

AFRICA · DESERT · HISTORY · ARCHITECTURE · CULTURE · OFF THE BEATEN PATH



Algeria

Africa's largest country runs from a Mediterranean coast of Roman ruins and French-era boulevards to Saharan sandstone plateaus, where Tassili n'Ajjer's rock paintings record a greener past. Algiers' Casbah, Constantine's gorge-spanning bridges and the dunes around Djanet see a fraction of Morocco's visitors, and trips to the deep south are usually arranged through a licensed local agency.



The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of Algeria.

Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice. FCDO advice last updated 25 September 2026.

 CAPITAL Algiers	 CURRENCY Algerian dinar (DZD) £1 ≈ DZD 180	 LANGUAGE Arabic, French Tamazight (Berber)	 BEST TIME Mar–May, Oct–Nov
 DAILY BUDGET £35–£180 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type C, F 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 2h 50m direct ~£180–£420 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+1 standard time

Algeria is Africa's largest country, yet most of its 46 million people live on a narrow strip between the Mediterranean and the Atlas mountains. A first trip usually has two halves. The north means Algiers' Casbah and French-era waterfront, then east to Constantine's gorge bridges and the Roman cities of Djémila and Timgad, or west to Oran and Tlemcen's Moorish mosques. The second half is the Sahara: a stop in the M'zab valley's ochre towns around Ghardaïa, then a flight south to Djanet for Tassili n'Ajjer's rock art and dunes, or to Tamanrasset for the volcanic Hoggar.

Tourism infrastructure is thin, which is both the appeal and the challenge. Northern hotels are often aimed at business travellers, Roman sites can be all but empty, and English is rarely spoken outside the travel trade, so French goes a long way. Day-to-day costs are low by European standards; guided desert trips with a 4x4, driver and cook are where the money goes. Algerians are hospitable and curious about visitors, and showing your passport at road checkpoints is routine. It suits travellers who have done Morocco or Tunisia and want somewhere less packaged, and who can handle paperwork and a slower pace.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

HISTORY

Tassili n'Ajjer

A UNESCO-listed sandstone plateau of eroded rock 'forests' and canyons holding more than 15,000 prehistoric paintings and engravings of cattle, giraffes and hunters from when the Sahara was green. Trek up from Djanet with a guide and pack donkeys.
- 2

HISTORY

Casbah of Algiers

A UNESCO-listed hillside medina of Ottoman palaces, stepped alleys and small mosques above the port. Dar Mustapha Pacha and the Ketchaoua Mosque stand out; a local guide makes sense of the maze and its role in the independence war.

3

HISTORY

Timgad

Trajan founded this Roman colony around AD 100, and its near-perfect grid of colonnaded streets, theatre, library and triumphal arch survives on a plateau below the Aurès mountains. Visitors are few, so you may have it almost to yourself.

4

ARCHITECTURE

M'zab Valley

Five fortified ksour built by the Ibadi Mozabite community from the 11th century, each climbing a hill to a single minaret. Ghardaïa's market square and the carefully guarded streets of Beni Isguen, visited with a local guide, are the highlights.

5

NATURE

Assekrem, Hoggar Mountains

Charles de Foucauld's stone hermitage sits at about 2,780 m among the volcanic peaks of the Hoggar, a long, rough 4x4 drive from Tamanrasset. Stay overnight at the refuge for sunrise over the jagged Atakor, one of the Sahara's great views.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Algiers

≈ 3.5 million people

The Casbah's stepped lanes, the hilltop Notre-Dame d'Afrique basilica and grand French-era boulevards curving above the bay make the capital worth two or three days.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Oran

≈ 1.5 million people

A port city with a looser, Spanish-tinged feel and the birthplace of raï music. Climb to Fort Santa Cruz for views over the bay, then use it as a base for Tlemcen.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Constantine

≈ 950,000 people

Built on a rock split by the Rhumel gorge and stitched together by vertiginous bridges, the 'City of Bridges' is also a good base for day trips to the Roman ruins of Djémila and Timgad.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Algeria

Best time: **Mar–May, Oct–Nov.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

