

## A1 READING CHALLENGE · #22

# The City of Colours

*Chefchaouen, Morocco — the city where everything is blue*

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There is a small city in **Morocco**. Its name is Chefchaouen. People call it "the Blue City" or "the Blue Pearl." Why? Because almost everything is **blue**! The walls are blue. The doors are blue. The stairs are blue. Even the **flowerpots** are blue. It is one of the most beautiful places in the world.

## Where Is Chefchaouen?

Chefchaouen is in the north of Morocco. It is in the **Rif Mountains**. The city is about 600 metres above the sea. It is not a big city — only about 45,000 people live there. From the city, you can see beautiful green **mountains** and blue sky. The name "Chefchaouen" means "look at the horns." This is because two mountain **peaks** above the city look like horns.

Chefchaouen is not easy to **reach**. It is about three hours by car from Fez. It is about two hours from Tangier. There is no **airport** in Chefchaouen. But many **tourists** go there every year. They want to see the blue city.

## The History of the Blue City

Chefchaouen is an old city. A man named Moulay Ali ibn Rashid **founded** it in 1471. He built a small **fortress** in the mountains. The fortress was to protect people from **attacks** from Portugal.

Later, many people came from Spain. In 1492, the king and queen of Spain told all Muslims and Jews: "Become Christian, or leave!" Many people left. Some went to Chefchaouen. They built houses, **mosques**, and shops. The city grew bigger.

## Why Is Everything Blue?

This is the big question! Nobody knows for sure. There are three **theories**:

**Theory 1: Religion.** Jewish people came from Spain. In Jewish **tradition**, blue is very important. Blue is the colour of the sky. It **reminds** people of God and heaven. So they painted their houses blue.

**Theory 2: Mosquitoes.** Some people say the blue paint keeps **mosquitoes** away. Mosquitoes do not like blue. The blue looks like water, and mosquitoes do not want to land on water.

**Theory 3: Cool in summer.** Blue walls keep houses **cool** in hot weather. Blue **reflects** the sun's heat. Morocco can be very hot in summer.

Maybe all three are a little bit true! Today, people **repaint** their houses in fresh blue paint every year. Every house is a different **shade** of blue — light blue, dark blue, sky blue, ocean blue.

## What Can You Do in Chefchaouen?

The **medina** is the old part of the city. The streets are very **narrow**. You cannot drive a car there. You walk, look at the blue walls, and take photos. Many people say it is the most beautiful place for photos in all of Africa.

You can also eat delicious food. People eat "tagine" — a hot dish with meat and vegetables. They drink fresh mint tea. You can buy **handmade** bags, clothes, and beautiful blue plates in the small shops.

If you like nature, you can walk in the mountains. There is a **waterfall** near the city called Ras el-Maa. People go there to sit and listen to the water.

## A City Like No Other

There are many beautiful cities in the world. But there is only one blue city. Chefchaouen is **unique**. It is a place where colour, history, and nature come together. If you ever go to Morocco, you must visit the Blue Pearl.

**Fun Fact:** People in Chefchaouen repaint their walls one or two times every year. Each family chooses their own shade of blue. That is why every street looks different!

**Fun Fact:** Chefchaouen was closed to visitors for a long time. From the 1400s to the 1920s — about 400 years — almost no foreigners could enter the city!

## Vocabulary

Word	Meaning
<b>Morocco</b>	a country in North Africa, next to Spain
<b>blue</b>	the colour of the sky and the sea
<b>flowerpots</b>	containers for plants and flowers
<b>Rif Mountains</b>	a mountain range in northern Morocco
<b>mountains</b>	very high land, much higher than a hill

Word	Meaning
peaks	the top point of a mountain
reach	to arrive at a place; to get to
airport	a place where planes land and take off
tourists	people who travel to visit new places
founded	started something new (a city, a school)
fortress	a strong building to protect from enemies
attacks	when people try to hurt or fight others
mosques	buildings where Muslims go to pray
theories	ideas that may or may not be true
tradition	old customs people follow for many years
reminds	to make you think about something again
mosquitoes	small flying insects that bite you
cool	not hot; a nice temperature
reflects	to send back light or heat
repaint	to paint again with fresh paint
shade	a lighter or darker version of a colour
medina	the old part of a North African city
narrow	not wide; with very little space
handmade	made by a person, not by a machine
waterfall	water that falls down from a high place
unique	the only one of its kind; special

## Comprehension Quiz

**1. What is the nickname of Chefchaouen?**

- A) The Red City
- B) The Blue Pearl
- C) The Green Mountain
- D) The White City

**2. Where is Chefchaouen?**

- A) In the south of Morocco
- B) In Spain
- C) In the north of Morocco, in the Rif Mountains
- D) Near Marrakech

**3. Why is Chefchaouen blue? (Most popular theory)**

- A) The government painted it
- B) Blue paint was cheapest
- C) Jewish people painted houses blue because of tradition
- D) A famous artist did it

**4. What does 'Chefchaouen' mean?**

- A) Blue water
- B) Beautiful mountain
- C) Look at the horns
- D) City of God

**5. What is a 'medina'?**

- A) A type of food
- B) A big mosque
- C) The old part of a city with small streets
- D) A mountain

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**Answer Key****1. B 2. C 3. C 4. C 5. C**