

 discovertunisia.com

INSPIRING Tunisia

Experience the **SAHARA**



5 reasons to visit the TUNISIAN **SAHARA** p.2



Across the **SAHARA** p.14

Towards the Great Eastern Sand Sea.....	16
Douz and Chott el-Jerid	20
Tozeur and Nefta	26
Canyons and mountain oases.....	30
Ksour and Berber villages	32

The magic of the light,

the invigorating air, the infinite spaces and the pure nakedness of desert landscapes... **The call of the Sahara** is sounding louder as modern life becomes more restricted and oppressive. The Tunisian Sahara is ideal for **contemplation**, whether in one of its luxury hotels, a comfortable campsite or a tent in the middle of the desert. It is also full of **adventure**, in a 4x4 speeding across the rocky slopes, or on a camel's hump. Depending on your tastes, it can also rebound with speed and thrills: its terrain is ideal for extreme sports. With its originality and diversity as well as the quality of its infrastructure, the Tunisian South is the perfect location for extraordinary **events** and incentive breaks.







5

reasons
to visit the
TUNISIAN
SAHARA

2

3

A short **camel** trek with local guides, a meal in a tent in the **splendour of the dunes** or a night in a bivouac under the **starry sky**, everyone can experience these emotions of the Sahara. A **road trip** out in the middle of the desert, **hiking** on foot through jaw dropping landscapes: adventure is just **a few hours from Europe**.



1

EMOTIONAL
experiences
at your
fingertips

4
.....
5

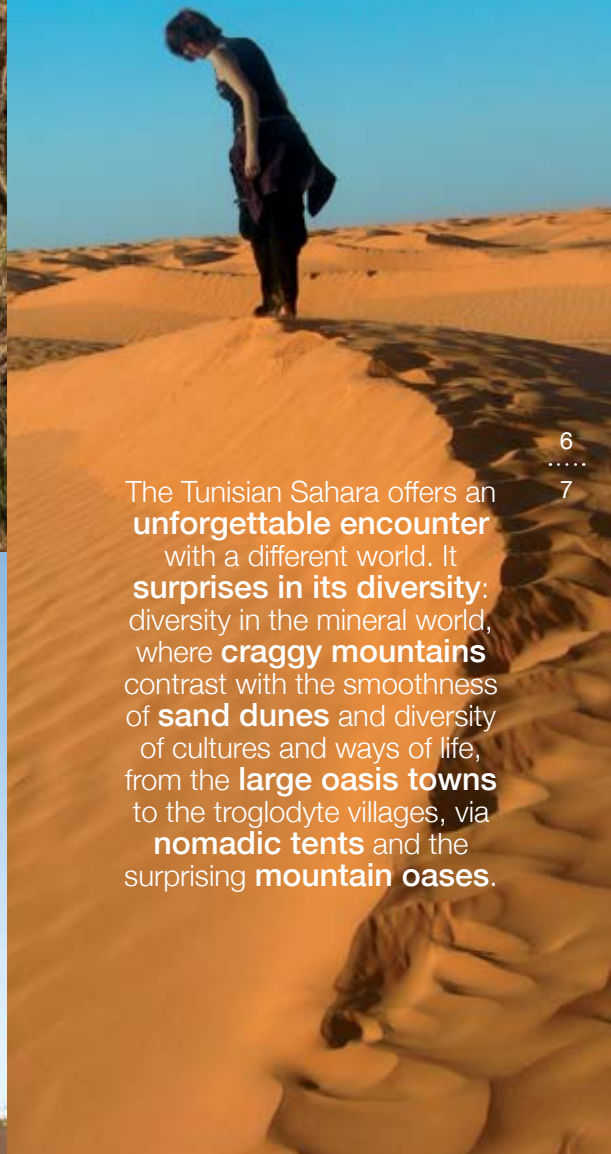






2

SAHARA... Saharas...



