



Low-cost flights put Morocco in easy reach

Travelling to Morocco has become cheaper and easier with the introduction of new low-cost flights this month and Thomson's announcement that it is to start charter flights and package holidays to the country next year.

Morocco's first low-cost airline, Atlas Blue (atlas-blue.com), launched flights from Gatwick to Marrakesh on 31 October for around £130 return. Meanwhile GB Airways (0870 850 9850 ba.com) launched the first direct UK service to the medieval city of Fez on 2 November, from £199 return from Gatwick, making it a low-cost, short-break alternative to Marrakesh.

Thomson will launch holidays to Agadir and Marrakesh in November 2005 with packages from £199 pp per week, using new Britannia Airways flights from Manchester and Gatwick to Agadir.

At the higher end of the market, short break specialist Kirker Holidays (020 7231 3333; kirkerholidays.co.uk) launched its first dedicated Morocco brochure this month, with accommodation at luxury hotels or bohemian riads in Marrakesh, Fez, Essaouira, Casablanca, Ouirgane and the small town of Taroudant. 'From our point of view it's an excellent time to go there,' said a spokesman. 'Over the past 10 years there has been significant investment in hotels, and now GB Airways has gone into Fez.'

Four nights' B&B at the fashionable Riad el Cadi, in the heart of Marrakesh's medina, with flights from Heathrow and private car transfers, costs from £537pp.

Richard Branson's luxury Kasbah Tamadot in the High Atlas is scheduled to open in early 2005, with rooms from £200 a night; contact Virgin (0800 716919, virginlimitededition.com).