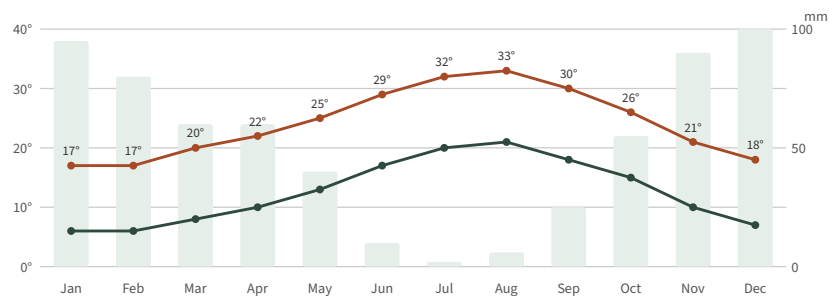
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Algiers

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jan	Yennayer (Amazigh New Year) A national holiday since 2018, celebrated on 12 January with family feasts of couscous, dried fruit and sweets, and music and craft fairs, especially in Kabylie.
Feb–Mar	Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr Days are quiet and many cafés close until sunset, then streets and pastry shops fill until late. Eid al-Fitr ends the month with new clothes, sweets and family visits.
Jun	Sebiba, Djanet A UNESCO-listed Tuareg ritual held at Ashura, when rival quarters of Djanet compete in drumming, chanting and dance. It follows the Islamic calendar, currently falling in June and moving earlier each year.

How much does Algeria cost?

SHOESTRING £35 per person / day ≈ DZD 6,283 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £80 per person / day ≈ DZD 14,362 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £180 per person / day ≈ DZD 32,314 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Couscous Steamed semolina piled with lamb or chicken, chickpeas and vegetables in a spiced broth; the Friday family meal and Algeria's national dish.	Chakhchoukha A speciality of the east, especially Biskra and the Aurès: torn flatbread soaked in a peppery tomato, lamb and chickpea stew.	Chorba frik Lamb and tomato soup thickened with cracked green wheat and finished with coriander and mint; it breaks the fast every evening during Ramadan.
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Getting around

Air Algérie's domestic flights are the practical way to reach the Sahara, linking Algiers with Djanet, Tamanrasset and Ghardaïa and saving days of driving. In the north, SNTF trains connect Algiers with Oran and Constantine, while buses and shared long-distance taxis cover the rest. Algiers has a metro, trams and cable cars, and the local ride-hailing app Yassir works in big cities. Most visitors hire a driver rather than self-drive.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE C F 230V — bring a UK-to-C/F adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Ambulance: 1021 Fire: 14 Police: 17 or 1548 Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +213	TIME ZONE UTC+1 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Varies — bottled or filtered is safer

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Not expected but appreciated: round up taxi fares, leave 5–10% in sit-down restaurants, and tip desert guides, drivers and cooks at the end of a trip.

ETIQUETTE

Dress conservatively, covering shoulders and knees, especially outside Algiers. Ask before photographing people, never photograph police or military sites, and during Ramadan avoid eating or drinking in public by day.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Houari Boumediene Airport (ALG), Algiers; Ahmed Ben Bella Airport (ORN), Oran; Mohamed Boudiaf International Airport (CZL), Constantine

Visas & entry for Algeria

Shown for a British passport.

Visa required — apply before you go

You must have a visa to visit Algeria.

Check your visa details, including validity dates, before you travel. If you overstay, it is likely Algerian immigration police will detain you at the airport on departure. You may face criminal prosecution and up to 3 months in prison.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Hepatitis B

Measles

Polio

Rabies

Tuberculosis

Typhoid

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Algeria

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 1 Nov 2026	Revolution Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Tue 12 Jan 2027	Amazigh New Year
Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Wed 10 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Thu 11 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Mon 17 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Tue 18 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Sun 6 Jun 2027	Islamic New Year (date may shift)
Tue 15 Jun 2027	Ashura (date may shift)
Mon 5 Jul 2027	Independence Day
Sat 14 Aug 2027	Prophet's Birthday (date may shift)

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Algerian Arabic (Darja)

ENGLISH	ALGERIAN ARABIC (DARJA)	SAY IT
Hello	السلام عليكم	as-sa-LAAM a-LAY-kum
Thank you	شكرا	SHUK-ran
Please	يعيشك	ya-AY-shek
Excuse me	سمحي	SMAH-lee
How much is this?	بشحال هذا؟	besh-HAL HA-da

Know before you go

- Cards are accepted in few places beyond large hotels and foreign cards often fail at ATMs, so bring enough euros in cash for the trip and change them as you go.
- Trips to Djanet and Tamanrasset are usually organised through a licensed agency that arranges the guide, vehicle and paperwork; book a few months ahead for the October–March season.
- Check the FCDO travel advice before booking, especially for desert and border areas, and learn some French: it is far more widely understood than English.