



Tunisia: From Carthage to the Sahara 2025

28 OCT – 14 NOV 2025

Code: 22544

Tour Leaders **Tony O'Connor**

Physical Ratings 

Explore Tunisia's fascinating layered history visiting Berber oasis villages with troglodyte houses, UNESCO heritage-listed Roman & Phoenician cities, fine antique mosaics & Islamic buildings.

Overview

Travel with [Tony O'Connor](#), an archaeologist, museum professional and highly experienced tour lecturer, who has led numerous tours throughout the Middle East, Italy and North Africa, in particular, Algeria and Tunisia.

- Magnificent Roman ruined cities of Dougga, Thurburbo Majus, Uthina and Sbeitla, with fine examples of antique architecture.
- El Djem, containing the most impressive and well-preserved Roman amphitheatre after the Colosseum.
- Kerkouane, the world's best-preserved example of a Phoenicio-Punic city.
- Tunisia's unmatched Roman mosaics in the Bardo, El Djem and Sousse museums.
- The Islamic world's most significant architecture from all periods and dynasties since the 7th century, including the very early Kairouan mosque and the Sousse mosque, reputed to have the earliest extant minaret. The medinas of both Kairouan and Sousse are both UNESCO World-heritage sites.
- Port of Bizerte, located on the north coast; featuring a picturesque old harbour, medina and kasbah.
- Fortified Berber desert and mountain villages, with troglodyte houses and distinctive granaries, set in narrow mountain valleys and palm oases on the edge of the Sahara.
- Dinosaur footprints, fossils, cave paintings and a dig site for fossilised dinosaur bones - by special arrangement with the Association des Amis de la Mémoire de la Terre de Tataouine.
- The Sahara's edge, where we witness the sun setting over the dunes, an inimitable experience.
- Begin with 4 nights based in the photogenic, Sidi Bou Said, a clifftop village overlooking the Mediterranean, with whitewashed alleyways, wrought-iron window frames and colourful blue doors.
- Enjoy two nights at the 5-star [Anantara Tozeur Resort](#), a new luxury desert resort surrounded by palm oasis.

Overnight Sidi Bou Said (4 nights) • Kairouan (2 nights) • Tataouine (2 nights) • Ksar Ghilane (1 night) • Tozeur (2 nights) • Kairouan (2 nights) • Téboursook (1 night) • Hammamet (3 nights)

Overview

This tour, led by Tony O'Connor, will explore Tunisia's fascinating layered history by visiting Berber oasis villages with distinctive troglodyte houses, Roman cities with fine imperial monuments like el Djem's huge amphitheatre, museums with magnificent antique mosaics, and beautiful Islamic buildings constructed over 1500 years. Just one of these is Kairouan's magnificent early mosque, which played a key role in the Islamisation of North Africa. We also chart the development of Muslim Tunis on the ruins of its ancient predecessors, Phoenician and Roman Carthage; the city's bustling *souq* owes much to Iberian émigrés who developed Tunisia's wool trade after their expulsion from Spain. This city is also graced with fine mosques, tombs and madrasas in the style of North Africa's Ottoman conquerors, the Turks. You will also encounter the fascinating ribat of Sousse, built to defend Islamic Ifriqiyya from European incursions, and the extraordinary port city of Mahdia, constructed to launch the Shi'a Fatimids' 10th century invasion of Egypt. Travelling south from the Mediterranean littoral, we leave behind the great northern wheat fields which made this Rome's 'bread bin', to the edge of the Sahara. Here we encounter Roman frontier fortresses designed to control the movements of the desert peoples, where fascinating Berber villages have mud brick granaries, designed to protect the precious harvest from Arab raiders. Here, on the edge of the Sahara, you will explore remote oases approached by four-wheel drive and by camel, and watch the crimson sunrise over the desert.

Historical Overview

Tunisia lies between the great Sahara and the southern coast of the Sicilian channel. The desert emerged around 2,000 BC when the region, once temperate, became hotter and drier. Continuous human habitation, however, has been documented in Tunisia's southern regions since at least 10,000 BC. The indigenous African tribes of the Sahara and the Mediterranean littoral - and the mountains that separate them - were called many names by different invaders. The desert peoples have variously been known as Garamantes, Gaetules and Louata. Those further to the North were known by the Greeks as Libyans, by the Romans variously as Africans, Numidians and Moors, and by the Arabs as Berbers; indigenes, to the contrary, would have known themselves by their tribal names, or often called themselves names like Imazighen - 'free men' - to distinguish themselves from city dwellers in the thrall of governments. These oasis dwellers and desert wanderers are the forebears of what foreigners now call Berbers and the desert Tuareg, who have interacted over millennia with the various hegemonies that have threatened their territories and their freedom.

To the north, the narrow Sicilian Channel, meanwhile, connects the western and eastern basins of the Mediterranean, and Tunisia therefore lies at the heart of the most travelled sea in history. Whilst various dynasties have both traded with and fought the indigenous peoples of the interior, the proximity of Europe and Africa at this point, and the necessity for all trans-Mediterranean trade to pass through the constricted channel, have consistently shaped Tunisia's history. Greeks, Phoenicians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Habsburgs and Ottomans have all struggled to assert control over the African shores of the Sicilian channel. Many of these different civilisations and empires have left their mark upon the rich and diverse architectural heritage of Tunisia. Each is unique, nonetheless all are characterised by eclecticism and an ability to synthesise the diverse cultural influences they have experienced. At the same time, their extensive and imposing coastal fortifications bear witness to the violence of the historic struggle for control of the Sicilian channel.

Little is known of the prehistoric history of Tunisia. By 1000 BC the Phoenicians had begun to draw the region into their trading network that extended from the Levant to Spain and beyond. Carthage became the most famous Phoenician city in the western Mediterranean, and after the destruction of the Phoenician Levantine homeland, the centre of the Punic seaborne trade empire (Thalassocracy). The Romans challenged the Phoenicians for supremacy in the Mediterranean during the Punic Wars (264-146 BC). Carthage finally capitulated in 146 BC thus ending the third Punic War, inaugurating the creation of Roman Africa. What is now Tunisia thereafter supplied the empire with wheat and animals; the mosaics of rich town houses in Tunisia show scenes of the hunt, African animals, and public games. Garish yellow and pink Tunisian Chemtou marble became the most sought after marble in Rome. Influence travelled in both directions. Whilst Africa became the bread bin of the Empire, the Romans introduced the olive to North Africa. Some scholars even believe that it was the Romans who brought the Middle Eastern Camel to the westerly parts of North Africa. The wealth experienced by the region under the Romans manifested itself in a number of magnificent North African cities, like Dougga, Sbeitla and El Djem, whose monuments stand in fine condition today, partly because many remained empty after antiquity and therefore were never built over by later city layers.

In the 5th century the Vandals swept through North Africa from Spain, and took up residence in the rich Roman province of Numidia, modern Tunisia. The Vandals for a time interrupted trade and communication in the southern Mediterranean. With the 6th century Byzantine reconquest of North Africa, however, the region was brought once more into a Mediterranean empire, this time an eastern Christian empire whose political control was weak but whose cultural influence was great. Africa, which had produced one of Early Christianity's greatest thinkers, St Augustine, continued to influence European Christianity at this time. Although Byzantine control was limited to the coasts of the Western Mediterranean, the Byzantine mosaics that we shall see in Tunisia offer lasting testimony to Byzantine African culture

After a century, Byzantium lost control of North Africa to the newly converted Arabian followers of the Prophet who at first fought pitched battles with, but later gradually Islamised, North Africa's Berber tribes. In the early 9th century Arabo-Berber Aghlabid dynasty's (800 – 909) naval forces captured Malta and Sicily and for two centuries the North African Muslims remained masters of the Mediterranean and a thriving trading empire linking Tunis to Islamic Spain, Sicily and the ports of Egypt and the Levant. At the same time, trans-Saharan trade expanded, connecting Ifriqiyya, the Arab name for Tunisia, to a huge Islamic Afro-Asian trading network.

Despite thriving trade links, Tunisia was soon to come into religio-political conflict with the rest of the Arab world when the Shi'a Fatimid Dynasty seized power (909-973). The Fatimids built the port of Mahdia on Tunisia's east coast from which their navy conquered Egypt, leaving Tunisia to the Zirid Dynasty (973-1160). This momentous invasion led to the (Fatimid) founding of the modern city of Cairo, and war with the Sunni Seljuk Turks of Iran and Syria.

In the 11th century Europe began to reassert her presence in the Mediterranean, starting with the capture of Sicily from the Muslims. The Normans who conquered southern Italy and Sicily between the 1060s and 1090s moved into Ifriqiyya. The Berber Almohads (Ar. al-Muwahhidun) from Morocco (1160-1227), however, soon drove them out, but they remained masters of Sicily and Malta, whose Arabic-speaking and Muslim populations continued to trade with Muslim Tunisia.