6
.....
7

The Tunisian Sahara offers an **unforgettable encounter** with a different world. It **surprises in its diversity**: diversity in the mineral world, where **craggy mountains** contrast with the smoothness of **sand dunes** and diversity of cultures and ways of life, from the **large oasis towns** to the troglodyte villages, via **nomadic tents** and the surprising **mountain oases**.



The wide, open spaces of the Sahara are perfect for performance, adventure and **extreme sports**. The sandy dunes are adventure playgrounds for **quad bikes, 4x4s or motorbikes**. The far-reaching plains of **Chott El-Jerid** are great for sand yachting and wind **skateboarding**. Dune skiing offers an exhilarating experience. **ULM** is one of the best ways of appreciating the **beauty of the Tunisian Sahara**.





3

Powerful
experiences
in the great
OUTDOORS



8
.....
9



The Tunisian Sahara offers a **wide choice of comfortable hotels** in the Saharan style. From sumptuous hotel to the palace from the Thousand and One Nights, **luxury** is well suited to the majesty of the desert. For an original experience, choose one of the **lodges in the palm groves**, an encampment surrounded by sand dunes, a **guest room** in a traditional house, or a **cave dwelling** refurbished as a hotel.

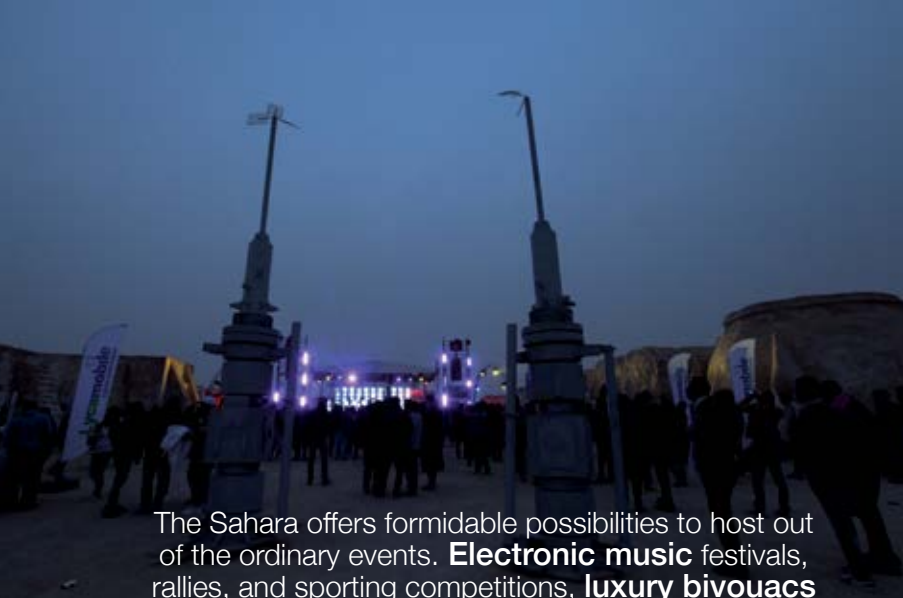


4

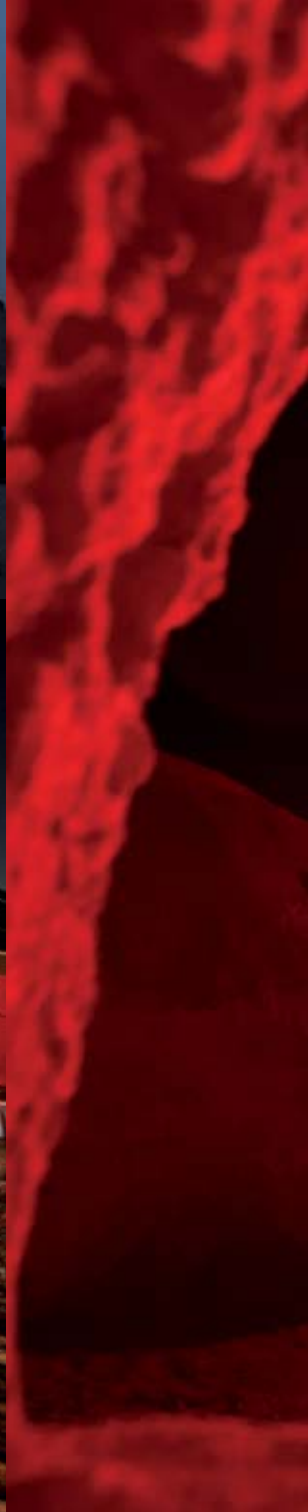
10
.....
11



Luxury **SAHARAN**
hotels or quaint
rural lodging



The Sahara offers formidable possibilities to host out of the ordinary events. **Electronic music** festivals, rallies, and sporting competitions, **luxury bivouacs** with sunset champagne, a banquet in the oasis or on a dried salt lake... live out **magical moments** in the stunning surroundings that inspired filmmakers such as George Lucas (**Star Wars**) and Anthony Minghela (**The English Patient**).



5

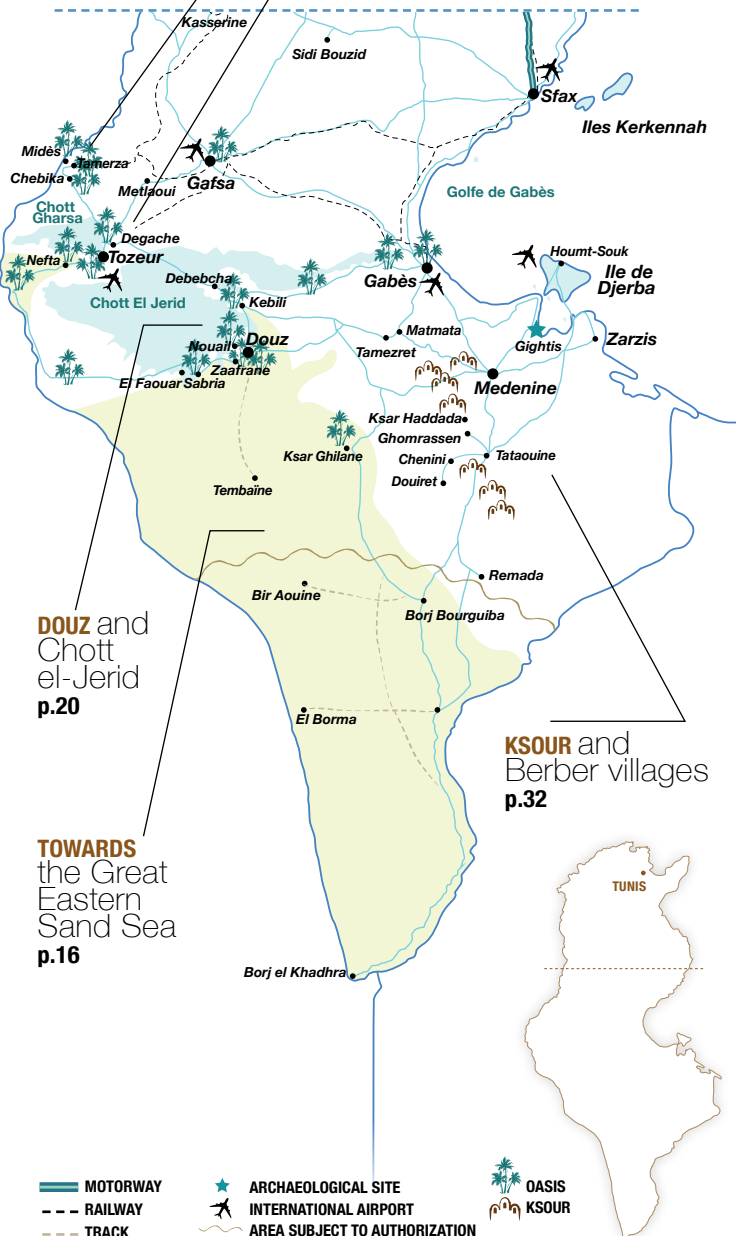
An exceptional
SETTING
for exceptional
events

12
.....
13



**CANYONS and
Mountain Oases**
p.30

**TOZEUR and
Nefta**
p.26





Across the **SAHARA**

The **variety** of the Tunisian Sahara and a network of **good quality roads** allow an infinite number of excursions. In the Southwest, you'll find **great medinas** and **giant palm** groves, craggy mountains and deep **canyons**, suspended oases. In the Southeast, **rocky and rugged landscapes**, unusual architecture and **Berber villages**. Between them, the vast glittering expanse of the **Chott-el-Jerid**. And to the extreme south, surreal landscapes guarded by **cordons of towering sand dunes**.

