

## Special Feature

# Recycling - Marrakesh Style!

A short break in Marrakech proved to be a real eye-opener. I am not sure if Morocco counts as part of the 'developing world' but it is certainly a very poor country. The residents of Marrakech could teach us a thing or two!



### Everything Re-used

The first thing we noticed in the Medina, the old part of the city, was the lack of motorised traffic. Cars could barely pass along the narrow lanes and alleyways but mule-drawn carts and hand-pushed barrows abound. The hand-carts were a miracle of engineering, made entirely from scraps of metal, pipes, wood and wheels. Old tyres were stacked outside tiny workshops waiting to be turned into panniers for mules or any kind of carrying implement. What happens to our old tyres? Are they re-used or just scrapped?

I have never seen so many cobblers repairing shoes - shoes that we would consider way past the end of their useful life.

Baby pushchairs are also refurbished and re-used. The shopkeepers are ingenious repairers, using any metals and materials that they have to hand.

People seem to live by selling, although I never worked out who had the money to buy; men make livings selling single cigarettes and wander the souks rattling a few coins to let you know that they have

a packet to sell.

The thing that I found most shocking was a peek into a pharmacy offering a choice of about six items on its shelves. Just think of our own well-stocked dispensary in the local Surgery!

### The True Heritage

But it is not all doom and gloom. Marrakech

has its Djemaa el-Fna - the most exciting and unique square in the world. This bustling centre of the city is a UNESCO World Heritage Site designated as *Immaterial Heritage of Mankind*. During the day the people criss-cross the square going about their daily lives, shopping, selling, chatting, whatever life demands, but at dusk it is transformed into a spectacle of storytellers, fortune tellers, herbalists, groups playing traditional music, dancers, singers, acrobats, snake charmers, water carriers, tooth pullers and food-sellers. It has to be seen to be believed - in fact we returned every evening!

I came home realising what a wasteful, selfish society we live in. I never heard anyone complaining about their lot in life. They even managed to give a coin or two to those worse off than themselves. Has the time come for us all to review the way we live in the West and really start trying to change our ways before it is too late?

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