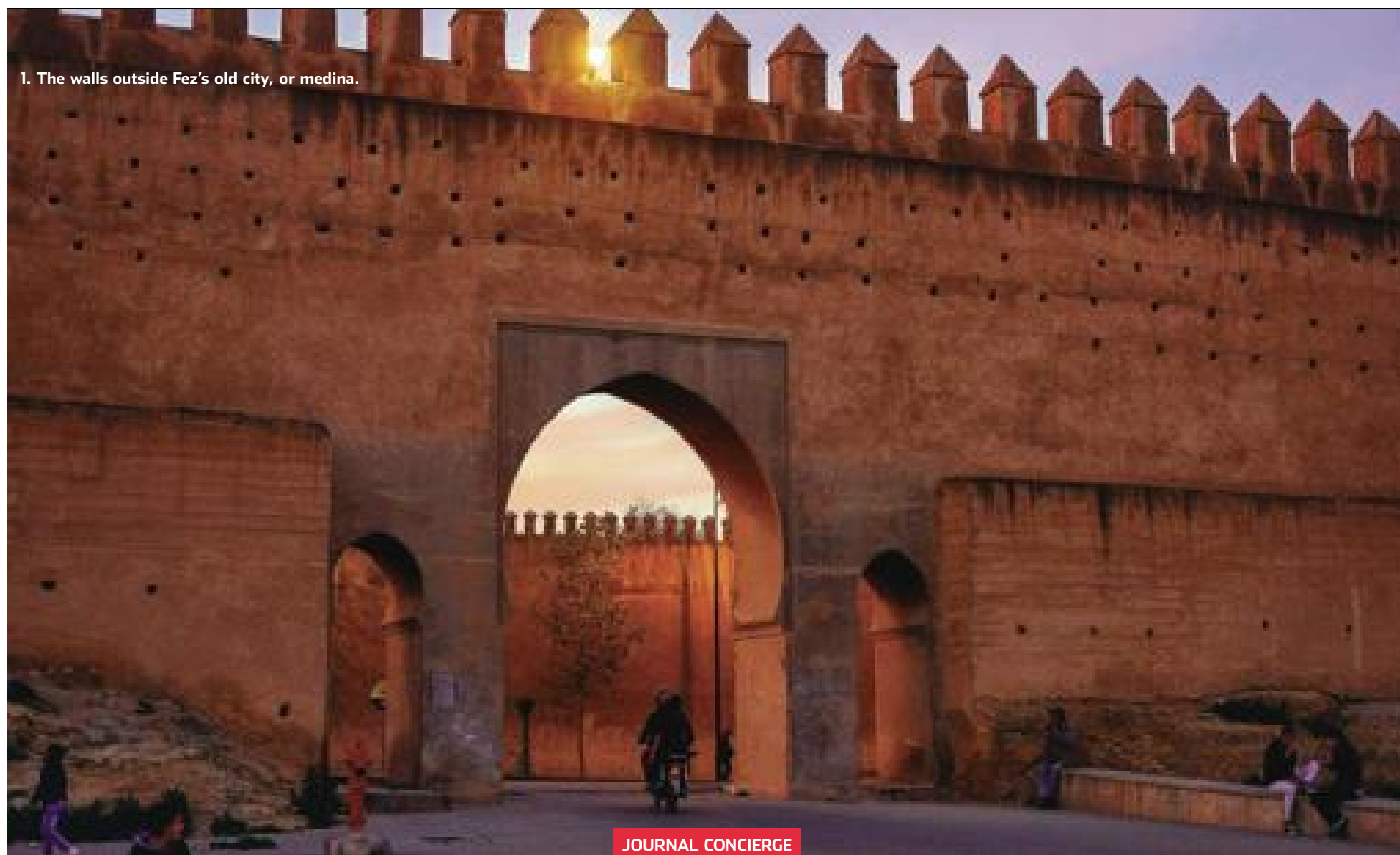


ADVENTURE & TRAVEL



1. The walls outside Fez's old city, or medina.

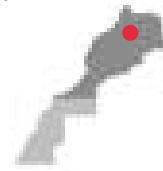
JOURNAL CONCIERGE
An Insider's Guide

Fez

Morocco's cultural capital, time-trapped for centuries, is inching into the modern world—with a kingly nudge

MARRAKESH MAY garner more pages and gush in glossy magazines, but traditionalists—and those who romanticize sepia-colored North African cityscapes—tend to put their money on Fez. Founded in the 8th and 9th centuries, and historically the center of learning in the Arab world, Fez, in the foothills of the Middle Atlas mountains, ranks among Morocco's most rewardingly preserved cities. Its dusty streets lead to faded palaces, hidden gardens and obsessively tiled mosques and madrasas (Islamic centers of study). While mod-

ern urban centers have sprouted up around town in the last few decades, craftspeople, from tanners to coppersmiths, still ply their pre-digital trades in Fez's walled old city [1], or medina. Tradition-bound Fez resists evolution, but ambitious development plans, instigated by King Mohammed VI (whose wife is from Fez), as well as an influx of Moroccan and international designers and entrepreneurs mean that change is inching its way in. Here, four Fez dwellers share their top discoveries, both new and very, very old. —Gisela Williams



