



Trip Dossier for Tunisia – Star Wars & Camels

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Tunisia boasts bustling markets, the ruins of Hannibal's Carthage, great palm oases and the delightful seaside town of Sidi Bou Said. From the coliseum at El Djem, we cross the mountains to the edge of the Sahara Desert, visiting film locations featured in *Star Wars*. Explore the desert oasis of Tozeur, traverse the immense salt flats of Chott el Djerid, go camel trekking and see the 'troglodyte' houses in Matmata. Sleep one night in a fixed desert camp and spend two days relaxing by the sea at Djerba, the legendary "Land of the Lotus Eaters".

Day 1 Fly to Tunis (Gammarth La Marsa)

Depart from London arriving in Tunis in the evening. This ancient medieval city was originally the poor relation to the more prominent Carthage. However by the 9th century the Aghlabid, who were originally the governors of Tunisia and also Algeria, had made it their capital, building the Great Mosque, the pulsating heart of the Medina.

Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast)

Day 2 Visit the remains of Carthage; Sidi Bou Said and Sousse

This morning we set off to visit Carthage, a key rival of Rome in its march to domination of the Mediterranean. Its leader Hannibal was a sworn enemy that almost brought Rome to its knees so when they finally defeated Carthage the Romans exacted a terrible revenge. The ruins of both the Punic and Roman imperial cities overlook the sea with baths, dwellings, temples, shrines and the fabulous naval port of the Carthaginians. From here, it is a short journey to hilltop village of Sidi Bou Said with sweeping views across the Bay of Tunis as far as the sacred two-horned sacred mountain of the Carthaginians; here you can unwind in one of its relaxing cafes in this charming whitewashed village with its famous blue doors and intricate metalwork. After lunch (own expense) we travel down the coast to Sousse (2 hours drive). The rest of the afternoon and evening is free to explore; Sousse has wonderful white beaches and you can also test your haggling skills in the well preserved walled Medina, full of old world charm. Walk through the ornate gateways of the Medina and explore the narrow streets awash with merchants all eager to sell their goods. Decide if you want carpets or jewellery, brasswork or sheesha pipes, handicrafts or pottery – there is a souk for everything. **Hotel (breakfast)**

Day 3 El Jem and Tozeur (5 hours drive total)

After breakfast, you'll leave the coast and head south through the endless olive groves towards the Sahara Desert. En route you'll visit the stunning Roman amphitheatre at El Jem, rising majestically from the middle of a flat plain surrounded by houses. It is better preserved than the Coliseum in Rome and you can absorb the atmosphere that has seen gladiatorial games, wild animals and circuses – children can let their imagination, and games, run wild. The well-restored underground chambers and almost complete Roman villa make this a fascinating visit.

We stop en route for lunch, (own expense) before we head across the mountains and across the increasingly arid landscape to the great oasis of Tozeur in the deep south – it will be noticeably hotter here and the landscape becomes wilder. Tozeur built its power and regional prominence on its date harvest and as a stop on the caravan route to the Sahara. We arrive late in the afternoon, with time to take a dip in the pool and freshen up before dinner. Or time permitting ride in a calesh (a horse-drawn carriage - optional) or walk amongst the 200,000 palms set in an oasis fed by hundreds of springs, the water being funneled along dykes. **2 nights - Hotel with pool (breakfast and dinner)**

Day 4 Star Wars at Onk El Jemel

This morning we visit Onk El Jemel, meaning camel's head; you will see why when you spot the rock formation which startlingly resembles the top half of a camel. *Star Wars'* fans may also recognize the terrain as it was the site of one of the sets for the first *Star Wars* film. The set is still in place and was also used more recently for *The English Patient*.

The afternoon is free for optional tours, whether this is visiting the fascinating museum at Dar Cherait, which offers a glimpse into 3,000 years of Tunisian life. Alternatively, climb into a four-wheel drive and strike out to the abandoned village of Tamerza, next to the Algerian border, across the Chott el Gharsa, a salt flat which lies below sea level, stopping at the small kasbah and oasis of Chebika, perched on a rocky outcrop (1½ hr driving time). Here you can hike through the gorge to a small waterfall. Returning mid afternoon to enjoy walk through the oasis palmerie at Tozeur to see the farmers at work and intricate irrigation channels running through the palms.



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Day 5 Dinosaurs to Douz (2 hours driving)

Before you leave Tozeur you'll visit Chak-Wak to delve even further back in history with an exhibition of evolution from dinosaurs to pre-history, walk through a volcano and move on to the history of Jewish, Christian and Muslim religions. Heading further south you cross the great salt lake at Chott el Jerid on a high causeway. Tunisia's largest salt flat is completely dry for half the year; when it does flood the water evaporates rapidly – as you cross you will no doubt stop to see the strange formations and frequent mirages that appear. The road then skirts the edge of the desert, the Great Eastern Erg - you will start to see the dunes as soon as you leave the salt lake. Douz is the gateway to the Sahara and home to the nomadic tribe of the Mrazig – it is still unspoiled and very friendly. There is an optional camel trek into the sand dunes, approximately 2 hours long. The camel is still the main form of transport for the locals here and you'll now climb on board your very own beast for the trip into the desert. These are actually dromedaries (they only have one hump) and surprisingly their gait is relatively smooth because they move their left and right legs together, although you may want to walk too. You'll notice if your camel has just had a drink because his hump is firm and straight, it droops when he is thirsty and needs to replenish his store. Tonight you'll stay in a fixed desert camp, in Bedouin-style tents. There is a swimming pool and separate washrooms and toilets. Remember to wrap up warmly as it can get very cold in the desert at night. Enjoy watching the sunset across the desert – magical. **Camp (dinner and breakfast)**

