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Chapter 1 Profile

Introduction

Algeria, or *al-jaza'ir* in Arabic, is a North African Mediterranean country populated almost entirely by Sunni Muslims of mixed Berber and Arab heritage. The population speaks several Arabic and Berber dialects and has been heavily influenced by French imperialism.

Unlike some of its North African neighbors, Algeria lacks a firm, unique cultural identity and foundation. For example, Egypt has a well-developed sense of national sovereignty and identity, forged through the Pharaonic dynasties of old, the Fatimid Caliphate of the medieval period, and the Nasserism of modern times. Morocco has a rich nationalist history in its imperial cities, and its current ruling dynasty is nearly 350 years old.¹ The creation of modern Algeria, however, has been much more piecemeal.



© Casas-Rodriguez Collection
Algerian cultural musician

Algeria did not exist separately until it became an Ottoman-governed district. Prior to the Ottomans, different sections of the modern borders fell under a variety of regional authorities at various times. Even after the Ottomans left, Algeria was not a unique place driven by indigenous influences; rather, it was a subject of French occupation. More than a century of French colonial rule changed Algeria. It became not only a part of the Francophone world as a whole, but also a part of France. When anti-colonial sentiment spread in the middle of the 20th century, so did violence and unrest. The Algerian rebellion against the French eventually gave the country sovereignty, but cost hundreds of thousands of lives along the way.

Since independence, Algeria has been attempting to define itself and its cultural identity, and has largely done so by promoting a policy of Arabization. The government has liberalized the economy and begun opening the political sphere. Islamist success at the ballot box in the early 1990s prompted the military to cancel elections, and the country eventually fell into a decade of violent civil war. Today the Algerian government seeks not only to sustain the recent ebb in violence and insecurity but also to promote greater unity within the country.

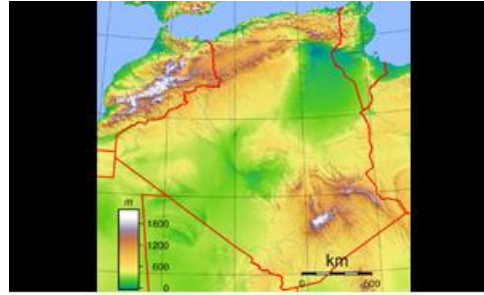
¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Morocco," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco>

Geography

Area

Algeria is the largest country in North Africa. It is also the most populous country in northwest Africa (a region traditionally known as the *Maghreb*, which comprises Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Western Sahara, and Mauritania). The north of the country, home to the majority of the population, has a shoreline that stretches 998 km (620 mi) along the Mediterranean Sea.

Algeria borders three other Mediterranean countries: Morocco on the west, Tunisia on the northeast, and Libya on the east. Niger lies to the southeast of Algeria, and Algeria's southwest desert border is shared with Mali and Mauritania, and for 42 km (26 miles) with Western Sahara. Algeria has a total land area of 2,381,741 sq km (919,595 sq mi), almost three and a half times the size of Texas.²



© Sadalmelik / Wikipedia.org
Topographic map of Algeria

Geographic Divisions and Topographic Features

Three regions divide Algeria: the discontinuous coastal plain, the High Plateaus, and the desert.³ Most of the country is covered by uninhabitable desert. The Atlas Mountains, beginning in the west in Morocco, serve as the major lines of demarcation between the three regions. The northern Tell Atlas ranges run through most of Algeria parallel to the southern Saharan Atlas Mountains. The coastal plains lie north of the Tell Atlas range, between it and the Mediterranean Sea. The Sahara lies south of the Saharan Atlas range. The High Plateaus run between the two arms of the Atlas Mountains. The mountains in the northeast of the country where the Tell and Saharan Atlas ranges meet are known as the Aurès Mountains.

² Central Intelligence Agency, "Algeria," in *The World Factbook*, 20 December 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html>

³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Algeria," in *The World Factbook*, 20 December 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html>

Climate

The coastal plains receive precipitation, allowing for the cultivation of grains, olives, fruit, and vegetables.⁴ Most of the coastal cities have moderate summer temperatures averaging in the mid-20s °C (mid- to high 70s °F).⁵ Winters in this region are mild, usually not dropping below 10°C (50°F); rainfall ranges from 400 to 670 mm (16–27 in.) annually, with more rain falling in the northeast.⁶ The vast majority of the population lives on the coastal plains.



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Snow-capped Aurès mountains

In the High Plateaus the rainfall varies significantly from year to year, leading to less land cultivation and more pasturage of sheep and goats.⁷ The area is largely barren except for intermittent bush and pastures.⁸ Temperatures in the High Plateaus are lower than those of the coast.⁹

The dry steppe and desert region is only suitable for some pasturage in the steppe areas.¹⁰ Temperatures are hot and some places in the desert may go as long as 20 years without rainfall.¹¹ Dust storms and sandstorms are frequent in this region between February and May.¹² Most of this region is devoid of human settlement, although the Tuareg Berbers live in the Ahaggar Mountains.

⁴ Albert Hourani, “Chapter 5. The Arab Muslim World,” in *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 94.

⁵ Climate Zone, “Algeria,” 2004, <http://www.climate-zone.com/climate/algeria/>

⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Algeria,” May 2008, 8, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

⁷ Albert Hourani, “Chapter 5. The Arab Muslim World,” in *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 94.

⁸ Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note, Algeria,” 2 August 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/8005.htm>

⁹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Algeria,” May 2008, 8, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

¹⁰ Albert Hourani, “Chapter 5. The Arab Muslim World,” in *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 94.

¹¹ Algeria Channel, “Algeria’s Geography—From the Blue Mediterranean to the Sands of the Sahara,” No date, <http://www.algeria.com/geography/>

¹² Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note, Algeria,” 2 August 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/8005.htm>

Bodies of Water

Algeria has few natural bodies of water. Life in the country has been facilitated largely by proximity to the Mediterranean Sea and rainfall on the north side of the Atlas Mountains. The country has a handful of freshwater lakes, and most of its rivers are only active during the rainy season.



© M.GASMI / Wikipedia.org
Seybouse River

The Chelif River is Algeria's longest at 725 km (450 mi). It begins in the Atlas Mountains and empties into the Mediterranean Sea along Algeria's northwestern coast. The Chelif's water level fluctuates greatly throughout the year, and it is not navigable.

The Seybouse River runs in the northeast and is formed mostly by the runoff of smaller streams during the rainy season. It empties into the Mediterranean Sea just south of Annaba.¹³

Major Cities

Algiers is the capital and largest city in Algeria. It is a port along the north-central Mediterranean coast. It lies at the base of the Tell Atlas Mountains and along the western side of a natural bay. The city's name in Arabic (*al-jaza'ir*) means "the islands," which refer to four islands (now connected to land) in the bay.¹⁴ In the 16th



© Damien Boilley
Coastline of Algiers

century, Algiers became home to many of the Moors who had been expelled from Spain. Some sought retribution against the Spanish and began using Algiers as a base for piracy. For the next 300 years, during nominal Ottoman control of the city, Algiers was the major home for Barbary pirates.¹⁵ During the Algerian struggle for independence from the French, some of the most brutal fighting took place in the capital city. Just 40 years later, during the civil war of the 1990s, the city was again the scene of horrific violence. In recent years the wounds of Algiers have begun to heal as violence has waned, and the economy has improved. Today Algiers is an eclectic metropolis with Ottoman, French colonial, and modern aspects. The city and surrounding

¹³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Wadi Seybouse," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/537235/Wadi-Seybouse>

¹⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Algiers," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15094/Algiers>

¹⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Algiers," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15094/Algiers>

urban area has a population of 2.74 million according to a 2009 United Nations estimate.¹⁶

Another of Algeria's major port cities on the Mediterranean, west of Algiers, Oran is the country's second biggest city. It was originally built for Moorish traders operating out of the Iberian Peninsula. The Spanish conquered the city in 1509 and controlled it on and off for nearly 300 years, often vying for power against the Ottomans. Today, some of Oran's most prominent landmarks are old Spanish fortifications. French colonists arrived in 1831



©Taguelmoust / Wikipedia.org
Spanish Fort overlooking Oran

and began investing in the port, eventually turning Oran into one of France's largest and most bustling cities.¹⁷ It developed a thriving population of French settlers, who mostly fled after independence. Oran's most important cultural contribution is the home-bred folk music known as *rai* that has spread throughout much of North Africa. Although Oran was similar to Algiers in that it saw a great deal of violence during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1990s, it has not bounced back as Algiers has.¹⁸

Lying in the country's northeast on an inland plateau, Constantine (*Qacentina* in Arabic) is one of Algeria's most unique sights. The area's earliest inhabitants took advantage of the high rock walls overlooking a deep gorge to create a naturally fortified settlement. The city was the capital of a Roman province for hundreds of years, although the Romans razed the city in 311 C.E. after a rebellion. Emperor Constantine later ordered the city to be rebuilt, and it has been known by his name ever since.¹⁹

Annaba lies along the Mediterranean Sea near Algeria's eastern border with Tunisia. This natural port and its proximity to fertile ground has ensured its longevity through many centuries.²⁰ Phoenicians first settled the area, and it later fell under the jurisdiction of the Romans, who called the city Hippo Regius. After the Roman Empire adopted Christianity, the religion spread to the region. The city became a key center for Christianity under its influential Bishop Augustine, especially following the fall of Rome to the Visigoths in 410.²¹ Though not a particularly active town during Ottoman times,

¹⁶ United Nations, "Algeria," World Urbanization Prospects: The 2009 Revision Population Database, 2010, <http://esa.un.org/wup2009/unup/p2k0data.asp>

¹⁷ Lonely Planet, "Oran: History," 2 March 2009, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria/oran/history>

¹⁸ Lonely Planet, "Introducing Oran," 2 March 2009, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria/oran/>

¹⁹ Lonely Planet, "Introducing Constantine," 17 February 2009, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria/constantine>

²⁰ Lonely Planet, "Introducing Annaba," 2 March 2009, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria/annaba>

²¹ Lonely Planet, "Annaba: History," 2 March 2009, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria/annaba/history>

the city was modernized under French rule and became a major port.²² Annaba was largely spared the violence of the 1990s, and today handles the bulk of the country's mineral exports.²³

History

Pre-Islamic History

Cave paintings in southeastern Algeria are remnants of the region's early inhabitants. Occupying the area between 6000 and 2000 B.C.E., Algeria's earliest dwellers lived off subsistence farming and tending of livestock, eventually developing into a native population known today as Berbers.²⁴



© W. Robrecht / Wikipedia.org
Cave painting

The Mediterranean Sea brought Phoenician traders to North Africa around 900 B.C.E. Within a century they established Carthage in present-day Tunisia and began building up their empire along the coast. Trade (and hostility at times) developed over the following centuries between the Carthaginians and Berbers. Carthage was eventually defeated by Rome in the Punic Wars during the second century B.C.E., and the area fell into Roman hands.²⁵

By the fourth century C.E. the Berber regions had become Christianized in urban areas, although many Berbers retained their indigenous beliefs.²⁶ This period of Algeria's history is most famous for Augustine, Bishop of Hippo Regius (present-day Annaba) and one of Christianity's most prominent early theologians.

²² Lonely Planet, "Annaba: History," 2 March 2009, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria/annaba/history>

²³ Lonely Planet, "Introducing Annaba," 2 March 2009, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria/annaba>

²⁴ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 1, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

²⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 2, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

²⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 2, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

Islamic Expansion

By 711, less than 80 years after the death of Muhammad, Arab Muslims aided by Berber converts conquered all of North Africa.²⁷ Most of the Maghreb was ruled for one-and-a-half centuries out of Tahirt, southwest of Algiers. After the Fatimids (a Berber-supported Shia caliphate) destroyed Tahirt in 911, the conquerors' territorial interests turned toward the east, and they largely left Algeria to be ruled by a Berber dynasty known as the Zirids (972–1148).

For the next 400 years, until Ottoman expansion reached Algerian shores, the region fell under various dynasties: the western Saharan Almoravids, the Almohads out of Morocco, and finally the Zayanids, who established their rule in the Algerian city of Tlemcen.²⁸



© PHGOM / Wikipedia.org
Ottoman-era cannon

Algeria as a unique governing concept did not exist until it came under Ottoman jurisdiction. Throughout the early Islamic period, the region had supported a number of local dynasties but never developed its own state organization. The Ottomans, based in modern-day Turkey, were the first foreign conquerors to create a separate territorial and administrative identity within the Algerian region.²⁹ Although the Ottoman bureaucracy was highly institutionalized, Ottoman control over rural areas was never complete. Tension and even open rebellion against Ottoman rule were common, even to the time of the French invasion in 1830.³⁰

Colonial Period

France blockaded the port at Algiers for 3 years in 1827. France sent a military expedition in 1830 and by 1848, France controlled almost all of northern Algeria.³¹

Over the following decades France increased its colonial presence. Colonists, known as *colons* or *pieds noirs* (literally, “black feet”), became firmly



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
French capture of Constantine

²⁷ Ira M. Lapidus, “Chapter 3. The Arab Conquests and the Socio-Economic Bases of Empire,” in *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 33.

²⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Algeria,” May 2008, 2–3, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

²⁹ Ira M. Lapidus, “Chapter 16. Islamic North Africa and Spain to the Nineteenth Century,” in *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 334.

³⁰ Ira M. Lapidus, “Chapter 16. Islamic North Africa and Spain to the Nineteenth Century,” in *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 326.

³¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Algeria,” May 2008, 3, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

rooted in Algerian economic and administrative affairs.³² The European population increased from 200,000 in 1860 to 750,000 in 1911. Their presence was especially felt in cities; Algiers in 1911 was three-quarters European.³³

French colonialism in Algeria followed a pattern of assimilation in which France actively promoted French language and culture. Not only did France become heavily reliant on Algerian resources, but Algeria became “an integral part of metropolitan France.”³⁴ By the 1920s and 1930s, world attitudes toward colonialism began to change, but France (unlike Britain) was struggling too much economically to consider reversing its imperial position.³⁵ Algiers was even the provisional capital of France for a time during the German occupation of World War II.³⁶ By the mid-20th century, 80% of European settlers in Algeria had been born in Algeria.³⁷ They had the best land, the best jobs, and the best positions in government.

Battle for Independence

By the 1950s, changing attitudes toward colonials and recent French defeats in Indochina had emboldened disaffected Algerians.³⁸ By 1954, the Muslim population of Algeria had reached nearly 9 million and more than half of all native Algerians were less than 20 years old. Poor living standards and high unemployment created an environment in which protest movements—generally unsuccessful in previous decades—began to take hold.³⁹ One such group was the



© Michel Marcheux
Barricaded street in Algiers

³² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Algeria,” May 2008, 4, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

³³ Albert Hourani, “Chapter 17. European Empires and Dominant Elites (1860–1914),” in *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 291.

