

Trip Dossier for Tunisia – Star Wars & Camels

Trip Code: FTSW Issue date: 22 Nov 2007 Valid from: 01 January 2008

Day 1 Fly to Tunis (Gammarth La Marsa)

Depart from London arriving in Tunis at lunchtime. 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 (they claimed) Algeria, had made it their capital, building the Great Mosque, the pulsating heart of the Medina. **Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast)**

Day 2 From Islam at Kairouan to the Romans at Sbeitla

Today we head south to Kairouan, Islam's fourth holiest site, ranking after Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. As you approach, rising from far across the plains you see white domes surrounded by stunning battlements. It is a UNESCO World Heritage site. The simplicity of the Great Mosque with its delicate ornamentation is in contrast to the massive buttressed walls that encompass it. See the Medina and the Mosque and then relish the quiet outside as you explore the Aghlabid pools built in the 9th century, an amazingly sophisticated city water-collection system fed by a 35-kilometre aqueduct from Jebil Cherichera. Close to the pools you can visit the Barber's Mausoleum; the barber in question was a companion of the Prophet who kept with him at all times three hairs from the Prophet's beard and so he was known as the Prophet's Barber. This mosque has wonderful lattice-work ceilings and harmonious colonnades. Moving on you reach back even further in time to the Roman sites at Sbeitla (known as Sufutela). This is the best-preserved complex of forum temples in the country and there is an olive press, as well as baths and a triumphal arch. Tonight is spent at Gafsa on the northern edge of the Jerid, an arid area covering more than half of Tunisia and characterized by flat empty landscapes, in summer a dazzling salty whiteness and in winter the lake is nearly entirely covered with a thin layer of water. **Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast and dinner)**

Day 3 Dunes, Desert and Star Wars at Tozeur

After breakfast, you'll leave Gafsa bound for Tozeur, which built its power and regional prominence on its date harvest and as a stop on the caravan route to the Sahara. 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. Visit the museum at Dar Cherait which offers a glimpse into 3000 years of Tunisian life. Climb into a four-wheel drive and strike out to Tamerza across the Chott el Gharsa, a salt flat which lies below sea level, stopping at the small oasis of Chebika, perched on a rocky outcrop. Here you can hike through the gorge to a small waterfall for a cooling swim. On the way back to Tozeur you divert to 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 for *The English Patient*. This may be the evening you catch a desert sunset on your way back to Tozeur. **Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast and dinner)**

Day 4 Dinosaurs to Douz

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. Yesterday's salt lake was miniature as compared to Chott el Jerid, which you cross today. This is Tunisia's largest salt flat and is completely dry for half the year; when it does flood the water evaporates rapidly. The road then skirts the edge of the desert, the Great Eastern Erg. 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 quad bike tour of Douz (18 years and over). 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 dromadarys (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 camp under the stars, but wrap up warmly as it can get very cold. **Camp (dinner and breakfast)**

Day 5 Troglodytes and Berber villages

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. You'll visit some of these before



winding up at the ancient Berber village of Chenini. Extraordinary in its isolation and barrenness this fairytale village rises up amongst the bare rocky hills, its cave dwellings clinging to the sides, and fronted by *ghorfas*. Return to Tataouine.

Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast and dinner)

Day 6 Drive up the coast to Sfax and the Roman Amphitheatre at El Jem and on to Sousse

Today you'll leave the desert and mountains behind and head back to the coast at Gabes, the hub of southern Tunisia by virtue of its position between the coast and the salt flats. Since the days of the Phoenicians, caravans, pilgrims to Mecca, merchants and present day traffic pass through this city. Carry on up the coast to Sfax and spend a couple of hours in the bustling Medina nearly completely encircled by ramparts. Poke around the first floor workshops to see cobblers and other artisans at work using traditional methods. The *ribat* or *Kasbah* was built as the governor's residence but is now an architectural museum. Further north is El Jem where, in the middle of a flat plain surrounded by houses, is a stunning Roman amphitheatre. Better preserved than even the Colosseum in Rome, you can absorb the atmosphere that has seen gladiatorial games, wild animals and circuses. Well restored underground chambers and a totally complete Roman villa make this a fascinating visit. The last stop today is at Sousse, on the coast, with wonderful white beaches. You can also test your haggling skills in the well preserved walled Medina, full of old world charm. **Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast and dinner)**

