

March 18, 2007**FORAGING | FEZ, MOROCCO**

Coin Berbère

By SETH SHERWOOD

Arriving in [Fez](#) in the early 1600s, the Scottish traveler William Lithgow was astonished to find that [Morocco](#)'s religious and cultural capital was also a shopper's paradise. "The city aboundeth in all manner of provision fit for man or beast," he observed.

If the errant Scot explored the 1,200-year-old city today, he would still find the place full of the artisans' stalls and workshops that have long made Fez the capital of North African craftsmanship. And at Coin Berbère, he might even unearth the same creations he glimpsed four centuries ago.

Owned by brothers Khalid and Mohamed Bouzidi-Idrissi, the quartet of small clustered stores is where a neo-sultan might furnish his palace, clothe his staff and carpet his floors. One chamber is full of huge 17th- and 18th-century wooden doors. These impressively carved portals now enjoy second lives as wall-mounted artwork. Another nook holds venerable Fez pottery, prized for its distinctive cobalt blue glaze. Earthenware jugs, brass kettles and silver jewelry burst from the corners.

Hanging on a wall, an exquisitely sewn 18th-century silk caftan highlights one of the store's specialties: textiles. Even more astonishing is the Star of David stitched deftly into a button. It's a quiet reminder that Jews historically formed a vibrant component of Moroccan society. (Most emigrated to [France](#) and [Israel](#) in the 20th century.) Upstairs, carpets testify to the artistry of another Moroccan minority, the Berbers, the indigenous inhabitants of North Africa.

Like everywhere in the country, prices are unmarked and negotiable. In general, Mohamed says, doors run from 5,000 to 10,000 dirhams (\$585 to \$1,175, at 8.70 Moroccan dirhams to \$1), caftans from 3,000 to 8,000 dirhams, chests from 1,500 to 4,000 dirhams and embroidery from 10,000 to 12,000 dirhams. That will almost certainly include a glass of mint tea.

"It's one of the best antique and carpet shops in Fez," said David Amster, a 12-year resident who has outfitted his guesthouse, Dar Bennis, with textiles and wooden furniture from the store. "The owners are friendly, honest and fair," he said. "But of course you have to bargain a bit."

Coin Berbère is at 67 Talaa Kebira in the Haddadine quarter of the Fez medina (212) 35-63-69-46.