³⁴ Albert Hourani, “Chapter 21. The End of the Empires (1939–1962),” in *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 369.

³⁵ Albert Hourani, “Chapter 19. The Climax of European Power (1914–1939),” in *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 330.

³⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Algiers,” 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15094/Algiers>

³⁷ Albert Hourani, “Chapter 21. The End of the Empires (1939–1962),” in *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 369.

³⁸ Albert Hourani, “Chapter 21. The End of the Empires (1939–1962),” in *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 370.

³⁹ Albert Hourani, “Chapter 21. The End of the Empires (1939–1962),” in *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 369–370.

National Liberation Front (FLN), an organization primarily composed of men with little education but with some French military experience.^{40, 41} The FLN fired its first shots in 1954, beginning almost a decade of a brutal war for independence which was especially fierce in Algiers in 1957.⁴²

By the early 1960s, French Premier Charles de Gaulle's public references to "self-determination" had angered the *pieds noirs* to the point that they staged an insurrection in Algeria and conspired with elements in the French army to overthrow the de Gaulle government.⁴³ After the coup attempt was foiled, de Gaulle no longer felt responsibility for the colonists. In 1962, a settlement was reached in which Algeria gained independence, thus ending a war in which tens of thousands of French were killed and anywhere between 300,000 and 1 million Algerians died.⁴⁴ Although guarantees were made for the French settlers still living in Algeria, most fled because of continued violence and threats.

Early Independence

Algerian independence brought with it a number of challenges. The fighting of the previous decade not only cost many lives, but also destroyed villages and important agricultural land. The country lost a great deal of institutional memory in several vital sectors as the *pieds noirs*—who represented most of Algeria's civil servants, senior administrators, technical experts, and managers—fled the country.⁴⁵ It was against this backdrop that a newly independent Algeria had to find its way.



© magharebia / flickr.com
Unrest in the streets

A constitution was adopted by referendum in 1963, establishing the FLN as the sole political party. After just 3 years of independence, the minister of defense, Colonel

⁴⁰ Albert Hourani, "Chapter 21. The End of the Empires (1939–1962)," in *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 370.

⁴¹ Ira M. Lapidus, "Chapter 26. North Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 595.

⁴² Albert Hourani, "Chapter 21. The End of the Empires (1939–1962)," in *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 371.

⁴³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 5, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

⁴⁴ Albert Hourani, "Chapter 21. The End of the Empires (1939–1962)," in *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 372.

⁴⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Algeria," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

Houari Boumédiène, led a non-violent coup, establishing himself as the head of state and placing the armed forces in an official operating role within the government.⁴⁶ After Boumédiène's death in 1978, the FLN nominated Colonel Chadli Bendjedid, elected president in 1979, 1984, and 1988. Under Bendjedid in 1989, a new constitution was adopted and the political space was opened to more parties besides the FLN.⁴⁷ Of the many new political parties created in the wake of the political liberalization of the 1989 constitution, none was more popular than the militant Islamic Salvation Front (FIS).

Civil War

Municipal elections were held in the summer of 1990, and FIS candidates won more than 50% of all votes. A year and a half later, in December 1991, the first round of national legislative elections was held and FIS once again was resoundingly successful.⁴⁸ Faced with the prospects of the FIS gaining a majority of seats in the National People's Assembly, the military decided to intervene, forcing Bendjedid to resign and cancelling the second-round elections.⁴⁹ The

FIS responded violently, and by February 1992 the High Council of State, established after Bendjedid's resignation, declared a state of emergency and began pushing back. FIS offices were shut down, the party was formally dissolved, and more than 50,000 party members were jailed.⁵⁰

During most of the following decade, Algeria was consumed by civil war. Several terrorist groups, including the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), and an offshoot of the GIA known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), began targeting government institutions and figures, journalists, and other civilians. A newly appointed president and former hero of the independence movement, Mohamed Boudiaf, was assassinated in 1992 by an army lieutenant acting on



© Jackaranga / Wikipedia.org
Emblem of independent Algeria

⁴⁶ Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note, Algeria," 2 August 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/8005.htm>

⁴⁷ Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note, Algeria," 2 August 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/8005.htm>

⁴⁸ Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note, Algeria," 2 August 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/8005.htm>

⁴⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Algeria," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

⁵⁰ Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note, Algeria," 2 August 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/8005.htm>

behalf of Islamist terrorists. It is estimated that as many as 150,000 Algerians died because of the violence of the 1990s, a period known as the “black years.”⁵¹

Restoring Stability

In 1999 Abdelaziz Bouteflika was elected president, and began by focusing on security and stability in the country. He offered amnesty to most of those who had fought against the government during the 1990s. This policy, known as the Law of Civil Concord, was approved in a national referendum. It is estimated that 80% of those who fought against the government in the “black years” have accepted the amnesty and have attempted to reintegrate into Algerian society.⁵² Although the security situation in the country has greatly improved, civilians and government officials are still targeted by terrorists from time to time. In 2007 the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat rebranded itself as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). AQIM is especially involved in the kidnapping of civilians and the trafficking of drugs and weapons.⁵³

Government

The Algerian government has three branches with an especially strong executive branch. It is a multiparty political system with a strong military.

Executive Branch

The president, elected for a 5-year term, is the head of state and commander in chief. The current president (Abdelaziz Bouteflika) also has the position of minister of defense. The president may appoint and dismiss the prime minister.⁵⁴ Previous presidents were constitutionally limited to two terms, but Bouteflika successfully led a campaign to change the constitution so that he could run for a third term in 2009, an election he subsequently won with 90% of the vote.⁵⁵



© Ricardo Stuckert
President Abdelaziz Bouteflika

⁵¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Algeria,” May 2008, 17, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

⁵² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Algeria,” May 2008, 7, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

⁵³ Jean-Pierre Filiu, “Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Algerian Challenge or Global Threat?” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Middle East Report* 104 (October 2009): 7–8, carnegieendowment.org/files/al-qaeda_islamic_maghreb.pdf

⁵⁴ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Algeria,” May 2008, 17, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

⁵⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, “Algeria,” in *The World Factbook*, 20 December 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html>

Legislative Branch

Algeria has a two-house parliament. The 389 members of the lower house are popularly elected every 5 years. The upper house members serve 6-year terms. Two-thirds of the 144-member council are elected by local and regional authorities. The remaining third are appointed by the president.⁵⁶

Judicial Branch

Algeria's court system is divided among ordinary courts, courts of appeal, administrative courts, and the Supreme Court. Although Algeria's constitution guarantees an independent judicial system, in reality the executive branch has influence on the courts.⁵⁷

Media

Although the country's TV and radio stations are state-controlled, Algeria's print media is among the most independent in the Arab world.⁵⁸ Algiers, Oran, and Constantine have daily newspapers published in Arabic and French that often criticize the government.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, blatant insults or defamation of the president, members of parliament, or other government officials and institutions (such as judges or the army) may be punishable by fines or prison terms.⁶⁰ The state also controls printing presses and advertising, and may punish a newspaper by withholding access to advertising.⁶¹ The most severe threat to the media does not stem from the government but from violent extremists.⁶²



© John Perivolaris
Satellite dishes

⁵⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 17, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

⁵⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 17, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

⁵⁸ BBC News, "Algeria Country Profile," 6 October 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/790556.stm

⁵⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Algeria," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

⁶⁰ BBC News, "Algeria Country Profile," 6 October 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/790556.stm

⁶¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 19, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

⁶² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 19, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

Economy

Independence from the French brought a shift in economic policy. During the colonial period, the major driver of the economy was agriculture. After 1962, the country began emphasizing industry.⁶³ For several decades the government ran many corporations, but by the 1980s Algeria began to liberalize its economy; by 1989, the word “socialist” was officially dropped from the constitution.⁶⁴ Although the government began its shift from state control more than 20 years ago, the economy’s evolution toward greater privatization has proved to be complicated and halting.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, the agricultural sector has never recovered from its neglect after independence. As a result, Algeria has moved from a food-exporting region in the 1950s to a nation that today must import roughly 45% of its food.^{66, 67}



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Unloading at port

For many decades the economy has been dominated by hydrocarbons, which account for about 60% of budget revenues, 30% of the gross domestic product (GDP), and more than 95% of export earnings.⁶⁸ Algeria is a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and exports crude oil and natural gas, with its largest customers being the United States, Italy, Spain, France, and the Netherlands.⁶⁹ Algeria’s

⁶³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Algeria,” 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

⁶⁴ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Algeria,” May 200), 6, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

⁶⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Algeria,” May 2008, 11, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

⁶⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Algeria,” May 2008, 11, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

⁶⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Algeria,” 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

⁶⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, “Algeria,” in *The World Factbook*, 13 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html>

⁶⁹ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization, “Trade Performance HS: Exports and Imports of Algeria—27 Mineral Fuels, Oils, Distillation Products, etc. (2009, in USD Thousands),” 2010, http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI_P.aspx?IN=27&RP=012&YR=2009&IL=27 Mineral fuels, oils, distillation products, etc&TY=T

heavy reliance on hydrocarbons meant that the country was especially susceptible to the economic downturn in 2008.⁷⁰

Linguistic Groups

The government of Algeria no longer ethnically distinguishes between Arab and Berber. The *CIA World Factbook* lists the ethnic make-up of the country as 99% Arab-Berber and 1% European.⁷¹ Almost all Algerians are at least partly descended from ancient Berber groups, though only a minority identify themselves as Berber.⁷² Therefore, distinctions are drawn linguistically rather than ethnically.



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Promenade strollers

Since independence, Algeria has followed a policy of “Arabization” as a backlash to the long colonial rule. In 1990 the sole official language of the country became Arabic, and the vast majority of Algerians speak at least one Arabic dialect, although French is still widely used.⁷³ French is especially common in the business sector.⁷⁴ Berber dialects, known as *Tamazight*, are spoken by the Berber population, although most also speak Arabic.⁷⁵ Language has become a symbolic issue in the Berber struggle for greater autonomy; many Berbers see the policy of Arabization as a dismissal of their native culture. *Tamazight* was adopted in 2002 as a national language, but it still does not enjoy official language status as Arabic does.

Prominent Berber dialects include Kabyle, spoken in the region directly east of Algiers; Tachawit, spoken in the northeast of the country; and Tuareg, spoken in the country’s

⁷⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, “Algeria,” in *The World Factbook*, 13 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html>

⁷¹ Central Intelligence Agency, “Algeria,” in *The World Factbook*, 20 December 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html>

⁷² Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Algeria,” 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

⁷³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Algeria,” 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

⁷⁴ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Algeria,” May 2008, 10, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

⁷⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Algeria,” 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

southeast. Various other Berber languages are spoken by small populations throughout the central region.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ M. Paul Lewis, ed., “Languages of Algeria,” in *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 16th ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2009), http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Algeria

Chapter 1: Assessments

1. Algeria, as a distinguishable entity, has existed since the medieval period.

False

Algeria did not become a distinguishable entity until the Ottoman Empire.

2. Algeria is the largest country in North Africa.

True

Algeria is North Africa's largest country and the second largest (after Sudan) on the entire continent.

3. The Seybouse River is the longest in Algeria.

False

The Chelif River is the longest in Algeria.

4. Annaba is Algeria's second-largest city.

False

Oran is Algeria's second-largest city.

5. The French actively promoted their language and culture in Algeria.

True

Promotion of French language and culture was part of a colonial assimilation policy.

Chapter 2: Religion

Overview

Algerian social values and societal expectations are largely shaped by Islam. The religion has deep roots in Algerian history and culture, and was one of the main ways that Algerians expressed their indigenous values during the long French colonial period. Religious expression in Algeria takes many forms, including Islamist political and extreme terrorist groups. The country's deeply rooted Islamist opposition to the government led in part to the violence of the civil war (1992–2002). Today, religion plays a large role in everyday life.



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Karawine, Islamic University

Major Religions

More than 99% of Algerians are Muslim, with the remaining population as primarily Christian or Jewish.⁷⁷ Although the vast majority of the country is Sunni Muslim, religious expression in Algeria is surprisingly diverse. There are varying opinions about the degree to which Islam should permeate society. Algeria also has a sizable Sufi population.

Islam

Islam is the world's second-largest religion.^{78, 79}

The religion's origins lie in the early seventh century C.E. in the Arabian Peninsula.

Muhammad (570–632 C.E.), a trader from Mecca, is believed to have been visited by the angel Jibril (Gabriel), from whom he received a series of revelations that were eventually written as the Quran.⁸⁰ Muhammad gained support for his new teachings, which eventually supplanted the polytheistic beliefs then prevalent there.



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Muhammad with Gabriel

⁷⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "Algeria," in *The World Factbook*, 20 December 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html>

⁷⁸ BBC Religions, "Islam at a Glance," 30 June 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/ata glance/glance.shtml>

⁷⁹ John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (New York: Gallup, Inc., 2007), 3.

⁸⁰ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 16–18.

However, Muslims do not see their faith as new, but as a continuation of the religious tradition of Abraham. Abraham (Ibrahim), Moses (Musa), and Jesus (Isa) are considered prophets who preceded Muhammad.⁸¹

Islam after Muhammad

Muhammad died without naming a successor, an issue that influenced Islamic history. A group of Muhammad's close associates chose one of his early companions, Abu Bakr, to be the new leader (Caliph) of the Muslim community.⁸² Although not seen as a prophet, Abu Bakr secured authority over the community. Election of the community's next leaders became more



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Flag of Jihad

contentious. The next two Caliphs, Umar and Uthman, both died violently. Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, claimed leadership authority but was never fully recognized. Within 5 years he was also killed and leadership passed back to a kinsman of Uthman.⁸³ This history is important because it is still hotly contested today and is the source of a great doctrinal schism in Islam. Supporters of Ali and his family arose, becoming known as the Shi'ites (*shiat Ali* in Arabic, meaning the party or sect of Ali). They have long felt abused and mistreated by Islam's majority sect, the Sunni. Roughly 85% of the world's Muslims are Sunni; Shi'ites are primarily centered in Iran and Iraq, with a notable presence in Lebanon. Virtually all of Algeria's Muslims are Sunni, although the M'zab (a Berber people) of Algeria's northern Sahara region follow a rare form known as Ibadi Islam, which lies outside of the conventional Sunni-Shia dichotomy.^{84, 85}

Although Islam's first century was a tumultuous time for the religion, it was also a period of expansion. Within 100 years of Muhammad's death, Islam reached across all of North Africa and into the Iberian Peninsula of modern-day Spain and Portugal.

⁸¹ John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (New York: Gallup, Inc., 2007), 8.

⁸² Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 22–23.

⁸³ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 24–25.

