

**Photo**  
**MEDIA SPOTLIGHT**

## Moorish Architecture

Arches and tiles decorate domes and pillars

For the complete photos with media resources, visit:  
<http://education.nationalgeographic.com/media/moorish-art/>

Moorish [architecture](#) is a variation of [Islamic](#) architecture. There are many [motifs](#), or repeated patterns, in Moorish architecture. This photo gallery illustrates just a few. The first slide gives an overview of the motifs: different styles of [arches](#), [calligraphy](#), [vegetative](#) design, and decorative tiles.

Moorish architecture is named after the [Moors](#), North African people who conquered the Iberian Peninsula and many islands in the Western Mediterranean beginning in the 700s. The Moors controlled what is now Spain, Portugal, and the Pyrenees region of France for hundreds of years.

The Moors were Muslim and influenced by the Islamic architecture that developed in the Middle East. Although [mosques](#) are the most common examples of Moorish architecture, motifs spread to the design of homes and places of businesses. One of the most famous examples of Moorish architecture, the Mezquita or Grand Mosque of Cordoba, Spain, is today the region's Catholic [cathedral](#).

Read the captions associated with the photo gallery and review the relevant vocabulary words in the "Vocabulary" tab. Then answer the questions in the "Questions" tab.

### QUESTIONS

- Many buildings constructed in the Moorish architectural style are mosques, Muslim places of worship. What buildings included in the photo gallery are NOT mosques?  
The **Ben Youssef Madrassa** (slide 2), the **Alhambra** (slide 3), **Cordoba Cathedral** (slides 5 and 7), the **gateway arch** (slide 6), the **Dome of the Rock** (slide 8), and the **Minaret of Jam** (slide 9) are not mosques.
- What building, constructed as a mosque in the Moorish architectural style, is now a Christian church?  
The **Cathedral of Cordoba**, Spain, was originally built as a mosque.
- What photos depict minarets?  
Photos of the **Minaret of Jam** (slide 9) and the **Imam Mosque** (slide 11) include minarets.
- Most buildings constructed in the Moorish architectural style include Arabic script. Which photos do NOT depict such calligraphy?  
Photos of the **Sheikh Zayed Mosque** (slide 4), the **prayer hall of Cordoba Cathedral** (slide 5), the **gateway arch** (slide 6), the **Royal Mosque** (slide 12), **Sepahsalar Mosque** (slide 13), **tile** (slide 14), and **Wazir Khan Mosque** (slide 15) do not include calligraphy. All of these buildings, however, have calligraphy incorporated elsewhere on the building.
- Which of these buildings are in Europe?

The **Cathedral of Cordoba** and the **Alhambra** are in Spain, and the **Blue Mosque** is in Istanbul, Turkey.

## VOCABULARY

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
<b>arch</b>	<i>noun</i>	shape that looks like an upside-down "U."
<b>architecture</b>	<i>noun</i>	style and design of buildings or open spaces.
<b>calligraphy</b>	<i>noun</i>	decorative handwriting or script.
<b>cathedral</b>	<i>noun</i>	important regional church.
<b>cusped arch</b>	<i>noun</i>	arch with circular shapes cut into its interior.
<b>Dome of the Rock</b>	<i>noun</i>	Islamic shrine in Jerusalem, Israel.
<b>emirate</b>	<i>noun</i>	state or territory under the authority of an emir, or Islamic leader.
<b>faience</b>	<i>adjective, noun</i>	type of painted pottery that has a tin glaze.
<b>grotto</b>	<i>noun</i>	natural or artificial cave.
<b>intrado</b>	<i>noun</i>	interior (smaller) part of an arch.
<b>Islam</b>	<i>noun</i>	religion based on the words and philosophy of the prophet Mohammed.
<b>keyhole arch</b>	<i>noun</i>	arch that has a generally rounded shape, although it can be pointed or lobed. Also called a Moorish arch or horseshoe arch.
<b>madrassa</b>	<i>noun</i>	school where Muslim theology is taught.
<b>masonry</b>	<i>noun</i>	construction made of stone or brick.
<b>Middle East</b>	<i>noun</i>	region of southwest Asia and northeast Africa.
<b>minaret</b>	<i>noun</i>	tower used to call Muslim worshippers to prayer.
<b>Moor</b>	<i>adjective, noun</i>	people and culture native to North Africa, blending Arab and Berber cultures, who established a major civilization on the Iberian Peninsula between 756-1492.
<b>mosque</b>	<i>noun</i>	place of worship in the Muslim or Islamic religion.
<b>motif</b>	<i>noun</i>	theme or subject that reappears in a work of art.
<b>muqarna</b>	<i>noun</i>	decorative stone or brickwork jutting out from a wall, used in Islamic architecture.
<b>Quran</b>	<i>noun</i>	holy book of the Islamic religion.
<b>tendrils</b>	<i>noun</i>	narrow, thread-like part of some plants that usually winds around something to help support the stem or main part of the plant.
<b>vegetative</b>	<i>adjective</i>	having to do with plants, or the non-reproductive parts of plants, such as vines and tendrils.



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