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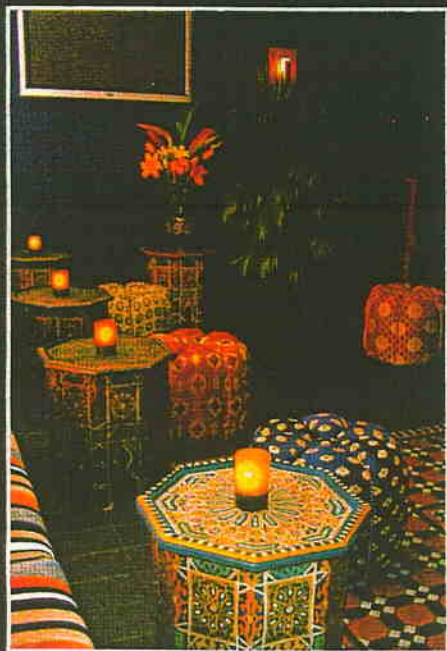
June 2006

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DONED DEALS

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inside THE DEAL



Marrakech To Have Moroccan Flair

When renovations are completed at the Marrakech Hotel in New York later this year, the property is expected to have strong appeal for travelers looking for chic lodging without much of an expense.

"Everyone wants to stay in a Schragger hotel, but not everyone can afford it. The Marrakech is a fashionable and inexpensive alternative," said Hank Freid, president and CEO of the Impulsive Group, a New York-based hotel development and management firm that owns the Marrakech.

Freid has been a developer for 30 years and has specialized in purchasing rundown buildings in New York and converting them into hotels. His portfolio includes the 126-room Broadway Hotel which, like the Marrakech, is now being upgraded and will be renamed the Aspen. He is also redesigning the Portland Square Hotel, which he acquired in September 2005 and will rename the Sanctuary.

Additionally, Freid's collection of hotels includes the 212-room Ameritania Hotel, which he plans to expand with 100 more guestrooms.

Located at 2688 Broadway, the 125-room Marrakech is in a building acquired by Freid in 1984. Along with the hotel, the building has other commercial tenants and will soon have a Starbucks.

The multi-million dollar refurbishment of the

Marrakech is giving the hotel a Moroccan theme with ceiling fans, mosaic tiles, ironwork, custom carpet and backlit photos of Moroccan landscapes. The color palette includes rust, brown and navy.

The lobby features a bar, a fireplace, comfortable banquette seating and a 42-inch plasma television. Guestrooms have upgraded amenities, including flat-screen televisions, curved shower rods and exposed brick for a "downtown" flavor. Adding to the hotel's urban ambience are doormen attired head-to-toe in black.

The interior design is being directed by Lionel Ohayon of Icrave Design Studio of New York.

The current \$119 nightly rate at the Marrakech will be increased when the renovations are completed, but Freid anticipates that the hotel will continue to appeal to under-35 international travelers looking for something different.

With the new Moroccan theme, the hotel has "a distinct, warm look that is very inviting," Freid said.

While there have not been too many challenges in the refurbishment of the Marrakech, "it took longer than I expected. We have constantly made adjustments as we go along to make sure we get it right," Freid said.

—CATHY URELL