

All about Marrakech

Marrakech (also spelled Marrakesh) was founded around 1070 by the Almoravids and is one of Morocco's four imperial cities. Its walled medina, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1985, gives it the nickname "the Red City".

At its heart is the square of Jemaa el-Fnaa. Today about a million people live in the city, which sits on a plain north of the Atlas Mountains.

Quick facts

Country	Morocco
Nickname	The Red City
Founded	about 1070
People	about 1 million (2024)
Languages	Arabic, Amazigh, French
City walls	about 19 km
July high	about 38 °C
UNESCO	medina listed 1985

Key words

medina: the old walled part of a North African city

madrasa: a school or college, especially an old Islamic one

khettara: an underground channel that carries water

protectorate: a country controlled and protected by a stronger one

imperial city: a city that was once a royal capital

ramparts: strong defensive walls

Fun facts

Cat city

Marrakech is famous for the huge number of cats in its streets.

Tins into lanterns

Metalworkers make candle holders from old sardine tins.

A country named after a city

Many names for Morocco, like Maroc and Marruecos, come from the name Marrakech.

Daughter of the ash

Tanjia is slow-cooked in a clay pot buried in hot ashes.

Going deeper

- Groundwater under the city has fallen by about 0.9 m a year since 2002.
- Craftsmen from Córdoba and Seville helped build its monuments, mixing Andalusian, Saharan and West African styles.
- In 2009 Fatima-Zahra Mansouri became the city's first female mayor.
- Until 1867, European Christians needed the sultan's permission to enter the city.

Think about it: Groundwater under Marrakech is falling. Why might a hot, dry, growing city use more water? What could help?

Marrakech: the Red City

Use the words in the box to fill the gaps. Each word is used once.

Name _____ Date _____ Score _____ / 10

Word bank 1956 1985 1994 Almoravids falling khettaras mayor
Mellah permission Saadian

1. In the 1500s the _____ sultans built lavish palaces such as El Badi.
2. Marrakech was founded around 1070 as the capital of the _____.
3. Until 1867, European Christians needed the sultan's _____ to enter.
4. Since 2002 groundwater under the city has been _____.
5. The agreement that created the World Trade Organization was signed here in _____.
6. Underground channels called _____ carried water to the gardens.
7. In 2009 Fatima-Zahra Mansouri became the city's first female _____.
8. The old Jewish quarter of the city is called the _____.
9. The medina became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in _____.
10. Morocco became independent in _____.

Marrakech: the Red City

Read each sentence. Circle True or False.

Name _____

Date _____

Score _____ / 7

1. Groundwater under the city is rising.
2. Marrakech has been Morocco's capital without a break since 1070.
3. The Almoravids ruled land from Senegal to the middle of Spain.
4. The WTO agreement was signed in Paris.
5. In 1984 about half the city's people lived in the medina.
6. Marrakech is classed as a desert city.
7. France made Morocco a protectorate in 1912.

☐ True☐ False☐ True☐ False☐ True☐ False☐ True☐ False☐ True☐ False☐ True☐ False☐ True☐ False

Marrakech word match

Write the letter of the right meaning in each box.

Name _____ Date _____ Score _____ / 7

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ imperial city | A a place protected because it matters to the whole world |
| ☐ khattara | B a city that was once a royal capital |
| ☐ semi-arid | C the old walled part of a North African city |
| ☐ madrasa | D a country controlled and protected by a stronger one |
| ☐ medina | E dry, with little rain, but not a desert |
| ☐ protectorate | F an underground channel that carries water |
| ☐ UNESCO World Heritage Site | G a school or college, especially an old Islamic one |

Marrakech: think and discuss

Read the facts, then write your answers. There are no wrong answers if you give reasons.

Name _____ Date _____

Daughter of the ash

Tanjia is slow-cooked in a clay pot buried in hot ashes.

Head of the shop

That is what the spice mix ras el hanout means.

Sunshine city

Marrakech gets more than 3,250 hours of sunshine a year.

Storks on the palace

White storks nest on top of the ruined El Badi Palace walls.