14
.....
15





TOWARDS THE Great Eastern Sand Sea

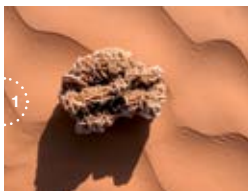


Saharan
encampment
in Tembaïne

This is the desert you dream about, **BLISSFUL** and immense, silent and sweeping. Tunisia has **40,000 square kilometres of sandy desert**: a part of the Great Eastern Erg offering some of the most splendid panoramas of dunes sculpted by the wind. Sometimes **gently undulating**, sometimes rising up in impetuous waves, swathed in the yellows and pinks of dawn – a rare spectacle that rewards **NIGHTS SPENT IN A BIVOUAC**. The continually changing landscape sometimes conceals surprises: sandy wells, **mountains overhanging the dunes**, basins sheltering undergrowth and bushes, or even a **lake where ducks and egrets frolic**. Guides and camel drivers of the South pour all their passion and all their experience into serving those who want to discover the **emotion of a Saharan journey**.

1 Desert roses.

2-3 The sand dunes of the Great Eastern Erg.





TOWARDS THE Great Eastern Sand Sea



STRONG points

- Beauty and variety of locations.
- Easy access, tourist facilities and supply points close by.
- Numerous trekking possibilities (hiking, camel rides, motorbike, quad or 4x4).
- Some routes on asphalted roads or tracks are possible in saloon car.
- Routes are made safe by regularly spaced military posts and supply points.



GOOD to know

Hikes from Douz or Nouil. Saharan encampments in Ksar Ghilane, Zaafrane and Bir Soltane. Isolated deep among the sand dunes, in Tembaine you'll find a comfortable encampment. Travel permit required for treks and raids in the far South (military zone). Ksar Ghilane is accessible by road from two international airports, 260 km from Kozeur and 210 km from Djerba.



1 The desert fauna. 2 Saharan encampment in Ksar Ghilane. 3 Ksar Ghilane.



GOING further

DESERT FAUNA. Located 50 km south of Douz, the Jebil National Park is an immense nature reserve. It is a preservation area for fragile desert and sand species of fauna and is home to some sixty gazelles and addax. Another park, Sidi Toui, features an arid ecosystem typical of the south east. The plant and animal species found there have adapted in some incredible ways. The spiny-tailed lizard, reminiscent of a dinosaur, only eats plants. Gazelles, rodents and birds dress in delicate colours, making them near invisible to the naked eye.



A CLOSER look

THE OASIS OF KSAR GHILANE. On the edge of the sandy desert, Ksar Ghilane is the most Saharan of the Tunisian oases. It offers hikers or tourist trips an unusual stopping point with its vast palm grove and its alleyways shaded by tamarisk trees swarming with birds. A thermal spring feeds a basin that invites you for a deliciously relaxing swim. After Ksar Ghilane you plunge into a sea of dunes until suddenly you come across some ancient remains in the middle of the desert – the remains of an ancient fort which also saw fighting in the Second World War.

HIKES and Raids



18
.....
19

Southern Tunisia is the place for those who like long hikes and wide open spaces. Hikers can spend whole weeks there; Douz's cameleers place their experience at the service of their passion, helping participants discover the secrets of nature and nomad life. Dozens of rallies have been organised in the Tunisian desert. To the south of Ksar Ghilane

a wide piste trails between majestic rose-coloured dunes taking you to the oil town of El Borma. But you need to get off the beaten track to find the sand rose fields, the sandy mountains, flocks of animals gathering around pools to drink and hot water lakes shimmering amidst the sand.



