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INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY

The quiet life in the Atlas Mountains

Ajay Teli heads to Morocco to stay in British-built villas in the mountains

Locations that are tucked away from the craze of cosmopolitan life have become popular with smart developers in recent years looking to create idyllic hideaways to escape the city. Only an hour outside Marrakech, the rolling hills and masses of greenery form the epic landscape of the Atlas Mountains. This part of the mountains is mainly occupied by Berbers, a group of people indigenous to North Africa. Still very traditional, shepherds can often be found herding their sheep and goats through the pine forests and the slower pace of life is in stark contrast to the hustle and bustle of nearby Marrakech.

Nestled in the tranquil foothills of the mountains lays the pretty village of Ouirgane (pronounced weer-gan) and it's here, atop a striking plateau, overlooking the olive and citrus groves, that the 12 acre L'Amandier (meaning "almond grove" in French) estate offers uninterrupted views of the surrounding National Park and snow-capped mountains.

Developed by MHK International,



L'Amandier, Morocco, from £328,000



which is run by brothers Anwar and Riaz Harland-Khan, L'Amandier is an environmentally sensitive project that has remained sympathetic to its surrounding neighbourhoods. Their decision to purchase the land was based primarily on the incredible

landscape. CEO, Anwar Harland-Khan, says, "Having found one of the most truly spectacular locations in Morocco, we set out to create a boutique hotel with private residences that would stand alongside the best destinations in the world."

Its only rival in the luxury category is Sir Richard Branson's illustrious Kasbah Tamadot, which is 25 minutes away in an adjacent valley. They bought the land, which started a process of making new friends with locals, drilling for water and negoti-

ating with tricky officials before they got permission to build.

The 14 new villas have been designed by London-based architect Nick Gowing, who marries elegant modern living with traditional Moroccan heritage architecture. They offer a unique investment proposition as the only resort-based self-contained villas in the area. Each one features a plunge pool, an internal courtyard, a private garden and a large roof terrace.

To own a luxury haven in this peaceful village, a two bedroom villa starts at £329,000 and three bedrooms can be snapped up for £495,000.

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