The Norman capture of Sicily was, however, a symptom of the southward and eastward movement of Europeans, which produced the Crusades (the Sunni Seljuks and Shi'a Fatimids were so preoccupied fighting each other that they did not see the Crusaders coming), the Spanish 'Reconquista', and the gradual usurpation of Mediterranean trade by Barcelona, Marseille and the Italian city states. In coastal cities like Sousse and Monastir, we shall encounter *ribats*, religio-military fortresses built to defend Tunisia's shores against Christian incursions. The Hafsid State now emerged in this region (1227-1574).

From the time of the Fatimids to the rise of the Hafsids Tunis, the Muslim city that had replaced the older Phoenician, Roman and Byzantine metropoli, grew to be the great capital of Ifriqiyya and the largest and most prosperous city in North Africa, a prosperity largely based, despite constant political and military contest with the Europeans, on her Mediterranean trade connections. The Sicilian Channel nevertheless henceforth became divided into a Christian north and a Muslim south, and its historic unity ruptured, although coastal peoples to the north and south maintained contact through smuggling, corsairing and piracy.

In the 16th century the two great Mediterranean powers, the Habsburgs and the Ottomans, both tried to reverse this situation and secure both sides of the Sicilian channel for themselves. The Habsburgs initially held the upper hand: Charles V, who had inherited Sicily and Malta along with Spain, captured Tunis in 1535. In the same year he persuaded the Knights of St. John, expelled by the Ottomans from Rhodes in 1522, to garrison Tripoli in what is now Libya, in return for possession of Malta. The Ottoman vanguard of Turkish corsairs, however, soon expelled the Knights from Tripoli and then repulsed a Habsburg attack on the Tunisian island of Jerba, and besieged Malta (1565). The siege of Malta failed and in 1571 the Habsburgs, assisted by Venice, defeated the Ottomans at the naval Battle of Lepanto. The Ottomans nevertheless rebuilt their fleet and in 1574 defeated and expelled the Habsburgs from Tunis. After a century of fighting Habsburgs and Ottomans finally accepted that the north of the channel would remain Christian and the south Muslim. The Ottoman rulers of Tunis, the beys, were surrounded by a coterie of renegades, Christian converts to Islam, who added their touch to the great Turco-Tunisian palace of the era, the Bardo, and also to many of Tunis' palatial residences.

Legitimate trade and corsairing tied Tunis to Sicily and the Italian mainland until the late 19th century, and

numerous Sicilians and Maltese settled on the Tunisian coast as exporters of olive oil to Europe. When Sicily became part of a unified Italian state in 1860, the strength of her connection with Tunisia made the latter the first target of Italian colonialism. When Tunisia became a French protectorate in 1883, the vast majority of non-Tunisian nationals in the country were Sicilians and Maltese. Following independence Tunisia has self-consciously asserted its own identity, rediscovering its Arab and Berber heritage.

Leaders



Tony O'Connor

Archaeologist, museum professional and highly experienced tour lecturer. Tony leads tours throughout the Middle East, Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa including programs to Lebanon, Sicily, Algeria, Tunisia & Croatia.

Tony O'Connor, an archaeologist, museum professional and highly experienced tour lecturer, has led tours throughout the Middle East, Italy and North Africa, in particular, Algeria and Tunisia. With an honours degree in Ancient History and Archaeology (Manchester), he has worked extensively as a field archaeologist on major North African sites, including the city of Ptolomais in Libya and many Roman villas, small towns and military sites. His knowledge of the region is both profound and extensive, aided in part by the fact that he has made landscape surveys in Libya sponsored by UNESCO.

Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London and past committee member of the Society of Libyan Studies, Tony is a polymath, combining archaeological research with important roles in museums. He is a past committee member of the Society of Museum Archaeologists, Chairman of Museums of East Anglia, Chairman of the West Essex Archaeological Group and a trustee of Museums Essex. He has been Deputy Keeper at the Verulamium Museum, St Albans, Keeper of Antiquities at the Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery, and Museum Heritage and Culture Manager, Epping Forest District Museum.

Tony's passion, however, is for designing, running and teaching on cultural tours. Along with his Algerian, Tunisian and Lebanese tours, his extraordinary experience in this field includes developing and leading tours to Syria, Northern Egypt and the Western Desert, Jordan, Libya, Calabria, Pompeii and the Bay of Naples, Northern Italy and Provence. ASA welcomes such a passionate and experienced tour leader and lecturer to our team. In 2021 Tony was named a finalist in the 'Best Specialist Guide' category at the 2021 Wanderlust World Guide Awards!

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Itinerary

The detailed itinerary provides an outline of the proposed daily program. Participants should note that the daily activities described in this itinerary may be rotated and/or modified in order to accommodate changes in opening hours, road conditions, flight schedules etc. Participants will receive a final itinerary together with their tour documents. Meals included in the tour price are indicated in the detailed itinerary where: B =breakfast, L=light lunch and D=dinner. Bottled water will also be provided daily during site excursions.

Sidi Bou Said - 4 nights

Day 1: Tuesday 28 October, Arrive Tunis – Sidi Bou Said

- Tour commences at 2.00pm in the foyer of Dar Said
- Welcome Meeting
- Light Dinner at the historic [Dar Zarrouk](#)

Meeting Point: The tour commences at 2.00pm in the foyer of [Dar Said](#) located in Sidi Bou Said, a picturesque coastal village located about 20kms from the capital, Tunis. Please meet your tour leader, Tony O'Connor, and fellow travellers for a short welcome meeting.

We begin our program with a welcome meeting followed by a light dinner at the historic Dar Zarrouk restaurant overlooking the Mediterranean. (Overnight Sidi Bou Said) D

Day 2: Wednesday 29 October, Sidi Bou Said – Carthage – Sidi Bou Said

- Carthage: Byrsa Hill, harbour, trophet & amphitheatre (UNESCO World-Heritage Site)
- Bardo Museum
- Welcome Dinner at the gastronomic restaurant, [Au Bon Vieux Temps](#)

This morning we visit the site of ancient Carthage located on the north side of Lac Tunis. We first stop at the

Byrsa Hill, the site of the earliest Phoenician settlement in the area, where we may view the old Phoenician harbour, the Gulf of Tunis and the modern city located on the south side of the lake. We will also visit the Tophet, a sanctuary where Carthaginian child sacrifice may have taken place.

Next, we visit the Roman city of Carthage. The Romans completely destroyed the Punic city of Carthage in 149 BC, but built a Roman city on the site, which by the 1st century AD had become the second largest city of the western half of the Roman Empire. Its development was driven in part by Tunisia's crucial importance as a granary for the Empire. Carthage became an important centre of Christianity, and a number of early Church Councils occurred here; in the 4th and 5th centuries the Church was riven by controversy with the Donatists, who would not tolerate those who had compromised with the Empire during the period of persecution of Christians. Carthage was taken by the Vandals in the 5th century, but became an Exarchate of the Byzantine Empire in the 6th century. It fell to the Arabs in the late 7th century. Formidable ruins of the Roman city remain, despite its changing fortunes in late antiquity. We shall explore such monuments as the ruins of the Roman amphitheatre and the thermal Antonine Baths, which were the largest baths in the Empire.

Following lunch at a local restaurant we visit one of the country's great treasures, the Bardo Museum. The Bardo Museum, a medieval palace rebuilt by the Muradid and then Husaynid beys between the 17th and 19th centuries, houses many of the mosaics from Tunisia's most famous Roman sites. The Bardo also contains a small Islamic section, but its most interesting feature is the eclectic combination of Islamic and Italianate elements, evident in the designs on the painted coffered wood ceilings; the juxtaposition of European-style halls and Arab-Islamic domed chambers; and the incongruous addition of chandeliers, a common feature in 18th and 19th century Turco-Tunisian decor.

This evening we enjoy a welcome dinner at the gastronomic restaurant, Au Bon Vieux Temps, in Sidi Bou Said. (Overnight Sidi Bou Said) BLD

Day 3: Thursday 30 October, Sidi Bou Said – Bizerte – Sidi Bou Said

- Dar Ennejma Ezzahra: The Centre for Arab and Mediterranean Music (CAMM)
- Bizerte: Old Harbour, Medina & Kasbah

The village of Sidi Bou Said grew up around the tomb and *zaouia* of the Sufi teacher Abu Said el Baji who established his order here in the early 13th century. When members of the Husainid dynasty moved here in the 18th century, they brought with them many leading musicians and writers. This laid the foundations for Sidi Bou Said's reputation as an artists' village. Today this picturesque village features white-washed buildings with wrought-iron window dressings and sky-blue wooden doors. One of the grandest of these houses, which we visit, is the Dar Ennejma Ezzahra. Beautifully restored, the palace was once home to French painter and musicologist Baron Rodolphe d'Erlanger, who produced a multi-volume work on the history of Arab music. Today it hosts the Centre of Arab and Mediterranean Music. Beside the gardens and architecture, a mixture of 'pure' Tunisian and Romantic Orientalism, the main attraction is its collection of fine musical instruments.

