



Algeria

Africa's largest country, where Roman cities, whitewashed old towns and the green Mediterranean coast give way to the vast Sahara and its painted rocks.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Algiers

POPULATION

About 47 million (2024 estimate)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Arabic and Tamazight (Berber). Most people speak Algerian Arabic (Darja) day to day, and French is widely used, although it has no official status

CURRENCY

Algerian dinar (DZD)

AREA

About 2,381,741 km², the largest country in Africa (as of 2026)

GOVERNMENT

Semi-presidential republic

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Mount Tahat in the Hoggar mountains, about 2,900 to 3,000 m (sources give different heights)

LONGEST RIVER

The Chelif, about 700 km

NEIGHBOURS

Tunisia, Libya, Niger, Mali, Mauritania and Morocco. To the southwest lies Western Sahara, a disputed territory. Across the Mediterranean: Spain and Italy

DRIVES ON THE

Right

CALLING CODE

+213

A 45-minute trip to Algeria

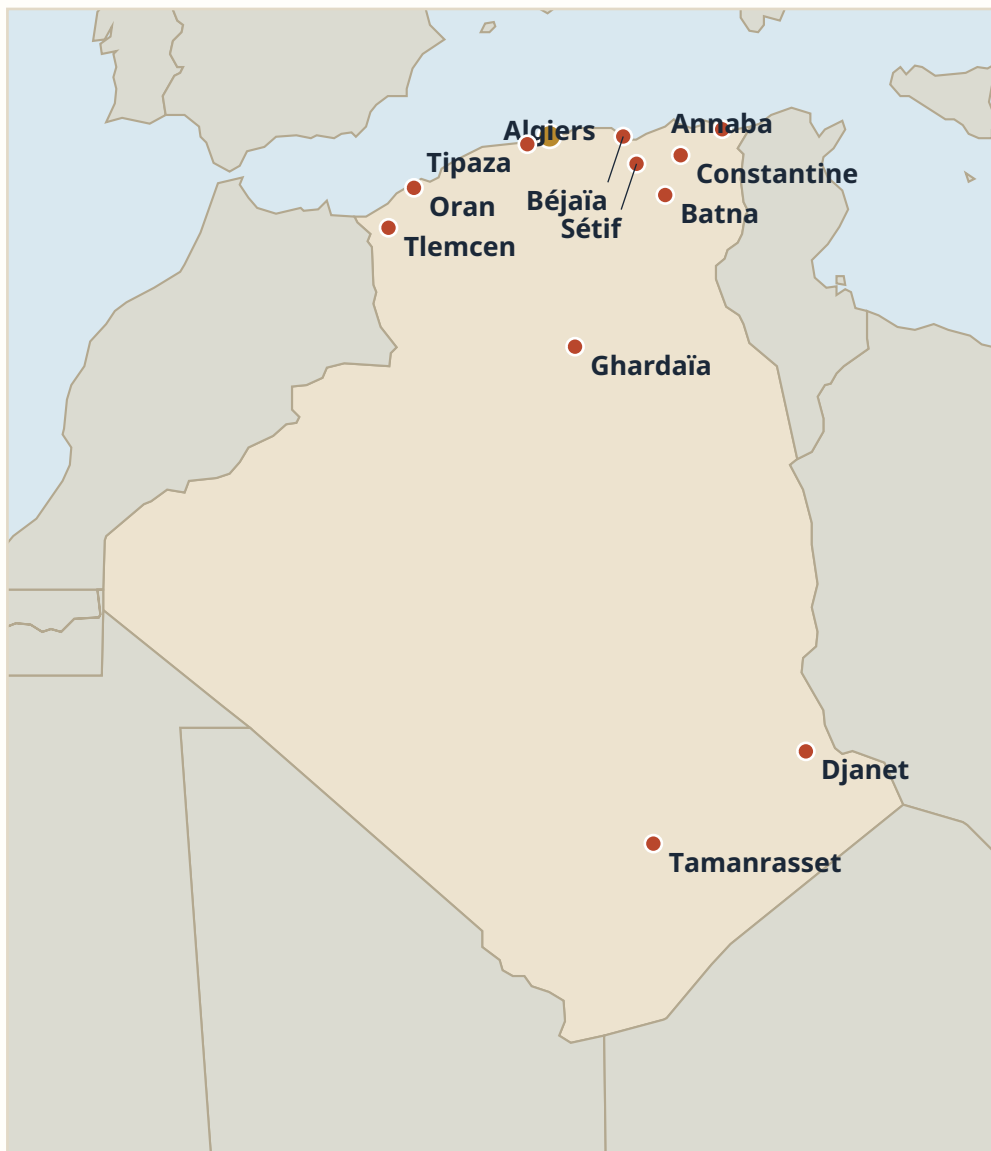
Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