⁸⁴ Valerie J. Hoffman, "Ibadi Islam: An Introduction," University of Georgia, No date, <http://www.uga.edu/islam/ibadis.html>

⁸⁵ Pessah Shinar, *Modern Islam in the Maghrib* (Jerusalem: The Max Schloessinger Memorial Foundation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2004), 98–107

The Five Pillars of Islam

Islam is often viewed as a behavioral religion, in which adherents are defined as much by what they *do* as what they *believe*. Such is the case in Algeria, where Islam is practiced “largely as a set of social prescriptions and ethical attitudes.”⁸⁶ The manifestation of Islam in Algerian society is most markedly seen in the faith’s fundamental duties, also known as the “Five Pillars of Islam.”



© Bachir / flickr.com
Al-Badr Mosque

Shahada—The declaration of faith (*shahada*) that “There is no god but God (Allah) and Muhammad is God’s messenger” is all that one needs to do to become a Muslim. It is repeated in prayers throughout the day and in the call to prayer. It reminds Muslims not only of the polytheism of pre-Islamic Arabia but also that nothing (including money or ambition) should be worshipped except God.⁸⁷

Salat—Muslims are expected to pray five times a day. In many Muslim countries, including Algeria, the call to prayer can be heard throughout cities and towns. Crowds of people attend Friday prayers at noon in mosques across the country.

Exchange 1: When do you pray?

Visitor:	When do you pray?	wuqtash tSaloo?
Local:	The next time is at noon.	il-wuqt il-jaay 'a aT-Tnaash

Sawm—Fasting during the month of Ramadan is a time for physical discipline and spiritual reflection. Muslims fast and also abstain from sexual intercourse and smoking from sunrise to sunset throughout the month.

Zakat—Muslims are expected to give alms (*zakat*) to share the wealth they have received from God. Sharing 2.5% of all assets is customarily expected. Algeria announced in 2009 that it would begin streamlining *zakat* collection by creating a *zakat* management institution under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.⁸⁸ Money from the state-run *zakat* fund has



© zedamnabi / flickr.com
Minarets

⁸⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Algeria,” 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

⁸⁷ John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (New York: Gallup, Inc., 2007), 12–13.

⁸⁸ Algeria News & Press Reviews, “Forthcoming Creation of Zakat Management Institution,” 10 September 2009, <http://news.marweb.com/algeria/social/forthcoming-creation-of-zakat-management-institution.html>

been used for many purposes, including building mosques, providing scholarships to needy students, and providing aid to the Palestinians in Gaza.

Hajj—Pilgrimage to Mecca is the final pillar of Islam. Once every year pilgrims come from all over the world for the 5-day ritual. It is expected that every Muslim should go once in a lifetime, although if they are unfit or lack the means, someone may go on their behalf. According to the Saudi Ministry of Hajj, 144,000 Algerians made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 2010.⁸⁹

Algerian Sufism

Although Algeria does not have a Shia–Sunni rift, there are varying interpretations of Islam, and religious expression is dynamic. One mode of religious expression common in Algeria and much of North Africa is known as Sufism. Commonly known as Islamic mysticism, Sufism refers to an eclectic and polymorphous group distinguished by many unique practices and approaches to religion. Sufis stress local custom and direct spiritual insight, often dispensing with an *imam* (a prayer-leader). They seek their own personal encounter with the divine that may come through meditation, chanting, or even dancing.⁹⁰ Sufis are also known for honoring saints, a practice called saint worship. Sufis revere those seen to be endowed with divine grace.⁹¹ These venerated individuals, known as *Marabouts*, may be teachers, scholars, healers, or people known for their piety or spirituality.⁹²



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Sufi worshippers

Many Sufis have practiced a sort of monasticism by following Quranic admonitions to leave the material world behind and to only pursue eternal happiness.⁹³ Indeed, Sufism likely takes its name from the woolen robes early monastic Sufis wore (*suf*, Arabic for

⁸⁹ Arab News, “Haj Ministry’s Clarification on Stranded Algerian Pilgrims,” 26 September 2010, <http://arabnews.com/saudiarabia/article147866.ece>

⁹⁰ A. J. Arberry, *Aspects of Islamic Civilization: The Moslem World Depicted through its Literature* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1967), 218.

⁹¹ Sossie Andezian, “The Significance of Sufism in Algeria in the Aftermath of Independence,” PASSIA, 12 December 2002, <http://www.passia.org/meetings/rsunit/2002/Sufism-minutes3.htm>

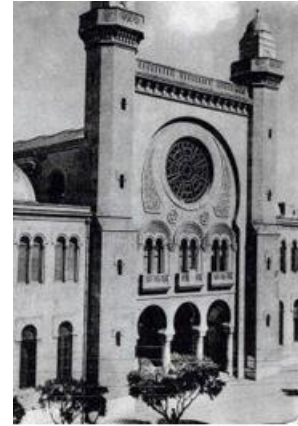
⁹² Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Algeria,” 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

⁹³ A. J. Arberry, *Aspects of Islamic Civilization: The Moslem World Depicted through its Literature* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1967), 218.

wool).⁹⁴ Most Sufi brotherhoods today in North Africa were founded sometime after the 16th century.⁹⁵ There are an estimated 1.5 million Sufis in Algeria today.⁹⁶

Christians and Jews in Algeria

Despite Algeria's history as the home of Saint Augustine, and the long colonial presence of the mainly Catholic French, few Christians live in the country today. Less than 1% of Algeria's populace is Christian. Although the Catholic Church has some presence, the majority of Algeria's Christians are Protestant.⁹⁷ Although Christians are guaranteed a certain degree of freedom to worship, they must be careful not to try to convert Muslims or to disrespect Muslim cultural mores, such as the one against eating in public during Ramadan.



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Grand Synagogue of Oran

Judaism in Algeria dates back nearly 2,000 years, although there was not a sizable Jewish population until the 14th century. When Jews were driven out of Spain during the *Reconquista*, many found new homes in Algeria's port cities, primarily Algiers and Oran. By the 1950s, the Jewish population of Algeria numbered roughly 140,000; however, more than 90% of them fled after the country gained independence from the French in 1962. In Algeria's civil war of the 1990s, the Jewish population experienced increased harassment. A threat by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in 1994 was enough to prompt most of the remaining Jews to flee. The country's sole synagogue was abandoned, and today it is estimated by one source that fewer than 100 Jews live in Algeria.⁹⁸

Role of Religion in the Government

Islam is part of Algeria's national identity, but the degree to which the state regulates its practice is hotly debated—sometimes violently. Islamic symbolism became infused early in the struggle for independence from the French. Algeria's National Liberation Front (FLN) sought to create a unique state founded in Islam.⁹⁹ Further, the constitution names

⁹⁴ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 72.

⁹⁵ Sossie Andezian, "The Significance of Sufism in Algeria in the Aftermath of Independence," PASSIA, 12 December 2002, <http://www.passia.org/meetings/rsunit/2002/Sufism-minutes3.htm>

⁹⁶ Reuters, "Algeria Fights Insurgency with Sufism," Al Arabiya News Channel, 8 July 2009, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/07/08/78165.html>

⁹⁷ BBC News, "Two Algerian Christians 'Did Not Break Ramadan Rules,'" 5 October 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-11475137>

⁹⁸ Mitchell Bard, "The Jews of Algeria," Jewish Virtual Library, 2010, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/algjews.html>

⁹⁹ L. Carl Brown, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 121.

Islam as the country's official religion; other religions are also protected as long as they do not proselytize or publicly assemble without a license. The government actively monitors the practice of Islam, hoping to curb violent teachings.¹⁰⁰

Islamist Parties and Groups

Although the Algerian government has endorsed the importance of Islamic heritage in the country, government policies have also allowed room for secular development. In response to this perceived "secularism," fundamentalist groups that push for a greater role of Islam throughout society have been growing in Algeria since the 1970s. Although the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) has been banned from political activity, a number of other Islamist parties have found supporters. During the mid-1990s, the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP) fielded presidential candidates. Today, the greatest Islamist representation in government comes from the party Al Islah (Movement for National Reform), although it is a splinter from another, still active Islamist party known as Al Nahda (Islamic Renaissance Movement, also rendered as *Ennahda*).¹⁰¹ More extreme groups operate outside the political sphere and hope to shape modern Algerian society through violence. Among them are the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

Sufis and Government

Because Sufis stress local customs and direct spiritual insight, they have traditionally been independent of established authority—religious or civic. But this independence has been viewed as a threat to conventional authorities.¹⁰² Sufis have found themselves at odds with ruling powers and have been involved in a number of tribal uprisings. The Algerian government banned Sufi brotherhoods following independence.¹⁰³ In an interesting policy reversal, however, the government has loosened its restrictions on Sufism since 1991 and has even created television and radio stations in recent years that promote Sufism.¹⁰⁴ Despite initially viewing Sufis as a group apart from the mainstream and a threat to established authority, many Algerian officials now see Sufism as an answer to the *Salafi* fundamentalism often associated with Islamic extremism.¹⁰⁵ Salafism

¹⁰⁰ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 10, <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf>

¹⁰¹ Achria Mammeri, "Algeria's Islamist Parties Opt Out of Presidential Elections," *Magharebia*, 10 February 2009, http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2009/02/10/feature-01

¹⁰² Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Algeria," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

¹⁰³ Sossie Andezian, "The Significance of Sufism in Algeria in the Aftermath of Independence," PASSIA, 12 December 2002, <http://www.passia.org/meetings/rsunit/2002/Sufism-minutes3.htm>

¹⁰⁴ Reuters, "Algeria Fights Insurgency with Sufism," *Al Arabiya News Channel*, 8 July 2009, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/07/08/78165.html>

¹⁰⁵ Sossie Andezian, "The Significance of Sufism in Algeria in the Aftermath of Independence," PASSIA, 12 December 2002, <http://www.passia.org/meetings/rsunit/2002/Sufism-minutes3.htm>

is dedicated to the reform of society through the return to an original form of Islam practiced by Muhammad and his immediate successors, and Salafism has influenced some of Algeria's Islamist movements.¹⁰⁶ The contemplative nature of Sufis and their tendency to be far less political than *Salafi* reformers impress officials trying to rebound from years of violence at the hands of extremists. Today, movements in Algeria are actively trying to promote Sufism as an indigenous form of Islam in contrast to Saudi-imported Salafism.¹⁰⁷

Religion in Daily Life

Islam permeates many aspects of daily life in Algeria. As a Muslim country, Algeria's foods are influenced by *halal* prescriptions, meaning they conform to Islamic law. Alcohol is forbidden in Islam and so is not readily available in Algeria, though it is tolerated much more than in some Muslim countries. Algerian wine, popular during the French colonial period, is still available along with beer in some urban bars, clubs, as well as high-end restaurants and hotels.¹⁰⁸ As in other Muslim nations, pork is practically nonexistent.



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Veiled woman in Algiers

Religion is also evident in Algerian daily life through the observance of *salat*. Five times a day the streets near a community mosque ring out with the call to prayer. Before entering the mosque to pray, Algerians (like other Muslims) will cleanse by washing their face, neck, hands, arms, and feet.^{109, 110} Men and women perform this ritual cleansing in separate areas and remain segregated during their prayers in the mosque.

Algeria's Sufis have acts of devotion, the most widespread of which is the *dhikr* (Arabic for remembering). Like most aspects of Sufism, *dhikr* is not tied to a codified dogma and may vary greatly from one brotherhood or individual to another. Following Quranic exhortations to remember God, the idea is that one is brought closer to God through remembrance, so the repetition of scripture, God's many names, or the name of

¹⁰⁶ Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 464, 466.

¹⁰⁷ Reuters, "Algeria Fights Insurgency with Sufism," Al Arabiya News Channel, 8 July 2009, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/07/08/78165.html>. The Algerian government is not the only entity coming to such conclusions. A 2007 RAND report also cited promoting Sufism to fight emerging Islamism.

¹⁰⁸ New York Times, "Algeria: An Open Door for Alcohol," 19 July 2005, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9905E0DB173CF93AA25754C0A9639C8B63>

¹⁰⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Islam," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/295507/Islam>

¹¹⁰ Anthony Ham, Nana Luckham, and Anthony Sattin, *Algeria* (Footscray, Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet, 2007), 47.

Muhammad helps one remember one's standing before God.¹¹¹ The *dhikr* may be an individual act or may bring people together in a group setting.

Religious Events and Holidays

A number of Muslim holidays are officially recognized in Algeria.¹¹² Because these holidays concur with the Islamic lunar calendar, their dates are not fixed to the standard Gregorian calendar or the seasons of the year. Therefore, the dates fall 11 or 12 days earlier every year, according to a standard Western calendar.

Al-Hijra

Al-Hijra is the Islamic New Year—an important date in Muslim history and a state holiday in Algeria. It marks the date in 622 C.E. when Muhammad left Mecca and began leading his followers to Medina (*hijra* meaning migration or flight). Because the day is seen as the beginning of Islam as a community (*umma*), all Islamic calendars refer to this historical moment with *Al-Hijra* as the first day of the first month (*Muharram*) of the first year.¹¹³ Subsequent years are marked A.H. (after *hijra*) or simply *hijri*.

In Algeria, like most of the Muslim world, *Al-Hijra* is a time for reflection, when Muslims might ponder the original *hijra* or make New Year resolutions.¹¹⁴ But the holiday is not as important as others, such as the two major festivals (*Eids*).

Ashura

Ashura is an especially important holiday for Shi'ite Muslims. Meaning *ten* in Arabic, *Ashura* is the tenth day of the Islamic month *Muharram* and, for Shi'ites, commemorates the death of Hussein, the son of Ali and grandson of Muhammad, at Karbala (in modern-day Iraq). Shi'ites view Hussein as a martyr murdered by an illegitimate ruler and as a symbol for their struggle against Sunni Muslims. They often observe his death by putting on passion plays reenacting Hussein's martyrdom or by making a pilgrimage to Karbala.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "dhikr," 2010, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/160785/dhikr>

¹¹² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 1, <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf>

¹¹³ BBC Religions, "Al-Hijra," 7 September 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/holydays/alhijra.shtml>

¹¹⁴ BBC Religions, "Al-Hijra," 7 September 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/holydays/alhijra.shtml>

¹¹⁵ Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 134, 244.