Day 7 Beaches at Hammamet

Before you leave Sousse you will be able to return to the Medina to see the Ribat, notable because of its rare architectural style once common throughout North Africa. It is a mixture of monastery and fort, housing the defenders of the city from marauding Christians. You can climb up the 27-metre tower for an impressive view of the old town and harbour. Then carry on up the coast to Hammamet. Stop off at the newly constructed Medina Mediterranean of Yasmine Hammamet. You will be welcomed by Hannibal and his troops aboard their elephants at the entrance to this complex comprising a themed adventure park called Carthageland, a marina, sophisticated medina, shops and restaurants. Hammamet is well known for its wonderful beaches and was developed as a resort in the 1920s. The Medina juts charmingly out into the sea and a visit to the restored 12th-century Kasbah will give you marvellous views. **Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast and dinner)**

Day 8 Souks of Tunis, remains of Carthage and Sidi Bou Said

All the hustle and bustle of the souks of Tunis are on the menu today. 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 chicha pipes, handicrafts or pottery – there is a souk for everything. You then move on to soak up the incredible experience of the Bardo Museum. In this former Turkish Palace you will find the finest collection of Roman mosaics in the world, including scenes from Homer's Odyssey and biblical themes, wildlife and birds, hunting and gaming, roman statuary and an Islamic Art collection. With all this in mind and remembering Hannibal from yesterday you then visit Carthage. The ruins of both the Punic and Roman empires overlook the sea with baths, dwellings, temples, shrines and the fabulous naval port of the Carthaginians. A short hop away is Sidi Bou Said; here you can unwind in one of its relaxing cafes in this charming whitewashed village with its famous blue doors and intricate metalwork. **Hotel (breakfast and dinner)**

Day 9 Fly to London

Transfer to Tunis airport to fly home and arrive 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 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. Consequently there are factors over which we have no control and which could make changes necessary. We will always endeavour to keep you informed of any such changes in advance.

Is this right for your family? There's quite a bit of traveling, but the itinerary is packed with interest and there are only two long driving days. 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.

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

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.

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) mloukiah (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.

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 (Oct 2007) £1 = 2.54TD. ATMs can be found in most sizeable towns

Local Costs

A small bottle of mineral water (500ml)	£0.50
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	£1.70
Tea or coffee	£0.60
A light lunch time snack – sandwich for example	£3.50
A two course meal* - excluding drinks	£5.00
A three course meal* - excluding drinks	£7.00

*Based on a mid range tourist restaurant.

Tippling 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 traveller should allow £2-3 per day to cover tips for local staff.

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.

Time Tunisia is GMT +1 hours with no daylight saving. So in British summer time there is no difference.

Glossary

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

Packing List Please refer to our separate "packing list"



Clothing & Equipment List for Tunisia – Star Wars & Camels

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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.

CLOTHING	NUMBER PER PERSON	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Walking Shoes	1 pair		Soft-sided bag 50 – 80 litres	
Trainers or Strong Sandals	1 pair – all purpose wear		Lightweight Daypack – 25 litres	
Socks	4+		A variety of plastic bags	
Waterproof Jacket	1 lightweight		Sunglasses	
T-Shirts	3+		Personal First Aid Kit	
Long Trousers or Skirt	2+		Large Water Bottle	
Short Trousers	2		Insect Repellent	
Long Sleeve Shirt	2+		Torch and Batteries	
Track Suit Bottoms or Similar	Optional		Camera, Film and Accessories	
Sunhat / Baseball cap	Essential (styled to shade face, ears and neck)		Reading Material	
Warm jacket	1		Washing & Shaving Kit - wet wipes are refreshing	
Thin Fleece or Sweatshirt	1		Towel or Sarong	
Warm hat, scarf and gloves	Woolly or fleece (winter)		Guide Book & map	
Swim Wear	1		Loo Kit (in small bag) loo paper/tissues	
Bicycle Helmet recommended for kids riding on camels				

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Passport/ Visa		Small Sewing Kit & Safety Pins	
Air Tickets		Universal travelling adapter	
Money/Travellers Cheques		Tooth Paste/Floss	
Cash Cards/Visa		Small Calculator	
Insurance Documents		Sweets and Snacks for the journey	
Trip Information and Itinerary		Cold Water Detergent	
Money Security Belt/Pouch		Biodegradable Soap	
Spectacles/Contact Lenses		Binoculars – optional	
Sunscreen – lots of it		Notebook/Diary/Pen	
Moisturising Cream & Lip salve – not in hand luggage		Small presents for local kids – biros, balloons, books	
Scissor/Mirror/Nail Clippers – not in hand luggage		Small toys and books for your children	

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