Tourism brings money to Marrakech, but some researchers say it has changed the old town. Who do you think benefits most from tourism? Give reasons.

Many names for Morocco come from the word Marrakech. Why do you think a whole country might be named after one city?

Marrakech

Find each word and tick it off. The words can go in any direction, even backwards.

Name _____ Date _____ Found _____ / 13

k	g	a	r	d	e	n	s	s	o	r	z	v	j
t	n	f	n	r	r	t	s	a	y	g	x	f	u
z	c	s	o	u	k	e	z	i	o	u	w	u	s
a	d	u	m	j	j	a	w	b	f	b	o	z	j
k	e	g	x	t	q	q	z	u	k	r	e	m	i
g	l	m	n	r	j	d	x	o	w	z	q	p	g
v	l	m	e	d	i	n	a	t	b	s	h	s	s
c	e	g	l	t	n	l	a	u	a	l	z	k	f
d	r	s	p	i	c	e	s	o	t	l	h	r	y
i	o	e	c	a	l	a	p	k	l	a	o	o	j
h	j	g	b	r	y	r	d	v	a	w	x	t	v
u	a	d	l	z	h	t	j	g	s	n	i	s	r
w	m	t	n	i	m	l	c	k	x	w	e	k	m
u	d	t	d	i	i	t	o	c	c	o	r	o	m

- ☐ Atlas ☐ gardens ☐ Koutoubia ☐ Majorelle ☐ medina
☐ mint ☐ Morocco ☐ palace ☐ souk ☐ spices ☐ storks
☐ tea ☐ walls

Marrakech: the Red City

Answers are shown in red.

Name _____ Date _____ Score _____ / 10

Word bank 1956 1985 1994 Almoravids falling khettaras mayor
Mellah permission Saadian

1. In the 1500s the Saadian sultans built lavish palaces such as El Badi.
2. Marrakech was founded around 1070 as the capital of the Almoravids.
3. Until 1867, European Christians needed the sultan's permission to enter.
4. Since 2002 groundwater under the city has been falling.
5. The agreement that created the World Trade Organization was signed here in 1994.
6. Underground channels called khettaras carried water to the gardens.
7. In 2009 Fatima-Zahra Mansouri became the city's first female mayor.
8. The old Jewish quarter of the city is called the Mellah.
9. The medina became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985.
10. Morocco became independent in 1956.

Marrakech: the Red City

Answers are shown in red.

Name _____ Date _____ Score _____ / 7

1. Groundwater under the city is rising.
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☐ True☒ False☐ True☒ False☒ True☐ False☐ True☒ False☒ True☐ False☐ True☒ False☒ True☐ False

Marrakech word match

Answers are shown in red.

Name _____ Date _____ Score _____ / 7

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| B imperial city | A a place protected because it matters to the whole world |
| F khattara | B a city that was once a royal capital |
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| G madrasa | D a country controlled and protected by a stronger one |
| C medina | E dry, with little rain, but not a desert |
| D protectorate | F an underground channel that carries water |
| A UNESCO World Heritage Site | G a school or college, especially an old Islamic one |

Marrakech

The hidden words are shaded in red.

k	g	a	r	d	e	n	s	s	o	r	z	v	j
t	n	f	n	r	r	t	s	a	y	g	x	f	u
z	c	s	o	u	k	e	z	i	o	u	w	u	s
a	d	u	m	j	j	a	w	b	f	b	o	z	j
k	e	g	x	t	q	q	z	u	k	r	e	m	i
g	l	m	n	r	j	d	x	o	w	z	q	p	g
v	l	m	e	d	i	n	a	t	b	s	h	s	s
c	e	g	l	t	n	l	a	u	a	l	z	k	f
d	r	s	p	i	c	e	s	o	t	l	h	r	y
i	o	e	c	a	l	a	p	k	l	a	o	o	j
h	j	g	b	r	y	r	d	v	a	w	x	t	v
u	a	d	l	z	h	t	j	g	s	n	i	s	r
w	m	t	n	i	m	l	c	k	x	w	e	k	m
u	d	t	d	i	i	t	o	c	c	o	r	o	m

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