Next, we drive north from Sidi Bou Said to visit the naval port of Bizerte, which was important between the 16th and 18th centuries because it dominated naval traffic through the Sicilian Channel. Bizerte guards one of the great natural harbours of the Mediterranean, the huge Lac de Bizerte. There is also a small and heavily defended port which dates in main from the 16th century. After the expulsion of the Muslims from Spain Bizerte became a major corsair base. Bizerte's *medina*, which we shall visit, wraps around the picturesque old harbour area. Within its labyrinth of narrow alleyways and covered *souqs* are the workshops of metalworkers and carpenters, and the stores of butchers and grocers. Just north of the old harbour lies

the *kasbah*, whose walls offer fine views. Nearby is the 17th-century Rebaa Mosque with a distinctive octagonal minaret. On the south side of the harbour is the golden-stoned fort of Sidi el Hani. Like the kasbah, it is an Ottoman construction and dates from the 17th century. (Overnight Sidi Bou Said) BL

Day 4: Friday 31 October, Sidi Bou Said – Thurburbo Majus – Zaghouan – Oudhna – Sidi Bou Said

- Roman city of Thurburbo Majus
- Bedouin lunch at the ecological farm, Dar Zaghouan
- Zaghouan-Carthage Aqueduct
- Roman city of Uthina, Oudhna

This morning we head southwest to Thurburbo Majus, originally a Berber settlement ruled by the Phoenicians, located on the major road that linked ancient Carthage to the Sahara desert. Augustus transformed it into a Roman *colonia* for military veterans (27 BC); it eventually took the name *Colonia Julia Aurelia Commoda*. Most of the town was built around 150 – 200 AD and restored in the 4th century after a 3rd century crisis. It received a *Capitolium* in 168 AD. The town produced grain, olives, and fruit. Under Hadrian it became a *municipium* and Commodus made it a *colonia*. The site today is extensive. Of particular note is the tetrastyle temple that was adorned with statues of Apollo, Venus, Silvanus, Bacchus, the Dioscuri and a satyr. We shall visit its forum, amphitheatre, temples, baths and some houses. A bedouin lunch will be provided at the nearby ecological farm, Dar Zaghouan.

From Thurburbo Majus we return north, passing the Roman aqueduct which carried fresh water from the nearby mountains, the Jabal Zaghouan, to Carthage. Stretching for some 132 kms, this is one of the longest aqueducts of the Roman Empire. Hannibal's Carthage lost a hard-fought, bitter war to the Roman Republic early in the 2nd century BC that ended with the city being completely destroyed. It was not long, however, before Rome realised the advantages of re-establishing Carthage as a Roman city and upon doing so, its population swelled to an estimated 500,000. Building the Zaghouan-Carthage aqueduct was essential to provide the colonists with water for domestic and agricultural use.

Located on the cultivated slopes of Mt Mekrima are the ruins of the ancient city of Uthina, one of the Roman Empire's oldest cities in Africa. A famous 2nd-century mosaic, now in the Bardo Museum in Tunis, shows a typical private domain in the valley of the Miliana at Uthina with wheatfields, which were the source of its wealth, olive trees, pastures for sheep, goat, cattle and horses, and scrub supporting partridge and wild boar. The city had one of North Africa's largest Roman amphitheatres which could hold over 10,000 spectators; in its basement we may view the underground vaulted cells where criminals and wild animals were held. At the top of the hill stands the grand *capitolium*. Below are the enormous arched cisterns; large public and small private baths including the Fishing Angels Baths with mosaics depicting cherubs casting poles and nets into a fish-laden stream, and a sumptuous 3-room villa with mosaics illustrating the legend of wine invention and hunting scenes. (Overnight Sidi Bou Said) BL

Kairouan - 2 nights

Day 5: Saturday 1 November, Sidi Bou Said – Sousse – Kairouan

- Medina of Sousse: UNESCO World-Heritage Site
- Dar Essid House Museum
- Ribat
- Great Mosque of Sousse
- Fatimid Qubba (Kalaout el-Koubba)
- Archaeological Museum

This morning we depart Sidi Bou Said and follow the coast south to Sousse, an old Islamic port on the Tunisian coast that had formerly been the second most important Roman city in what is now Tunisia, after Carthage.

On arrival we take a walk through Sousse's UNESCO World-Heritage listed medina. We begin with a visit to a house museum, the Dar Essid. The small palace will give you a vivid view of life in Tunisia in the 19th century.

As we thread our way through the streets of the old medina we will pass several fascinating mosque façades from the Fatimid, Almohad and Ottoman periods, including a Fatimid *qubba* (Kalaout el-Koubba), or dome chamber. Its façade is a rare example of North African Fatimid decoration, and the dome itself, decorated with a raised zig-zag pattern, is the only dome of its type outside Cairo, which was captured by the Fatimids in 969.

Within the medina lies Sousse's great mosque and *ribat* that, although now a little way inland, originally overlooked its harbour. The great mosque was built in 851 and was based upon the Sidi Oqba Mosque at Kairouan. Its walls have battlements and its defensive towers, to which domes were later added, originally defended the harbour. The nearby *ribat* is a simple but powerful building. A soaring main entrance leads into a central courtyard surrounded by two storeys of cells. On the first floor a prayer hall stretches the length of the building. A watchtower rises from the ramparts. A *ribat* housed warriors of the faith, and the role of Sousse's *ribat* was to defend the port from (Christian) European incursions.

Little of the Roman city remains, except for an excellent collection of mosaics in its museum. Following lunch at a local restaurant, we visit the 11th-century *qasba*, or citadel, built around an 8th-century watchtower, and now an archaeological museum containing mosaics from the Sousse region. After exploring the *qasba* and its mosaic collection we continue inland to Kairouan located in the heart of the central Tunisian plain. (Overnight Kairouan) BLD

Day 6: Sunday 2 November, Kairouan

- Kairouan: UNESCO World-Heritage Site
- Mosque of 'Uqba ibn Nafi'
- Zaouia of Abu Zamaa al-Balawi (Tomb of Sidi Sahab – Mosque of the Barber)
- Aghlabid Basins
- Medina: Bir Barouta, Zaouia of Sidi Ghariani & Mosque of the Three Doors (exterior only), Dar Hassine Allani

This morning we commence our tour of Kairouan, the first great city of Islamic North Africa. It is believed to have been founded in the 7th century by Uqba bin Nafi, the semi-mythical conqueror of the west. From the 7th to 13th century, Kairouan was the capital of Ifriqiyya, although it temporarily lost this status to Tunis and Mahdia. Its antiquity and its role in the conquest of North Africa for Islam made Kairouan a sacred city, with special connections to Mecca. A well in the city, the Bir Barruta, is said to flow with the same water as the Zamzam well in Mecca. One of Kairouan's most loved shrines, moreover, is the mausoleum of Sidi al-Balawi, one of Prophet Muhammad's companions. Kairouan is today a sleepy provincial town, but it is still deeply religious and has an air of quiet and dignified piety.

Our program commences with a visit to the great mosque of 'Uqba ibn Nafi', the oldest mosque in North Africa and the model for the Zaytuna in Tunis and slightly later mosques such as the Qarawiyyin in Fes and the Great Mosque of Córdoba. The mosque consists of a huge hypostyle prayer hall and courtyard surrounded by an arcade. Roughly at the centre of the wall opposite the prayer hall stands the minaret, a

unique composition of three square storeys, each one smaller than the last. This imposing, fortress-like crenellated structure reflects the fact that the threat of attack by the local Berber population was ever present. Like so many other buildings we will see, the great mosque of Kairouan is an amalgam of different materials and styles. The columns are Roman and Latin inscriptions in the walls indicate that masonry was also gathered from antique sites. At the same time the minaret evokes the ziggurats of ancient Mesopotamia, already conquered by Muslim armies.

To the west of the Great Mosque, outside the walls of the old city, stands the tomb of Abu Zamaa al-Balawi. Considered one of the most venerated places in Kairouan, it contains the remains of one of the Prophet's companions (or *sahab*), Abu Zamaa al-Balawi, who came to Ifriqiya in 654 AD. The tomb, called a *zaouia* or *zawiya*, is sometimes referred to as the Mosque of the Barber because Abu Zamaa Al Balawi was believed to always carry three hairs from the beard of the Prophet Muhammad. While the original mausoleum dates from the 7th century AD, most of what stands today was added at the end of the 17th century. The complex includes the mausoleum, a madrasa and a guesthouse linked by several consecutive courtyards and passages, all decorated with tile work of blue, green and yellow floral panels.

We also visit the Aghlabid Basins, located to the north of the *qasba*. Two pools survive of a number that stored water for the palace of the Aghlabid dynasty, which occupied the site of the nearby cemetery. At the centre of one of these is the base of a pavilion in which, in keeping with an Islamic tradition of palace arrangement (seen, for example, in the Topkapi Palace, Istanbul) the ruler would relax.

