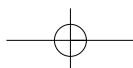
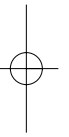
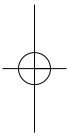
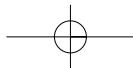


Nature trail

Fancy doing your bit for the environment?
Robin and **Jenny McKelvie** highlight some
of the Med's most **eco-friendly hotels**





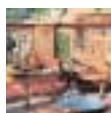
eco hotels

Over the last decade as issues surrounding climate change and environmental impact have come to the fore the hotel industry has responded with the emergence of the much vaunted 'eco hotel'. While some dubious hoteliers have just slapped the eco tag on their names, there have also been some impressive attempts to really take into account the environment and create tourism that works with nature. These genuine eco hotels offer guests the chance to stay somewhere that is relaxing and comfortable while also allowing their consciences to sleep a little easier.



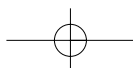
Kasbah du Toubkal

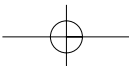
Near Marrakech, Morocco



In Morocco the multi-award-winning Kasbah du Toubkal (pictured), rated the 'Best Mountain Environment' in the 2004 Responsible Tourism Awards and 'Highly Commended' in British Airways' 2002 Tourism for Tomorrow awards, awaits. Situated atop a rocky outcrop, this eco hotel began life as a local ruler's residence. Today, the Berbers (a traditional North African tribe) welcome guests from across the world. Highlights are breathtaking vistas of the mountains and valleys, and a pervading serenity. Embracing responsible tourism the Kasbah's owners, Discover Ltd, have strived to protect the Toubkal National Park and to improve living conditions in the local village, bringing in fresh water, rubbish removal and an ambulance. For guests who trek in the Jbel Toubkal (North Africa's highest mountain) the warming hammam (steam bath) is on hand to ease weary limbs.

Kasbah du Toubkal c/o Discover Ltd, Timbers, Oxted Road, Godstone, Surrey, England RH9 8AD; ☎+44 (0)1883 744392; 🌐www.kasbahdutoubkal.com approx £90 for a standard double room





eco hotels

EcoHotel la Correa

Arona, Tenerife



EcoHotel la Correa is surely one of Tenerife's best-kept secrets. Breaking away from the island's more mainstream hotels, this rustic property harbours just six rooms. Located close to Teide National Park in a private estate the hotel has an ethos centred around a respect for nature, with the emphasis on conservation of the natural environment, recycling and the use of environmentally friendly products. For visitors this comes across with nutritional breakfasts of organic fruit, vegetable drinks, soya and rice milk. Guests can attend talks focusing on health, but the most enjoyable activity is absorbing the surrounds and distant sea views safe in the knowledge that your stay is not damaging the ecosystem.

EcoHotel la Correa, Arona, Tenerife; ☎+34 (0)922 725738;
 🌐www.ecohotelcorrea.com £45-£66 for a double room



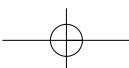
Aparthotel Venus Albir

Alicante, Spain



The supremely tranquil Aparthotel Venus Albir resort, located in the village of Albir-Alfàs del Pi, near Alicante, is framed by mountains, sea and an award-winning Blue Flag beach. This eco hotel has employed natural materials in both its construction and décor, with latex mattresses among its more unusual features. In a bid to conserve the environment it uses a solar water heating system. With just 24 comfortable apartments – each sleeps up to four and has a private kitchen, living/dining area, bathroom and terrace – the Eco Aparthotel Venus Albir is on a pleasantly small scale for this part of the world. This retreat also boasts an outdoor pool and organic restaurant, with tai chi, yoga, massage and aromatherapy.

Aparthotel Venus Albir, Plaza Venus 7, 03581 Albir Alfàs del Pi; ☎+34 (0)966 864820;
 🌐www.raycons.com/venusalbir £34-£58 for two people



eco hotels



Radisson SAS Bay Point Resort

St Julian's, Malta



It is not just small hotels that are taking responsible tourism seriously. Showing that an international hotel chain can have a conscience the Radisson SAS Bay Point Resort in Malta (pictured above) produces more than 45,000 gallons of water each day

(rendering it virtually self-sufficient) and generates over 25 per cent of its electricity through roof-mounted solar panels. In addition, sensors control its external lights and air-conditioning units shut off when doors or windows are open. Environmentally-friendly innovations have been incorporated without compromising the five-star luxury, and guest rooms are elegant and comfortable. Guests can also enjoy myriad leisure activities that include an outdoor pool complex, dive centre, indoor pool and Jacuzzi; while an exploration of the sizeable ecological gardens (via a walkway) reveals the hotel's commitment to helping conserve the island's indigenous flora and fauna.

Radisson SAS Bay Point Resort, St George's Bay, St Julian's STJ02, Malta; ☎+356 21 374894; 🌐www.radissonsas.com £93-£137 for a standard double room



La Abubilla Yurt Hotel

Near Malaga, Spain



Located in Andalucia, melting in amidst the cork forest and olive groves of the Grazalema mountain range, La Abubilla Yurt Hotel believes tourism should be low impact with solar power, composting toilets, terracotta fridges (powered through the sun's heat and the process of evaporation), and a pool filled with spring water and heated using the sun's UV rays just some of its energy saving features. The striking yurts are what attract most visitors. Traditionally the domain of nomadic Mongolian tribes, yurts are dome-peaked tents, which at La Abubilla come individually decorated and en suite. Each yurt boasts its own gardens, combining a 'back-to-nature' feel with the modern luxury of a conventional hotel. Additional services range from therapeutic massages to pottery lessons in a nearby village.

La Abubilla Yurt Hotel, Apt de Correos 23, Cortes de la Frontera, 29380 Malaga; ☎+34 (0)952 117055; 🌐www.yurthotel.com £48 per yurt





Hotel Jardim Atlântico

Calheta, Madeira



Madeira's Hotel Jardim Atlântico is another example of a property keen to keep the negative impacts of tourism at a minimum. In its 12 years of operation the hotel has received 30 awards for its eco activities (of which energy efficiency and the responsible management of water resources form the crux) including the coveted European Ecolabel in 2004. Guest accommodation includes kitchen facilities, balconies or terraces, and a sea view. In addition to its dramatic cliff-top location the Jardim Atlântico offers guests indoor and outdoor pools, while the unspoiled scenery that surrounds it is perfect for walking. Dining on wholesome food produced by the hotel's kitchen while soaking up dramatic sea views from the outdoor terrace is the perfect end to the day.

Hotel Jardim Atlântico, Lombo da Rocha, Prazeres, Calheta, Madeira;
 ☎ +351 291 820220; 🌐 www.jardimatlantico.com