

What was Al-Andalus?

Al-Andalus was the Arabic name for parts of the Iberian Peninsula governed by Arab and North African Muslims at various times between 711 and 1492.

Al-Andalus was the province of the Umayyad Caliphate started by the Caliph Al-Walid I (711–750); the Emirate of Córdoba (c. 750–929); the Caliphate of Córdoba (929–1031); and the Caliphate of Córdoba's taifa (successor) kingdoms.

Later, Al-Andalus became a province of the Berber Muslim dynasties of the Almoravids and Almohads, which was later divided into several minor states, most notably the Emirate of Granada.

Al-Andalus was a leader in learning, and the city of Córdoba became one of the strongest cultural and economic centres in both the Mediterranean and the Islamic world.

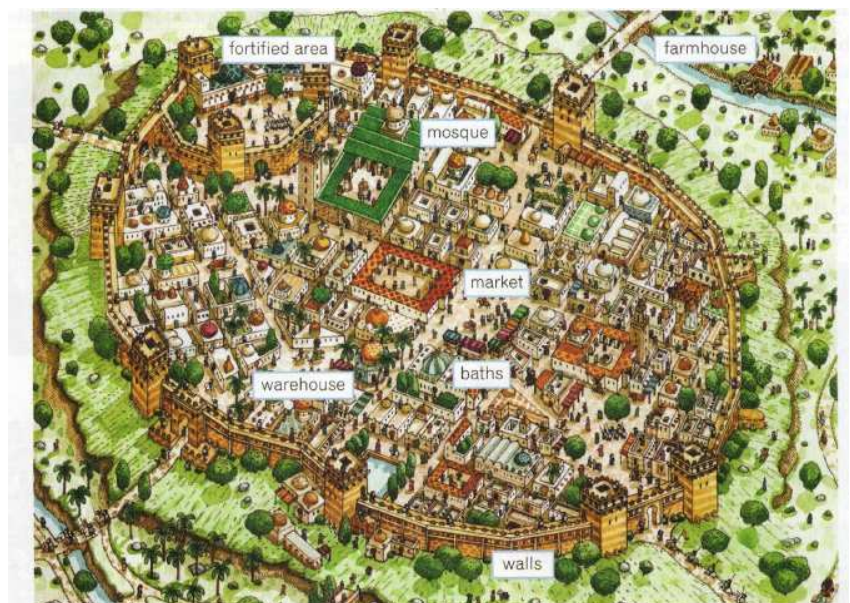
Muslim cities

Muslim cities were very big compared to those in other parts of Western Europe and they were very important centres of economic, religious and cultural life. For example, in the 10th century, Córdoba had about 100,000 inhabitants, whereas London had less than 15,000.

Muslim cities had walls with gates, which were closed at night. The main area was the **medina** or old city, which contained the most important buildings, including the **aljama**, or main **mosque**. Around the medina there were the **arrabales**, or workers' districts, where the craft workshops were located.

The centre of political life was the **alcázar**, a fortified area in the highest part of the city, where municipal employees and authorities lived. Social and economic life was centred on the **souk**, or market.

Today, we can see remains from the Muslim period in many Spanish cities.



A medieval Muslim city

Activity 1: Explain what we mean by Al-Andalus:

Activity 2: Match the two halves of each sentence:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| a) Taifas | 1. were small kingdoms |
| b) Parias | 2. were Berber warriors from North Africa |
| c) The Almoravids | 3. were taxes paid to the Christian Kings |
| d) The Almohads | 4. were defeated at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa |

Activity 3: Complete each sentence with the correct word from the box:

Berbers	Arabs	Muladíes	Jews	Mozarabs
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- a) The _____ has the best land and were in charge of the government.
- b) The _____ had fewer privileges and sometimes rebelled.
- c) The _____ had been Christians but changed to Islam.
- d) The _____ were Christians who had to pay taxes because they were not Muslims.

Activity 4: Look at the photos below.



- a) Do you know these buildings? Find out which buildings they are and why they are important in the history of Al-Andalus.
- b) Explain what the most important characteristics are in Islamic architecture.
- c) Group work: Plan a trip to a place in Spain where you can see the remains of Muslim Spain.
 - What place are you planning to visit?
 - Why is it important?
 - What are you going to see here?
 - Did any important event take place here? Which?

Activity 5: Listen to the recording and fill in the gaps in the text.

Muslim cities were very _____ compared to those in other parts of Western Europe. For example, _____ had about 100,000 inhabitants, whereas London had less than _____. Muslim cities had gates which were _____ at night. The _____, or old city, contained the most important buildings. The aljama was the name of the main _____ and the _____ were the workers' districts. The centre of political life was the _____, and the souk was the centre of the social and _____ life. The merchants kept their goods in large warehouses known as _____.