In the afternoon we continue our walk through the the medina. We visit the Bir Barruta, where a camel still works the water-wheel which raises the sacred water and nearby, the *zaouia* of Sidi Ghariani, a 14th century shrine renovated by the Turks. The shrine complex is decorated with the tile panels beloved of the Turks, but its most noteworthy feature is the coffered and gilded wood ceiling of the tomb chamber. As we pass through the narrow streets of the old town we will also see the façade of the Mosque of the Three Doors, with its 9th century stone inscriptions and floral decoration. We also visit the late 18th-century Dar Hassine Allani whose rooftop provides magnificent views over the medina. (Overnight Kairouan) BLD

Tataouine - 2 nights

Day 7: Monday 3 November, Kairouan – Matmata – Tataouine

- Matmata Troglodyte Village
- Berber village of Toujane (time-permitting)

We depart early this morning, and drive 290km south, past the Gulf of Gabes, to Matmata, famous for its troglodyte houses. Those who remember the early scenes of the first Star Wars film will remember the troglodyte family home of the young Luke Skywalker; these early scenes were filmed in Matmata. Centuries ago the inhabitants of this desert region, like those of many extremely hot places from Iran to Southern Spain, decided to build their houses underground. Matmata's are some of the most sophisticated of this type. They consist of a deep, quarried courtyard approached from ground level by a tunnel. Off the courtyard were dug living rooms. We shall see a number of these houses, of which Matmata boast some forty.

From Matmata our journey continues a further 130km south to the city of Tataouine. The underground 'cave dwellings' of the native Berber population were designed for coolness and protection. En route we make a brief stop to view the Berber mountain village of Toujane. (Overnight Tataouine) BLD

Day 8: Tuesday 4 November, Tataouine: Ksour & Dinosaur fossils

- 4WD "Memory of the Earth Tour" arranged by the Association des Amis de la Mémoire de la Terre de Tataouine
- Musée Memoire de la Terre (Memory of the Earth Museum)
- Ksar Mrabtine: *ksar*, fossils and dinosaur prints
- Ksar El Ferch
- Ghomrassen: Neolithic cave paintings and dig site with fossilised dinosaur bones
- Beni Ghedir Valley: dinosaur prints and fossils

Tataouine is located on a rocky outcrop which dates from the Jurassic period (144-208 million years ago) when the area was submerged. Fossils from this area are primarily of sea animals. However, in the Dahar Mountain Range to the west of Tataouine, lies the Chenini geological formation made of rocks dating from the Cretaceous period (68-144 million years ago). During the Early Cretaceous period the Chenini Formation was a marsh-like habitat with swamps and plenty of water. Remains of dinosaurs and other vertebrates (sharks, bony fish, coelacanths, turtles, crocodilians, pterosaurs) have been discovered here. The most famous dinosaur discoveries include the remains of the carnivorous Spinosaurus. Mediterranean dinosaur remains, particularly northern African specimens, are important for understanding some of the most extreme Cretaceous ecosystems.

Today we take a 'Memory of the Earth' tour which has kindly been arranged with the assistance of the Director of the Association des Amis de la Mémoire de la Terre de Tataouine. We begin with a visit to the small, Memory of the Earth Museum, which displays an interesting range of meteorites, fossils and dinosaur models. From the museum we continue to Ksar Mrabtine to view the *ksar* with its distinctive *ghorfas*, as well as fossils and dinosaur prints.

Tatouine lies at the centre of some of the most spectacular *ksour* (fortified Berber villages), in North Africa. The *ksour* feature multi-story *ghorfas*, (long, barrel- vaulted rooms used for the storage of grain). Forced into the hills by invaders in the 11th century, semi-nomadic Berber tribes carved dwellings and storage facilities into the soft rock, placing their grain at the highest point in the village to protect the community's food supply from ongoing raids. Positioned on a rocky promontory, the Ksar Mrabtine features the mausoleum of Sidi Abdallah Dhouib, a fortress and a mosque. Estimated to be around 700-800 years old, with some sections dating back to approximately 1800, the *ksar* comprises 180 *ghorfas*, mostly spanning three to four floors. Noteworthy architectural elements include external staircases for accessing different levels and wooden hooks used for hoisting goods into the *ghorfas*. Nearby Ksar El Ferch, which we also visit, has fine examples of multi-storeyed *ghorfas*.

In the afternoon we visit Ghomrassen to view some Neolithic cave paintings and a dig site containing fossilised dinosaur bones. We also view dinosaur prints and fossils in the neighbouring valley of Beni Ghedir. Vertebrate tracksites from the Middle Jurassic and Upper Cretaceous in this area include approximately 130 tridactyl footprints, and represent the oldest evidence of dinosaur fauna in Tunisia. (Overnight Tataouine) BLD

Ksar Ghilane - 1 night

Day 9: Wednesday 5 November, Tataouine – Chenini – Ksar Ghilane

- Ksar Ouled Soltane
- Berber village of Chenini
- 4x4 excursion to Tisivar Roman Fort
- Optional Camel Ride at Sunset

This morning we journey 20kms south of Tataouine to visit Ksar Ouled Soltane. Originally built in the 15th century, this mud-brick *ksar* is spread over two courtyards connected by a passage made of palm wood. The *ghorfas*, which are four stories high, were used to store grain on the lower levels and olives on the upper levels. Ksar Ouled Soltane was one of the film locations for the Mos Espa's Slave Quarters in Star Wars Episode I: *The Phantom Menace*.

Next, we visit the Berber village of Chenini, whose historic 12th-century core sits on a ridge below which houses spread down the terraced hillsides. Following lunch in Chenini we continue our journey to Ksar Ghilane, a green oasis located on the eastern limit of the Grand Erg Oriental, and one of the gateways to the Tunisian Sahara. On arrival there will be an excursion by 4x4 drive to the remains of Tisivar Roman Fortress, one of the fortifications built by the Romans to control the movements of the local tribes. Our major objective is not, however, to visit the fortress but to experience the magnificent sunset over the Sahara, an inimitable, very memorable visual experience.

We end the day with an optional short camel ride to watch the sunset over the desert. (Overnight Ksar Ghilane) BLD

Tozeur - 2 nights

Day 10: Thursday 6 November, Ksar Ghilane – Douz – Tozeur

- Thursday Market at Douz
- Medina of Tozeur (Ouled El Hadeff)

We depart Ksar Ghilane early this morning and head northwest to the oasis town of Douz on the edge of the Sahara proper. One reason for visiting Douz is to explore its huge Thursday animal market, which rivals the famous animal market in Kashgar in Central Asia. You will see locals tending, buying and selling sheep, goats, donkeys, and purveying herbs, spices and other foodstuffs. Weekly markets provide much more than an opportunity to buy and sell animals. They enable country people from surrounding districts the opportunity to meet friends, visit the barber or the doctor, and even perhaps enlist the services of a letter writer.

The people of Douz and its hinterland are all from the Nefzaoua tribe and believe themselves to be descended from two holy men, Ahmed el-Gouth and Amar Mahjoub. Holy men and their shrines (*Marabouts*) are extremely important in North Africa, for claiming descent from them is the foundation of tribal identity and ensures tribal cohesion. Many members of a tribe may not be genetically descended from such figures, but rather have adhered to them and their cult as a result of clientage, which the famous North African 15th-century thinker Ibn Khaldun described as crucial to building large tribes and tribal confederations. The *marabouts* of both holy men are centres of contemporary religious life in Douz.

After thoroughly exploring Douz and enjoying lunch at a local restaurant, we cross the Chott el Jerid, the largest salt pan of the Sahara, and continue to the town of Tozeur, a gateway to the Grand Sud. On arrival we take a walking tour of Tozeur's medina, known as Ouled El Hadeff. Its narrow alleyways are lined with traditional mud brick desert houses whose façades are decorated with geometric brick designs similar to motifs found on many Berber carpets. (Overnight Tozeur) BL

Day 11: Friday 7 November, Tozeur

- Morning optional 3-hour morning 4WD excursion to the oases towns of Chebika & Tamerza
- Lunch at Eden Palms Tresors de l'Oasis

- Afternoon at leisure

This morning there will be an optional excursion by 4WD to the mountainous oases of Chebika and Tamerza. Chebika lies in the foothills of the craggy Djebel el Negueb range, an off-shoot of the Atlas Mountains. It is surrounded by *palmeraie*, natural cascades and agricultural fields. Many scenes for the film *The English Patient* were shot in the Chebika oasis landscape. Tamerza, the largest mountain oasis in Tunisia, is located north of the salt lakes. It has a pleasant canyon and an abandoned old village. In antiquity both Chebika and Tamerza were Roman outposts and later became mountain refuges for the Berbers. Note: this option may be pre-booked 1 day prior and the estimated cost is €25 per person.

Midday we rejoin for lunch at Eden Palms located inside the Tozeur oases. Here we dine in tents and enjoy lamb cooked in clay pots "Gargoulette", served with rice and steamed vegetables.