- 0 to 5 min** Welcome. Show the map page and find Algeria together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there?
- 5 to 15 min** Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: 202 BC: Masinissa unites Numidia; 1516: The Barbarossa brothers take Algiers; 2016: Tamazight becomes an official language.
- 15 to 25 min** At the table: talk about Couscous (seksu) and Chakhchoukha. Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help.
- 25 to 30 min** Say it like a local: practise "As-salamu alaykum" (Peace be upon you (hello)), "Wa alaykum as-salam" (And upon you be peace (the reply)), "Wesh rak?" (How are you? (to a man; to a woman, wesh raki?)). Everyone says them together.
- 30 to 40 min** Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at <https://worldstroll.com/countries/algeria/group>. No scores needed.
- 40 to 45 min** Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page.

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Algeria and its cities



- Algiers (Algiers Province, Mediterranean coast): The Casbah, the old town on the hill, Djamaa el Djazaïr, the Great Mosque of Algiers, Maqam Echahid, the Martyrs' Memorial
- Oran (Oran Province, northwest coast): Raï music, The Santa Cruz fort and chapel above the bay, Karantika, the chickpea street snack
- Constantine (Constantine Province, northeast): The "City of Bridges" across the gorge, The Sidi M'Cid suspension bridge, The old town on the rock

- Annaba (Annaba Province, northeast coast): The Basilica of Saint Augustine, The ruins of Hippo Regius, Beaches and the large bourek annabi
- Tlemcen (Tlemcen Province, northwest): The Great Mosque of Tlemcen, Andalusian music, Mansourah, a ruined medieval city nearby
- Béjaïa (Béjaïa Province, Kabylie coast): Mount Gouraya above the bay, A gateway to the Kabylie mountains, Medieval trade with Europe
- Sétif (Sétif Province, eastern high plains): Trade and industry, Its cool high-plains climate, Day trips to Djémila
- Batna (Batna Province, Aurès mountains): Timgad nearby, The Aurès mountains, Chaoui Amazigh culture
- Ghardaïa (Ghardaïa Province, northern Sahara): The M'zab valley, a World Heritage Site, Its market square, Mozabite architecture
- Tamanrasset (Tamanrasset Province, far south): The Hoggar (Ahaggar) mountains, Sunrise at Assekrem, Tuareg culture
- Djanet (Djanet Province, southeast Sahara): Tassili n'Ajjer and its rock paintings, Desert treks, The Kel Ajjer Tuareg
- Tipaza (Tipaza Province, coast west of Algiers): The ruins of ancient Tipasa by the sea, Beaches, Albert Camus's essays about it

A short history of Algeria

Algeria's history runs from Amazigh kingdoms and Roman towns through Islamic dynasties and an Ottoman regency to 132 years of French rule and a hard-won independence in 1962. The events below follow that long story, with approximate dates for the early centuries.

202 BC Masinissa unites Numidia

Around 202 BC the Amazigh king Masinissa, an ally of Rome against Carthage, united the Numidian kingdoms into one state, with its capital at Cirta, today's Constantine.

AD 100 Trajan founds Timgad

Around AD 100 the Roman emperor Trajan founded Timgad as a colony for veterans in the Aurès mountains. North Africa became one of Rome's great grain-growing regions.

AD 354 Saint Augustine is born

Augustine was born in Thagaste, today's Souk Ahras. He became bishop of Hippo Regius, near modern Annaba, and one of the most influential Christian thinkers.

AD 429 The Vandals arrive

The Vandals crossed from Spain in 429 and ended Roman rule in the region. A century later the Byzantine Empire took back parts of the coast.

AD 777 The Rustamids rule from Tahert

After the arrival of Islam, an independent Ibadi state, the Rustamid imamate, was founded around 777 with its

capital at Tahert, near modern Tiaret. It grew rich on trade across the Sahara.

1007

The Hammadids build their citadel

Hammad ibn Buluggin built the Qal'a of Beni Hammad in the Hodna mountains in 1007 as the capital of the Hammadid dynasty. Later the Hammadids moved their capital to Béjaïa.

1236

Tlemcen becomes a royal capital

Yaghmurasen ibn Zayyan founded the Zayyanid kingdom in 1236 with Tlemcen as its capital. The city became a centre of learning and trade for three centuries.

