

As-Salt: The Middle East's city of tolerance and generosity

This small Jordanian city where **minarets** and church towers share the skyline was **deemed** a "place of tolerance and urban hospitality" by UNESCO.

MINARET /mɪnə'ret/ *noun*: a tall thin tower, usually forming part of MOSQUE, from which Muslims are called to prayer.

DEEM /di:m/ *verb*: (formal) consider
They would take any action deemed necessary.

The dawn call to prayer echoed through a still sleepy valley before the first rays of sun started illuminating golden limestone houses clustered on the **slopes** of three mountains.

SLOPE *noun*: incline

The town is built on a slope.

"Allahu Akbar" ("God is great"), the voice of the **muezzin** rose up above the domes of the city. "Hayya 'ala-s-salah" ("Hurry to the prayer"), called loudspeakers from the minarets that **dot** the **rugged** landscape.

MUEZZIN /mu:'ezɪn/ *noun*: a man who calls Muslims to prayer, usually from the tower of a MOSQUE.

DOT *verb*: to be spread over an area

The countryside was **dotted with** small villages.

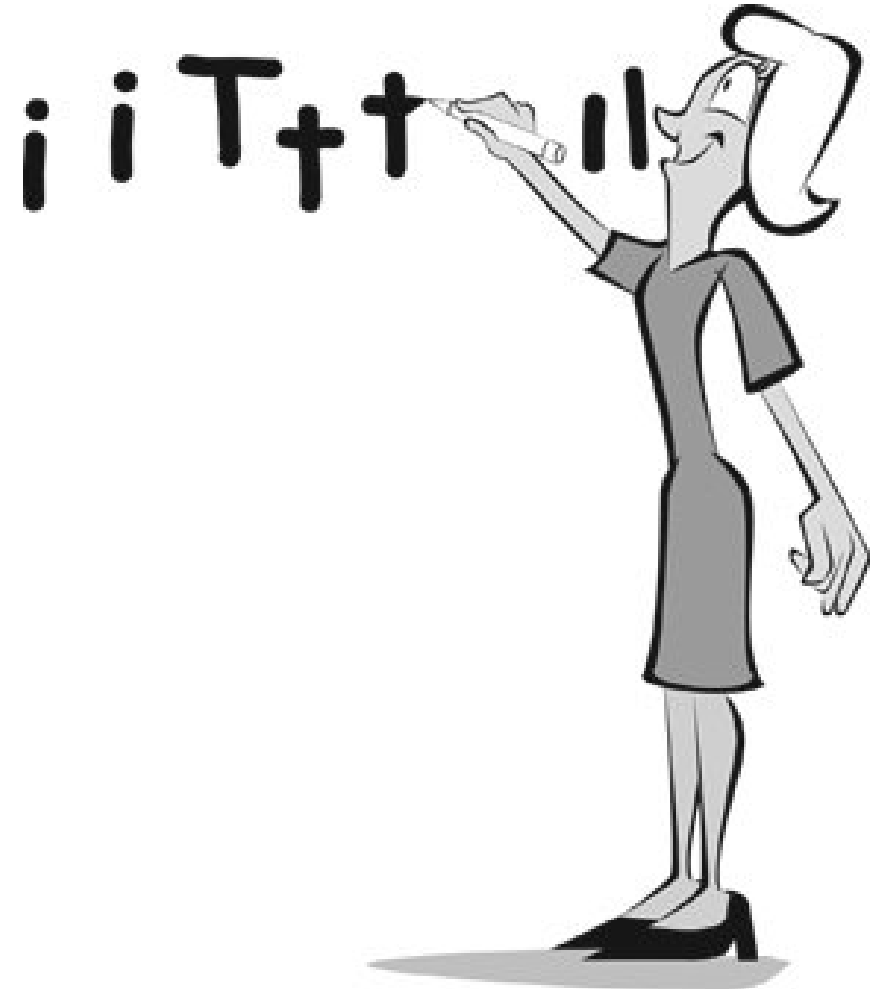
There are lots of Italian restaurants **dotted around** the London.

RUGGED /'rʌɡɪd/ *adj.*: (of the landscape) not level or smooth and having rock rather than plants or trees.

They admired the rugged beauty of the coastline.

DOT YOUR I'S AND CROSS YOUR T'S

TO PAY ATTENTION TO SMALL DETAILS WHEN YOU ARE FINISHING A TASK





Moments later, the city's **winding** streets filled with the ring of church bells announcing the morning mass.

WINDING /Waɪndɪŋ/*adj.*: have a curving and twisting shape
A long and winding road

We were in As-Salt, the Middle East's newest Unesco World Heritage site. This small Jordanian city where minarets and church towers share the skyline was deemed a "place of tolerance and urban hospitality".

Located at the crossroads of trade and pilgrimage between the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian Peninsula, As-Salt **grew into** a **thriving** town in the late 19th Century during a period of reforms intended to "modernise" the Ottoman Empire.

GROW INTO *verb*: to gradually develop, over a period of time

THRIVING *adj.*: prosperous and growing; flourishing.

A thriving industry



IT/MONEY DOESN'T GROW ON TREES.

- Used to tell sb not to use sth or spend money carelessly because you don't have a lot of it.

In the city's historic centre, hundreds of heritage limestone buildings – dating to the late 19th and the early 20th Centuries – with arched doorways, carved columns and high windows glowed in the sun.



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DIRECTORATE OF SALT GOVERNORATE

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متحف آثار السلط
AS-SALT ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

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"The yellow stone buildings are important, but they're not the reason why As-Salt is so unique," said Thaira Arabiyat, a shop owner who trains local women in traditional needlework, as she poured me a cup of coffee fragrant with cardamom.







We sat surrounded by embroidered dresses and scarves at her small shop in the city centre, where I first found her sewing the knotted fringes of a [shemagh](#), a traditional Jordanian scarf. She interrupted her work to tell me more about her hometown.

The keffiyeh, also known as a “kufiya”, “shemagh” or “hattah”, is a square-shaped cotton scarf.



knotted fringes

FRINGE *noun*: a strip of hanging threads attached to the edge of sth to decorate it.

"What makes this city so special is the people here, their kindness," said Arabiyat after filling my cup a second time. She then asked me, "Did you have breakfast? Come eat with me."

While exploring the city's winding streets and narrow alleys, I received repeated invitations for lunch, coffee or tea. Traditions of hospitality and generosity towards visitors have deep roots in As-Salt.

For centuries, the city was an important stop for merchants and pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, Damascus, Baghdad or Mecca. Residents would welcome visitors and offer them food and lodging.

In the 19th Century, As-Salt became the region's administrative headquarters, attracting merchants from different religious and cultural backgrounds. Many ended up settling in the hillside town, creating prosperous **neighbourhoods** where local Bedouin tribes mixed with Levantine traders and craftsmen.

NEIGHBOURHOOD *noun*: district

We grew up in the same neighbourhood.