This afternoon is at leisure for you to enjoy the facilities of the luxury [5-star Anantara Resort](#) which includes an outdoor swimming pool and extensive gardens. (Overnight Tozeur) BL

Kairouan - 2 nights

Day 12: Saturday 8 November, Tozeur –Bir Umm al Ali – Gafsa – Kairouan

- Roman wall of Bir Umm al Ali
- Gafsa Archaeological Museum: Mosaic of the Olympic Games from Batten Zamour

This morning we depart Tozeur and travel north to Kairouan, crossing the Cherb mountain range which provides a barrier between the fertile north of Tunisia and the desert south. In Roman times the range also separated the territory of the *Capsitani* and *Nybgenii*. To control movement between north and south, the Romans built walls, known as *Clausurae* (short cut-off walls erected in order to block a narrow pass or gorge between mountains, hills and wadis). One of the best examples may be viewed at Bir Oum Ali which still retains remarkably preserved sections of the wall to the north and south of the road.

After visiting these impressive walls we continue north to Kairouan via Gafsa, a former Roman frontier town and headquarters of a garrison. Within the old town, opposite ancient Roman pools, lies the Archaeological Museum. A highlight of the collection is a Capsian figurine dating back to the Neolithic Age (8000 BC) and a superb 4th-century AD mosaic of athletic games from Batten Zamour near Gafsa, found in 1987. (Overnight Kairouan) BLD

Day 13: Sunday 9 November, Kairouan – El Djem – Mahdia – Kairouan

- Amphitheatre of El Djem: UNESCO World-Heritage Site
- El Djem Mosaic Museum
- Skifa al-Kahla, Mahdia
- Fatimid Great Mosque, Mahdia

We depart early this morning, and journey to El Djem, site of the most impressive, well-preserved Roman amphitheatre after the Colosseum. The amphitheatre, capable of seating 35,000 citizens, was built in the 3rd century AD, when the city, named Thysdus, rivalled Hadrumetum (Sousse) in importance; at this time it was a major exporter of olive oil. We shall explore the amphitheatre before visiting El Djem's excellent museum that has a mosaic collection to rival those of Sousse and Tunis. Of particular importance is a mosaic floor depicting gladiators from the amphitheatre; these men obviously enjoyed celebrity status!

Mahdia, located to the south of Monastir, was the port from which the of the Shi'a Fatimids set out to conquer Egypt. It began as a royal complex built on a small peninsula to house the Fatimid leaders, their navy and their stores. The royal complex could only be entered through the Skifa al-Kahla, the 'Black Passage', a huge gateway built in the walls sealing the peninsula off on the landward side. Apart from the Skifa al-Kahla, little remains today of Fatimid Mahdia. The old town is now dominated by the Burj al-Kabir, the Great Tower, built by the Spanish when they held the town for a short time; out was restored by the Turks. A typical square 17th-century Ottoman fortress, the *burj* has one unusual feature, high on its approach wall a tiger carved in relief stares balefully at all comers, its provenance unknown. Below lies the ruined Fatimid harbour, a deep blue niche enclosed by fragments of the Fatimid ramparts, where colourful fishing boats now float in place of the Fatimid navy. At the end of the day we will return to Kairouan. (Overnight Kairouan) BLD

Téboursouk - 1 night

Day 14: Monday 10 November, Kairouan – Bulla Reggia – Téboursoyk

- Roman city of Bulla Reggia

Today we drive across huge stretches of land under cereal cultivation which show why Africa was the bread basket of Rome. In this region we visit one of Tunisia's major Roman sites. Bulla Regia was the capital of one of the most famous Berber rulers in North Africa, Massinissa, king of the Numidians. Massinissa allied with the Romans against the Phoenicians but was subsequently removed by his erstwhile allies who feared his power. This corner of Tunisia was the original centre of Massinissa's kingdom, and a shrine to him is located at the summit of a mountain overlooking nearby Chemtou. Like many other Tunisian-Roman sites, Bulla Regia is an amalgam of Berber, Punic and Roman elements. Its most noteworthy feature is its domestic architecture: unique two-story houses with one floor above ground and one floor below ground. The upper floor was used primarily in winter whilst the cooler subterranean lower floor was used in summer. The underground chambers were provided with light and ventilation through a central courtyard and shafts at the corners of the house. Several houses of this type have been excavated and their lower floors, many with mosaics still in place, give us an evocative glimpse of Roman domestic life in Africa.

After Bulla Regia we continue to the town of Téboursoyk located at the foot of the Téboursoyk Mountains and overling olive groves in the valley of Wadi Khalled. (Overnight Téboursoyk) BLD

Hammamet - 3 nights

Day 15: Tuesday 11 November, Téboursoyk – Dougga – Testour – Hammamet

- Dougga: UNESCO World-Heritage Site
- Great Mosque of Testour (exterior only)

This morning we visit the UNESCO World-Heritage listed site of Dougga, considered the most spectacular Roman site in Tunisia. Dougga is located on a steep hillside overlooking the fertile fields of the Tell and its temples still rise up, dominating the surrounding land. Dougga was a Lybico-Punic city before its incorporation into the Roman Empire and therefore has a rambling street plan which follows the contours of the hillside rather than the typical gridded Roman schema. The architecture of Dougga, like its street plan, has a character all of its own: the temple of Juno Caelestis, the Romanised version of the Punic goddess Tanit, is ringed by an unusual semi-circular colonnade; a chart of the twelve winds is carved upon the flagstones of the forum floor; and down the hillside stands a Lybico-Punic funerary tower, one of the oldest constructions in North Africa. Dougga also has an excellently preserved theatre, capitol, and bath complex. In the late afternoon we return to Tunis.

In the afternoon we journey east to the town of Hammamet located on Cap Bon's southeastern coast. Along the way we make a brief stop at Testour, which was rebuilt by Andalusian refugees in the 17th century. We also view the exterior of the Great Mosque of Testour distinguished by its octagonal minaret that features Andalusian-style inscriptions. **(Overnight Hammamet) BL**

Day 16: Wednesday 12 November, Hammamet – Cap Bon – Kélibia – Hammamet

- Phoenicio-Punic city of Kerkouane, Cap Bon: UNESCO World-Heritage Site
- Kélibia Fort

This morning we visit the UNESCO-listed Punic settlement of Kerkouane, located at the tip of Cap Bon on a cliff that dominates the sea. This is the world's best-preserved example of a Phoenicio-Punic city. Abandoned during the First Punic War, the town was never reoccupied by the invading Romans. Consequently, its chequer-board network of streets, houses and workshops remains as it was around 250 BC.

We will take our lunch in a local restaurant in Kélibia. The original center of this coastal town was built in the Roman period and was known as Clypea. The name derives from the Latin 'clipeus'—which is a typical small, round Roman shield—because the small promontory on which the town was built resembles half of this shape. Rising 150m above the town is the flat plateau of the acropolis with the monumental Kélibia Fort, which we will visit after lunch, to discover its epic history and take in the breathtaking vistas it offers in all directions due to its towering location.

The Kélibia Fort is the largest preserved fort in Tunisia. It is in the form of a square with three towers on each side. The defensive aspect of the acropolis was first used by the Carthaginians in the 5th century BCE, but only a few traces of this original construction remain visible in the walls as the fort was destroyed and rebuilt many times. Much of the building that is seen today was built by the Ottomans during the 16th century, but due to its long history, one can still see sections constructed by the Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, the Berber Zairid dynasty, and even changes made by the Italians and Germans who used the fort during World War II. **(Overnight Hammamet) BLD**

Day 17: Thursday 13 November, Hammamet – Tunis – Hammamet

- Walking tour of the old Tunis medina, including: Bab Bhar, Zaytuna Mosque, Grand Souq des Chechias, Souq el Bey & Souq el Berka, Tourbat el-Bey, Dar Othman, Dar Ben Abdullah Museum (UNESCO World-Heritage Site)
- Farewell Dinner at Barbarossa Restaurant

Modern Tunis is located on the southwestern side of Lac Tunis, a salt lake that separates the city from the sea. It stands on the site of Phoenician Thunes, the sister city to Carthage, located on the northern side of the lake. Although Carthage and Thunes were often rivals, they joined forces against the Romans during the Punic wars and suffered the same fate after their defeat; the Romans, who then rebuilt Carthage in their image, razed both towns. After periods of Vandal and Byzantine rule, Arabo-Muslim armies from Egypt captured Carthage and Tunis in the late 7th century. Tunis became an important Muslim port but Carthage, again destroyed by her conquerors, never recovered. In addition to being a naval base for the conquest of the Mediterranean, Tunis also became a centre of religious learning. The great mosque of Tunis, the Zaytuna, soon came to rival the great mosque of Kairouan as the Arab province of Ifriqiyya's foremost teaching mosque. As different Muslim regimes came to power, Tunis alternated as capital with Qayrawan (engl. Kairouan) and Mahdia. In the 11th century Tunis, along with other coastal areas, fell to the Normans who exploited the collapse of central power in Ifriqiyya, which had been exacerbated by the arrival of Arab

nomads from the east. The Normans were expelled by an Almohad naval force from Morocco. The Almohads appointed a lineage of governors, the Hafsids, who were to become the founders of the first state corresponding to modern Tunisia. The old town of Tunis owes its shape to the Hafsids who made it their capital, a status it never henceforth lost. In the 16th century, Tunis suffered grievously from the Habsburg-Ottoman struggle. The Spanish wrecked the city, defiled its mosques, and left us with little more than the street plan as evidence of the Hafsid era. The Ottomans and the Turco-Tunisian *beys* rebuilt the city and many of the monuments we will see date to the era of the Husainid *beys* (1705-1957), who gave Tunis a new profile. Exuberantly painted octagonal minarets; dramatic black and white marble arches; detailed stuccowork and strange Baroque touches bear witness to the vivacity of Turco-Tunisian culture.