1516

The Barbarossa brothers take Algiers

The corsair brothers Aruj and Hayreddin Barbarossa took Algiers in 1516, and in 1519 Hayreddin placed it under Ottoman protection. The Regency of Algiers became a largely self-governing Mediterranean power.

1830

France captures Algiers

A French army landed in 1830 and captured Algiers, ending the Regency. The conquest of the rest of the country took decades, and many European settlers followed.

1847

Emir Abdelkader surrenders

Emir Abdelkader led the resistance in the west from 1832 and built a state of his own before he surrendered in 1847. He is remembered as a national hero.

1954

The War of Independence begins

On 1 November 1954 the National Liberation Front (FLN) launched coordinated attacks across the country, the

start of a war that lasted more than seven years.

1962 **Algeria becomes independent**

After the Évian Accords and a ceasefire in March 1962, Algerians voted for independence on 1 July. France recognised it on 3 July, and 5 July 1962 was proclaimed Independence Day.

1992 **A decade of conflict begins**

In January 1992 the authorities cancelled the second round of the first multi-party parliamentary elections. A long armed conflict followed between the state and armed Islamist groups, often called the Black Decade.

1999 **The Civil Concord is approved**

A referendum in 1999 approved the Civil Concord, which offered a limited amnesty. Violence fell in the following years, and a second reconciliation charter followed in 2005.

2016 **Tamazight becomes an official language**

Tamazight, the Amazigh (Berber) language, was recognised as a national language in 2002 and became an official language alongside Arabic in the 2016 constitution.

What people eat in Algeria

Algerian cooking brings together Amazigh, Arab, Ottoman, Andalusian and French influences, with wheat and semolina at its heart. A family meal often starts with a soup such as chorba or with salads, continues with a stew (tajine) or a big shared dish of couscous, and bread comes with almost every meal. Sweet pastries with almonds, dates and honey are served with coffee or mint tea, above all during Ramadan and at weddings.

Couscous (seksu)

All of Algeria, and shared across the Maghreb

Tiny grains of semolina, steamed two or three times over a pot of stew and served in a large dish with meat, chickpeas and vegetables such as courgettes, carrots and turnips. In Algeria it comes with a red tomato sauce or a white one, and there is also masfouf, a dry version, sometimes sweet with raisins.

Chakhchoukha

Eastern Algeria, especially Biskra

Thin rounds of semolina flatbread are torn into small pieces and soaked in marqa, a tomato stew with lamb, chickpeas and spices. The bread softens and soaks up the sauce, a filling dish for family gatherings.

Rechta

Algiers, Blida and Constantine

Fine, flat noodles cut by hand, steamed and served with chicken, chickpeas and turnips in a white sauce flavoured with cinnamon and white pepper. It is the signature dish of Algiers, often made for family celebrations.

Chorba frik

All of Algeria, especially the east; also eaten in Tunisia

A thick soup of lamb, tomato, chickpeas and frik, wheat harvested green, roasted and cracked. It is the soup of Ramadan evenings, when families break the fast with it.

Bourek

All of Algeria; the large bourek annabi comes from Annaba

Thin pastry sheets, called dyoul, rolled or folded around minced meat, potato, cheese, egg or tuna and fried until crisp. In eastern Algeria it is called brik, and it is a fixture of the Ramadan table.

Karantika (garantita)

Oran and western Algeria, now sold across the country

A baked chickpea-flour custard with a golden, egg-glazed top, sold hot by street vendors in squares or tucked into bread and sprinkled with cumin and harissa.

Mhadjeb)

Southern and eastern Algeria, such as Biskra and Touggourt; now eaten everywhere

A very thin semolina dough, stretched by hand, filled with a spicy mixture of onion, tomato and pepper, folded into a square and cooked on a griddle. The name means 'veiled' or 'covered'.

Kesra

Eastern Algeria; baked all over the country

A round, flat semolina bread cooked on a clay or iron griddle. It is eaten warm or cold with almost anything, from stews to olive oil, honey or a glass of fermented milk (leben).

Mtewem

Algiers

Meatballs and pieces of lamb or chicken cooked with plenty of garlic, almonds or chickpeas, in a red or a white sauce. It is a

favourite for guests and weddings in Algiers, and during Ramadan.

Chtitha djej (chicken in red sauce)

Algiers, and eaten across the country

Chicken and chickpeas simmered in a red sauce with a lot of garlic, tomato paste, paprika and a little chilli. Chtitha is a whole family of red stews, made with chicken, meat, liver or even potatoes.

