For our editors and contributors, three days in any city usually means a different bed every night. The running joke in our office is that unless a high-end property is truly special, something called luxury fatigue sets in by the last day. In other words, the miles of marble or omnipresent butler can feel gratuitous if not oppressive. What we prize most is the uniqueness of hotels—stalwarts of authenticity in the age of global homogeneity. Because in the end, it’s the little things—waking to the call to prayer at El Fenn in Marrakech, or the mood lighting that makes everyone feel like a sexier version of themselves at the historic Soho House bar in Istanbul. As hotel obsessives, we know that where you stay can determine the fate of your trip, that a hotel must clear some very high hurdles in order to justify your spending the money and time away from the kids, the spouse, or the office. What follows are our impassioned recommendations for the hotels we visit time and again—and daydream about long after checkout.
An ODE to HOTELS in Marrakech

Even more so than the Jardin Majorelle, with its iconic electric-blue villa and canary-yellow planters, or the Carnival-esque Jemaa el Fna Square, hotels here have the power to transport. Sitting in the grand marble lobby of Es Saadi, a hint of orange blossoms and cigarettes in the air, you can almost convince yourself that it’s 1968 and Keith and Mick are about to walk by. At the Royal Mansour, you’ll play out a modern One Thousand and One Nights fantasy in a private riad with your own rooftop terrace and hammam. La Mamounia, on the other hand, is one big fabulous spectacle. There’s nothing subtle about it, from the doormen dressed in billowing white pants, Jez, and red velvet cape to the exquisite peacock feather–hued zellige tiles over nearly every surface (for Moroccan minimalism—white tile, neutral textiles, and cream Beni Ourain rugs—stay at the new Mandarin Oriental just outside the city). If your idea of Marrakech is waking to the call to prayer echoing from the Koutoubia Mosque and sipping mint tea in the square, then an Old City riad turned hotel is the way to go, and Vanessa Branson’s El Fenn is the best in the category. Not sure which version of Marrakech you want? Choose one and just go with it.

REBECCA MISNER

GOLD LIST

Photograph courtesy El Fenn

Inside the halls of El Fenn.