Today we explore the Tunis medina, visiting a number of important monuments. We walk from Bab Bhar up through the old town of Tunis to the great mosque. Bab Bhar, the Sea Gate, originally provided access to the harbour via marshy wasteland. European consuls and merchants resided nearby, and also the poor of the city who could not afford to move further from the miasmas of the nearby marshland. We will make our way up the hill through one of the main market streets of the old town towards the Zaytuna, the great mosque of Tunis founded in the early 8th century, but rebuilt by the Aghlabid dynasty in the 9th century. The Zaytuna nestles in the upper, prestigious part of the medina with the old citadel behind and the quarters of the rich stretching away on both sides. Originally its presence would have been concealed by shops, which lined its outer walls, but the *beys* cleared one side and commissioned an Italian renegade to build the portico that now marks the approach to the mosque. Inside stand the starkly simple courtyard and prayer hall. Roman columns gathered from Tunisia's antique sites support the arches of the courtyard's arcade, and an ancient Arabic inscription graces the lintel of the doors into the prayer hall. The minaret, a 19th century creation, was modelled on the earlier square Almohad minaret dating to the 12th century.

From the peace of the Zaytuna we will move into the bustling old town to explore the upper town whose rich stone-carved doorways testify to the wealth of its former inhabitants. Among the sights we will see are the Sulaymaniyya Madrasa, one of many Turco-Tunisian madrasas where the religious sciences were taught. We will visit the Grand Souq des Chéechias, named after the woollen caps (*chéechias*) whose manufacture was brought to this souq in the 17th century from Andalusia. Passing the Hammouda Pasha Mosque (c.1665) with its fine Syrian – style minaret, and the Mosque of Youssef Dey (1616), we will enter the Souq el Bey, named from the 19th century palace of the Bey of Tunis in its midst, and the Souq el Berka. If time permits, we shall visit the district of the Mosque of the Dyers (Mosquée des Teinturiers).

Opposite this mosque is the Dar Othman, the palace built by Othman Bey in 1600, with a lovely inner courtyard. We may then visit the Madrasa attached to the Dyers Mosque before continuing to the Dar Ben Abdullah Museum. This 18th century palatial residence houses an interesting collection of Turco-Tunisian domestic articles. Close by is the Tourbet el-Bey (1758), the Mausoleum of the Husseinite Dynasty (1705-1957), which is graced by a huge dome. It has ornate marble inlay, reminiscent of Hagia Sophia, and thoroughly North African stuccowork. We pass the Masjid of Ibn Khaldun, a tiny Hafsid mosque where the great North African historian, Ibn Khaldun, is said to have lectured.

We will have lunch at Dar El Jeld, a restaurant within a beautifully restored traditional house within the Medina. The walls are covered in vibrant tiles and the ceilings are richly carved and painted. Throughout the house are antique furniture and ornaments; here diners can easily imagine the lifestyle enjoyed by a wealthy Tunisian merchant family.

This evening we enjoy a farewell dinner at the Barbarossa Restaurant which is located within Hammamet's kasbah. (Overnight Hammamet) BLD

Day 18: Friday 14 November, Tour Ends

- Morning at leisure
- Afternoon transfer from Hammamet to Tunis Airport

The morning is at leisure. Hammamet is located approximately 73kms from the Tunis airport. An early afternoon transfer to the airport will be arranged. Alternatively please contact ASA if you require assistance in arranging an independent transfer. **B**

Accommodation

ASA has selected 3- to 5-star hotels (excluding 2 nights in a mud-brick *ksar* in Tatouine, and 1 night in the Hotel Pansy Ksar Ghilane Desert Camp) that are themselves historical buildings and/or are located in historical centres. All accommodation includes en suite bathroom.

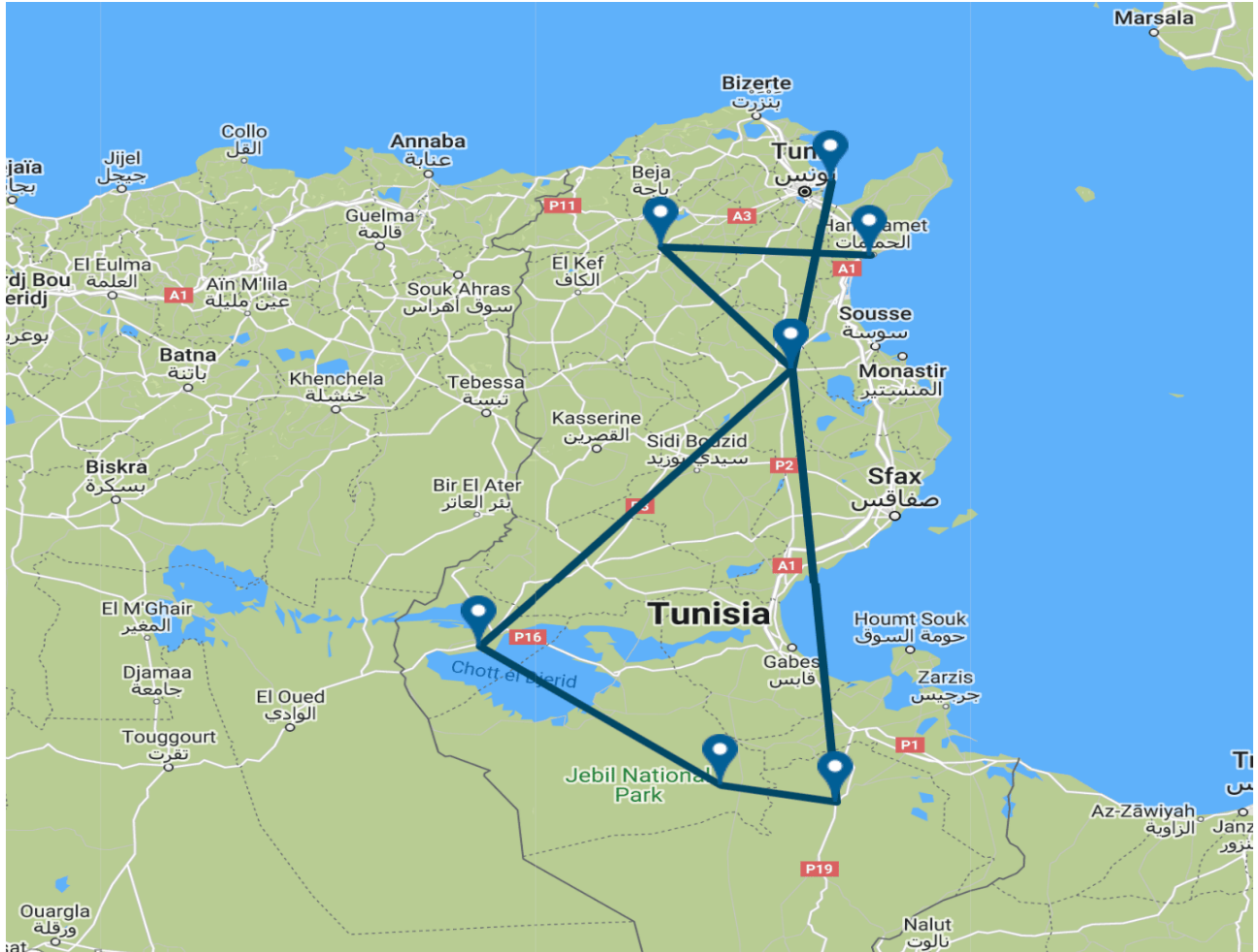
- Sidi Bou Said (4 nights): 4-star Dar Said – overlooking the Gulf of Tunis, this charming hotel is housed in a former 19th-century bourgeois home. darsaid.com.tn
- Kairouan (2 nights): 5-star Hotel La Kasbah – a modern hotel located in the traditional quarter of the holy city. www.goldenyasmin.com
- Tataouine (2 nights): Hotel Ouled Debbab – providing basic accommodation in a mud-brick traditional *ksar* that has been converted into a hotel. This is an ideal base from which to explore the surrounding *ksour* (fortified granaries) that are the region's main attraction. The 'cave' rooms include ensuite bathroom and air-conditioning.
- Ksar Ghilane (1 night): Hotel Pansy Ksar Ghilane Desert Camp – nestled in its own oasis, this desert camp offers accommodation in air-conditioned linen tents equipped with a private bathroom. reservationpansy.wixsite.com
- Tozeur (2 nights): 5-star Anantara Tozeur Resort – this brand new luxury resort is a contemporary retreat of lush palm trees and meandering swimming pools. www.anantara.com
- Kairouan (2 nights): 5-star Hotel La Kasbah – a modern hotel located in the traditional quarter of the holy city. www.goldenyasmin.com
- Téboursouk (1 night): 3-star Hotel Thugga – a modern hotel located outside the town centre. (website not available).
- Hammamet (3 nights): 5-star The Sindbad Hotel – a modern hotel located on the beach front of Hammamet. sindbadhotel.com

Note: *hotels are subject to change, in which case a hotel of similar standard will be provided.*

Single Supplement

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a double (or twin) room for single occupancy throughout the tour. The number of rooms available for single occupancy is extremely limited. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.

