

## hotspots Kasbah Tamadot, Morocco

**Where is it?** An hour's drive south of Marrakesh, Kasbah Tamadot is the latest in Richard Branson's growing portfolio of former hideaway-turned-chic luxury hotels. Like his other upper-echelon sanctuaries (Necker Island, in the British Virgin Islands, and Ulusaba Private Game Reserve, South Africa), it occupies a rarefied perch, in this case literally: Tamadot stands at 1,300 metres, alongside a couloir in the foothills of Morocco's saw-toothed High Atlas Mountains.

**Contemporary or classic?** Stocked with African artefacts, Indian and Far Eastern antiques, Murano chandeliers and hand-carved Indonesian sculptures and statues, the 18-room crenellated *riad* (traditional house) is decidedly classic. Behind its vast Moorish-style doors, which are flanked by two majestic stone lions, guests find a warren of mosaic-covered courtyards and canopied arcades, azure reflecting pools, intricately carved walls and bonsai-perfect terraced gardens, which cascade down to

a cliff-side infinity pool encircled by rose and cactus plants and fruit trees.

**Who should visit?** Clued-up travellers and reticent holidaymakers seeking genuine rest and relaxation, as opposed to an escape where they want to see and be seen, plus couples and newlyweds looking for a bolt-hole that is unpretentious but exclusive.

**What is there to do?** Sporting activities include hiking, trekking, horse-riding, swimming and tennis in summer, and skiing and the use of the petite indoor pool and fitness centre in winter. But most guests are perfectly content to while away the hours poolside or in their antique-flavoured Frederic Scholl-designed quarters, which feature king-sized four-poster beds, balconies, gilt furniture and picture windows, to frame the panoramic mountain views. Rooms come without television sets, although they will be supplied, with DVD players, on request. Some guests head to the library for



its selection of hardcover books and high-speed internet access; idlers may make for the *hammam* and small spa.

**What's on the menu?** South African chef and long-term Branson employee Jean Mundell-Murphy, the architect of the French-African cuisine served at Kanoun, Tamadot's restaurant, jumped at the chance to head to the highlands. Her dishes, served on a candle-lit rooftop terrace with views of the Ourika Valley and the hillside Berber village of Asni, do their best to eschew tajine but skilfully combine locally sourced produce and native flavours.

**What's the bottom line?** Rates start at €290 (HK\$2,870) a night for a double room. Kasbah Tamadot can be found in Asni, Marrakesh, Morocco, tel: 212 4436 8200; www.virgin.com/kasbah. *Farhad Heydari*

## spree Upper East Side, New York



New York City's Upper East Side may be synonymous with Park Avenue princesses and the high fashions of Fifth Avenue, but all that glitters here need not break the budget of upwardly mobile gals with more aspiration than hard cash. A wonderful web of consignment stores hides just off the main drags, full of fabulous and often unworn hand-me-downs from the world's style setters – and at a fraction of their original prices.

Take the 6 Train to 77th Street at Lexington Avenue, where **A Second Chance** (2/F, 1109 Lexington Avenue, tel: 1 212 744 6041) will be the first store window to catch a true shopper's eagle eye, thanks to vintage Louis Vuitton luggage that, unfortunately, is not for sale. Inside this closet-sized warren of designer delights is a showcase of Chanel jewellery that includes pretty pearl stickpins (US\$125) and a pristine Hermès black crocodile clutch (US\$1,599) that no one will know you didn't inherit from your grandmother. Cyber shoppers may already be familiar with the ever-changing inventory thanks to its eBay boutique (user ID: ASecondChanceResale).

