

WorldDenver Presents:

STAYCATIONS

a new way to travel the world without leaving your home

CAPTIVATED BY CHEFCHAOUEN

On Wednesday, WorldDenver announced the launch of a new innovative, educational exchange program serving young people in Denver and the Middle East/North Africa region starting next school year. The World Affairs Challenge Virtual Exchange will connect local high school students with teammates in Israel, Iraq, and Morocco in a competition to design and implement solutions to challenges in their local communities related to UN Sustainability Goals. Today, we invite you to explore one of our partner countries. The landscape of Morocco varies greatly from the golden dunes of the Sahara to the verdant coastal plains to the imposing High Atlas Mountains. In a spot in northern Morocco that feels fairly far from anywhere, Chefchaouen (or, simply Chaouen to the locals) sits in the Rif Mountains—a blip of blue in a country that is largely green and tan.

CULTURE

Quiet and remote, the most noticeable characteristic of the mountainous town of Chefchaouen is the buildings, all painted in shades of blue. Powder blue doors stand out against whitewashed walls and it feels as if the streets of the old city are extensions of the brilliant sky above. Founded in 1471 by Moorish exiles from Spain, the blue-glazed houses and buildings are a tradition that comes from the town's former Jewish population. Chefchaouen was known as one of the main concentrations of moriscos and Jews who sought refuge in this mountainous city after the Spanish Reconquista in medieval times. Following in Jewish traditions, the refugees painted their buildings blue as a reminder of God's power above. Even as the Jewish population faded in the area and gave way to a stronger Muslim presence, the tradition of blue buildings continued. Today, residents of Chefchaouen still regularly paint their houses, keeping the blue city fresh and the lost tradition alive. Enjoy a peaceful stroll through the "Blue Pearl of Morocco" and let the peacefulness of this mountain city sweep over you.

CUISINE

Couscous is the dish for Moroccan families to enjoy for Friday dinner. Different theories abound as to the origin of couscous, but the most commonly accepted is that it is traditionally from Morocco and that it was first cultivated by the Berber people.

An anonymous author first referenced the dish in a 10th-century North African cookbook, and in the 13th century, a Syrian historian wrote about couscous being brought to his homeland from across the sea. Couscous is so wildly popular in the Maghreb region that it is the national dish of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. Its taste and simplicity have also charmed various European countries such as France, Spain, Italy, and Portugal. Learn more about Moroccan spices and how they are used alongside couscous in this [video](#) and enjoy your own [couscous from home](#).

BEVERAGE

No trip to Morocco, virtual or otherwise, is complete without enjoying a glass or two of sweet mint tea. A daily staple for most locals, this tea is symbolic in local homes as a sign of hospitality and generosity. Often presented in a silver tea service in many of Morocco's cafés, this traditional drink is made by stewing mint leaves with water for up to 15 minutes. To achieve the correct level of froth, pour the mint tea into a glass containing a sugar cube from shoulder height. While mint tea is usually served very sweet in Morocco, it can be adapted to personal preference by adding or taking away sugar cubes in the glass.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5b3Q1T4S4iE>

<https://moroccanzest.com/authentic-moroccan-mint-tea-recipe/>