DOUZ and Chott el-Jerid



Dunes and
palm trees
near to Douz

Covered in a **fine white coat** like a snowy landscape, the Douz region offers the gentlest desert approach. Strings of dunes and gracious **BOUQUETS OF PALM TREES** line the roads eaten away by sand. The great white immensity of desert is right there, within reach. **DOUZ** is inhabited by the Mrazig, **nomad livestock** breeders, who, to this day, sometimes leave their more solidly built homes to return to life under the tent. Close to Douz the vast **date palm groves** of Kébili and Deggache offer delicious shady relief in a forest ambience. **THE SANDY VILLAGES** of Sabria, Nouil and El Faouar, along with their small oases seem lost between the deserts of sand and an **immense salty expanse** with shifting reflections, the Chott El-Jerid.

1 Douz Festival.

2 Palm grove
near Douz.





DOUZ and Chott el-Jerid



STRONG points

- Choice of quality accommodation, hotels with views of the sand dunes.
- Immediate access to the sandy desert.
- Presence of the nomadic culture, large weekly market.
- Numerous activities (ULM, quad bikes, dune skiing, sand yachting and wind skateboarding on the Chott el-Jerid).
- Numerous Saharan encampments.
- Activities and events are possible on the Chott (sand yachting, ULM, banquets, etc).



GOOD to know

Festival of the Sahara in Douz: nomadic traditions, fantasia, games, hunts, hare coursing, marriage ceremonies (late December). Museum of nomadic traditions. Encampments in Douz, Nouil, Degache, Zaafrane... Don't miss: The strange site of Debebcha offers an unusual sight with its rocky outcrops of hardened sand sculpted by erosion. Douz is linked by paved roads to the international airports in Tozeur (125 km) and Djerba (260 km).



1-2-3 Around Douz. 4 Saharan encampment in Zaafrane.



GOING further

NOMADS AND SETTLED PEOPLE. The areas near the desert have always benefited from the relationship between nomads and settled people. The nomads raise sheep, goats and camels. The oases in the South West produce dates, fruit, cereals and vegetables. The mountains of the South East have long been occupied by villagers who practise arboriculture.



A CLOSER look

SAHARAN TRADITIONS. A rallying point for nomadic camel drivers, Douz remains a great market for southern breeders and a focus for many Saharan traditions. Marriage rites, games and fantasias, Sloughi dog races, caravan departures... ancestral ceremonies are still rooted in the hearts of the people of Douz, who delight in showing them off for the great enjoyment of visitors during the Sahara Festival.

CHOTT El-Jerid



22
.....
23

Legend has it that the Chott has swallowed caravans and whole armies – its bottom is so muddy and unstable. Once feared, Chott El-Jerid now only inspires wonder. Crossed by an asphalted road, this ancient interior sea extends out of sight, now largely dried out.

Its salt crystals evoke immobile foaming waves and its glistening surface conjures up puzzling mirages. It has channels, gypseous crusts and flooded parts in winter that draw in thousands of pink flamingos.







TOZEUR and Nefta



The old
quarters
of Tozeur

A town that suddenly just appears from the desert, Tozeur nestles in an immense oasis of **hundreds of thousands of palm trees**.

Tozeur surprises, fascinates and plunges you into a complete change of scenery from Europe, only a few hours away. The **BURNING SUNLIGHT** of the Great South pours down the streets of the town. It makes its way through the alleyways of the **older neighbourhoods trapped** between the high façades whose **PALE BRICKS**, built in relief, form complex designs of diamonds and chevrons. The small town of Nefta is set apart from its neighbour by its rich Sufi tradition: it is punctuated by **innumerable domes** indicating sanctuaries and saints' tombs. Nefta dominates a palm grove which rests, like an armful of flowers, at the bottom of a basin called the **CORBEILLE**.