Algeria, being almost entirely Sunni Muslim, commemorates *Ashura* differently than the Shi'ite world.¹¹⁶ For Sunnis, *Ashura* is a day of fasting. This tradition began after the exodus from Mecca of Muhammad and his followers. When they arrived in Medina, he was told by Jews fasting there that they honored Moses' fast of gratitude for the Israelites' passage through the Red Sea to escape the Egyptians. Muhammad adopted this practice and later urged his followers to also fast the day before or after *Ashura* to distinguish their observance from that of the Jews.¹¹⁷

Mawlid an-Nabi

The Birth of the Prophet (*Mawlid an-Nabi* or *Milad an-Nabi*), an official holiday in Algeria, celebrates the birth of Muhammad.¹¹⁸ While many use this day to remember the life of Islam's chief prophet, others feel that celebration of his birthday (or any) is inappropriate, because there is no evidence that Muhammad celebrated birthdays.¹¹⁹

Mawlid is often marked by parades and other street celebrations. *Mawlid* offers a time for Muslims to reflect on Muhammad's teachings, or to discuss his character as a way to advance social or political agendas. In Algeria, celebrations have been used to publicly discuss the status of women in the country (among other topics), using the example of Muhammad's actions in improving the status of women.¹²⁰

Lailat al-Miraj

Algerians celebrate *Lailat al-Miraj* (The Night of Ascension) as an official holiday. The holiday traces its roots to Islam's beginnings. According to tradition, Muhammad was transported in the night by a great winged horse to Jerusalem.¹²¹ From Jerusalem he ascended a ladder to heaven and visited with many other prophets, and eventually with God. Muhammad was instructed in his meeting with God to teach his followers to pray five times a day.¹²² Because prayer (*salat*) plays such a prominent role in Islam, *Lailat al-Miraj* is viewed as a foundational event in the religion's history.

¹¹⁶ A Global World, "Ashura is a Religious Observance for Muslims Around the World," No date, <http://aglobalworld.com/holidays-around-the-world/ashura-islam/>

¹¹⁷ Christine Benlafquih, "Day of Ashura," 3 January 2009, <http://www.suite101.com/content/day-of-ashura-a87975>

¹¹⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 1, <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf>.

¹¹⁹ BBC Religions, "Milad un Nabi," 7 September 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/holydays/miladunnabi.shtml>

¹²⁰ Pessah Shinar, *Modern Islam in the Maghrib* (Jerusalem: The Max Schloessinger Memorial Foundation, The Hebrew University, 2004), 288

¹²¹ William Ochsenwald and Sydney Nettleton Fisher, *The Middle East: A History* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 30.

¹²² BBC Religions, "Lailat al Miraj," 7 September 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/holydays/lailatalmiraj.shtml>

Ramadan

Ramadan is Islam's holiest month and, in Algeria, the first and last days of Ramadan are official holidays.¹²³ The month is celebrated in memory of God's revelation of the Quran to Muhammad. The Quran holds special importance during this month, and Muslims will often increase their devotion to its recitation during this time. Most mosques will ensure that the entire Quran is recited during the month.¹²⁴

The most conspicuous aspect of Ramadan is the daily fast. Muslims are expected to abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sunset for the entire month. The purposes are to increase self-control and to remind one of humanity's total dependence on God. Because Ramadan is based on a lunar calendar, the dates shift seasonally and may occur anytime between the shorter winter days or the long, hot days of summer. The foods eaten in the morning before the daily fast begins tend to be those that digest slowly and provide energy throughout the day. In contrast, the evening meal comprises quickly digested foods that will rapidly restore blood glucose levels.¹²⁵

Ramadan ends with a festival known as *Eid al-Fitr* to celebrate the end of fasting and to give thanks to God for giving Muslims strength during the previous month.¹²⁶

Ramadan profoundly affects daily life in Algeria. Many shops close for much of the month, not from a lack of consumer demand but from a shortage of workers. Access to public services may become difficult because of the staffing issues.¹²⁷ The government has been criticized by human rights groups in recent years for arresting people who were eating publicly during Ramadan.¹²⁸



© Mikhail Tainkov
Resting during Ramadan

¹²³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 1, <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf>

¹²⁴ BBC Religions, "Ramadan," 7 September 2009, http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/practices/ramadan_1.shtml

¹²⁵ BBC Religions, "Ramadan," 7 September 2009, http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/practices/ramadan_1.shtml

¹²⁶ BBC Religions, "Eid ul Fitr," 7 September 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/holydays/eidulfitr.shtml>

¹²⁷ Nazim Fethi, "Ramadan Takes Toll on Algeria Public Services," Magharebia, 2 September 2010, http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2010/09/02/feature-02

¹²⁸ David E. Miller, "Algerian Men Put to Justice for Breaking Ramadan Fast," *Jerusalem Post*, 7 September 2010, <http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=187460>

Eid al-Adha

The Festival of Sacrifice (*Eid al-Adha*), also known as the Greater Eid, is one of Islam's most important holidays. Muslims use this time to celebrate the faith of the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) when he was asked by God to sacrifice his son.¹²⁹ Ibrahim responded by placing his trust in God. As he prepared to kill his son Isma'il (Ishmael, not Isaac as in the Christian and Jewish traditions), he was stopped by a voice from heaven and was provided a ram to sacrifice instead.

Muslims in Algeria and throughout the world remind themselves of Ibrahim's faith by spending the day in prayer and by making sacrifices. The festival typically begins by attending a mosque to participate in the Eid prayer.¹³⁰ Those who can afford it sacrifice an animal, usually a sheep, as a symbol of their willingness to follow Ibrahim's example. The meat from the slaughter is divided, with two-thirds given away to friends and those in need.¹³¹

Buildings of Worship

Mosques

The central place of worship in Islam is the mosque. Most mosques consist of a large room where the *imam* directs long rows of worshippers. The direction to Mecca is marked in a niche (*mihrab*) in the wall, so worshippers will know the direction to face for prayers. A pulpit (*minbar*) often stands near the *mihrab* and offers a place for sermons to be given during Friday prayers.¹³² Towers known as minarets, attached to or directly adjacent to the mosque, allow the *muezzin* to call worshippers to prayer throughout the day. Algeria's mosques typically follow North African architectural conventions, often including a large, square minaret—



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Grand Mosque Algiers

¹²⁹ BBC Religions, "Eid ul Adha," 7 September 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/holydays/eiduladha.shtml>

¹³⁰ Algeria Channel, "Eid al-Adha—Festival of the Sacrifice," No date, <http://www.algeria.com/blog/eid-al-adha-festival-of-the-sacrifice>

¹³¹ BBC Religions, "Eid ul Adha," 7 September 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/holydays/eiduladha.shtml>

¹³² Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 28.

unique in the Muslim world.¹³³ Many of the main mosques in Algeria are not open to non-Muslims, so permission should always be sought beforehand.¹³⁴

Exchange 2: May I enter the mosque?

Visitor:	May I enter the mosque?	naqdiR nidKhul il-jaam'a?
Local:	Yes, of course.	ey, byensuR

Marabout Shrines

Sufi *Marabout* shrines are also important religious sites in Algeria and throughout the *Maghreb*.¹³⁵ Because Sufis revere saint-like scholars and leaders known as *Marabouts*, they often build shrines or tombs dedicated to the memory of the saints’ divine grace. The founders of individual Sufi brotherhoods are especially revered. Their tombs are seen as holy places for quiet reflection.¹³⁶

Behavior in Places of Worship

It is important to dress modestly in mosques or other places of worship in Algeria. Women especially should cover their arms and legs and not wear tight-fitting clothing.¹³⁷ The headscarf, which is common for women in Algeria even in the streets, should be worn in the mosque.¹³⁸



© Damien Bailey / wikipedia.org
Mosque in Algiers

¹³³ Foundation for Science Technology and Civilisation, “Architecture of Muslim Caliphate in North Africa,” 13 January 2002, <http://www.muslimheritage.com/topics/default.cfm?articleid=261>

¹³⁴ Geoff Crowther and Hugh Finlay, *Morocco, Algeria & Tunisia: A Travel Survival Guide* (Berkeley, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 1989), 217, 218.

¹³⁵ Sossie Andezian, “The Significance of Sufism in Algeria in the Aftermath of Independence,” *Passia*, 12 December 2002, <http://www.passia.org/meetings/rsunit/2002/Sufism-minutes3.htm>

¹³⁶ Webster’s Online Dictionary, “Marabout,” 2006, <http://www.websters-dictionary-online.net/definitions/Marabout>

¹³⁷ Algeria Channel, “Gain Insight into Algeria’s Religions,” No date, <http://www.algeria.com/religion/>

¹³⁸ Margaret K. Nydell, *Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Westerners* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc., 2002), 153.

Exchange 3: Do I need to cover my head?

Visitor (Female):	Do I need to cover my head?	laazim inghaTee Raasee?
Local:	Yes. If you don't have a scarf, you can get one at the mosque.	ey, weela ma'andaksh foolaaRa Khoodee waHda mil-jaam'a

Shoes are never worn in the mosque and should be removed before entering the building.¹³⁹ An area with mats or carpets outside the walls of the mosque may be used for the removal of shoes, although this area might be considered an extension of the mosque, which would make shoes inappropriate, even on the mats outside the mosque. Attention should be paid to the conventions of local residents.

Exchange 4: Where should I put my shoes?

Visitor:	Where should I put my shoes?	wayn niHuT SubaaTee?
Local:	Over there on the shelf.	foq iR-Raf

Exchange 5: May I carry my shoes into the mosque?

Visitor:	May I carry my shoes into the mosque?	naqdiR indaKhil SubaaTee fee ij- jaam'a?
Local:	Yes, but place them in a bag.	ey, biSaH HuToo fee shkaaRa

The inside of the mosque may be decorated with elaborate calligraphy or carvings, but taking photographs may be seen as inappropriate.

Exchange 6: May I take photographs inside the mosque?

Visitor:	May I take photographs inside the mosque?	naqdiR naaKhud tSaawuR daaKhil il- jaam'a?
Local:	Yes, you may.	ey, taqdiR

¹³⁹ Algeria Channel, "Gain Insight into Algeria's Religions," No date, <http://www.algeria.com/religion/>

While in a mosque it is important to be aware of one's surroundings. Walking in front of someone while they are praying is considered not only rude but an invalidation of their prayer. Speak in hushed tones and treat the space around you with respect.

Chapter 2: Assessments

1. Most Algerian Muslims are followers of the Sunni school.

True

Most Algerians follow the Sunni school; Shi'a are in the minority.

2. In Algeria, Sunnis commemorate Ashura by fasting.

True

Ashura, an important Shi'ite holiday that commemorates the death of Hussein, is celebrated in Sunni Algeria by fasting.

3. The pilgrimage to Mecca is called the *shahada*.

False

Shahada is the declaration of faith; the pilgrimage to Mecca is called the *hajj*.

4. Mosques in Algeria typically feature a large, square minaret.

True

This type is representative of North African mosque architecture.

5. The *zakat* (alms), typically 2.5 percent of a family's assets, has always been collected by individual mosques in Algeria.

False

As of 2009 *zakat* is collected and dispersed through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, a government body.

Chapter 3: Traditions

Introduction

A combination of traditions from Arab, Berber, French, and Islamic influences is reflected in many aspects of Algerian life, from greetings and eating customs to folklore and superstition.

Qualities such as hospitality and honor are greatly valued throughout all levels of Algerian society.

Cultural traditions, however, are not universally accepted among the population. As the country has modernized and moved past its colonial rule under the French, various groups have attempted

to emphasize differing aspects of cultural traditions in Algeria. Religion has been the primary battleground for Algeria's culture war; religious and secular elements in society have clashed as they attempt to define what aspects of Algeria's cultural traditions are worth perpetuating.



© NÁjwA Máráfje / flickr.com
Algerian dancing

Honor and Values

A positive social standing is an important traditional value in Algeria. An Algerian's personal honor is largely tied to familial honor, and although women conventionally hold a subordinate place in society, they are seen as the carriers of household honor. As such, they are expected to act within the accepted social constructs of discretion and modesty. Failure to do so brings shame not only to the woman but to her entire family.¹⁴⁰ For some women, the punishment for transgressing social mores can be quite severe. Algeria has not been immune to honor killings, although non-governmental organizations have experienced success in influencing the government to treat violence committed in the name of honor as a criminal act.¹⁴¹

The confluence of traditional cultural values and those of global popular trends can create tension in Algeria. Conservative clergy are especially critical of Algerian youth who abandon indigenous cultural and artistic expression for Western music and movies.¹⁴² These criticisms are often exploited and exaggerated by Islamic extremists in the country, who oppose what they see as the prevalence of dangerous secular values throughout Algerian art and culture. As a result, they have targeted much of Algeria's cultural elite,

¹⁴⁰ A to Z World Travel, "Algeria: Society and Culture/Life Cycle," No date, http://www.atozworldtravel.com/worldtravel2_country.asp?nid=20.22&next_nid=20.23&cid=3&parent=Society%20and%20Culture

¹⁴¹ Regional Bureau for Arab States, "The Arab Human Development Report 2005: Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World," United Nations Development Programme (New York: United Nations Publications, 2006), 116.

¹⁴² Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Algeria," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

including authors, playwrights, musicians, and artists. Assassinations of leading cultural figures in the darkest days of the civil war in the 1990s pushed much of Algeria’s cultural capital out of the country.¹⁴³

Formulaic Codes of Politeness

In Algeria, many aspects of daily interactions—verbal and non-verbal—are driven by social expectations and standards. The French convention of exchanging kisses on the cheek when greeting has endured even after independence, though it is less pervasive now.¹⁴⁴ When Algerians greet, they will often share long exchanges and ask about many aspects of life, including work, family, and health.¹⁴⁵ As men share greetings, they may continue to hold hands after shaking them.¹⁴⁶



© Pabel Rock
Man showing Algerian pride

Exchange 7: Good morning!

Visitor:	Good morning!	SbaaH il-KhayR!
Local:	Good morning to you!	SabHak bil-KhayR!

It is customary for women to initiate a handshake with men. However, religious men may graciously decline to shake the offered hand of a woman out of respect. In any case, men should avoid long eye contact with and personal questions of women.¹⁴⁷

Exchange 8: How are you?