Lham lahlou

Algiers and the whole country

A sweet dish of lamb cooked with prunes, dried apricots, raisins and almonds in a syrup scented with cinnamon and orange blossom water. Its name means 'sweet meat', and it is made especially during Ramadan and for weddings.

Makroud

All of Algeria, and the rest of the Maghreb

Diamond-shaped pastries of semolina filled with date paste, fried or baked and then dipped in honey or syrup. They are a classic sweet for Eid and for serving with coffee or tea.

Qalb el louz

All of Algeria; also called *chamia* in the west

A dense semolina cake filled with ground almonds, flavoured with orange blossom and soaked in honey syrup, each piece topped with a whole almond. It is a favourite on Ramadan evenings with mint tea or coffee.

Tcharek

Algiers

Small crescent-shaped pastries of thin, buttery dough wrapped around almond paste with cinnamon and orange blossom water. Tcharek msaker is rolled in icing sugar, while tcharek el ariane is left bare.

At the table

- Eat with your right hand, and use pieces of bread to scoop up sauce and stew.
- When a dish is shared, eat from the part in front of you rather than reaching across.
- Guests are usually offered coffee or tea with sweets; accepting at least a little is polite.
- Many people say 'bismillah' ('in the name of God') before eating; you can simply wait for your host to start.
- During Ramadan the fast is often broken at sunset with dates and milk, followed by a bowl of chorba.

Chorba frik

A thick soup of lamb, tomato, chickpeas and frik, wheat harvested green, roasted and cracked. It is the soup of Ramadan evenings, when families break the fast with it.

Ingredients

- 400 g lamb shoulder, cut into small cubes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 tomatoes, grated
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- Half a teaspoon ground cinnamon
- A pinch of chilli or a teaspoon of harissa (optional)
- 150 g frik (cracked green wheat, sold as freekeh)
- 1 x 400 g tin chickpeas, drained
- A small bunch of coriander, chopped, and a few mint leaves
- Salt, pepper and lemon wedges to serve

Method

1. Heat the oil in a large pot and brown the lamb with the onion and garlic for about 5 minutes.

2. Stir in the tomato paste, grated tomatoes and spices and cook for 2 minutes, then add 2 litres of water and a teaspoon of salt. Bring to the boil and simmer for 30 minutes.
3. Rinse the frik, add it to the pot with the chickpeas and simmer for 25 to 30 minutes, stirring now and then, until the grains are soft and the soup is thick. Add hot water if it gets too thick.
4. Stir in most of the coriander, taste for salt and pepper, and serve with the rest of the herbs, the mint and lemon wedges.

Karantika (garantita)

A baked chickpea-flour custard with a golden, egg-glazed top, sold hot by street vendors in squares or tucked into bread and sprinkled with cumin and harissa.

Ingredients

- 250 g chickpea flour (gram flour)
- 1 litre water
- 100 ml sunflower oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin, plus more to serve
- 1 egg, beaten, for the top
- Harissa and baguettes to serve

Method

1. Heat the oven to 220 °C and oil a baking tin of about 30 x 20 cm.
2. Whisk the chickpea flour with the water, oil, salt and cumin until smooth, then leave it to rest for 10 minutes.
3. Pour the batter into the tin; it should be about 2 cm deep. Bake for 20 minutes, until it starts to set.
4. Brush the top with the beaten egg and bake for 10 to 15 minutes more, until it is firm and golden. Make sure the egg is fully cooked.
5. Cut into squares and serve warm, sprinkled with cumin, with harissa, on its own or inside a piece of baguette.

Mhadjeb

A very thin semolina dough, stretched by hand, filled with a spicy mixture of onion, tomato and pepper, folded into a square and cooked on a griddle. The name means 'veiled' or 'covered'.

Ingredients

- 500 g fine semolina
- 1 teaspoon salt
- About 300 ml warm water
- Sunflower oil for stretching and cooking
- For the filling: 3 onions, finely chopped
- 3 tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 1 green pepper, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon paprika, half a teaspoon ground cumin and a pinch of chilli
- Salt and black pepper

Method

1. Make the filling: soften the onions in 3 tablespoons of oil for 10 minutes, add the pepper, garlic, tomatoes and spices and cook for 15 to 20 minutes until thick and dry. Leave to cool.
2. Mix the semolina and salt, then add the water little by little and knead for 10 to 15 minutes into a soft, very smooth dough.