Tour Map



Tour Price & Inclusions

AUD \$9780 Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 30 Sep 2024

AUD \$9980.00 Land Content Only

AUD \$1880.00 Single Supplement

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in 3 to 5-star hotels, 2 nights in a mud-brick *ksar* in Tatouine, and 1 night in the Hotel Pansy Ksar Ghilane Desert Camp.
- Meals as indicated in the tour itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch & D=dinner
- Bottled water 2 x 500ml per day for excursions
- Drinks at welcome and farewell meals. Other meals do not include beverages.
- Transportation by air-conditioned coach; some excursions made by 4WD
- Departure airport transfer if travelling on ASA 'designated flight'
- Porterage of one piece of luggage per person at hotels
- Lecture and site-visit program
- Services of Tunisian National Guide
- Entrance fees to all sites visited on program (excluding sites listed as optional)
- Tips for the coach driver, National Guide and restaurants for included meals
- New City Tax for all hotels to be introduced in 2025.

Tour Price (Land Content Only) does not include:

- Airfare: Australia-Tunis, Tunis-Australia
- Evening meals & lunches not indicated in the tour itinerary
- Personal spending money
- Arrival Airport transfer
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44lbs)
- Travel insurance
- Tunisian Visa (not applicable for Australian passport holders)
- Note: Headset whisperers are NOT available in Tunisia.



Physical Endurance & Practical Information

Physical Ratings 

The number of flags is a guide to the degree of difficulty of ASA tours relative to each other (not to those of other tour companies). It is neither absolute nor literal. One flag is given to the least taxing tours, seven to the most. Flags are allocated, above all, according to the amount of walking and standing each tour involves. Nevertheless, all ASA tours require that participants have a good degree of fitness enabling 2-3 hours walking or 1-1.5 hours standing still on any given site visit or excursion. Many sites are accessed by climbing slopes or steps and have uneven terrain.

This 18-day Cultural Tour of Tunisia involves:

- A moderate amount of walking where many of the sites are large and unsheltered.
- Visiting sites where you will encounter steps, cobbled streets, rocky and uneven ground, slopes and steep walks.
- Extensive travel by air-conditioned coach; and a number of excursions by 4WD.
- Accommodation in 3 to 5-star hotels, 2 nights in a mud-brick *ksar* in Tatouine, and 1 night in the Hotel Pansy Ksar Ghilane Desert Camp. There are six accommodation changes.
- You must be able to carry your own hand luggage. Hotel portage includes 1 piece of luggage per person.

It is important to remember that ASA programs are group tours, and slow walkers affect everyone in the group. As the group must move at the speed of the slowest member, the amount of time spent at a site may be reduced if group members cannot maintain a moderate walking pace. ASA tours should not present any problem for active people who can manage day-to-day walking and stair-climbing. However, if you have any doubts about your ability to manage on a program, please ask your ASA travel consultant whether this is a suitable tour for you.

Please note: it is a condition of travel that all participants agree to accept ASA's directions in relation to

their suitability to participate in activities undertaken on the tour, and that ASA retains the sole discretion to direct a tour participant to refrain from a particular activity on part of the tour. For further information please refer to the ASA Reservation Application Form.

Practical Information

Prior to departure, tour members will receive practical notes which include information on visa requirements, health, photography, weather, clothing and what to pack, custom regulations, bank hours, currency regulations, electrical appliances and food. The Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade website has advice for travellers: www.smartraveller.gov.au

Booking Conditions

ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION FORM

Please complete the ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION and send it to Australians Studying Abroad together with your non-refundable deposit of AUD \$1000.00 per person payable to Australians Studying Abroad.



Reservation Application

TOUR NAME _____
TOUR DATES _____

Please complete **one application, per person in block letters and sign**. Parental signature is required for participants under 18 years of age. Please mail this form with the appropriate deposit to: **P.O. Box 8285, ARMADALE, VICTORIA, 3143**. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation.

Applicant Details (as in passport)

TITLE Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Miss ☐ Dr ☐ Other _____
FIRST NAME _____ Preferred FIRST NAME _____
MIDDLE NAME _____ SURNAME _____
POSTAL ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ COUNTRY _____ POSTCODE _____
TEL. (AH) () _____ TEL. (BH) () _____ Mobile Tel: _____
EMAIL address _____
Date of birth ____ / ____ / ____ GENDER Male ☐ Female ☐

Passport Number _____ Expiry date ____ / ____ / ____ Nationality _____
☐ Colour copy of my current valid passport enclosed ☐ I'm renewing my passport ☐ ASA has a colour copy of my current passport

Covid Certificate ☐ A copy of my current international certificate enclosed

Travel Plans

☐ I plan to leave Australia before the tour commences. Planned departure date ____ / ____ / ____
☐ I will be arranging my airfare independently and taking the Land Content Only option.

Tour Accommodation (rooming preferences)

I/we would like: ☐ a twin-bedded room ☐ a double-bedded room ☐ a room for sole occupancy
I am travelling: ☐ on my own ☐ with a friend/family member Travel Companion _____

Meals

☐ I do not have any specific dietary requests

Please **X** the box if you **CAN NOT** eat any of the following:

☐ fish ☐ poultry ☐ red meat ☐ dairy products
☐ eggs ☐ pork ☐ nuts
☐ Other _____

Allergies: Refer to the Medical Information

Correspondence

Your preferred method of correspondence ☐ Postal Mail ☐ Email Address _____

Emergency Contact Details

Note: this person **MUST** be available by telephone and be present in Australia for the duration of your tour with ASA

Name _____ Relationship to Traveller _____
Address _____
TEL. (AH) () _____ TEL. (BH) () _____ Mobile Tel: _____
EMAIL address _____

The purpose of seeking this information is to assist ASA to determine, where necessary, whether ASA is able to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs and whether your health and safety (or that of your fellow travellers) is likely to be compromised given your choice of tour. It will also assist you and ASA if you fall ill or have an accident whilst travelling.

- ASA reserves the right to decline your Reservation Application if this Medical Information section is not completed properly and may reject or cancel your reservation, or terminate your participation on any tour, if ASA subsequently learns that you have failed to make full and proper disclosure.
- ASA is committed to protecting the privacy of your personal information. ASA's privacy policy is available for viewing at www.asatours.com.au
- If ASA has any concerns about the information you have provided, it will contact you to request clarification before considering your Application.
- ASA requires you to consider carefully your limitations in light of ASA's Physical Endurance Star Rating System in ASA's Brochure and Itinerary when choosing your tour.
- If you are not likely to satisfy ASA's Participation Criteria (see below), ASA, in its sole discretion, may reject your Reservation Application.
- It is a condition of your tour that you agree to accept the directions of ASA's Tour Leaders in relation to your suitability to participate in activities planned on tour.
- ASA reserves the right to cancel your participation on a tour if your behaviour is in ASA's opinion causing undue distress or damage to any person or their property.
- If your participation is discontinued during a tour, ASA will assist by arranging your onward travel (if required) at your own cost, but you will not be refunded for forfeited parts of the tour.
- ASA tour groups are not accompanied by a medical practitioner. ASA recommends that you see your doctor for advice about your specific needs while overseas. You may also wish to contact a travel and vaccination clinic for advice. www.traveldoctor.com.au tel: 1300 658 444; www.travelvax.com.au tel: 1300 360 164.
- Travel insurers require you to declare all existing medical conditions.
- Please carry a complete list of medications with you during the ASA tour. Include **generic names** of each medication (consult your local pharmacy for information).

Please mark **X** in the YES or NO box to every question below and provide details where necessary:

Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. **You must also be fully vaccinated against Covid-19.** If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour. The responsibility of the Tour Leader is to ensure that the larger group enjoys a relaxing and informative journey, and he or she cannot be relied upon to provide ongoing individual assistance to any one guest.

- | | YES | NO |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Can you walk and stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Can you walk unassisted on and over uneven surfaces? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Can you climb at least 3 flights of stairs and/or walk up and down steep slopes unassisted? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Can you walk at a steady pace and no less than 1km every 15 - 20 minutes unassisted? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Can you organise, manage and carry your own luggage? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Can you follow and remember tour instructions and meet punctually at designated times and places? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Can you administer your own medication? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. You do NOT have impaired vision or hearing which may impact your capacity to participate on this tour? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Mobility and Fitness

As many of ASA's international sites do not provide access to wheelchairs or similar mobility aids, we regret that ASA tours are not suitable for people who require the use of a walking frame, wheeled walker, wheelchair or motorised scooter.