Visitor:	How are you?	wushRaak
Local:	Fine, very well.	la-baas Hamdoo ilaah

¹⁴³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Algeria,” 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

¹⁴⁴ A to Z World Travel, “Algeria: Society and Culture/Greetings and Courtesies,” No date, http://www.atozworldtravel.com/worldtravel2_country.asp?nid=13.02&next_nid=13.03&cid=3&parent=Society%20and%20Culture

¹⁴⁵ Kwintessential, “Algeria—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette,” No date, <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/algeria.html>

¹⁴⁶ Embassy of People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria in Sofia, Bulgaria, “Facts for Visitors,” 12 July 2010, <http://www.algeria-embassy-sofia.org/facts-for-visitors-1198>

¹⁴⁷ Kwintessential, “Algeria—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette,” No date, <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/algeria.html>

Unlike some parts of the Arab world, in Algeria the use of surnames is customary and respectful. Titles such as doctor or professor are also important when being introduced to someone in Algeria. When addressing a group of people, the eldest is greeted first out of respect.¹⁴⁸

Exchange 9: Hi, Mr. Ben Muhammadi! (Informal)

Visitor:	Hi, Mr. Ben Muhammadi!	SaHa see bin muHamad!
Local:	Hello!	SaHa!
Visitor:	Are you doing well?	Raak la-baas?
Local:	Yes.	ey, Hamdoo ilaah

Algerians also have a number of non-verbal social exchanges. Gratitude is expressed by placing the right hand over the heart. A greeting may be offered from a distance by clasping the hands together. Algerians may ask another for patience or to slow down by slightly moving the right hand up and down with the fingertips joined together.¹⁴⁹

Hospitality and Gift-Giving

In Algeria, the gesture of gift-giving is valued as highly as the gift itself.¹⁵⁰ It is customary and polite to bring a gift such as flowers, fruit, or pastries when visiting an Algerian’s home. Algeria is known for its dates, which always make a good present—as do other sweets. When presenting a gift, Algerians will use either their right hand or both hands together, not the left hand only. Gifts of alcohol should be avoided unless one is certain their host drinks alcohol. White flowers and violets should also be avoided because they have negative connotations (they represent death and sadness respectively).¹⁵¹



© e-du / flickr.com
Men communicating

¹⁴⁸ Kwintessential, “Algeria—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette,” No date, <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/algeria.html>

¹⁴⁹ A to Z World Travel, “Algeria: Society and Culture/Greetings and Courtesies,” No date, http://www.atozworldtravel.com/worldtravel2_country.asp?nid=13.02&next_nid=13.03&cid=3&parent=Society%20and%20Culture

¹⁵⁰ A to Z World Travel, “Algeria: Society and Culture/Gift Giving,” No date, http://www.atozworldtravel.com/worldtravel2_country.asp?nid=20.15&next_nid=20.16&cid=3&parent=Society%20and%20Culture

¹⁵¹ Kwintessential, “Algeria—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette,” No date, <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/algeria.html>

Exchange 10: Thank you for your hospitality.

Guest:	Thank you for your hospitality.	SaHa 'ala Deeyaftak
Host:	You are welcome.	bila mzeeyaa

Visitors to Algerians' homes should also be aware of customary Algerian hospitality regarding reciprocating compliments on household items. It is conventional to offer as a gift any item that a guest has complimented or praised. Thus, a visitor should avoid putting their host in an awkward situation by complimenting something truly valuable or expensive. If a guest is presented with something they have complimented, they should return the gesture later with a gift of similar value.¹⁵²

Eating Customs

In Algeria, not all eating conventions are fixed, so dining may occur on mats on the floor, on low couches, or around a big table. As in other Muslim countries, the left hand is reserved for personal sanitation and, as a result, eating and the passing of dishes should only be done with the right hand, even if one is left-handed. Algerians tend to be gracious hosts and will most likely insist that their guests take additional helpings until some food is left on their guests' plates.¹⁵³

Foods

As with much of Algerian society, Algerian food is a hybrid of Arab, Berber, Turkish, and French influences.¹⁵⁴ Couscous—pasta made of tiny steamed grains of dough—is the staple and usually accompanies meat dishes of mutton, lamb, or poultry. Couscous may be bought pre-processed at the market, but is traditionally made at home. Water is used to moisten semolina wheat, which is then dusted with flour and rolled in the palms of the hands until tiny balls are formed. These grains are then steamed over boiling water or broth. Once cooked, the couscous often accompanies a stew known as *tajeen* (also seen: *tagine*).¹⁵⁵



© Rainer Zenz
Algerian couscous dish

¹⁵² A to Z World Travel, "Algeria: Society and Culture/Gift Giving," No date, http://www.atozworldtravel.com/worldtravel2_country.asp?nid=20.15&next_nid=20.16&cid=3&parent=Society%20and%20Culture

¹⁵³ Kwentessential, "Algeria—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette," No date, <http://www.kwentessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/algeria.html>

¹⁵⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Algeria," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

¹⁵⁵ Anne Marie Weiss-Armush, *Arabian Cuisine* (Beirut: Dar An-Nafaes, 1993), 278.

Couscous may be included in a salad or used as the base for a dessert of sticky dates, figs, and almonds.¹⁵⁶

Exchange 11: The food tastes so good.

Guest:	The food tastes so good.	al-maklaa baneenaa
Host:	I'm glad you like it.	Hamdoo ilaah kee'ajbaatak

Locally grown figs, dates, and almonds are favorites, as are strong, sweet coffee and mint tea. A meat pastry known as *brik* and a beef sausage called *merguez* are local dishes often found in homes and restaurants.¹⁵⁷

Exchange 12: What type of meat is this?

Guest:	What type of meat is this?	waash min no' intaa' al-laHm haadaa?
Host:	Lamb.	ghanmee

One Algerian dish, known as *lhem lahlou*, combines sweet and savory tastes and includes meat (usually lamb) with sweet fruits such as prunes and apricots. Sugar is also used and spices such as cinnamon and saffron may be added.¹⁵⁸ *Lhem lahlou* is an especially common dish for *iftar* dinners during the month of Ramadan, because the fruits and sugar are metabolized quickly and can be quite restorative after a long day of fasting.

Exchange 13: What is the name of this dish?

Guest:	What is the name of this dish?	wasimhaa haad al-maklaa?
Host:	It is called lhem lahlou.	asimhaa lHam laHloo

Exchange 14: What ingredients are used to make *lhem lahlou*?

Guest:	What ingredients are used to make <i>lhem lahlou</i> ?	wush laazim baash nTayib lHam laHloo?
Host:	Lamb, prunes, apples, almonds, cinnamon, and sugar.	il-ghanmee, il-'ayn, it-tifaaH, il-loz, il-qiRfa, wa-is-sukaR

¹⁵⁶ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 118.

¹⁵⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Algeria," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

¹⁵⁸ Chefzadi, "L'ham Lahlou bel Mechmech, Algerian Beef with Apricots, Boeuf aux Abricots," 3 September 2005, http://www.chefzadi.com/2005/09/lhm_lahlou_bel_.html

The Tuareg people of southern Algeria eat little meat, reserving it for festivals and certain rites of passage. They primarily eat grains (though in more urban areas their diet is not as fixed) and get most of their protein from milk and cheese. A thick, sweet drink known as *eghajira* is made for special occasions out of millet, dates, goat cheese, and water.¹⁵⁹

Dress Codes

Western-style clothing is common in urban areas.¹⁶⁰ Business suits as well as Western-style shirts and trousers are the conventions for men. More traditional attire is the norm in rural areas, though even in the countryside, children are often found in Western shirts and shorts.¹⁶¹

Exchange 15: Is this acceptable to wear?

Visitor:	Is this acceptable to wear?	ma'aley nilbas haadaa?
Local:	Yes.	ey ma'aley

The use of the veil for women has become increasingly popular since independence in 1962. Today, more women wear a head scarf in Algeria than in any North African country.¹⁶² In some more conservative parts of the country, there is substantial social pressure on women to use either a headscarf or more extensive head-to-toe coverings, and their freedom of movement outside the home may be entirely predicated on their acceptance of wearing a veil.¹⁶³



© John Perivolaris
Veiled women in Algiers

The Ministry of Education has established dress codes at schools in an attempt to deter social discrimination. Young girls wear pink smocks, while middle-school girls and older girls wear white smocks. Boys of all ages wear blue tunics to school.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Everyculture, “Tuareg,” No date, <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Mauritania-to-Nigeria/Tuareg.html>

¹⁶⁰ Centre for Intercultural Learning, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, “Cultural Information—Algeria,” 15 October 2009, <http://www.intercultures.ca/cil-cai/ci-ic-eng.asp?iso=dz#cn-4>

¹⁶¹ Embassy of People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria in Sofia, Bulgaria, “Facts for Visitors,” 12 July 2010, <http://www.algeria-embassy-sofia.org/facts-for-visitors-1198>

¹⁶² Margaret K. Nydell, *Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Westerners* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc., 2002), 153.

¹⁶³ Caroline Sakina Brac de la Perrière, “Algeria,” Freedom House, No date, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=170>

¹⁶⁴ Hayam El Hadi, “Algerian Educators Change Dress Code, Flu Prevention Measures,” Megharabia, 10 September 2009, http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2009/09/10/feature-02

The Tuareg people of the southeastern desert have especially distinctive attire. The men are known for their vivid blue robes and for head scarves that cover all but their eyes.¹⁶⁵ Their dress is even linked to their identity: they are often referred to as the “blue people.”¹⁶⁶

Nonreligious Celebrations

Algerians have a number of official nonreligious holidays. Several commemorate important aspects of the independence movement and the creation of modern Algeria. On 19 June, Algerians celebrate the 1965 military coup that overthrew Ahmed Ben Bella, the first president. The national Independence Day is 5 July, which celebrates the nearly unanimous independence referendum vote in 1962.



© Radio Nederland Wereldomroep
Boys waving the flag

Exchange 16: Happy Independence Day!

Visitor:	Happy Independence Day!	mabRook 'eed listiqlaal
Local:	You too!	mabRook 'alayk taaneek!

The early morning attacks of 1 November 1954 that started the revolution are also celebrated on that day’s anniversary. Other non-nationalistic holidays are recognized in Algeria; New Year’s Day (1 January) and Labor Day (1 May) are official state holidays.¹⁶⁷

Berber Cultural Traditions

Because Algeria is not a uniform Arab population, its cultural traditions extend beyond those of the Arabic-speaking majority. The Kabyle and Tuareg Berbers, among others, have unique cultural distinctions.

Agricultural New Year

The agricultural calendar’s first day, known as *Yennayer*, is treated annually as a public holiday by the Kabyle Berbers. It is believed that the



© magharebia / flickr.com
Taureg festival

¹⁶⁵ Asmat Travel, “Tuaregs, People from the Desert,” No date, <http://www.asmat.eu/scripts/article.php?Article=211-tuaregs-people-from-desert>

¹⁶⁶ Anthony Ham, Nana Luckham, and Anthony Sattin, *Algeria* (Footscray, Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 42.

¹⁶⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Algeria,” May 2008, 1–6, <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf>

festival will set the tone for the year, so great effort is exerted to put the house in order.¹⁶⁸ With intentions for the coming year, the household will spend the holiday in good cheer, because that is traditionally believed to guarantee happiness throughout the year. The day is celebrated with unique music, dance, traditional meals and large feasts to symbolize the prosperity hoped for in the new year.¹⁶⁹ Gifts are given to young children. Boys celebrating their first *Yennayer* are given their first haircut, and the family symbolically recognizes the child's future responsibilities.¹⁷⁰

Kabyle Marriage Customs

Marriages in the Kabylia region typically occur in the late summer before the hard work of the plowing season. A large number of traditions, including animal sacrifices, feasts, henna ceremonies, and poetry readings, may accompany the marriage ritual.¹⁷¹ The groom typically will retrieve his bride and bring her and a large procession to the feast; finally, he will carry her across the threshold into his house.¹⁷²

Tuareg Gender Roles

The Tuareg's cultural traditions extend beyond their distinctive blue clothing. They are known for their veil and often refer to themselves as "people of the veil." In contrast to much of the Muslim world, it is primarily the men who are veiled and not the women.¹⁷³ For the Tuareg, the veil is a symbol of masculinity. Men likely began wearing the veil as protection against the harsh desert environment while they caravanned. In time, the veil became associated with additional beliefs, including that it protects against evil spirits who would enter the body through the nose or mouth. Today, the veil is first presented to a boy as a rite of passage when he enters manhood. Once donned with the veil, Tuareg men will not remove it, even in front of their families.¹⁷⁴ Women have a prominent role

¹⁶⁸ Mouna Sadek, "Algerian Amazigh Community Celebrates Yennayer," Megharabia, 12 January 2010, http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2010/01/12/feature-02

¹⁶⁹ Said Jameh, "Algerians Celebrate Amazigh New Year," Megharabia, 14 January 2008, http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2008/01/14/feature-02

¹⁷⁰ Kaci Racelma, "Kabylia Celebrates Yennayer," Megharabia, 12 January 2009, http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2009/01/12/feature-02

¹⁷¹ Mariage-Oriental, "Mariage Kabyle," No date, <http://www.mariage-oriental.fr/Le-mariage-Kabyle>

¹⁷² Louise Jordan Miln, "Woosings and Weddings in Algeria and Elsewhere," *New York Times*, 18 December 1898, as quoted in "Marriage Customs Of Kabyle People," 21 July 2007, <http://marriage.longtermly.net/marriage-customs-of-kabyle-people/>

¹⁷³ PBS, "Meet the Tuareg: Customs," No date, http://www.pbs.org/wnet/africa/explore/sahara/sahara_people_customs_lo.html

¹⁷⁴ Paula I. Nielson, "The Tuareg-Muslim Men Who Wear the Veil: A Role Reversal of the Sexes in Islam of North Africa," Suite101.com, 1 January 2010, <http://www.suite101.com/content/the-tuareg-muslim-men-who-wear-the-veil-a184703>

in Tuareg life; honor and social status are determined through matrilineal descent, and Tuareg women own their family's land.¹⁷⁵

Dos and Don'ts

Do

Do leave a small amount of food on your plate to show that you are finished.

Do dress modestly.

Do present gifts of flowers, fruit, or pastries when visiting a home.

Do use titles and honors such as doctor or professor when addressing someone.

Do present gifts only with your right hand or both hands together.

Do exchange formalities when beginning a conversation.

Do shake hands with people of the same gender.

Don't

Don't enter a mosque without asking permission.

Don't show the soles of your feet when sitting.

Don't eat or pass food with your left hand.

Don't ask personal questions of women.

Don't eat in public during Ramadan.

Don't initiate discussions about politics or religion.

Don't take photographs without asking permission.

Don't point directly at someone or something using the index finger.

¹⁷⁵ PBS, "Meet the Tuareg: Customs," No date,
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/africa/explore/sahara/sahara_people_customs_lo.html

Chapter 3: Assessments

1. In Algeria, men initiate handshakes with women.

False

Women initiate the handshake, but men who are religiously conservative may decline to shake a woman's hand.

2. White flowers would be an acceptable gift to Algerians.

False

Algerians associate the color white with death.

3. Rice often accompanies Algerian meals where meat is served.

False

Couscous, a type of pasta made of tiny steamed grains of dough, usually accompanies meals where meat is served.

4. Among Algerians, the Tuareg people consume little meat.

True

For the Tuareg, meat is reserved for special occasions.

5. Algerian women are legally required to veil outside the home.

False

Although there is no legal requirement to veil in Algeria, women may be under substantial social pressure to veil themselves in public.

Chapter 4: Urban Life

Urbanization

Roughly 60 to 65% of Algeria's population is urban.^{176,177} This number has grown over the decades largely because of economic drivers in the country as well as demographic shifts brought about by a high birth rate. As pastures and farmland have been negatively affected by droughts, herdsman and farmers have moved to the cities seeking employment.¹⁷⁸ This internal migration has strained an already tenuous urban economy.



