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White-Hot Tangier: Where to Be in 2024

Jamie Creel and Marco Scatran's home, Dar Zera, in the Kasbah, Tangier

Tangier: Creative and Design Hot Spot

By Diane Dorrans Sacks.
Photographs this page from the book
Destinations: Jean-Louis Deniot,
Rizzoli. Photography Anour Akrouh and
Peter Rodger.

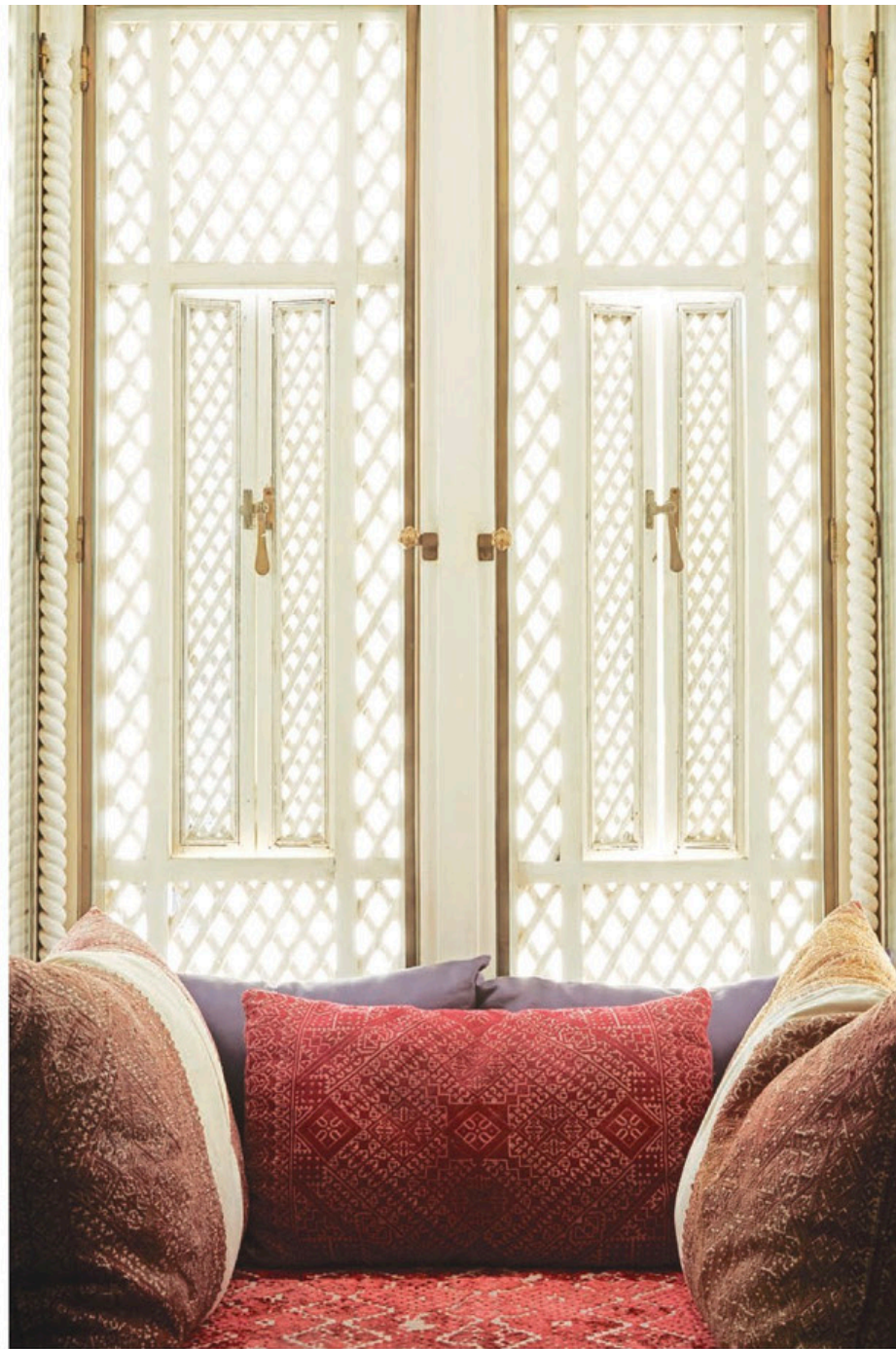
Leading international interior designer/architect Jean-Louis Deniot lives in Paris and has been inspired by exuberant trips to Morocco for more than three decades. Fifteen years ago, he discovered Tangier. It was love at first sight of the crenellated, white-walled old town, lush gardens, and the splash of the blue Strait of Gibraltar in the sun-struck distance.

