Arabic A2, lesson 13: the comparative and the superlative

A2 Lesson 13 of 18

You compare two towns, two objects, two people, and say “the most beautiful”.

Vocabulary | Dialogue | Grammar | Exercises

Pronunciation is written in Latin letters (ā, ī, ū = long vowels; ḥ, ṣ, ḍ, ṭ, ẓ = emphatic consonants; ʿ = the letter ع). The Arabic is always fully vowelled.

ARABIC	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
جَمِيلٌ	*jamīl*	beautiful
أَجْمَلُ	*ajmal*	more beautiful
أَكْبَرُ	*akbar*	bigger
أَصْغَرُ	*aṣghar*	smaller
أَطْوَلُ	*aṭwal*	longer, taller
أَسْرَعُ	*asraʿ*	faster

ARABIC	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
أَرْخَصُ	*arkhaṣ*	cheaper
أَغْلَى	*aghlā*	more expensive
أَقْرَبُ	*aqrab*	closer
أَحْسَنُ	*aḥsan*	better
أَيُّ	*ayyu*	which
سَفَرٌ	*safar*	travel
بَارِيسُ	*bārīs*	Paris
الْأَجْمَلُ	*al-ajmal*	the most beautiful

KARIM

الْقَاهِرَةُ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ بَارِيسَ.

al-qāhiratu akbaru min bārīs.

Cairo is bigger than Paris.

SALMA

نَعَمْ، لَكِنَّ بَارِيسَ أَجْمَلُ.

naʿam, lākinna bārīsa ajmal.

Yes, but Paris is more beautiful.

KARIM

السَّفَرُ بِالطَّائِرَةِ أَسْرَعُ مِنَ الْقِطَارِ.

as-safaru bi-ṭ-ṭāʾirati asraʿu mina l-qiṭār.

Travelling by plane is faster than by train.

SALMA

وَالْقِطَارُ أَرْخَصُ.

wa l-qiṭāru arkhaṣ.

And the train is cheaper.

KARIM

أَيُّ فَصْلٍ هُوَ الْأَجْمَلُ؟

ayyu faṣlin huwa l-ajmal?

Which season is the most beautiful?

SALMA

الرَّبِيعُ هُوَ الْأَجْمَلُ.

ar-rabīʿu huwa l-ajmal.

Spring is the most beautiful.

The comparative: the pattern أَفْعَلُ

To compare use the pattern أَفْعَلُ: كَبِيرٌ (big) → أَكْبَرُ (bigger), جَمِيلٌ → أَجْمَلُ, سَرِيعٌ → أَسْرَعُ. This word **does not change** in the feminine. After it مِنْ means "than": اَلْقَاهِرَةُ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ بَارِيسَ.

For the superlative ("the most…") add ال: هُوَ الْأَجْمَلُ (the most beautiful), or put the comparative before a singular noun without ال: أَجْمَلُ مَدِينَةٍ (the most beautiful city).

A few irregular comparatives to remember: أَحْسَنُ (better), أَغْلَى (more expensive).

Examples

ARABIC	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
اَلْقَاهِرَةُ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ بَارِيسَ	*al-qāhiratu akbaru min bārīs*	Cairo is bigger than Paris
هَذِهِ السَّيَّارَةُ أَسْرَعُ مِنْ تِلْكَ	*hādhihi s-sayyāratu asraʿu min tilka*	this car is faster than that one
الرَّبِيعُ هُوَ الْأَجْمَلُ	*ar-rabīʿu huwa l-ajmal*	spring is the most beautiful
أُخْتِي أَصْغَرُ مِنْ أَخِي	*ukhtī aṣgharu min akhī*	my sister is younger than my brother



Ibrahim explains

Good news: the comparative does not agree. It is the same for him and for her!

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