© Radio Nederland Wereldomroep / flickr.com
Street view

Algeria's cities have been the home of great violence during both the independence war in the 1950s, and the civil war of the 1990s.¹⁷⁹ Although a decade of stability has brought renewed development to Algeria's cities, the U.S. State Department warns its citizens to avoid crowds and to maintain a low profile while in the country.¹⁸⁰

Urban Work Issues

Unemployment runs high in the cities, and their streets are often filled with people who have little to do.¹⁸¹ Unemployment is especially widespread among Algeria's younger population; approximately 80% of the unemployed are under the age of 30. Most have few marketable skills and little education.



© amekinfo / flickr.com
Youths congregating on street

¹⁷⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 9, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

¹⁷⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "Algeria," in *The World Factbook*, 20 December 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html>

¹⁷⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 9, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

¹⁷⁹ Lonely Planet, "Introducing Algiers," 17 February 2009, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria/algiers>

¹⁸⁰ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Travel Warning: Algeria," 2 April 2010, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_929.html

¹⁸¹ Lonely Planet, "Introducing Algiers," 17 February 2009, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria/algiers>

Daily Urban Life

Pastimes

Algerians enjoy the company of others, and many hours are spent either calling on relatives or talking in outdoor cafés. Tennis, swimming, and games such as checkers and backgammon are also popular pastimes.¹⁸² Urban girls and women are more socially liberal than those in rural areas, and are notably more liberal than their urban counterparts in countries such as Egypt and Jordan. It is not uncommon in Algeria's cities to see young women, even those who are veiled, flirting or holding hands with young men.¹⁸³ In rural areas, clothing is also more conservative and modest than in the cities.¹⁸⁴



© John Perivolaris
Couple talking by sea

Algerians are passionate about football (soccer). When Algeria qualified in late 2009 for the 2010 World Cup, many saw it as a symbolic end to the country's violent "black years."¹⁸⁵ Algeria had reached the World Cup in 1986, but the social unrest in the next decade-and-a-half nearly pulled the country apart. National football matches could not be played in the capital for fear of violence.¹⁸⁶ As Algeria moves away from its "black years," its cities are once again alive with excitement for its national team. Many city neighborhoods are filled with young boys playing football.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 105–106.

¹⁸³ Michael Slackman, "In Algeria, a Tug of War for Young Minds," *New York Times*, 23 June 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/23/world/africa/23algeria.html?pagewanted=1&_r=2&hp

¹⁸⁴ World Travel Guide, "Algeria Travel Guide—History and Culture," 2010, <http://www.worldtravelguide.net/algeria/history-and-culture>

¹⁸⁵ Christian Lowe, "Soccer Win Marks End to 'Black Years' for Algerians," Reuters, 19 November 2009, <http://af.reuters.com/article/idAFJJOE5AI00320091119>

¹⁸⁶ Christian Lowe, "Soccer Win Marks End to 'Black Years' for Algerians," Reuters, 19 November 2009, <http://af.reuters.com/article/idAFJJOE5AI00320091119>

¹⁸⁷ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 105.

Rai Music

The coastal city of Oran is the birthplace of a type of pop music known as rai that has become popular not only in Algeria but in all of North Africa and beyond.¹⁸⁸ Rai has always been an eclectic art form, heavily influenced by Arabic, French, Spanish, and African sounds. The movement grew organically beginning in the late 1970s as Western orchestras and North African orchestras played in Oran at the same venues and began fusing styles. This period was also marked by the arrival of a new generation of singers, born after independence from the French in 1962, who quickly adopted the burgeoning style.¹⁸⁹ The language of rai' has its roots in the poetry of local revered men who would express their thoughts or opinions (*rai*' meaning "opinion" in Arabic) through sung poetry.¹⁹⁰ When the music developed, it used Western instruments and mixed local songs with Moroccan wedding melodies, Egyptian preludes, disco from America, and a variety of sources.¹⁹¹



© Degeefe / wikipedia.org
Rai musician Cheb Hasni

By the early 1980s, the style began to spread beyond the Orani underground. Newspapers began reporting on the growing popularity of rai and radio stations started playing rai songs. By the end of the decade, rai had become popular not only in Algeria but in France and even as far away as Japan. The style was not universally embraced in Algeria, however, because Islamists saw the movement as a symbol of Western decadence and moral decay. As violence developed in the early 1990s, rai musicians and producers were common targets for Islamist threats and assassination.¹⁹² Today, as the music continues to evolve, it is picking up additional European and Asian influences.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Lonely Planet, "Introducing Oran," 2 March 2009, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria/oran>

¹⁸⁹ Marc Schade-Poulsen, *Men and Popular Music in Algeria: The Social Significance of Rai* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 19.

¹⁹⁰ Marc Schade-Poulsen, *Men and Popular Music in Algeria: The Social Significance of Rai* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 14, 15.

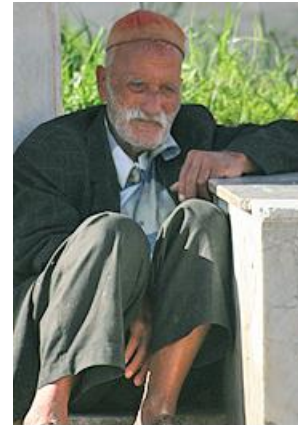
¹⁹¹ Marc Schade-Poulsen, *Men and Popular Music in Algeria: The Social Significance of Rai* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 5.

¹⁹² Marc Schade-Poulsen, *Men and Popular Music in Algeria: The Social Significance of Rai* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 22.

¹⁹³ Algeria Channel, "Musical Rhythms in Algeria," No date, <http://www.algeria.com/blog/musical-rhythms-in-algeria>

Urban Health Care

Healthcare in Algeria is largely done at the state's expense, but higher-income people are required to pay a percentage of their medical bills.¹⁹⁴ In general, government policy favors clinics over hospitals, although hospitals may be found in major cities.¹⁹⁵



© Jacob Cohen
Elderly man

Exchange 17: Is there a hospital nearby?

Visitor:	Is there a hospital nearby?	kaayin sbeeTaal qaReeb mina?
Local:	Yes, in the center of town.	ey, fee wSaT li-mdeena

The World Health Organization reported in 2002 that Algeria was suffering from a shortage of trained medical professionals. According to estimates, there were 1.13 physicians per 1,000 people (there are 2.3 physicians per 1,000 people in the United States) and 2.23 nurses per 1,000 people (the United States has 7.9 nurses per 1,000 people).^{196, 197}

Exchange 18: Is Doctor Ben Ali in, sir?

Visitor:	Is Doctor Ben Ali in, sir?	yaa Khoo Raahoo hunaa ad-daktoR bin 'alee?
Local:	[Yes] No.	ey / laa-la

Life expectancy in Algeria is relatively high for an African nation. An Algerian may expect to live on average 72 years; this number is largely the result of state-fostered

¹⁹⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Algeria," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

¹⁹⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 10, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

¹⁹⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 10, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

¹⁹⁷ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, "OECD Health Data 2005: How Does the United States Compare," No date, 1, www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/23/34970246.pdf

medical care and the fact that 98% of the urban population has access to improved sanitation facilities.¹⁹⁸

Education

Education is compulsory and free for children up to age 16, though many drop out by secondary school.¹⁹⁹ Students will follow a general, technical, or vocational track while in secondary school and will take a baccalaureate exam before entering a university or vocational school, though much of Algeria's population never progresses to this point.²⁰⁰ While Algeria's literacy rate of 70% is better than some of its North African neighbors, it is still below international expectations. Additionally, Algerian men are far more literate (79% of the male population) than women (61%).^{201, 202}



© Pabel Rock
Young pupils

In an attempt to distinguish Algeria as a unique country, the government has redesigned the educational system to replace French with Arabic, as well as to promote technical and scientific skills.²⁰³ As the country began filling its teaching ranks with Arabic speakers, it found a significant deficiency and had to import teachers from other Arabic-speaking countries. The state's policy of Arabization has spurred backlash from Berber communities, so the government began allowing increased Berber education in schools in the early 2000s.^{204, 205}

¹⁹⁸ The World Bank, "Algeria: Data & Statistics," No date, <http://go.worldbank.org/NDQKG28SQ0>

¹⁹⁹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 10, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

²⁰⁰ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 72.

²⁰¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 10, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

²⁰² There is some inconsistency in sources regarding literacy rates. Encyclopædia Britannica states that less than half of Algerian women are literate; however, the CIA *World Factbook* and UNICEF list numbers similar to those of the Library of Congress.

²⁰³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Algeria," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

²⁰⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Algeria," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/15001/Algeria>

²⁰⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 10, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

The shifting emphasis in education and the state process of Arabization have not only caused changes in society but also in the family. It is common for Algerian youth and young adults to watch television in Arabic while their parents, the products of another educational system, watch in French.²⁰⁶ This duality is especially prominent in cities rather than rural areas, because French had the most influence in urban society and education has long been most accessible in the cities.

Public Places

Restaurants

Although cafés are common gathering places, Algerians still prefer to eat their main meals at home rather than in a restaurant.²⁰⁷ Visitors to Algeria’s cities will find no shortage of cafés and restaurants, though the higher-end restaurants tend to be in hotels or close to the Mediterranean resorts.

Mint tea, coffee, and fresh juices are common drinks. Water in restaurants will tend to be bottled, although most of the population has access to clean water.²⁰⁸



© Bachir / flickr.com
Hotel Albert, Algiers

Exchange 19: May I have a glass of water?

Customer:	May I have a glass of water?	taqdiR tjiblee kaas maa?
Waiter:	Yes, sir!	ma'aley yaa Khoo!

Algerian breakfasts often include bread such as baguettes, as well as fresh jams, fruit, and coffee.

Exchange 20: Are you still serving breakfast?

Customer:	Are you still serving breakfast?	mazaal tsaRboo il-qah-wa ntaa' aS-SbaaH?
Waiter:	Yes [No].	ey / laa-la

²⁰⁶ Michael Slackman, “In Algeria, a Tug of War for Young Minds,” *New York Times*, 23 June 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/23/world/africa/23algeria.html?pagewanted=1& r=2&hp>

²⁰⁷ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 106.

²⁰⁸ UNICEF, “Algeria: Statistics,” 2 March 2010, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/algeria_statistics.html

Algerian cuisine was influenced by the long French presence, so pastries and other French desserts are still prevalent.

Exchange 21: Do you have dessert?

Customer:	Do you have dessert?	'andkum ad-deeseer?
Waiter:	Yes, we have makroud el louse.	ey, 'andanaa maqRoot al-loz

Given the abundant use of vegetables and meats in Algerian dishes, soups that combine the two are common, especially during the month of Ramadan.²⁰⁹



Exchange 22: I'd like some hot soup.

Customer:	I'd like some hot soup.	Habayt shweeya shuRba sKhoona
Waiter:	Okay.	ma'aley

Algerians will often follow a meal with coffee or mint tea. Black coffee and coffee spiced with cloves and cinnamon are frequently served in Algeria.²¹⁰

Exchange 23: I would like coffee or tea.

Customer:	I would like coffee or tea.	Habayt qah-wa wilaa laa-taay
Waiter:	Sure.	ma'aley

Restaurants in Algerian cities typically have facilities such as a phone and restroom.

Exchange 24: May I use your phone?

Visitor:	May I use your phone?	naqdiR nsta'mil at-taleefon?
Local:	Sure.	ma'aley

²⁰⁹ Chefzadi, "Marqa Recipe for Ramadan (Marka, Maraq or Marak)," 3 September 2007, <http://www.chefzadi.com/2007/09/marqa-recipe-fo.html>

²¹⁰ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 121.

Restaurant bills outside of Algiers typically include a service charge, so additional tipping is not expected.²¹¹ When dining in Algiers, a 10% gratuity is expected.²¹²

Markets and Lodging

Youth hostels and low-end hotels are easily found in Algeria’s cities, but high-end hotels tend to be limited to the resorts along the Mediterranean coast.²¹³



© Radio Nederland Wereldomroep / flickr.com
Souk market

Crafts, food, and clothing may all be found in the market (*souk*). Algeria’s larger cities have multiple markets of differing sizes. Visitors to Algerian markets should be prepared to negotiate prices because bargaining is customary in the *souk*. State-run craft markets offer goods with fixed prices.²¹⁴ Items typically bought by tourists include jewelry, clothing, rugs, leatherwork, copperware, and brassware.²¹⁵ Berber carpets are especially popular because of their beautiful handiwork.²¹⁶

Exchange 25: Can I buy a rug with this much money?

Buyer:	Can I buy a rug with this much money?	haad id-daRaahim yikfoo baash nishRee zaRbeeya?
Seller:	No.	laa-la

Most shops close for a couple of hours after noon, reopen, and close again in the evening. Shops may be closed on Fridays because that is the Muslim prayer day.²¹⁷

²¹¹ Embassy of People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria in Sofia, Bulgaria, “Facts for Visitors,” 12 July 2010, <http://www.algeria-embassy-sofia.org/facts-for-visitors-1198>

²¹² World Travel Guide, “Algeria Travel Guide—Food and Drink in Algeria,” 2010, <http://www.worldtravelguide.net/algeria/food-and-drink>

²¹³ World Travel Guide, “Algeria Travel Guide—Hotels in Algeria,” 2010, <http://www.worldtravelguide.net/algeria/hotels>

²¹⁴ World Travel Guide, “Algeria Travel Guide—Shopping in Algeria,” 2010, <http://www.worldtravelguide.net/algeria/shopping>

²¹⁵ World Travel Guide, “Algeria Travel Guide—Shopping in Algeria,” 2010, <http://www.worldtravelguide.net/algeria/shopping>

²¹⁶ World Travel Guide, “Algeria Travel Guide—Shopping in Algeria,” 2010, <http://www.worldtravelguide.net/algeria/shopping>

²¹⁷ World Travel Guide, “Algeria Travel Guide—Shopping in Algeria,” 2010, <http://www.worldtravelguide.net/algeria/shopping>

Exchange 26: How much longer will you be here?

Buyer:	How much longer will you be here?	shHaal RaayiH tiq'ad hinaa?
Seller:	Three more hours.	inzeed tilt sawaayi'

Cash is the standard in Algerian markets, although credit cards may be accepted in some urban areas. Visitors to Algeria are required upon arrival to declare the amount of currency they are bringing into the country.²¹⁸

Algeria has a black market that runs on foreign currency, primarily the euro. Because of strict government regulations against the black market, visitors are encouraged to use Algerian currency at sanctioned markets.²¹⁹

Exchange 27: Do you accept U.S. currency?