Head north and around the corner at 81st Street. You will soon spy the black awning of **Margoth** (218 East 81st Street, tel: 1 212 988 7688), another sliver of a shop packed with panache. The selection here meanders from the Paris runway's butterscotch suede Christian Dior biker jacket (US\$600) to less intimidating offerings such as Juicy Couture jeans (US\$80). A few doors down, things go exclusively upmarket at **Tamara's Pret-A-Reporter** (235 East 81st

Street, tel: 1 212 717 2691), perhaps the classiest resale boutique in town, with pieces consigned from private collections as far away as Houston and Beverly Hills. About one-third of the merchandise is new, with the tag still on an oversized Courrèges black patent leather handbag (US\$85), which retails in Paris for about 10 times the price, and unworn Marc Jacobs orange platform sandals (US\$75). No one will ever know these didn't come straight from Marc's own atelier.

Keep walking east to uncover more branded gems for women – and men too – at the **Designer Resale** trio of shops (311, 322 and 324 East 81st Street, tel: 1 212 734 3639), where this writer spied the black nylon Prada raincoat (US\$350) of her dreams.

For the next bevy of discount-shopping opportunities, turn west towards Central Park. But before relaxing on the green grass, take your greenbacks to **Bis** (above left; 1134 Madison Avenue at 84th Street, tel: 1 212 396 2760; www.bisbiz.com), where a natural leather overnight bag from Il Bisonte (US\$595) is ideal for toting your "new" purchases back home. Racks of well-edited pieces include a super-sexy Herve Léger little black dress (US\$500), a Celine wife-beater woollen tank top (US\$65) and a Gucci low-waisted khaki pantsuit (US\$395). Next door at **Encore** (1132 Madison Avenue at 84th Street, tel: 1 212 879 2850) you'll find two floors crammed with brands ranging from Citizens of Humanity jeans (US\$35) to a never-worn heavy Prada coat (US\$425) that will fashionably carry you through any winter south of the North Pole.

Circle back south towards the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but make a detour to the equally colourful items at **La Boutique Resale** (2/F, 1045 Madison Avenue at 80th, tel: 1 212 517 8099), where the Upper East Side's largest collection of Pucci skirts (from US\$150) and slip dresses (from US\$495) requires a super-slender size-two (British size four) figure. Brides on a budget can still fulfil their Vera Wang dreams thanks to the wedding dress salon next door at **Michael's** (1041 Madison Avenue near 79th Street, tel: 1 212 737 7273). This duplex stocks dozens of puffy white fantasy frocks (from US\$400 to US\$2,500), some new, which makes one wonder what happened. Never mind, at these prices just be content to let someone else's lost love be your designer gain. *Cynthia Rosenfeld*

## trial run

Travelling with a baby used to be a nightmare of exceeded baggage allowances and ghastly inelegance, thanks to cumbersome 11kg "port-a-cots" and equally heavy – or worse yet, flimsy – strollers. And that's before you even boarded the plane. Times have changed and a small number of quality travel items for babies have appeared on the market. But log on to any number of parents' web forums and one name keeps popping up.

New Zealand company Phil and Teds has provided a lifeline for frazzled travelling parents with a range of streamlined designs that are not only light and practical, but cool too. At 5.5kg, the two-wheeled SmartBuggy (HK\$1,140; available in red or charcoal) weighs slightly more than the lightest strollers on the market. But its space-saving design means it can go anywhere, making it MTR- and London Underground-friendly. Its collapse mechanism allows it to be folded without taking baby out of the seat while its front legs can be tucked in so it can be dragged or pushed. It is also sturdy and comfortable, with two seating positions and a sunshade, five-point harness, extendable handle and parcel tray.

If weight and size are of paramount importance, you can't beat the 2.5kg T2 pop-up travel cot (HK\$1,490). Available in red, blue and charcoal, it is easy to assemble and comes with a mattress, tent pegs for outdoor use, UV shade cover and storage pocket. It folds down to 18cm x 18cm x 55cm and comes in a carrying bag. You may like to throw in a MeToo high chair (below; HK\$350), which weighs less than 1kg and clamps safely to most tables.

All three are available from Bumps To Babies (5/F, Pedder Building, Central, tel: 2522 7112). They may even help coin a slogan: have child, can travel. *Mirjana Jovetic*

