Hotel "Les Gorges du Dadès"
Boumalne, Morocco

Architect: Patrice de Mazières & Abdesslem Faraoui
Rabat, Morocco

Client: Ministry of Tourism
Rabat, Morocco

Completed: December 1974

Site area: 45'000 square metres
Total floor: 3'000 square metres

Costs: MDH 5'500'000
(USS 1'200'000)
MDH 1'100 per square metre
(USS 240)

The project was initiated by the Moroccan government in response to a need for hotel accommodations in the valleys east of the High Atlas mountains. The hotel in Boumalne was designed to serve a policy of mass tourism rather than to accommodate individuals spending several days or weeks in the same place. It was to be one of a string of "way houses" for tourists. In addition to a spectacular landscape, the region possesses a rich indigenous architectural tradition in the form of Berber mud-brick dwellings. The architects wished to acknowledge the existence of this indigenous tradition through the use of comparable forms, textures and colours.

Site

Boumalne is situated in the High Atlas, in a river valley, at the junction of the main north-south highway and a new secondary road leading into the impressive Dadès Gorges. The site was selected by the Ministry of Tourism and their German consultant for hotels, and accepted by the architects. The hotel itself is sited on a ridge high above the mud-brick village rather than within the current boundaries of the town.

Functional Requirements

The hotel comprises:
- 100 double rooms;
- a lobby and a lounge;
- a restaurant with seating for 50 persons;
- a bar;
- a games room;
- a swimming pool;
- a flat for the director.

1. View from the northwest
2. Elevation overlooking patio & pool
**Description**

The project was conceived as a hotel for tourists of average means and thus to meet modest standards. All rooms conform to the same plan-type (e.g. 3.5x6.5m), comprised of entry, built-in-closet space, toilet and shower, and terrace. These units have been arranged around a central courtyard with swimming pool. Along the western perimeter of the hotel, the units tend (with the exception of a couple of rooms) to be situated below the courtyard level, thereby allowing a spectacular panoramic view of the village and oued (river valley), with mountains beyond.

The massing is staggered, usually by pairs of rooms, taking great advantage of the steep slope toward the village.

Furthermore, it provides a degree of privacy for the individual terraces. The entrance, public spaces, lounges, dining rooms and a shop have been placed on the eastern edges. The restaurant and bar are one floor above the entrance and have direct access to the patio and pool.

**Project Significance**

The project demonstrates sensitivity, on the part of the architects, to local vernacular architecture, particularly its formal aspects. However much the hotel's irregular silhouette attempts to camouflage its overbearing scale in relation to the surrounding built environment, it remains an impressive bulk when seen from near or far. Yet, there is a definite feeling of intimacy when one is within the confines of the hotel itself. Its irregular arrangement of guest rooms is intrinsically pleasing, while undoubtedly corresponding on some measure to the western tourist image of an Arab casbah.

**Construction**

The central core of the building (i.e. the swimming pool area and the structure on the north-east and south-east) is of reinforced concrete post-and-beam construction. While some stone has been employed for foundations and partially for wall construction of lower-level rooms, the principal material for infill is cement block covered with a mud and cement coating on the exterior. Aluminium window and door frames are utilized for all rooms and around the patio area. Wood is employed in less exposed areas. The aluminium and steel for reinforcing were imported, whereas the cement and other materials are produced in Morocco.

---

3. View of the central courtyard