

ProjectsAbroad



Projects Abroad Morocco October 2013 official Newsletter

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Volunteer story

Vanessa Strudwick – British – Teaching project



Sitting here in my favourite cafe , a small oasis of calm in the centre of Rabat, it's easy to tell you why I love Morocco so much.

Just across the busy road outside, behind Bab Chellah, lies Rabat medina, home for the last seven weeks. The labyrinth of narrow streets never fails to surprise...and it's here that you get a sense of the rhythm of life here in Morocco, starting with the muezzin's call to prayer at sunrise.

The quiet streets I walk along to get to the project each day are barely recognisable by the evening, when the soukhs come alive. Large stalls of dates, figs, oranges, peaches and cactus fruit compete for space with vendors and their spice mountains, piles of fresh mint, and henna powder and black olive oil soap for the weekly steam and scrub at the hammam. The streets get more and more crowded with people (on two speeds...slow and stop) , mopeds, and shouts of "balak" warn you to get out of the way of the huge barrow with sacks of flour that is just behind you!

Heavy wooden doors open to reveal entrances to beautifully tiled houses and tiny workshops. Add to this smoke rising off the stalls of street food (including bubbling trays of sheep heads!), hundreds of cats, ..and..well I hope you are starting to get the picture...

I'm here to teach English for two months at the Amali Association, just across the Bou Regreg river in Sale, true it's not as refined as Rabat but there's a beating heart in Hay Moulay Ismail. Adults come for a two hour class in the morning....most are studying or working....all with a real desire to speak English to help them with future dreams. We've covered many topics, learned about each other's cultures along the way and even used one lesson to cook the most delicious tagine, with strict instructions to speak English only in the kitchen. (completely ignored, all too excited!)

A wide eyed group of 7 -11 year olds burst into the classroom in the afternoon ready to show off vocabulary learnt over the last few weeks. The ambitious plan to stage "Amali Association's Got Talent" came to life last week, with no shortage of willing performers to sing, play derbouca, read poetry, read from the Koran, demonstrate football skills and do the inevitable rendition of "Gangnam style"....

Getting back to Rabat each day involves a being wedged into a "grand taxi", an ancient white Mercedes with five strangers and the driver ..a random but (almost) always entertaining experience.

Once home it's easy to relax....Youseff and Sanae, (and little Hassna, who has just started school), have made me really welcome and told me to make their home my home. We share all our meals around the same table, talk about what's happening and even had a Moroccan film night last week. My dormant French has spluttered into life and I've even learnt enough Moroccan Arabic to survive in the classroom and on the streets!

Food does not disappoint here..in the last week alone I have worked my way through delicious lamb tagine with prunes, baked fish, chicken pastilla and cous cous (the Friday tradition). Already unable to get into two pairs of trousers....

If you want to see Morocco, you need to sacrifice sleep and get the first train out on Saturday....have managed Chefchaouene, Fes, Meknes, Essaouira, Casablanca and Marrakesh this way and still looking at the map longingly to see if I can squeeze in something else before I go..

Best of all though? The daily interactions with ordinary Moroccans, they are warm, friendly, and curious....and I've lost count of the small acts of kindness that come out of nowhere....

....not sure I'm ready to leave...!



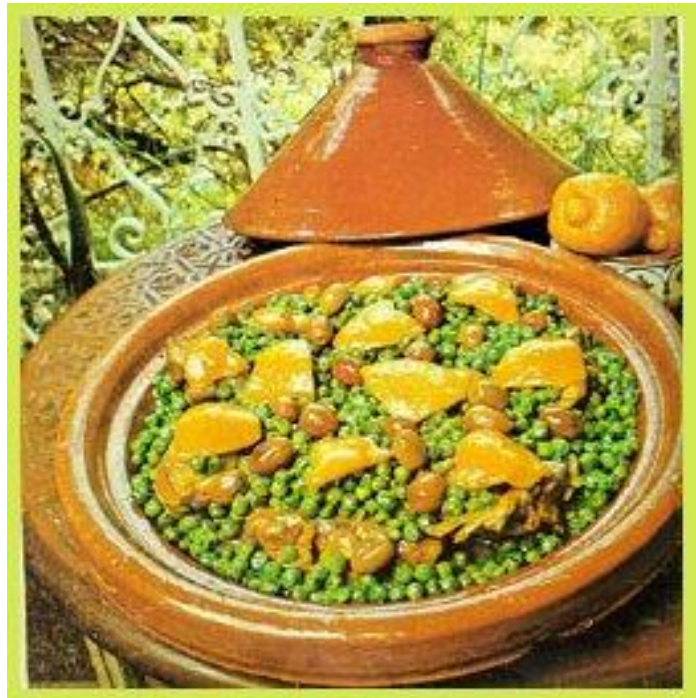
Danielle and Vanessa Juries in Amali Got Talent!



Amali association Got Talent!

Moroccan cuisine

Recipe for Tagine with Artichoke and Peas



Tagine is named after the special pot in which it is cooked. For most Moroccans their daily lunch meal is usually Tagine, eaten with homemade bread. There are various kinds of Tagine which are named after the main vegetables and kind of meat used. It may taste and look distinctive depending on the ingredients and the way it is

prepared even though the process remains nearly the same. Meat and vegetables decoratively placed in the Tagine earthenware, and kept simmering slowly on a very low fire, traditionally on coal. Here's the recipe for Tagine with artichoke, peas, and meat.

Ingredients:

1 beef or lamb meat.	1 tsp salt.
2 onions cut into small pieces.	½ tsp turmeric.
1 kg of artichoke.	Few saffron stamens.
½ kg peas.	3 minced cloves of garlic.
2 tbsp chopped parsley and coriander.	½ cup olive oil.
1 tsp ground ginger.	1 lemon (juice).
½ tsp ground black pepper .	

Way of preparation :

1. In this recipe we need just the bottom of the artichoke, so peel off the outer leaves one by one.
2. Remove the interior leaves also until you have just the bottom.
3. Wash the artichokes and soak them in water with lemon juice so as not to turn brown.
4. In a Tagine pot, put some water, garlic, salt and other spices and stir.
5. Marinate the meat in the mixture of spices and garlic.
6. Place the Tagine on the stove and set the fire to a low degree.
7. When it starts cooking, add onions, chopped parsley and coriander then oil. Cover the Tagine and heat for 10 minutes. Stir frequently.
8. Add peas and the bottom of artichoke on the top.
9. Add some water and let the Tagine cook for an hour and watch it regularly in case it should need some water.

You can put some pieces of lemon on top of it along with olives when it's totally cooked.

Make sure that it's served while still boiling!

Moroccans usually eat Tagine with bread using their bare hands.

Besseha! (enjoy)