3. Divide the dough into 12 balls, coat them in oil and leave to rest, covered, for 15 minutes.
4. On an oiled surface, press and stretch each ball with oiled hands into a very thin sheet. Spread a spoonful of filling in the middle and fold the sides over to make a square parcel.
5. Cook the squares on a hot, lightly oiled frying pan or griddle for 2 to 3 minutes on each side, until golden. Serve warm.

Kesra

A round, flat semolina bread cooked on a clay or iron griddle. It is eaten warm or cold with almost anything, from stews to olive oil, honey or a glass of fermented milk (leben).

Ingredients

- 500 g medium or fine semolina
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons olive oil or melted butter
- About 250 ml warm water
- A teaspoon of nigella seeds (optional)

Method

1. Mix the semolina, salt and nigella seeds, then rub in the oil or butter with your fingertips.
2. Add the water little by little and knead gently into a soft dough that holds together. Do not overwork it.
3. Divide into two balls and flatten each on a floured surface into a round about 1 cm thick. Prick it all over with a fork.
4. Cook in a dry heavy frying pan or on a griddle over a medium heat for 6 to 8 minutes on each side, turning a few times, until golden and cooked through. Cut into wedges.

Chtitha djej (chicken in red sauce)

Chicken and chickpeas simmered in a red sauce with a lot of garlic, tomato paste, paprika and a little chilli. Chtitha is a whole family of red stews, made with chicken, meat, liver or even potatoes.

Ingredients

- 1 kg chicken pieces (legs and thighs)
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, grated
- 5 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 teaspoons sweet paprika
- Half a teaspoon ground cumin and half a teaspoon black pepper
- Chilli flakes or harissa to taste
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 x 400 g tin chickpeas, drained
- Salt, chopped parsley and bread to serve

Method

1. Heat the oil in a heavy pot and cook the chicken with the onion and half the garlic for 8 to 10 minutes, turning, until lightly browned.

2. Stir in the tomato paste, paprika, cumin, pepper, chilli and the rest of the garlic and cook for 2 minutes.
3. Add the bay leaf, a teaspoon of salt and about 500 ml of water. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes.
4. Add the chickpeas and cook uncovered for 10 minutes more, until the chicken is cooked through and the sauce is thick and red. Scatter with parsley and serve with bread.

Useful phrases

As-salamu alaykum

ah-sah-LAH-moo ah-LAY-koom · Peace be upon you (hello)

Wa alaykum as-salam

wah ah-LAY-koom ah-sah-LAHM · And upon you be peace (the reply)

Wesh rak?

wesh RAHK · How are you? (to a man; to a woman, wesh raki?)

Labas, el hamdoulillah

lah-BAHS, el ham-doo-lil-LAH · Fine, thank God

Sbah el khir

SBAH el KHEER · Good morning

Msa el khir

MSAH el KHEER · Good evening

Sahit

sah-HEET · Thank you (to a man; to a woman, sahiti)

Rabbi yhafdek

RAB-bee YAH-fdek · May God protect you (a warm thank you)

Smahli

SMAH-lee · Excuse me, sorry

Ma fhemtsh

mah FHEMTSH · I don't understand

Wesh ismek?

wesh ISS-mek · What is your name?

Ismi ...

ISS-mee · My name is ...

Bshhal?

besH-HAHL · How much?

Win kayen ...?

ween KAH-yen · Where is ...?

Makach mushkil

mah-KASH mush-KEEL · No problem

Inshallah

in-SHAH-lah · God willing

Bslama

bess-LEH-ma · Goodbye

Things you might not know

1. As of 2026, Algeria is the largest country in Africa by area. It took that title in 2011, when South Sudan became independent and Sudan grew smaller.
2. The Sahara covers most of Algeria, but about 90% of Algerians live in the narrow northern, coastal part of the country.
3. The minaret of Djamaa el Djazaïr, the Great Mosque of Algiers, is 265 m tall, the tallest minaret in the world as of 2026.
4. As of 2026, Algeria has seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including three Roman towns (Timgad, Djémila and Tipasa) and the rock art of Tassili n'Ajjer.
5. When it opened in 1912, the Sidi M'Cid suspension bridge in Constantine, about 175 m above the gorge, was the highest bridge in the world. It kept that record until 1929.
6. The French word for candle, bougie, comes from Bougie, the old European name of Béjaïa, whose beeswax was shipped to Europe in the Middle Ages.
7. In 2020 couscous was added to UNESCO's intangible heritage list after a joint nomination by Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.
8. The fennec fox, a tiny desert fox with huge ears, is Algeria's national animal, and the national football team is nicknamed the Fennecs.
9. As of 2026, Algeria has won the Africa Cup of Nations twice: at home in 1990 and in Egypt in 2019.