Day 6 Troglodytes and Berber villages (5 hours driving in total)

Leave the desert behind and cross the rocky tell, an almost lunar landscape, which become even more bizarre as you approach Matmata. More *Star Wars* today as you explore the pit dwellings of Matmata - the interior shots for Luke Skywalker's home were filmed on location here. These troglodyte houses were built to escape the intense summer heat and winter cold, the earth's insulation provides constant ambient temperature year-round. A sunken courtyard is surrounded by smaller rooms dug out of the earth, with steps leading to higher chambers. A large house may comprise several pits joined together. You are now in Berber country; a facet of their life is the *ksour*, (*ksar* plural). These are fortified communal grain stores that you will see dotted about the southern mountains of the south on the way through Mednine to Tataouine. They comprise many *ghorfa*, small stone cells stacked side by side around a courtyard and then fortified. We stop for lunch at a troglodyte restaurant and from here and then carry on to the coast and the short ferry to Djerba. Time permitting we will stop at the small museum commemorating the 1943 Battle of Mareth when the British 8th Army broke through the Afrika Korps defences into Tunisia.

The Isle of Djerba is a picturesque island of white-washed towns, palm-fringed sandy beaches against a deep blue sky. You have free time to explore the capital Houmt Souk, with its narrow alleys of souks and souvenir shops or take a walk to the bustling fishing port. There are many great seafood restaurants in the area, please ask your guide for his recommendations. Approximately four miles from Houmt Souk, is the Synagogue of el-Ghriba in er-Riadh, it is the oldest synagogue in North Africa and believed to house the world's oldest Torah too. **2 nights - Hotel with pool (breakfast)**

Day 7 Isle of Djerba

Free time in Djerba to relax and unwind, enjoy walks along the beach, relax by the hotel pool and explore at leisure.

Day 8 Fly to London

Following an early breakfast, you are transferred to Djerba Airport for a short flight to Tunis, where you join your international flight back fly home; arriving in London mid-afternoon.

This itinerary includes our group flights from London. If you are making other flight arrangements, please refer to your Confirmation Invoice and Joining Instructions for details of the start or end of the trip. Please remember international flights and trip dates do occasionally change, so please always purchase flexible tickets. Each itinerary is planned many months in advance and although it is our intention to operate the itinerary as printed in the brochure and detailed here, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of alterations to flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors which are beyond our control. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops may vary from those outlined but we will always endeavour to keep you informed of any such changes. Included meals are indicated in the daily itinerary.

Is this right for your family? There's quite a bit of traveling, but the itinerary is packed with a variety of interests; because of this it is more suited to children over seven. Accommodation is in comfortable hotels, plus one night in the desert in a simple, but comfortable, Bedouin-style camp.

Lone Parents Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries, including the UK, require documentation confirming that the individual has authority to travel with the minor. It is



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crucial that you contact the relevant country embassy for further information on exactly what may be required. These details can be found on the Foreign & Commonwealth Website under the appropriate country www.fco.gov.uk/travel

Accommodation The hotels are of 3 to 4 star standard modern, clean and comfortable and offer friendly service. All rooms have private facilities and are booked on a twin share or family room basis. We stay in a fixed desert camp, in Bedouin-style tents. There is a swimming pool and separate washrooms and toilets. The mention of a swimming pool at a hotel should not be taken as a guarantee but rather an indication. You should also be aware that swimming pools at the hotels are often unheated and so can be cold in the winter months or even closed.

Food and Drink Meals are included as per the itinerary. Couscous is the national dish of Tunisia and Tunisians make good use of the excellent produce of both land and sea with lots of fruit and vegetables. They like chili and so it can be spicy. Look out for a variety of stews (tagine) based on vegetables and pulses such as chachouka (ratatouille with a poached egg), koucha (baked baby lamb), guenaouia (spicy beef or lamb) mloukiahia (beef or lamb stew). Brik or brik à l'oeuf (egg and a tasty filling fried in an envelope of pastry) is a good snack. Pastries are sweet and sticky. The national drink is mint tea with pine nuts, also very sweet. Please remember to drink plenty of bottled water during your trip.

Climate Tunisia has a Mediterranean climate, comfortably warm in spring and autumn although it is rainiest in March and April and hottest in July and August. In winter, the north and mountainous regions can get quite cold and even snowy on the coast. May to October is best for the beaches, especially in the north.