With his longtime partner, William Holloway, Deniot soon acquired one of the most beautiful residences and garden estates on Old Mountain to the east of the old town. From his windows, he gazes across to the Spanish coast, with the Mediterranean to the east and the Atlantic to the west. Geographic paradise. Mesmerizing.

Now Tangier has emerged as a white-hot artistic scene, with an exciting new generation of Tangier creative talents in the spotlight. Tangier's white walls are sparkling, the city has been painted and polished, and the 17th-century Kasbah has been restored, all with the blessing of King Mohammed VI and the royal family. "Tangier is a living culture, and I love today's vibe, energy," says Deniot, who is immersed in multiple nonprofit arts groups and fundraisers. "I admire this new appreciation of ancient traditions, Moroccan woven fabrics, classic fashions, handcrafted decor, rugs, and new art."

It's a kaleidoscopic pivot, he says, with revered handcrafts reinterpreted with a kick of glam-rock and psychedelic colors — a Technicolor dream. "The very cosmopolitan new community of fashion designers, painters, artisans, and their studios, shops, and workshops are framed by the beauty of Tangier," he says. "They're renovating Art Deco residences and Portuguese palaces with a new spirit of style and hospitality.





Charming cafes and patisseries are popping up. Three new museums have opened in the Kasbah. Tangier has never looked so beautiful.”

The heady days of Paul Bowles, the Rolling Stones, Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé, and assorted exiles are long gone. More lasting influences began when legendary antique dealers and designers — Londoners Christopher Gibbs, Robert Kime, and Veere Grenney, the Colefax & Fowler gang, and a dizzy list of chic French designers (Bruno Frisoni, Hervé Van Der Straeten) — descended on Tangier, set up residences, and left their Moroccan-inflected mark. Sultanate palaces, colonial villas, and former embassies are turned into boltholes and hotels. Now there’s a boast that every

other visitor/resident is an interior designer.

Tangier has a noble history to draw upon. After the indigenous Berbers, the region became a Phoenician trading post in the 1st millennium BC. It later became a Carthaginian settlement and was subsequently ruled by the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, Portuguese, the British, and, memorably, the French. In the Souk and in the Medina, polyglot voices float through the jasmine-scented air.

“Tangier, surrounded by my friends and the lively world of Moroccan creatives, is where I feel my happiest,” said Deniot. “Tangier means freedom. I’ve been coming here for almost two



Photos this page: Bruno Frisoni and Herve Van Der Straeten’s home, Dar Baba. From the book *Inside Tangier*, Vendome Press. Photographs Guido Taroni.

decades and I still have much of the region to discover. In the meantime, I’m exploring every inch of Tangier. Every day is an inspiration.”

(Continued)



“**Tangier** is super social. Parties buzz with gossip and **inspiring** conversations. At any fête, you meet the **most fascinating creatives** — and make world-spanning **friendships** and **connections for life.**”

— Erica Lennard, photographer

Bruno Frisoni and Herve Van Der Straeten’s home, Dar Baba. From the book *Inside Tangier*, Vendome Press. Photograph Guido Taroni

This page: Veere Greeney's home, Gazebo. Photographs from the book *Veere Greeney: Seeking Beauty*, Vendome Press. Photography Francesco Lagnese.



Jean-Louis Deniot's Tangier: What to See, Where to Shop and Swoon

Design and Fashion

Topolina

Isabelle Dallemang and her son Pierre-Henry kick up the color palette for the neon-hued interiors of their exciting fashion and design shop in the Medina. I recently acquired an exceptional Directoire-style armchair covered in a petit-point tapestry. I love their new limited-edition bronze tables and bamboo/rattan furniture collections. Woven silk pillows I adore, plus cheetah-print jackets with emerald silk lining. If you love shocking pink, this is your nirvana. @topolinashop.

Las Chicas

Brilliant. Moroccan filmmaker Farida Benlyazid restored a Portuguese mansion to create the first Tangier concept store. I spend hours here, taking vegetarian lunch on the balcony, checking vintage jewels, lucky charms, and embroidered slippers. A must-visit here is fashion designer Jaimal Odedra and his new Baba (men and women) fashion collections. I recently ordered a Baba indigo jacket and an ivory robe in silk with a long black tassel belt. Super-chic. Tip: Odedra recently opened a new Baba boutique near the Jardin Majorelle in Marrakech. @laschicasdetanger.

