

El Jadida City

Touring El Jadida in Morocco

El Jadida is a stylish and beautiful town, retaining the lanes and ramparts of an old Portuguese Medina. It was known as Mazagan under the Portuguese who held it from 1506 until 1769, when it was taken by sultan Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdullah. Moroccan Mazagan was renamed El Jadida - 'The New' - after being resettled, partly with Jews from Azemmour, by the nineteenth-century Sultan Abd er Rahman. Under the French, it grew into a quite sizeable administrative centre and a popular beach resort.

Today it's the beach that is undeniably the focal point. Moroccans from Casablanca and Marrakesh - even Tangier or Fes - come here in droves in summer and there's an unusual feeling of openness. The bars are crowded, there's an almost frantic evening promenade and - as in Casa - Moroccan women are visible and active participants. El Jadida's Medina is the most European-looking in Morocco: a quiet, walled and bastioned seaside village with a handful of churches scattered on its lanes. It was found by the Portuguese in 1513 and retained by them until 1769 and is still popularly known as the Cite Portugaise. El Jadida's town beach spreads southeast from the city and port well beyond the length of the town. It's a popular strip, though it is polluted by the ships in the port from time to time. If the water doesn't look too clear or if you feel like a change, head to the Phare Sidi Ouafi beach. This beach features a broader strip of sand where dozens of Moroccan families set up for the summer. Good swimming is to be had and there are makeshift beach cafes. The Plage Sidi Bouzid, which is situated about a further 2km southwest from Phare Sidi Ouafi beach, is more developed and is flanked by some fancy villas and chic restaurants.