Average monthly climate in Tunis

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Max °C	14	16	18	21	23	29	32	33	31	25	20	16
Min °C	6	7	8	11	13	17	20	21	19	15	11	7
Rainfall (mm)	64	51	41	36	18	8	3	8	33	51	48	61

Language The official language in Tunisia is Arabic, which is universal. French is spoken by the most educated Tunisians with a small minority speaking Berber. More and more English is spoken by school age children.

Currency The Tunisian currency is the Tunisian Dinar (TC). The Dinar is divided into 1000 millimes. Sometimes you will see prices expressed in millimes, e.g. 1,500 instead of 1.15TD. At the time of writing (Sept 2009) £1 = 1.95TD. ATMs can be found in most sizeable towns. On your return journey, please be aware the Duty Free does not take Tunisian Dinar and you need to change money before you proceed through to the Departure Lounge.

Local Costs *Based on a mid range tourist restaurant.

A small bottle of mineral water (500ml)	£0.70
A large bottle of mineral water (1 litre)	£0.80
A can of coke (soft drinks)	£0.75
A carton or bottle of fruit juice	£1.00
A bottle of beer	£1.80
Tea or coffee	£0.75
A light lunch time snack – sandwich for example	£3.50
A two course meal* - excluding drinks	£5.50
A three course meal* - excluding drinks	£7.50

Tipping is a recognised part of life and although at your discretion you will be expected to reward service. It should be remembered, however, that over-generosity could lead to jealousy in poor countries. Please remember that all tips should be a way for individuals to thank staff for good service. As a guideline each person should allow £2-3 per day to cover tips for local staff.

Time Tunisia is GMT +1 hour (summer this is GMT +2)

Ramadan 2010 11th August – 8th September 2010 (dates not fixed but dependent on the lunar calendar): Please note that Ramadan is a month of fasting observed by Muslims throughout the world, during which time the



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followers of Islam should not eat or drink between sunrise and sunset. There may be some limitations to services and disruptions to schedules during Ramadan, but generally our tours still operate effectively during this period and food is available to non-Muslims throughout the day in most countries. Please be aware of the local sensitivities during the day and bear in mind that the evening breaking of the fast is usually an exciting and celebratory period! (1st August to 29th August 2011)

Glossary	
aghlabid	Arab dynasty in 9 th century
bab	door/gate
borj	fort
chott	salt lake
dar	house
erg	sand dune
ghar	cave
ghorfa	grain store
jebel	mountain
jorf	cliff
kasbah	castle/fortified residence/village
ksar (pl. ksour)	granary
medina	town
oued	river
ribat	monastic fortress
souk	market/stall

Security Whilst the vast majority of travellers never experience anything untoward it is worth taking precautions particularly in urban areas. You should take sensible precautions in crowded areas such as street markets and airports, where pick-pocketing is common, and keep clear of any street disturbances. Don't wear expensive jewellery, never leave your bags unattended, keep large amounts of money, cameras and mobile phones out of sight when walking in town centres, and avoid walking in city centres after dark. Keep copies of important documents, including passports, in a separate place to the documents themselves, together with details of credit cards. Leave copies at home with a friend too. Safeguard valuables, important documents and cash and deposit them in hotel safes, where practicable.

Packing List Please refer to our separate "packing list"



Clothing & Equipment List for Tunisia – Star Wars & Camels

The following list of clothing and equipment is intended to be fairly comprehensive and experienced travellers may well take a good deal less luggage than we recommend. Out of respect for local culture please dress conservatively i.e. no sleeveless or low cut tops etc. Although shorts are acceptable in main tourist areas, they (like skirts) should be baggy and reach at least to the knee. Women should cover their heads, arms and legs when entering religious buildings. At night in the desert (especially from October to March) it can get surprisingly cold, so pack warm and windproof clothing. Please exercise caution in the desert and wear sturdy footwear – you may come across a scorpion in your path!

CLOTHING	NUMBER PER PERSON	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Trainers or Strong Sandals	1 pair – all purpose wear		Soft-sided bag 50 – 80 litres	
Waterproof Jacket	1 lightweight		Lightweight Daypack – 25 litres	
T-Shirts	3+		Sunglasses	
Long Trousers or Skirt	2+		Personal First Aid Kit	
Shorts / Short Trousers	2		Sunscreen	
Long Sleeve Shirt	2+		Insect Repellent	
Sunhat / Baseball cap	Essential (styled to shade face, ears and neck)		Torch and Batteries	
Warm jacket	1		Camera Memory Card + Accessories	
Thin Fleece or Sweatshirt	1		Washing Kit including dry antibacterial handwash wet wipes are refreshing	
Warm hat, scarf and gloves	Woolly or fleece (winter)		Loo Kit (in small bag) loo paper/tissues	
Swim Wear	1		Towel / Sarong	

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Passport/ Visa		Small Sewing Kit & Safety Pins	
Air Tickets		Universal travelling adapter	
Cash /Credit Cards		Reading Material	
Insurance Documents		Guide Book & map	
Trip Information and Itinerary		Binoculars – optional	
Money Security Belt/Pouch		Notebook/Diary/Pen	

For details regarding **hand luggage restrictions** please visit www.baa.com