

Sunshine and Serenity at Le Jardin des Douars in Morocco



After weathering cold winter nights and long dark days, we're all feeling the need for a little sunshine, which is really easy if you're happy to pop on a plane for a 10 hour flight to the Caribbean, but what about somewhere a little closer to home?

We've found the perfect place - with temperatures averaging 22C, won't have you feeling jet lagged for 48 hours, only takes 3 hours from London to get there and you'll arrive still in the same time zone - The charming little Moroccan port of Essaouira and I couldn't wait to explore and experience it for myself.

With a busy few months behind us, we decided to visit Essaouira, for a few days of pure relaxation, with a little exploring thrown in. We had found the most perfect retreat for the relaxing part of our trip Le Jardin des Douars a hidden gem (I know a lot of hotels are described as this, but this really was) - the terracotta washed Moroccan palace style buildings set in absolutely stunning gardens was an oasis of calm and tranquility.

Hidden pathways lead us to our room - A Luxe room (on the ground floor) with its own terrace that overlooks the adult only swimming pool and just steps away from the spa. Traditionally Moroccan inside with a comfortable King-sized bed, rugs and candles dotted around, a large beldi style shower in the bathroom and an inviting fireplace (the temperature does drop in the evenings), with a regularly stocked basket of wood all blend together effortlessly to create a real hideaway to enjoy the simpler things in life without any distractions.

Having freshened up, it was time to head over to the main hotel, another example of Moroccan architecture, terracotta pillars, tiled floors,

hidden nooks and crannies, open fires, mosaics and of course more candles. Steps lead down from the hotel to the gorgeous terrace surrounded by more of the beautiful gardens, scattered with wicker sofas with large plush cushions, you could sit here listening and watching the world go by for hours, but we'd come specifically to enjoy a glass of wine (similar prices to the UK) and watch the sunset over the hills, a sight that simply takes your breath away. Nothing is too much trouble for the staff here; they are attentive and always smiling.

Once the sun has gone down the temperature certainly does change so we retired inside to finish our drinks in front of the roaring fire in Le Ksar, sumptuously decorated in red and orange tones, with a large cushioned lounge area in front of the fire (this is Le Jardin des Douars casual dining room) friendly and lively, a great space for adults and children to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner. But as it was just the two of us and it was about getting away from it all we ate dinner in the adults only La Table des Douars - an intimate dining room lit only by small lamps with an assortment of mirrors adorning the walls and cozy nooks. The menu included dishes such as Linguine with courgettes, garden herbs juice, grilled almonds and parmesan - Lamb shanks, pea puree and parmesan chips - Crunchy pan seared foie gras and Leek confit with beetroot and cranberry, all of which were beautifully presented and had a definite Moroccan feel with a slight French influence. The ultimate foodie pleasure for me though was the dessert a 'Tea Gourmand' (or coffee if you prefer) a cup of tea served with small portions of desserts - I do believe that this little delight is a secret that needs to be shared.