1 Nefta and the
Corbeille.

2 Le Red Lizard
train.





TOZEUR and Nefta



STRONG points

- Wide choice of quality accommodation and luxury hotels.
- Brick architecture and a real change of scenery
- Trips in a barouche, by bicycle or by mule in the palm groves.
- The sand dunes several kilometres away from Nefta.
- The decors from the set of Star Wars (near to Nefta)
- Numerous tourist attractions in and around Tozeur: golf, museums, theme parks, Red Lizard train.



GOING further

DATES AND CARAVANS. Tozeur was a former compulsory stopping point for caravans crossing North Africa by the oasis route, totally laden with spices, materials and piles of dates. These days, the palm groves at Tozeur, Nefta and Kébili produce several varieties of which the most famous is the *deglet nour* ("date of light"), an amber-coloured translucent date with tender flesh. It is harvested in November.



1 Golf Oasis Tozeur. 2 Treetop adventure course in Tozeur. 3 Star Wars sets. 4 Dates from Tozeur.



A CLOSER look

SPORTS AND ATTRACTIONS. Fans of the Star Wars saga can take a pilgrimage to the town of Mos Espa, near Nefta. In Tozeur Oasis Golf is a typically Saharan course facing the palm grove. A visit to Eden Palm park will reveal all the secrets of the date palm, from seasonal work to local handicrafts. In the oasis, you'll discover the Sahara Lounge park with its tree climbing sports circuit. 50 km away from Tozeur, you could climb aboard the little 1920s train called the Red Lizard on which you can discover the gorges carved by the Selja river.



GOOD to know

International airport 5 minutes from the hotels of Tozeur and 25 km away from Nefta. Daily trains between Tunis and Tozeur via Sousse, Sfax and Gafsa (night trains). Festival of the Oasis in Tozeur: South Western traditions, date gathering (in November). Golf des Oasis in Tozeur: a 18-hole golf course designed by the architect Ronald Fream (25 hectares of turf, kept lush by recycled water). Don't miss in the palm grove of Tozeur: "Paradise", a garden with a hundred different flowers, and its desert zoo. From Tozeur, visit the mountain oasis region (see p.28), a 150 km circuit via asphalted roads.



THE palm oases

28
.....
29

Tunisia has some of the most beautiful oases of North Africa: Tozeur; Nefta, Kébili, Deggache, etc. The tangled palms create a deep woodland atmosphere. A visit to a palm grove is truly enchanting with the murmur of the water; the light broken up by the high palm tufts and the abundance of fruit and flowers that grow

in the protective shade of the palm trees. There are different types of date palm, the king of Saharan trees. Its trunk is used in construction, the leaves to make baskets, the fibres to weave ropes and the sap to make a fermented drink, *lagmi*.

CANYONS and Mountain Oases



Tamerza

Oases and mountain scenery form a **unique union**:

The fragile exuberance of the palm trees erupting from the streamlined **sand-coloured** geometry of the surrounding rock. This improbable encounter makes **CHEBIKA, TAMERZA AND MIDÈS** some of the most moving places in the Tunisian South. In this staggeringly **beautiful scenery**, each oasis is different. In Chebika a river gushes down the steep mountainside forming **WATERFALLS** and pools, where you can hear the croaking of frogs. The old village of Tamerza, abandoned like a **ghost town**, faces the modern town, set in a spectacular mountain landscape. Its **VERDANT OASIS** is irrigated by water from a high waterfall. Finally, Mides, perched on the edge of a vertiginous canyon offers a breathtaking sight. Further east are other **landscapes sculpted by erosion**: the immense canyons of Dghoumes.

1-2 Tamerza.

3 Midès.





30
.....
31

Canyon of Dghoumes



KSOUR and Berber villages



Berber village
near to Gabès

In the heart of an arid landscape of mountains, plateaux and **craggy peaks**, the astonishing architecture of Ksour surges up, great rock coloured beehives lost in the middle of nowhere. These **“DESERT CASTLES”** (ksour is the plural of ksar) used to be rallying points for **semi-nomads** of the area who stored their crops here safe from thieves, in hollow spaces called ghorfas that were built on top of one another. Other Ksour are villages like **CHENINI AND DOUIRET**, perched on impregnable peaks. Their ruined ghorfas merge with the mountain tops and the homes are partly dug out of the rock face. The **Berber language** is still used there today. Further north, the landscape becomes more gentle as it approaches Gabès, the great coastal oasis.