10. The writer Albert Camus, winner of the 1957 Nobel Prize in Literature, was born in French Algeria in 1913 and was the first literature laureate born in Africa.
11. In 1860, living in exile in Damascus, Emir Abdelkader intervened to stop a massacre of the city's Christians, and several countries honoured him for it.
12. As of 2026, Algeria is divided into 69 provinces (wilayas), up from 58 before November 2025. Each province is named after its capital city.
13. Raï, the popular music of the young singers called cheb and cheba, grew up in the city of Oran.

TALK ABOUT IT

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Algeria, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Couscous (seksu) or Chakhchoukha? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- A decade of conflict begins (1992). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- The Civil Concord is approved (1999). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen The Casbah of Algiers, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Algeria, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Algeria?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. Chakhchoukha is made from torn pieces of thin semolina flatbread soaked in a tomato stew.

- A) True
- B) False

2. 'Rabbi yhafdek' asks God to protect someone and is used as a warm thank you.

- A) True
- B) False

3. What is the Casbah of Algiers?

- A) The old town of Algiers
- B) A modern shopping district
- C) A desert oasis
- D) A Roman theatre

4. What is lham lahlou, whose name means 'sweet meat'?

- A) Fried fish in syrup
- B) Honey cake
- C) Lamb cooked with prunes and dried fruit
- D) Grilled sausages

5. Saint Augustine was bishop of which Roman town, beside modern Annaba?

- A) Carthage
- B) Timgad
- C) Hippo Regius
- D) Cirta

6. The French word for candle, 'bougie', comes from the old name of the port city Béjaïa.

- A) True
- B) False

7. The Algerian War of Independence began with coordinated attacks on which date?

- A) 5 July 1962
- B) 1 January 1950
- C) 18 June 1940
- D) 1 November 1954

8. Which Tamazight word means 'hello'?

- A) bslama
- B) azul
- C) tanemmirt
- D) shwiya

9. As of 2026, what is the status of the land border between Algeria and Morocco?

- A) Open with no checks
- B) Open only at weekends
- C) Closed since 1994
- D) Reopened in 2020

10. As of 2026, Algeria has won the Africa Cup of Nations twice, in 1990 and 2019.

- A) True
- B) False

11. What shape are makroud, the date-filled semolina pastries?

- A) Diamond
- B) Crescent
- C) Ring
- D) Ball

12. Emir Abdelkader surrendered to the French in 1830, the same year they captured Algiers.

- A) True
- B) False

Quiz answers

1. True

True. The bread is torn into small pieces and soaked in marqa, a tomato stew with lamb and chickpeas.

2. True

True. 'Rabbi yhafdek' means 'may God protect you', a warm way to thank someone for a favour.

3. A) The old town of Algiers

The Casbah is the old town of Algiers, a steep maze of lanes, mosques and Ottoman houses, and a World Heritage Site since 1992.

4. C) Lamb cooked with prunes and dried fruit

Lham lahlou is lamb cooked with prunes and dried fruit, such as apricots and raisins, with almonds in a syrup of cinnamon and orange blossom water.

5. C) Hippo Regius

Augustine was bishop of Hippo Regius, whose ruins lie beside Annaba. Carthage is in Tunisia.

6. True

True. Béjaïa, called Bougie by Europeans, exported beeswax for candles in the Middle Ages.

7. D) 1 November 1954

The FLN launched its first attacks on 1 November 1954; the war ended with independence in 1962.

8. B) azul

'Azul' means hello in Tamazight; 'tanemmirt' is thank you in Kabyle. 'Bslama' and 'shwiya' are Algerian Arabic.

9. C) Closed since 1994

The land border has been closed since 1994, so travel between the two

countries is by air.

10. True

True. Algeria won at home in 1990 and in Egypt in 2019.

11. A) Diamond

Makroud are cut into diamond shapes, fried or baked and dipped in honey or syrup. The crescent is the shape of tcharek.

12. False

False. Abdelkader was chosen as leader in 1832, led the resistance in the west for fifteen years and surrendered only in 1847. He is remembered as a national hero.

Algeria visa page

Name: _____ Date: _____



Next stops

Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____
Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____

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<https://worldstroll.com/countries/algeria>