Buyer:	Do you accept U.S. currency?	taqabloo ad-dolaaR?
Seller:	No, we only accept dinars.	laa-la, naqabloo ghayR ad-deenaar

Urban Traffic and Transportation

Algerian roads are often in disrepair, and traffic in the cities can be hectic and dangerous. In response to high casualty rates from auto accidents, the Algerian government passed sweeping traffic law reforms in 2010. According to the new Highway Code, speeding, running red lights, straddling yellow lines, speaking on a cell phone while driving, and failing to wear a seatbelt are infractions that can result in severe fines or loss of license.²²⁰ The government has highlighted old vehicles as one cause of the abundance of traffic accidents, and has looked to regulate the number of older vehicles on the road.²²¹



© Radio Nederland Wereldomroep / flickr.com
City street

²¹⁸ World Travel Guide, “Algeria Travel Guide—Money in Algeria,” 2010, <http://www.worldtravelguide.net/algeria/money>

²¹⁹ World Travel Guide, “Algeria Travel Guide—Money in Algeria,” 2010, <http://www.worldtravelguide.net/algeria/money>

²²⁰ Mohand Ouali, “Road Accidents Drop in Algeria,” Magharebia, 11 January 2001, http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2011/01/11/feature-02

²²¹ Nazim Fethi, “Algeria Looks to put Brakes on Soaring Traffic Fatalities,” Magharebia, 20 October 2009, http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2009/10/20/feature-02

Gasoline in Algeria is relatively inexpensive in comparison to the United States and is especially low-priced compared to Europe. As of 2008, Algerians were spending on average USD 0.34 per liter (USD 1.30 per gallon) at the pump, according to the World Bank.²²²

Exchange 28: Is there a gas station nearby?

Visitor:	Is there a gas station nearby?	kaayin staasyon intaa' leesaans qaReeb minaa?
Local:	Yes [No].	ey / laa-la

Algeria has nearly 5,000 kilometers (3,100 mi) of railroad, though much of it suffers from poor equipment. Although Algeria's major cities are serviced by rail lines, passenger usage has declined because of terrorist attacks against the system.²²³ After nearly 3 decades of work, a 10-station metro system in Algiers became operational in 2009.²²⁴

The U.S. State Department discourages citizens from traveling overland in Algeria.²²⁵ The national airline, Air Algerie, operates in most major cities, while Air France primarily flies between Algiers and Europe.²²⁶

Exchange 29: Is this airline safe for domestic travel?

Visitor:	Is this airline safe for domestic travel?	haadi ash-shaReeka nataa' iT-TayaRaan mleeH lil-voyaazh daaKhil liblaad?
Local:	Not really [Yes, of course].	laa-la, maashee bizaaf / ey biyaan suR

Cars are available for rental at Algiers Airport and at some large hotels, though visitors are cautioned against driving by themselves, especially outside of the cities.²²⁷ Buses are

²²² Trading Economics, "Pump Price for Gasoline (US Dollar per Liter) in Algeria," No Date, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/algeria/pump-price-for-gasoline-us-dollar-per-liter-wb-data.html>

²²³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 15, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

²²⁴ Hayam El Hadi, "Algiers Metro to Begin Operation," Magharabia, 28 April 2009, http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2009/04/28/feature-02

²²⁵ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Travel Warning: Algeria," 2 April 2010, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_929.html

²²⁶ Lonely Planet, "Algeria: Getting There & Around," 2 March 2009, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria/transport/getting-there-away>

common in Algiers and other large cities, and may be found at bus stations and main sites within the city.²²⁸ Buses may also be taken from one city to another.²²⁹

Exchange 30: Will the bus be here soon?

Visitor:	Will the bus be here soon?	qaReeb azhee il-buyis?
Local:	Yes [No].	ey / laa-la

Street Crime

Petty theft is a common problem in Algeria’s cities, and foreigners are especially targeted. Although some thieves involve themselves in elaborate scams, the majority of theft is opportunistic and can be avoided by taking care of valuables.²³⁰ Violence in the cities, especially Algiers and Oran, has been rampant in past decades but less of a problem in recent years. Though the police are most often the target of this violence, foreigners and tourists have been targeted and killed.²³¹



© Bachir / flickr.com
Police on motorbikes

²²⁷ World Guides, “Getting Around, Algeria Travel and Algeria Transport,” No date, http://www.algeria.world-guides.com/algeria_travel.html

²²⁸ World Guides, “Getting Around, Algeria Travel and Algeria Transport,” No date, http://www.algeria.world-guides.com/algeria_travel.html

²²⁹ Virtual Tourist, “Getting Around Algeria,” 14 December 2006, <http://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/Africa/Algeria/Transportation-Algeria-MISC-BR-1.html>

²³⁰ Lonely Planet, “Algiers: Health and Safety,” 17 February 2009, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria/algiers/practical-information/health>

²³¹ Lonely Planet, “Algiers: Health and Safety,” 17 February 2009, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria/algiers/practical-information/health>

Chapter 4: Assessments

1. Urban Algeria maintains the strict separation of the sexes in public places that is associated with Islamic societies.

False

In the cities, Algerians mix relatively freely with members of the opposite sex, and commonly flirt or hold hands in public.

2. Healthcare in Algeria is largely government funded.

True

Although healthcare is government funded, wealthier Algerians are required to pay a percentage of their medical bills.

3. The traditional marketplace in Algeria is called a *souk*.

True

Souks, found all over the Middle East, are the traditional shopping venue for Algerians.

4. It is customary to bargain over the price of goods in the *souk*.

True

Visitors to Algerian *souks* should be prepared to negotiate prices because bargaining is customary.

5. French is the medium of instruction in Algerian schools.

False

Although Algerian schools previously taught in French, the government has redesigned the educational system to replace French with Arabic.

Chapter 5: Rural Life

Land Ownership

After Algeria gained independence from France in 1962, it began to follow a socialist model for its economy. The government promptly confiscated land formerly owned by Europeans and began running state farms. Reforms in the 1970s broke up many of the state farms, though land ownership was not fully privatized until the 1980s.²³²



© Pabel Rock
Algerian farmer

Exchange 31: Do you own this land?

Official:	Do you own this land?	haada laRD milkak?
Local:	Yes.	ey

Tribal Distribution

Although many of Algeria's Arabs live in rural areas, tribal confederation among its Arabic-speaking majority began diminishing centuries ago during Turkish rule.²³³ Tribal affiliations among Algeria's Berber groups, however, remain important. The Kabyle Berbers of northern Algeria are its largest Berber group, numbering several million.²³⁴ The country's policy of Arabization has been contentious among the Kabyle, and many have pushed back for greater state recognition of Berber culture.²³⁵ The Tachawit Berbers, also known as Shawiya Berbers, of the northeastern Aurés Mountains number between 1 and 2 million.²³⁶ They are known for their belief that women



© HCPUNXKID / wikipedia.org
Tribesman and camel

²³² Economy Watch, "Land Reform in Algeria," No date, <http://www.economywatch.com/agrarian/land/algeria.html>

²³³ John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 24, 42.

²³⁴ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 54–55.

²³⁵ Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Algeria," 2 August 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/8005.htm>

²³⁶ M. Paul Lewis, ed., "Languages of Algeria," in *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 16th ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2009), http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Algeria

have special powers, thus giving women a higher station than in the Kabyle region. The Mzabis of the northern Sahara and the Tuaregs of the southern desert have traditionally been more isolated from the outside world.²³⁷ A number of other small Berber groups, often with populations far less than 10,000, exist across Algeria's northern Sahara region.²³⁸ Algeria's Berbers tend to feel little connection to a wider Berber identity; rather, they think in terms of local community.²³⁹

Rural Economy

The economy of Algeria's rural areas is largely driven by subsistence agricultural and pastoral work. Wheat and barley are the principle grains grown in the country; Mediterranean crops such as olives, grapes, and citrus fruits are also common.²⁴⁰ Given the small amount of arable land in the country, livestock is important for daily life in rural areas. Goats, cattle, and sheep are maintained in Algeria's High Plateaus.²⁴¹



© Rafik Garni
Cereal grains

Exchange 32: What crops do you grow?

Official:	What crops do you grow?	waash min ghilaa Raak tizRa'?
Local:	I grow wheat, olives, and dates.	nizRa' al-gmaH, az-zaytoon, wa at-tmaR

Women also contribute to the household income in rural areas. Generally, they feed the animals and do some planting and harvesting. Women also make crafts; they do a considerable amount of weaving and, to a lesser extent, sewing and pottery.²⁴²

²³⁷ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 55–56.

²³⁸ M. Paul Lewis, ed., “Languages of Algeria,” in *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 16th ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2009), http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Algeria

²³⁹ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 52.

²⁴⁰ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 45.

²⁴¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Algeria,” May 2008, 12, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

²⁴² Zine M. Barka, “Rural Women in Algeria and Their Participation in Economic Activity: Data Analysis,” in *Transition & Development in Algeria: Economic, Social and Cultural Challenges*, eds. Margaret A. Majumdar and Mohammed Saad (Portland, OR: Intellect Books, 2005), 89–90

Rural Transportation

Although 72% of Algeria's 107,000 km (66,487 mi) of road are paved, the road system is limited and largely in a state of disrepair.²⁴³

Algeria began construction on the East–West Highway in 2006, funded primarily through oil revenues. The highway is intended to stretch a total of 1216 km (756 mi) across the north of the country, connecting Algeria's major cities. The project will provide much-needed infrastructure for the transportation of goods, which accounts for 90% of all road congestion.²⁴⁴



© amekinno / flickr.com
Rural transportation

Kidnappings have become a major security concern in Algeria. Those travelling on rural roads have become easy targets for terrorists, who seek ransom money to buy weapons and strengthen their position in the region.²⁴⁵ The government has outlawed driving alone in the desert, in order to dissuade individual travel in terrorist areas.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 15, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

²⁴⁴ Lyes Aflou, "China and Japan Consortium to Construct Algeria's East-West Highway," *Magharebia*, 19 April 2006, http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2006/04/19/feature-01

²⁴⁵ Said Jameh, "Cash-Strapped al-Qaeda Turns to Kidnappings in Algeria," *Magharebia*, 17 October 2008, http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/reportage/2008/10/17/reportage-01

²⁴⁶ Lonely Planet, "Algeria: Practical Information—Health & Safety," 23 August 2010, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria>

Health and Education

Health care is less available in rural areas than in urban areas. The cities of the north have more doctors and hospitals than the Sahara region of the south.²⁴⁷



© amekinfo / flickr.com
Children not in school

Exchange 33: Is there a medical clinic nearby?

Official:	Is there a medical clinic nearby?	kaayin sbeeTaaR qaReeb minaa?
Local:	Yes, over there.	ey, hinaak

Although 92% of people in urban areas have access to improved water sources, in rural areas that number drops to 80%. Likewise, only 82% of the rural population has access to improved sanitation, compared to 99% of urban Algerians. Cholera and dysentery are still prevalent in rural areas, largely because of poor sanitation and unclean water. Tuberculosis is also a common concern for Algerians.²⁴⁸

The educational system in rural areas is also less established than in urban areas. Although education is free and compulsory, transportation limitations and the need for children to remain home to work for the family reduce rural school attendance.²⁴⁹

Exchange 34: Do your children go to school?

Official:	Do your children go to school?	olaadak aRaHo likool?
Local:	Yes.	ey

²⁴⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 11, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

²⁴⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Algeria," May 2008, 10, memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf

²⁴⁹ Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Algeria," 2 August 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/8005.htm>

Nomadic Way of Life

Many groups that were traditionally nomadic have been forced to settle because of government restrictions and devastating droughts.²⁵⁰ Nomadic Tuaregs, formerly involved in caravanning salt across the desert, have largely left Algeria because of government policy restricting the number of caravans that could pass each year into Niger.²⁵¹ Those who stayed now primarily reside in oasis communities of the Ahaggar Mountains and are much less nomadic than they once were.²⁵² Some are now employed in gas and oil fields or even work as tour guides.²⁵³



©salim b / flickr.com
Taureg nomad

Who's in Charge?

Governance may be different from village to village or tribe to tribe. Among the Kabyle Berbers, the largest Berber population in Algeria, villages are governed by councils formed by village elders, who rely upon a long-established legal code.²⁵⁴ The Mzabis of the northern desert likewise rely upon local elders for governance. In the case of the Mzabis, the governing council is strongly based upon local religious ideals and expressions of Islam.²⁵⁵ Gender roles among the country's Tuareg population are different from most other Arab and Berber areas. Women are greatly revered among the Tuareg and the area has a history of women rulers and matrilineal dominance.²⁵⁶

Exchange 35: Will you take me to your village chief?

Official:	Will you take me to your village chief?	RaaH tideenee li-'and shayKh id-dishRaa?
Local:	Yes.	ey

²⁵⁰ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 56.

²⁵¹ PBS, "Meet the Tuareg: Customs," No date, http://www.pbs.org/wnet/africa/explore/sahara/sahara_people_customs_lo.html

²⁵² Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 56.

²⁵³ PBS, "Meet the Tuareg: Customs," No date, http://www.pbs.org/wnet/africa/explore/sahara/sahara_people_customs_lo.html

²⁵⁴ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 54.

²⁵⁵ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 55.

²⁵⁶ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 56.

Border Crossings and Checkpoints

Algeria borders six other countries plus the disputed territory of Western Sahara, although not all borders are open or safe. Algeria's border with Morocco is firmly closed (largely because of the Western Sahara issue), and the southwest border crossings into Mauritania and Mali are frequently closed. The southern border crossings of Mauritania, Mali, and Niger have security concerns, because of either their proximity to the disputed territory of Western Sahara or the actions of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Algeria's law against driving alone in the desert was passed partly to protect people against these threats. Eastern routes into Libya may also be dangerous, but the multiple border crossings into Tunisia tend to be much safer.²⁵⁷



© Jim Rees
Algeria Border Post

Exchange 36: Do you know this area very well?

Official:	Do you know this area very well?	ta'Rif mleH haad il-blaaSā?
Local:	Yes.	ey

Checkpoints and roadblocks are common along Algeria's rural roads, especially in areas where the government suspects terrorist activity.²⁵⁸

Exchange 37: Where is the nearest checkpoint?

Official:	Where is the nearest checkpoint?	wayn Raahee aqRab nuqTat taftēesh?
Local:	Two kilometers from here.	'ala zoj keeloomatR

Terrorists view the military and police as state symbols and, as a result, often target them in attacks. Although attacks diminished after the civil war ended in 2002, suicide bombings and ambushes at checkpoints (among other attacks) rose again following the

²⁵⁷ Lonely Planet, "Algeria: Getting There & Around," 23 August 2010, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria/transport/getting-there-away>

²⁵⁸ Lonely Planet, "Algeria: Practical Information—Health & Safety," 23 August 2010, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/algeria>

creation of AQIM.²⁵⁹ Terrorists belonging to AQIM, dressed in military uniforms, have also created fake security checkpoints in search of targets.²⁶⁰

Land Mines

Algeria was heavily mined in World War II and then again by the French as they attempted to suppress the Algerian independence movement.²⁶¹ Opposition forces from the 1990s and current insurgency movements have also contributed to the country’s mine problem.²⁶² In 1999 Algeria signed the Mine Ban Treaty (also known as the Ottawa Convention) and began setting a long-term policy to demine the country.²⁶³ In 2007 France gave Algeria details of the minefields its military laid decades before.²⁶⁴ The latest demining operation by the Algerian army removed more than 415,000 mines, contributing to the more than 8 million mines destroyed since 1962.²⁶⁵



UN Photo/Evan Schneider
Mines shown in the Tindouf
Military Museum

Exchange 38: Is this area mined?

