



## The Project: Dar Les Cigognes

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Dar Les Cigognes is the creation of owners Eben Lenderking and Tanja Tibaldi, who discovered the dilapidated riads during a tour of Morocco in 1999.

The traditional Arab townhouse, originally a merchant's house with a mandate from the neighbouring palace, had walls dating back to the 1600s. The decorative features had changed, or removed, but the structure remained. They instantly fell in love with the property and within weeks had acquired it and embarked on their lengthy and loving renovation, with the aim of creating a truly luxurious, atmospheric and unique small hotel for Marrakech.

The couple harnessed the assistance of Charles Boccara, regarded as one of the most dynamic and creative architects in Morocco (whose previous projects include the Marrakech Opera House). Together, and with a team of 50 craftsmen and artists, it took two years of back-breaking work before the first phase was completed and opened in December 2001. The second phase, completed in October 2004, saw the expansion into a neighbouring courtyard house.

They named the hotel Dar Les Cigognes - 'House of Storks' - after the graceful birds that perch on the ramparts of the Royal Palace of Hassan II directly opposite the hotel.

At the heart of Dar Les Cigognes's conception was a desire to reflect the many facets of the rich cultural and artistic traditions of Moorish art and architecture. Each of the lavishly elegant bedrooms has been individually conceived and created, with names that reflect their 'theme'.

Throughout, the property is furnished with locally sourced carpets, tapestries, furniture and decorative details, such as ornately carved wooden doors, brass ceiling lamps, and hammered silver mirrors and basins.

All of this interior design is the work of Tanja, who says: "The ethos of the hotel is to offer an oasis of calm as an antidote to the hustle and bustle of the souks and the Jemaa el Fna square, which are just a short walk away. It's very much a hand made house. Every single one of the tiles has been cut by hand, while the painting and plasterwork involved craftsmen spending literally weeks on their backs painting and carving the ceilings with delicate brushes the size of an eye-liner."

Even the connecting archways that allow some bedrooms to be paired as larger, 2-bedded apartments are adorned with frescoes that were hand painted by the former Director of the Art Department of the University of Baghdad. Other materials employed include walls in varying hues of *tadelakt*, a time-consuming plastering technique that leaves a marble-like, shiny surface.

Dar Les Cigognes  
refined elegance in the medina of Marrakech  
[www.lescigognes.com](http://www.lescigognes.com)

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