New Tangier

I admire the elegance of Tangier-born fashion designer Kenza Bennani who custom-designs djellabas, kaftans, and long silk brocade dresses that Moroccan film stars wear on the red carpet. Her sustainable fashion label New Tangier is superbly handcrafted in luscious color-saturated linens, printed cottons, and silks. I especially admire that she showcases the savoir faire of local weavers and skilled artisans. Set in her family's handsome historic residence in Marshan. newtangier.com.

Kasbah Collective

This very happening gallery is proof that the next generation offers exciting new ways of seeing Tangier's beauty. The founder is the son of Boutique Majid's owner, the world-famous textiles specialist, so he knows traditional crafts. Floral-embroidered



Here and above, Veere Greeney's home, Gazebo. Photographs from the book *Veere Greeney: Seeking Beauty*, Vendome Press. Photographs Francesco Lagnese.



babouches! Long Ikat-weave jackets look cool with jeans. And he loves to tweak them with limited-edition decor and fashion in bold colors, vivid embroidery. My friends love his hand-painted denim jackets to buy and wear out the door. kasbahcollective.com.

Serendipity: Markets

In the medina and throughout Tangier, there is a sense of dusty treasures to be discovered. I heard the legend that someone once at a dusty market found a portfolio of drawings by Francis Bacon, who lived in Tangier in the '50s. Impromptu galleries and flea

markets may yield old hand-painted tiles or vintage silk embroidered kaftans (for pillows). I've found modernist pottery of great character, hand-blown Venetian glass, vintage postcards, and cloisonné bowls, and I'm always on the hunt for antique Moroccan lanterns with colored faceted glass to enhance my interiors.

Antiques

Boutique Majid

The legendary Abdelmajid Rais El Fenni is one of the great antique dealers in the

world. His prismatic three-story gallery is the treasured source for European royalty, top decorators, and textile collectors for decades. His textiles from traditional weavers are richly detailed and exquisite. I acquire Fes embroidered textiles and treasures from all over North Africa, including Mali and Gabon. I can spend hours here in the Souk, looking through stacks of Majid's antique silks. Impeccable. He is passionate about his wares, and rightly so. boutiquemajid.com.

Galerie Tindouf and Bazar Tindouf

These two much-admired brothers are among my favorite antique sources. Many of the great houses of Tangier have been decorated from these two rare and fabulous galleries. I've found great treasures, including old English oil portraits, silver and bronze chandeliers, jewelry, and a fantastic Syrian mother-of-pearl mirror.

Books and Culture

Les Insolites

Stéphanie Gaou founded her lively multilingual book shop/gallery/performance space in 2010. On the shelves are classic books of Moroccan and French literature, plus volumes by exciting emerging writers. Stephanie is very connected to cultural festivals throughout the year. @lesinsolitesofficiel.

Librairie des Collones

Since 1949, this elegant bookshop (revived a decade ago by Pierre Bergé) has been Tangier's literary icon. I find design books, new voices of Moroccan writers, plus bound tomes on Moroccan paintings.

I've found reference portfolios of Matisse in Tangier and fascinating antique books of vintage photography. Elegant atmosphere. A book collector's dream.

Soul Music: Not To Be Missed

Les Fils du Détroit

In the magical Tangier evening, follow the lustrous sound of lute-like oud music and soft voices to a quiet corner of the Kasbah. Squeeze onto the club's banquettes and immerse in authentic Andalusian chanting



and strumming. Sip a glass of hot mint tea surrounded by the cadences of 15th-century Moorish Spain. @lesfilsdudetroit.

Beach Life

Minutes from the Medina

At the end of an intense day in the Souk we have miles of beaches for our weekend escape. Current favorites are Restaurant L'Océan, above the Atlantic, and its sister, Le Chiringuito Beach, on Achakar Beach. Le Chiringuito also has blue-and-white decor and a relaxed vibe plus the freshest seafood. Friends gather; it's all very relaxed. Twilight there is especially beautiful, with twinkling lights and a lovely haze over the ocean. Tangier at its best.

"In the **splendor** of the souk, I see **innumerable** plummy branches of floss silk, skeins of citron yellow, crimson, grasshopper green and pure purple. Then flanks of beaten copper, embroidered slippers, and pomegranate red of Morocco bindings for European bibliophiles."

— Edith Wharton, from the book *In Morocco*, 1920



Here and above, Jamie Creel and Marco Scarani's home, Dar Zero, in the Kasbah.