1-2 The Ksour.

3 The village of Douiret.





KSOUR and Berber villages



STRONG points

- Original locations and ways of life.
- Berber craft (weaving).
- Chaotic, spectacular landscape, adventurous appeal.
- Number and variety of Ksour and excursions to them.
- Possible accommodation in converted Ksour and troglodyte houses.



GOOD to know

Festival of the Ksour in Tataouine: South Eastern traditions, music and songs, storage of the harvest (in April). Hotels in Tataouine, Medenine, Matmata. Rural lodging in Douiret, Chenini, Beni Khedache. Palaeontology museum in Tataouine. Tataouine is 140 km from Djerba airport.



1- 2 Berber villages near to Gabès.



GOING further

BERBER TRADITIONS. The Tunisian South used to be inhabited by the Zenets, a great Berber people made up of farmers and semi-nomadic camel drivers. Most of the inhabitants have taken on an Arabic lifestyle but have kept their many Berber traditions. Short-piled carpets of the Tunisian South are very much appreciated for their warm colours and their geometric Berber designs, arranged into superb compositions. Bakhnoug is a magnificent shawl of woven wool; it is woven into a fine pattern decorated with a design of triangles and chevrons.



A CLOSER look

THE EARTH'S MEMORY. For amateur geologists and lovers of prehistory, Tataouine is stuffed full of evidence of the planet's past. Dinosaur prints and skeletons have both been discovered here. Neolithic cave paintings can be seen close to Ghomrassen, and an outcrop, unique in Africa, showing the 250 million year old Permian seafloor, in Jebel Tebaga close to Medenine. Several meteorites have been discovered in the area, including the famous 1931 Tataouine meteorite. The Museum of the Earth's Memory, in Tataouine, exhibits dinosaur fossils and meteorites.



THE CAVE-DWELLERS of Matmata

This could almost be a moonscape: bare hills and gaping craters where life seems impossible from afar; this area is in fact inhabited by the Berber people of the Matmata mountains who have chosen to live underground, in rooms hollowed out of the soft rock. This is an old tradition that results in a haven of cool in the scorching summer. Around Matmata, the soft undulating slopes have allowed other villagers to dig their homes into the hillside and grow small gardens thanks to the seeping rainwater. The nearest port is Gabès, a seaside oasis.

USEFUL Information



AREA
163,155 km²

COAST LINE
1,298 km

CLIMATE
Mediterranean (semi arid in the interior, and in the South). Average temperatures: December 11.4°C, July 29.3°C.

POPULATION
10.9 Million inh.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE
Arabic

TIME ZONE
GMT + 1

CAPITAL
Tunis

MAIN CITIES
Sfax, Sousse, Béja, Bizerte, Jendouba, Gabès, Kef, Nabeul, Médenine, Kairouan...

RELIGION
Moslems (98% of pop.), Jews, Christians

LANGUAGE
The Tunisian people converse in the Arabic language yet many speak French fluently, English, German and Italian are often spoken.

NATIONAL HOLIDAY
March 20 (Independence, 1956)

EXCHANGE
Tunisian Dinar (TND)
The Tunisian Dinar is divided into 1,000 millimes. It may neither be imported nor exported. Traveller's and EuroCheques are accepted.
Euro 1 = TND 2.4 approx.