Visitor:	Is this area mined?	haad il-blaaS a feehaa al-meenaat?
Local:	Yes.	ey

²⁵⁹ Alfred De Montesquiou, “Suicide Bomber Kills 3 at Checkpoint in Algeria,” *USA Today*, 29 September 2008, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-09-29-345027355_x.htm

²⁶⁰ Dalila Henache, “GSPC Terrorists Install Fake Checkpoint to Kill Security Men West of Algeria,” Echorouk Online, 27 March 2010, <http://www.echoroukonline.com/eng/index.php?news=9328>

²⁶¹ The North Africa Journal, “Algeria Destroys Thousands of Landmines,” 26 September 2008, http://www.north-africa.com/social_polics/security_politics/algeria-destroys-thousands-of-landmines.html

²⁶² Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2002, Algeria,” 31 March 2003, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18272.htm>

²⁶³ Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, “Algeria,” No date, <http://www.the-monitor.org/index.php/publications/display?url=lm/2004/algeria.html>

²⁶⁴ Reuters, “France Tells Algeria Location of Landmines,” 21 October 2007, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSCHI040631>

²⁶⁵ Mineseeeker Foundation, “Algerian Army Defuses French Landmines,” 11 October 2010, http://www.mineseeeker.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=67:algerian-army-defuses-french-landmines&catid=25:the-project&Itemid=58

Although considerable progress has been made, it is estimated that 3 million mines remain. Roughly 40% of these lie along Algeria's eastern border area, from Annaba on the coast to Negrine, south of the Aurés Mountains; the remaining 60% are in the western border region.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁶ Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, "Algeria," No date, <http://www.the-monitor.org/index.php/publications/display?url=lm/2004/algeria.html>

Chapter 5: Assessments

1. Land ownership was privatized in Algeria immediately after independence.

False

Immediately after independence from France in 1962, the government confiscated private land and began running state farms. Reforms in the 1970s broke up many of the state farms, but land ownership was not fully privatized until the 1980s.

2. Tribal affiliation among the Berber population in Algeria remains important.

True

Although tribal affiliation diminished in importance for Algerian Arabs long ago, it remains strong for the Berber groups.

3. Most Algerian farmers are subsistence cultivators.

True

The small amount of arable land does not allow farmers to grow more than they need to subsist.

4. In rural Algeria, women's duties are limited to cooking and cleaning inside the home.

False

Women and girls also feed livestock and help with planting and harvesting.

5. The Mzabis have a tradition of matrilineal dominance.

False

Unlike most Arab and Berber groups, it is the Tuareg who greatly revere women, and they have a history of women rulers and matrilineal dominance.

Chapter 6: Family Life

Typical Household and Family Structure

In Algeria, family takes precedence over the individual and an individual's actions reflect upon the family. The honor of an entire family may be compromised when an individual acts shamefully.²⁶⁷ Although Algerians relied heavily on their extended family in the past, since independence this reliance has narrowed to the nuclear family.²⁶⁸



© Guido Moretti
Saharawi women

A bride will join her husband's family after marriage and often have friction with her mother-in-law. The status of a woman is raised by bearing a son; therefore, women will often favor their sons and keep a close relationship with them.²⁶⁹

Most homes, whether they are apartments or farmhouses, follow a similar design in which the rooms surround an open, central area. Dining rooms are used to entertain guests while some areas of the house remain off-limits to visitors. High walls often surround homes for security and privacy.²⁷⁰

Roles and Responsibilities within the Family

Age and gender determine the family hierarchy. Although childrearing and homemaking are conventionally seen as the woman's duties, the father has sole parental authority. All decisions regarding the running of the household fall upon him.²⁷¹ Children are expected to respect their parents and other adults in the family. Access to school is free but many households, especially in rural areas, keep children at home to assist in chores. Girls are held back from school at a



© Pabel Rock
Girls holding siblings

²⁶⁷ Kwintessential, "Algeria—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette," No date, <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/algeria.html>

²⁶⁸ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 64.

²⁶⁹ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 64–67.

²⁷⁰ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 71.

²⁷¹ Social Institutions and Gender Index, "Gender Equality and Social Institutions in Algeria," No date, <http://genderindex.org/country/algeria>

higher rate than boys, because the education of boys is valued much more than that of girls.²⁷²

Most women do not work outside the home. Women account for roughly 20% of the workforce, though that number is higher in urban areas and women’s participation in society is steadily growing.²⁷³

Exchange 39: How many people live in this house?

Official:	How many people live in this house?	shHaal min waaHid yiskun fee haad id-daaR?
Local:	Five.	Khamsa

Status of Women

Women moved into new areas of society during Algeria’s war for independence. Women participated in the military campaign, and Algeria’s “New Woman” became a symbol of the struggle. But post-independence society has largely seen an erosion of the status of women. This erosion is epitomized by the Family Code of 1984, which institutionalizes women’s subservient position in the country.²⁷⁴ According to the Family Code a woman is legally obliged to be obedient to her husband and does not inherit property equally or have the same claim to the children after divorce.²⁷⁵



© John Perivolaris
Veiled woman wading into surf

Women in Algeria have been subject to violence domestically and outside the home. Attacks on women were especially common during the civil war. Women were targeted by extremists who felt that secular-appearing women “transgressing” social norms were a threat to society. Extremists considered as transgressions such things as working outside

²⁷² Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Algeria,” 2 August 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/8005.htm>

²⁷³ Michael Slackman, “A Quiet Revolution in Algeria: Gains by Women,” *New York Times*, 26 May 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/26/world/africa/26algeria.html>

²⁷⁴ Margaret A. Mujamdar, “The ‘New Man’ at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century: Challenges and Shifts in Algerian Identity,” in *Transition & Development in Algeria: Economic, Social and Cultural Challenges*, eds. Margaret A. Majumdar and Mohammed Saad (Portland, OR: Intellect Books, 2005), 125–7.

²⁷⁵ Helen Chapan Metz, ed., *Algeria: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994), <http://countrystudies.us/algeria/60.htm>

the home or failing to wear head coverings in public.²⁷⁶ Consequently, more women veil in Algeria than any country in North Africa.²⁷⁷

Although women currently have more access to jobs than in previous decades, their jobs remain largely confined to the service sector, performing duties that are extensions of women's traditional roles in the home. Despite all these challenges, women are renegotiating their roles in Algerian society. Recent decades show that women are marrying at a later age and having fewer children. Likewise, the gap between the ages of husbands and wives is decreasing.²⁷⁸

Married Life and Divorce

In general, women must show deference to the men in their home. Women cannot marry without their father's permission, and Muslim women are prohibited from marrying non-Muslim men (though the reverse is not true).²⁷⁹ Women are required by law to obey their husbands.²⁸⁰



© Claude Springer
Segregated wedding socializing

Algeria's Family Code, although largely detrimental to women's progress, looks to restrict the practice of polygamy. Though Algerian men may legally take up to four wives (the maximum stipulated in Shari'a law), they must demonstrate a cause and an ability to treat all wives equally. Additionally, the current wife or wives must be notified in advance of the husband's intentions to marry another, and may demand a divorce.²⁸¹ Under Algerian law, divorce is only granted by a judicial authority after an official attempt at reconciliation has been made.²⁸² Although women

²⁷⁶ Cathie Lloyd, "Women in Algeria, Dimensions of a Crisis and of a Resistance," in *Transition & Development in Algeria: Economic, Social and Cultural Challenges*, eds. Margaret A. Majumdar and Mohammed Saad (Portland, OR: Intellect Books, 2005), 68–70.

²⁷⁷ Margaret K. Nydell, *Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Westerners* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc., 2002), 153.

²⁷⁸ Cathie Lloyd, "Women in Algeria, Dimensions of a Crisis and of a Resistance," in *Transition & Development in Algeria: Economic, Social and Cultural Challenges*, eds. Margaret A. Majumdar and Mohammed Saad (Portland, OR: Intellect Books, 2005), 72, 73, 80.

²⁷⁹ AFROL News, "AFROL Gender Profiles: Algeria," No date, http://www.afrol.com/Categories/Women/profiles/algeria_women.htm

²⁸⁰ Social Institutions and Gender Index, "Gender Equality and Social Institutions in Algeria," No date, <http://genderindex.org/country/algeria>

²⁸¹ Regional Bureau for Arab States, "The Arab Human Development Report 2005: Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World," United Nations Development Programme (New York: United Nations Publications, 2006), 139, www.arab-hdr.org/publications/other/ahdr/ahdr2005e.pdf

must meet certain conditions to petition for divorce, men may divorce under any pretext.²⁸³

Berber women have varying degrees of freedom within their households. Kabyle Berber women have little room to negotiate, while Tuareg women are given a great deal of flexibility in society.²⁸⁴

Family Events

Although Algeria does not have a Shari'a government, some aspects of its family code are influenced by Islamic law. Marriage follows Islamic norms as a civil contract that is negotiated between two families.²⁸⁵ Parents play a vital role because potential marriage partners must be approved by the families.²⁸⁶ Weddings may be opulent affairs in Algeria. Families are proud of lavish weddings and generally spend money on clothes, food, and decorations. The wedding is a joyful party with a hearty meal, delicious desserts, and a great deal of music and dancing.²⁸⁷

Exchange 39: Congratulations on your wedding!

Visitor:	Congratulations on your wedding!	mabRook 'alayk il-'aRs!
Local:	We are honored to have you here.	shaRaftoonaa kee-jeetoonaa

²⁸² Regional Bureau for Arab States, "The Arab Human Development Report 2005: Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World," United Nations Development Programme (New York: United Nations Publications, 2006), 139, www.arab-hdr.org/publications/other/ahdr/ahdr2005e.pdf

²⁸³ Social Institutions and Gender Index, "Gender Equality and Social Institutions in Algeria," No date, <http://genderindex.org/country/algeria>

²⁸⁴ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 54–56.

²⁸⁵ Falaq Kagda, *Algeria (Cultures of the World)* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1999), 68.

²⁸⁶ Algeria Channel, "Wedding Customs—Celebrating a Joyous Occasion," No date, <http://www.algeria.com/wedding-customs/>

²⁸⁷ Algeria Channel, "Wedding Customs—Celebrating a Joyous Occasion," No date, <http://www.algeria.com/wedding-customs/>

Algerian funerals are heavily influenced by Islamic conventions. The deceased's body is typically washed and prepared for burial in a white cloth. Family and friends gather at the home, and then men carry the body to a cemetery. Burial usually takes place within 24 hours of death.²⁸⁸



© amekinfo / flickr.com
Men carrying coffin

Exchange 40: I would like to give my condolences to you and your family.

Visitor:	I would like to give my condolences to you and your family.	il-baaRaka feek o-fee il-'aayil kulhaa
Local:	We are grateful for your kindness.	ya'Teek aS-SaHa kee-faRaHtoonaa

Naming Conventions

Algerian names largely follow Arabic naming conventions. Individual names often show paternal genealogy. A first name is the person's given name while their second and third names are often those of their father and grandfather. The word *ibn* (son) or its derivatives *bin* or *ben* (*ben* is especially common in Algeria) may be inserted between names, denoting that one is the son of the following name. Women's names follow a similar convention, and often have masculine names after their first given name. For women, the word *bint* (daughter) will be used rather than *ibn*. Likewise *abu* (father) may be used. In Algeria, *bou* is often seen instead of *abu*, as in the name of the president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika.²⁸⁹



© John Perivolaris
Girl with grandfather

The president's name demonstrates another common aspect of Arab naming conventions. Arab names often begin with the term *abdel*, meaning "servant (or slave) of." *Abdel* often precedes one of God's names, as in *Abdullah* (servant of God) or *Abdel-Karim* (servant of the Generous). Bouteflika's first name, *Abdelaziz*, means "servant of the Mighty." Other religious names are common, such as *Muhammad* (or its derivatives *Mahmoud* or *Ahmed*), *Ibrahim*, and *Musa*.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ Embassy of the United States—Algiers, Algeria, "Citizen Services: Death of an American Citizen in Algeria," U.S. Department of State, No date, http://algiers.usembassy.gov/death_u.s_citizen

²⁸⁹ Margaret K. Nydell, *Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Westerners* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc., 2002), 58.

²⁹⁰ Margaret K. Nydell, *Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Westerners* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc., 2002), 60, 61.

Chapter 6: Assessments

1. Algerians remain reliant on extended family.

False

Although Algerians relied heavily on their extended family in the past, since independence this reliance has narrowed to the nuclear family.

2. Marriage is a religious sacrament in Algeria.

False

Following Islamic norms, marriage is a civil contract negotiated between two families.

3. More women veil in Algeria than in any North African country.

True

Social traditions are conservative in Algeria and more women veil there than in any North African country.

4. Algerians make a greater investment in male children.

True

Males are more highly regarded than females in Algeria (except among the Tuareg).

5. The word *ibn* in an Algerian name means “daughter of.”

False

Ibn means “son of” and indicates the person is male. The word for daughter is “*bint*.”

Final Assessments

1. Algiers served as the provisional capital of France.
2. Algerians who worked for the French were called *pied noirs*.
3. Agriculture dominates Algerian exports.
4. Both French and Arabic are official languages in Algeria.
5. Few Algerians identify themselves as Berber.
6. Algerian men and women worship separately in a mosque.
7. *Marabout* is the Berber name for *imam* (prayer leader).
8. It is acceptable to wear shoes in an Algerian mosque as long as your head is covered.
9. Islamist political parties are banned in Algeria.
10. The majority of Algeria's Christians are Protestant.
11. Tuareg men customarily wear a head veil.
12. The first day of the agricultural new year is known as *Yennayer*.
13. When meeting an Algerian group, the eldest person should be acknowledged first.
14. An Algerian expresses gratitude by placing their left hand over their heart.
15. Women are responsible for maintaining an Algerian family's honor.
16. Gasoline prices in Algeria are among the most expensive in the world in order to discourage driving.
17. There is no opposition in Algeria to the government's Arabization program.
18. Rai music originated in Oran.
19. Unemployment is a pressing problem for Algerian youth.
20. Algerian cities are now home to more than half the population.
21. The governance system is uniform throughout rural Algeria.
22. Morocco can be accessed from Algeria via road.
23. Algeria has not been fully demined.
24. The number of nomadic groups is steadily growing in Algeria.

25. School is free for Algerian children in rural areas.
26. Algerians bury their dead within 24 hours of death.
27. Most Algerian women who work outside the home hold government jobs.
28. Algerian homes are often surrounded by high walls.
29. Men and women have equal rights to petition for divorce.
30. Algerian women enjoy equal rights under the law.

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