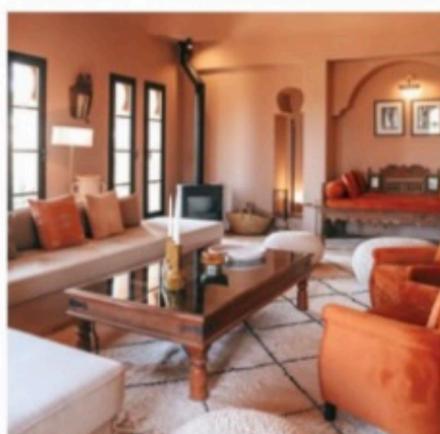
An effortless three-and-a-half hour direct flight from a grey Blighty saw us emerge from the plane to vast blue skies and swaying palm trees. "It would have taken us double the time to get to Scotland," said my delighted husband as he peeled off his winter jacket.

Our home for the next five days was an easy 15-minute drive away from Essaouira's airport - the magnificent Le Jardin des Douars. Set in 7.5 acres of rose and thyme-scented botanical gardens with a backdrop of exotic birdsong; it was like

we'd stepped into an alternate universe. This hotel offers luxury villas, heated pools, alfresco dining, hammam and spa - plus a rather snazzy Club des Douars with padel courts, leisure activities and bar.

I could feel the stress melting away under the soothing African sun, as we settled down for a wonderful lunch.

Our suite featured soothing ochre tones



complemented by Berber designs and a huge comfy bed with an opulent bathroom fit for royalty. Little touches, like the complimentary handmade Argan oil bath products, creams and facial mud scrubs, only added to my joy (I am easily pleased).

Some of the suites are located in the main building and are perfect for families. Others, like ours, more discreet and hidden in the lush gardens bursting with fig trees. Every evening we'd arrive home to find a freshly built fire all ready to light and gaze at in our cosy suite.

Meal times at Jardin Des Douars were special; catering to all

tastes. If it's not on the menu, it doesn't mean they can't make it! They offer a blend of Mediterranean flavours often featuring fresh fish caught in the Atlantic that very morning. Their tagines are the star of the show, with the main spotlight on their monkfish tajine à la Chermoula.

Grab a hotel shuttle to Essaouira (just ten minutes away) and you will discover a

**"I could feel the stress melting away under the soothing African sun"**

picturesque port city on the Atlantic coast, known for its laid-back vibe and stunning whitewashed medina (it's a UNESCO site). Big, crunchy white waves mean it's a surfer's delight, with historic ramparts and an ancient, bustling fishing port, for the culture junkies. Essaouira is a rich melting pot with Arabic, Berber, Jewish, and French influences, attracting worldwide artists and musicians to its Gnaoua music scene. Its annual jazz festival is held every June.

Perhaps Essaouira's biggest claim to fame is that parts of Game of Thrones were filmed on the ancient battlement walls overlooking the aqua ocean. Fans would know it as Astapor, the Slaver's Bay city (where icy blonde Daenerys Targaryen acquired her Unsullied army).

We felt it was so much more than a giant film location. There is much to experience - the azure blues and geometric patterns jumping out of every nook; the ancient bustling fish market and boats; the giant carts of freshly picked figs precariously wheeled through cobbled streets; endless bowls of tagines bejewelled with pomegranates; the welcoming souks stuffed with boho handmade Berber rugs, thuya wood crafts and Argan oil products and cheap as chips jewellery. Trust me, you will be the most popular person in your family when you bring home your jewellery haul for teens and twenty-somethings. Essaouira stole our hearts and made it into our top ten of laid-back holiday destinations.

If you've always fancied the idea of Morocco but can't quite face the frantic hubbub of Marrakech, Essaouira is the place for you.

And that warm embrace of Hotel Jardin Des Douars just a three-hour flight away ..."

● Visit, [jardindesdouars.com](http://jardindesdouars.com)