CREDIT CARDS ACCEPTED
Visa, MasterCard, Eurocard, Amex, Diner's Club

TELEPHONE
Country code 216 + number (8 digits)

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS
Tunis, Monastir, Djerba, Sfax, Tabarka, Tozeur, Gafsa, Gabès, Enfidha-Hammamet

AIRLINE COMPANIES
Tunisair
mail@tunisair.com.tn
www.tunisair.com.tn
Nouvelair
info@nouvelair.com.tn
www.nouvelair.com

THE REPRESENTATIONS of the Tunisian National TOURIST OFFICE across the WORLD

UNITED KINGDOM / LONDON

Tunisian National Tourist Office / 3ème étage,
111 Baker Street W1U 6SG, London
Tel: 00442072245598 / 00442072246201
Fax: 442072244053
director@cometotunisia.co.uk

NETHERLANDS / THE HAGUE

Ambassade de Tunisie
Gentsestraat - 98-2587 HX The Haag
Tel: 0031703603305 / 0031703466112
Fax: 0031703514323
info@ontdektunesie.nl

SWEDEN / STOCKHOLM

Tuniska STATENS TURISTBYRÅ
STUREPLAN 1 511145 STOCKHOLM
Tel: 0046868783645 / 004686878366
Fax: 0046868781905
tourismstunisia@telia.com

RUSSIA / MOSCOW

Тунисский Национальный офис по туризму в России
Кузнецкий проспект, 113, офис 108-109
Москва 121448
Tel: 0074992433181 / 0074992433058
Fax: 0074959748001 - tunisia@travel.ru

CANADA / MONTREAL

1155, rue Université, suite 1014 Montréal
(Québec) Canada H3B 3A7
Tel: 0015143971182 / 0015143970403
Fax: 0015143971647
tunisinfo@qc.airsa.com

BELGIUM / BRUSSELS

162, avenue Louise, 1050 Bruxelles
Tel: 003226483078
Fax: 003226482355
Fax: 003226472018
tourisminfo@skynet.be

CZECH REPUBLIC / PRAGUE

Sokolská 39/1200 Praha 2
Tel: 00420 224941824 / 00420 224942424
Fax: 4200224941825
ontpraha@inbox.vol.cz

POLAND / WARSAW

Tunezyjski Urząd De. Turystyki, rue Szpitalna
6 Lok. 2021, 00-131 Warszawa
Tel: 00482225370151 / 00482225370152
Fax: 48222262313
onttvar@toggaz.pl

FRANCE / PARIS

32, avenue de l'Opéra 75002 Paris
Tel: 0033144517465
Fax: 0033147425268
ontt@tourismetunisie.fr

GERMANY / FRANKFURT

Fremdenverkehrsamt Tunesien
Bockenheimer Anlage 2, 60322 Frankfurt
Tel: 0049 69 1336350
Fax: 0049 69 13363522
info@tunesien.info

AUSTRIA / VIENNA

1010 Wien Opernring 1
Siege R. Tur 109
Tel: 0043 15853480
Fax: 431585348018
office@tunesieninfo.at

HUNGARY / BUDAPEST

Tel: 003612476380
Fax: 003612476349
tunezinfo@tunezinfo.axelero.net

SPAIN / MADRID

Oficina Nacional del Turismo Tunesino C/
Alberto Aguilera N°11 (1°C)
Tel: 0034915481435 / 0034915481843
Fax: 0034915483705
onttmadrid@tourismotunesia.com

ALGERIA / ALGIERS

Cité des 90 Logis Bt 2 Apt 3 Said Hamdine
Bir Mourad Rais Alger
Tel: 0021321608190 - Fax: 0021321608190
ontalgi@yahoofr
37, boulevard Benzerdjeb-Oran
Tel: 0021341402870 - Fax: 0021341402870

ITALY / MILAN

Ente Nazionale Turismo per il Turismo
Via Pantano 11 - 20123 Milano
Tel: 00390286453044 / 00390286453026
Fax: 003902862752
info@turismotunisia.it

CHINA / BEIJING

突尼斯国家旅游局
北京市朝阳区建外大街乙12号
双子座西塔2502室·100022
Tel: 00861065862539
Fax: 00861065860169



INSPIRING
Tunisia

TUNISIA INSPIRES YOU...

Like numerous photographers and visitors to Tunisia, **IMMORTALISE** your most exciting moments and share them on our Facebook page

discover tunisia

Experience the **SAHARA**

INSPIRING
Tunisia

➔ discovertunisia.com