6. Café Clock



2. Al-Attarine Madrasa



5. Ruined Garden



4. Hotel Sahrai



3. Artisan Project



THE FASHION DESIGNER Ibrahim Zeghari Mouhib

Founder and designer of Fez-based accessories brand Mouhib



THE CHEF Najat Kaanache

Moroccan-born host of a Spanish cooking show and chef/owner of Nur, in the Fez medina



THE JEWELRY DESIGNER Rebecca Raft

The Australian founder and designer of Fez- and Bali-based jewelry brand Bouvier



THE WRITER Tara Stevens

Travel and food writer, and founder of Dar Namir Cooking School in Fez



FEZ FARE // Berrada Family Restaurant The street that leads to Souk el Attarine is loaded with action and delicious street food, but this is my favorite place to go. It serves extremely authentic traditional Fez dishes such as Harira soup. There is no menu; you need to choose from the dishes at the front. *Souk el Attarine*

SNACK AND STROLL // Plan-it Morocco A small Fez-based travel company owned by two really cool women, Plan-it Morocco runs a great tasting tour of the medina. *plan-it-morocco.com*

MARKET FORCES // medin'art The owner of this concept store, Laurence, works mostly with Moroccan-based designers to offer contemporary designs made with traditional techniques. *19 Bis Zkak Ihjar Talaa Sghira*

TRUNK SHOW // The Henna Souk Almost every day I have my mint tea in the Henna Souk, a tranquil place in the medina with two massive trees in the center and surrounded by small shops that sell ceramics and henna.

BYGONE BATH // Riad Laaroussa The hammam at this riad [a traditional house] transports you 500 years back in time thanks to the patina of the walls, the smell of the eucalyptus and the beautiful light. *3 Derb Bechara, riad-laaroussa.com*

DESIGN DUO // Artisan Project [3] and Craft Draft Nina Alami of Artisan Project and Hamza El Fasiki of Craft Draft do a lot to protect the old crafts. Nina produces traditionally made scarves in modern colors. Craft Draft runs workshops where you can learn to make a copper tray. *By appointment only, artisanprojectinc.com; craftdraft.org*

CHAPTER AND VERSE // American Language Center Bookstore Opened by one of the first American expats to live in Fez, it has every book about Morocco you could ever wish to find. *2 Rue Ahmed El Hiba, alcfzbook.com*

CAPITAL COUSCOUS // Darori Resto It's run by a Moroccan woman who grew up in France and her retired doctor husband. They serve lots of tea and outstanding couscous. *Place R'habet Zbib*

TIME TO EAT // Café Clock [6] I end up there a few times a week for the Berber eggs, which are baked in a spicy tomato sauce, or the beautiful lamb burger. Musicians or storytellers often perform at night. *7 Derb el Magana, fez.cafeclock.com*

ALMOND JOY // Cremerie La Place One of my favorite places to watch the city go by is this cafe. I order a *kawa khala* [espresso] and glass of orange juice from the lovely Mustapha. His almond cookies taste like angels made them. (Actually, his wife makes them.) *Place Seffarine*

SUITE DEAL // Dar Seffarine Kate Kvalvik, a designer, and Alaa Said, an architect, opened this guesthouse after they did a wonderful job renovating the building. The bridal suite is amazing. *From about \$80 a night, darseffarine.com*

A WOMAN'S TOUCH // Al-Qarawiyyin Library Founded by a woman in the 9th century, it's one of the world's oldest libraries, and has just been renovated by a female Moroccan architect. The woodwork is beautiful. *alqarawiyyine.com*

NIGHT OUT // Hotel Sahrai [4] Located on a hill overlooking the Ville Nouvelle [New Town], this new hotel bar is the one place in town I can put on a pair of heels and not feel out of place. It's the best place for a sunset drink. *hotelsahrai.com*

FOOT LOOSE // Le Jardin des Biehn I love to come to this hidden hotel with a lush garden in the medina for a hammam or a pedicure on the porch before lunch and a glass of wine. *jardindes-biehn.com/en*

THAI SURPRISE // Maison Moi Anan At this unlikely treasure, fashion designer Anan Sorutham cooks sensational Thai food like aubergines and prawns in coconut milk based on what his mother used to make. Bag a coveted spot on the roof terrace. *maisonmoianan.com*

OLD SCHOOL // Madrasa al-Sahrij Generally I prefer visiting the old madrasas and palaces more than museums. My favorite is Madrasa al-Sahrij, in the Andalusian quarter, where the reflecting pool casts groovy optical illusions.

Plus, don't miss... Al-Attarine Madrasa [2] This 14th-century religious school has a courtyard that's a superb example of traditional craft, from its colorful tiled floors to the intricate carvings. *Next to the Al-Qarawiyyin Library // Coin Berbère* This complex of four stores is jammed with antique pottery, 17th- and 18th-century wooden doors and rare textiles. *67 Talaa Kebira, in the Haddadine quarter // Nafis Hicham at Talaa Kebira* One of the ultimate food experiences in the medina is a tasting of wild honey at this beloved shop in the honey souk. *8 Fondouk Kaat Smen // Ruined Garden [5]* More about the romantic atmosphere of its overgrown garden than the food, this popular meeting place is run by British expat Robert Johnstone, formerly of the Ivy in London. *15 Derb Idrissy, Sidi Ahmed Chaoui, ruinedgarden.com*