1. Do you suffer from any medical conditions that may compromise your mobility and/or fitness to participate on this program? YES NO ☐ ☐
- If yes, please specify

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

Allergies and/or Food Intolerances

ASA will make reasonable endeavours to organise meals to suit you, provided that you give ASA adequate notice of your specific dietary requirements or allergies. You may be required to research dietary alternatives, as not all destinations may be able to offer suitable food substitutes.

1. Do you have any food allergies or intolerances? YES NO ☐ ☐
- If yes, please specify

2. Have you ever had an anaphylactic reaction to anything? ☐ ☐
- If yes, please specify

Do you carry an epipen? ☐ ☐

3. Do you have any other allergies or reactions to anything, including medical drugs? ☐ ☐
- If yes, please specify

Existing Medical Conditions

You alone are responsible for managing any existing medical conditions, your medication and any medical equipment that you may need when on your tour. Please plan for contingencies and take extra medication, dietary supplements and/or fully charged batteries for medical equipment if your health and safety depends on these. You should take into consideration that power sources at some destinations may be unavailable, inadequate, inconvenient or unreliable.

1. Have you any significant medical conditions that may impact your capacity to complete this tour? YES NO ☐ ☐
- If yes, please specify

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

2. Do you require some form of powered medical aid, such as a CPAP machine? ☐ ☐

These machines may not be operable on certain international flights, modes of transport, in remote or other areas with inadequate or unreliable power sources without a fully charged independent long life battery or batteries.

Diabetics: You may be travelling and sightseeing for many hours at a time. Insulin dependent diabetics must carry extra supplies of insulin (as this medication cannot be obtained in some destinations), regulators, applicators, storage and refrigeration equipment, as well as any necessary supplements. Accommodation may not provide refrigerators in rooms.

3. Are you diabetic? ☐ ☐
- Are you insulin dependent? ☐ ☐
4. Do you suffer from travel sickness? ☐ ☐
- Remember to use an appropriate medication while on tour.

Declaration

I declare that: I have read and understood the ASA Tour Itinerary, Reservation Application and Booking Conditions. I am aware of ASA's terms as relating to refunds, cancellations, responsibility and liability. I understand that ASA relies upon this declaration when considering this Application. I accept the inherent dangers, risks and uncertainties in travel and those beyond ASA's control and understand they may occur before or during any tour. I have made full and complete disclosure and have not knowingly withheld any medical information about myself from ASA. I have completed this Reservation Application honestly and accurately. I warrant that I am able to participate independently in all activities described by ASA in the itinerary without assistance from any person.

I will advise ASA in writing if any aspect of my fitness and or health conditions change materially at any time before my departure date. I understand and accept that the itinerary, accommodation and lecturers scheduled for this tour may change.

I agree and consent that ASA may give my personal information in this Reservation Application to tour service providers and relevant authorities as required by law, but only for the purpose of making bookings with and engaging services associated with the tour. I understand that if I do not consent to the use of my personal information for this purpose, ASA will decline my Reservation Application.

In consideration of ASA's acceptance of my Reservation Application, I irrevocably release and indemnify ASA from all claims that I, or any other party, may have against ASA its employees, invitees, agents and contractors, however arising in respect of any loss, damage, injury, death or expense incurred in the course of booking, preparing for, travelling to, on and from or cancelling any tour.

I release and indemnify ASA with respect to:

1. Every general risk to which I or my personal belongings may be exposed in the course of preparing for, travelling to, on or from any ASA tour;
2. Every special risk, in particular medical risks, to which I may be exposed in the course of preparing for, travelling to, on or from any ASA tour arising from, including, but not limited to:
 - a. intermittent power cycles and/or the temporary or permanent loss of power (beware CPAP or any other medical machine users);
 - b. dietary, food or other allergies (ASA cannot guarantee that traces of items to which you are allergic are not present in food or drink you are served, medication you are administered or other substances with which you may come into contact);
 - c. any event or situation that may compromise the administration of necessary medication or my health, safety and wellbeing generally; and
 - d. any event or happening beyond ASA's control
3. All claims arising as a result of my or ASA's cancellation or termination of any tour, part of a tour or of my continued participation on a tour for any reason (subject to ASA's refund conditions below).

Limitation of Liability

ASA is not a carrier, event or tourist attraction host, accommodation or dining service provider. All bookings made and tickets or coupons issued by ASA for transport, event, accommodation, dining and the like are issued as an agent for various service providers and are subject to the terms and conditions and limitations of liability imposed by each service provider. ASA is not responsible for their products, services, terms and conditions. If a service provider cancels or does not deliver the product or service for which you have contracted, and does not give a refund, your remedy lies with the service provider, not ASA.

ASA will not be liable for any claim (e.g. sickness, injury, death, damage or loss) arising from any change, delay, detention, breakdown, border closures, cancellation, failure, accident, act, omission or negligence of any tour service provider or authority however caused (contingencies). You must take out such travel insurance as is available against such contingencies.

ASA's liability in respect of any tour cancelled or changed will be limited to the partial refund of amounts you have paid, less an administration fee of \$500 and other costs and charges of third party service providers. No compensation will be payable to you by ASA where ASA cancels or changes a tour, or any part of a tour.

ASA reserves the sole discretion to cancel any tour or to modify itineraries in any way it considers appropriate and in the best interests of health, safety and wellbeing of tour participants. Tour costs may be revised, subject to unexpected price increases or exchange rate fluctuations.

Booking Conditions

DEPOSITS

A non-refundable deposit of \$1000.00 AUD per person is required to reserve a place on an ASA tour.

CANCELLATION FEES

If you cancel your booking the following charges apply:

More than 75 days before departure: your initial deposit of \$1000.00 is non-refundable.**

75-31 days prior 50% of total amount due

30-0 days prior 100% of total amount due

**\$500.00 of this amount (ie 50% of your deposit) may be credited to another ASA tour departing within 12 months of the original tour you booked. We regret, in this case early-bird discounts will not apply.

We take the day on which you cancel as being that on which we receive written confirmation of cancellation.

UNUSED PORTIONS OF THE TOUR

We regret that refunds will not be given for any unused portions or services of the tour, such as meals, entry fees, accommodation, flights or transfers.

WILL THE TOUR PRICE OR ITINERARY CHANGE?

If the number of participants on a tour is significantly less than budgeted, or if there is a significant change in exchange rates ASA reserves the right to amend the advertised price. We shall, however, do all in our power to maintain the published price. Occasionally circumstances beyond the control of ASA make it necessary to change airline, hotel or to make amendments to itineraries. We will inform you of any changes in due course.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

ASA requires all participants to obtain comprehensive travel insurance. A copy of your travel insurance certificate and the **reverse charge** emergency contact phone number must be received by ASA no later than 75 days prior to the commencement of the tour.

FINAL PAYMENT

The balance of the tour price will be due 75 days prior to the tour commencement date.

PLEASE READ THE ABOVE CAREFULLY, PRINT AND SIGN BELOW

☐ I accept the conditions on this booking form ☐ I have read the information about the physical requirements of the tour in the detailed itinerary and confirm that I am able to meet these requirements

Applicant's Signature

Print Full Name

Dated

Tour / Course Name _____

Name of Traveller 1 _____

Name of Traveller 2 _____

I have enclosed a payment to the value of \$ _____ (including CC or bank fee if applicable) for this tour

The above amount is payable for:

- ☐ Intention to Travel ☐ Tour Deposit
- ☐ Balance of Payment ☐ Upgrade from Intention to Travel to a Deposit
- ☐ Travel Insurance ☐ Other (eg. Airfares, Accommodation) _____

International Payments

Welcome to our international travellers! If you are making a payment and do not have an Australian bank account/credit card, we can only accept payment as follows:

- via credit card with the applicable fee - the credit card company/bank will set the exchange rate
- via bank transfer; please give your surname and tour code (eg. Smith 21705) as a reference and ask your bank to allow for all charges.

Bank cheques or personal cheques will not be accepted.

By Cheque (accept Australian cheques only)

Please make cheques payable to *Australians Studying Abroad*

Direct Deposit or Internet Banking

You will need to:

1. Provide your bank with ASA's bank details (see below) and the amount you wish to transfer OR make a direct deposit through any ANZ branch
2. Include any fees levied by the banks
3. Provide a reference number (Mobile or last name recommended).
4. Complete section below, including confirmation no. (given when transaction completed).

Australians Studying Abroad bank details

Bank ANZ
Branch 420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne Vic
Swift Code ANZBAU3M
BSB 013-423
Account No 3472-32759

Bank confirmation No. _____

Reference used: Mobile or last name recommended _____

Date Money Transferred _____

Credit Card Payment

Credit card fees apply: Mastercard, Visa & American Express 2%

Please debit my: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ American Express

I authorise ASA to debit my credit card for the amount due plus the applicable fee as above

Credit Card Number _____

Expiry Date _____

Security Code (CVC) _____

Bank the Card is linked to (eg. NAB or ANZ) _____

Cardholders Name _____

Cardholders Billing Address _____

Postcode _____

State _____

Country _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Cardholders Signature _____