

Algeria and Tunisia

Departs
18th October 2024

Blue Dot Travel

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ALGERIA AND TUNISIA

This journey will introduce you to the historical riches of two Northern African gems: Algeria and Tunisia.

Algeria stands as a testament to the layers of civilisations it has embraced, from the Numidians and Phoenicians to the Romans, Byzantines, and Ottomans... culminating in French colonial rule. Our exploration begins in Tipaza, where remnants of Phoenician commerce, Roman influence, and Byzantine Christianity converge. Timgad and Djémila offer glimpses into the opulent urban life of Imperial Rome, while Constantine, cradled within the rugged Wadi Rummel gorge, narrates a saga of resilience against dramatic landscapes. We will visit Tipaza, with its ruins of a Phoenician trading post, Roman port and Byzantine churches, and see the perfectly preserved Roman cities of Timgad and Djémila, which provide insight into sophisticated urban living in the wealthiest of imperial Roman provinces. Constantine, The Roman 'City of Bridges', is renowned for its unique topography. The river Oued Rhumel has carved out deep gorges, around the city perched on a rocky outcrop, creating a natural fortress. After a domestic flight, we head from the coast into the desert, beyond the limits of Roman control, to the 'closed' valley of the M'Zab, where a traditional way of life survives, little changed since medieval times when this was a remote refuge from war and religious persecution. With the Sahara as a backdrop, the ancient Ksars or fortified strongholds, with their surrounding mud brick villages, still hold on to traditions that have endured the desert sands for centuries. Our tour of Algeria finishes back in Algiers the bustling capital, where the traditional Casbah is counterbalanced by a wonderfully engaging mix of Ottoman grandeur, French colonial chic and modern vibrancy.

As large as Algeria is, Tunisia, on the other hand, is a small but diverse country situated across the Mediterranean from Sicily, with Algeria as its western neighbour. First settled by the Berber tribes, Tunisia has hosted several cultures. Sited close to present-day Tunis, where the Phoenicians founded our tour starts, the rich and powerful city of Carthage in the tenth century BCE. Following its destruction in 146 BCE, Rome re-established the city, which grew to a peak population of 500,000. Our tour of Tunisia will see us 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 1,500 years. One of these is Kairouan's ancient mosque, which played a key role in the Islamisation of North Africa. We will also encounter the fascinating ribats of Sousse and Monastir, built to defend Islamic Ifriqiyya from European incursions. From blue seas to sandy deserts: seaside cities and fishing villages, jagged hilltops and canyons, salt lakes, lush oases, and the world's greatest desert.

These two countries offer lands of incredible hospitality and an intriguing and extraordinary history in an area that is rarely visited by English speakers making them both classic Blue Dot destinations!



**Friday 18th October
DEPARTURE**

Depart Australia for Algiers, most likely through Dubai. All flights are to be confirmed. (Tip: alcohol is legal in Algeria but not widely available. You can bring one litre of alcohol into the country, and Dubai is the best place to purchase).



**Day 1, Saturday
19th October
ALGIERS**

Upon arrival in Algiers, the capital of Algeria, we will be met at the airport and transferred to our hotel for check-in. After our long flight, the afternoon is free.

Algiers, originally called Al-Jaza'ir, is built into the hills of the Sahel and stretches ten miles along the Bay of Algiers on the Mediterranean. This coastal location made it perfect for the barbarian pirate stronghold it would become in 1529, when the pirate "Redbeard" expelled the Spaniards from Penon Island, taking control of the city for the Ottoman Empire. The country's eventful history is demonstrated in the city's richly textured architecture - the French colonised Algeria in 1830 and stayed for 130 years, leaving large French-built boulevards and elegant apartments and villas, socialist-era monuments and public buildings, and an enduring Islamic heartland, nestled in the steep hillside Kasbah. A welcome dinner is included in the hotel

restaurant this evening. Overnight at Lamaraz Arts Hotel (or similar) for a two-night stay. *D*

**Day 2, Sunday
20th October
ALGIERS –
CHERCHELL – TIPAZA**

Today we'll take a day trip to visit Tipaza, Cherchell and the Tomb of the Christians. We will depart Algiers and travel west to the ruins of Tipaza (also called Tipasa). Originally a Phoenician trading post, Tipaza became a Roman colony in the 2nd century. Later, it became one of the most important Christian colonies in North Africa. With the arrival of the Vandals and their Arian Christianity in 430 AD, most inhabitants fled to Spain. One of the most interesting sites we visited in Tipaza was the mausoleum built in the 5th century with 14 places for sarcophagi. The museum is small but full of precious mosaics from the 1st-century basilica. After a wonderful seaside lunch and walk along the port, we will continue to Cherchell and the ruins of the ancient Roman port of Césarée. Cherchell was once a Phoenician, Carthaginian and Roman colony and the capital of the kingdoms of Numidia and Mauritania. We will then return to Algiers with a stop at the pyramidal structure of the Christian tomb, located on a hill with a magnificent view of



the surrounding countryside. The tomb dates back to the Christian era and probably belongs to the pre-Roman era of the Numidian rulers. Dinner at the hotel. *B/L/D*



 **Day 3, Monday
21st October
ALGIERS – GHARDAIA**

This morning, we embark on a tour of Algiers. We will head to the upper part of the Kasbah to start our walking tour with a stroll

through the narrow streets. We'll visit Centennial House designed at the beginning of the 20th century, offering a panoramic view over the rooftops of the bay of 'Alger. We will then walk through streets steeped in history, passing handicraft shops to visit the Khedaouj El Amia Palace and the Mustapha Pasha Palace, two buildings from the Ottoman era that now house the Museum of Traditional Arts and the Museum of Calligraphy and Miniatures. We then continue past the Kétchoua Mosque to the Palais des Rias (also known as Bastion 23), a listed historical monument. We'll ascend to the Our Lady of Africa (Lady of Africa), a Roman Catholic Basilica inaugurated in 1872 CE. In the afternoon, we'll visit the symbolic Martyr's Monument, an iconic concrete monument commemorating Algeria's war for independence, and its adjacent museum. The monument was inaugurated in 1982 on the 20th anniversary of Algeria's independence. Late afternoon, we'll go to the airport for our transfer to Ghardaia on Flight Algiers at 18:30hrs (arriving Ghardaïa at 20:00hrs TBC). Transfer to the hotel for dinner and a two-night stay at the Ghardaïa Hotel M'zab (basic but in-keeping with the region). *B/L/D*

 **Day 4, Tuesday 22nd October
GHARDAIA**

Today, a tour of Ghardaïa, located in the UNESCO World Heritage region of the M'zab Valley. This morning, we'll walk the markets and see the interesting architecture unique to this region. The valley, bordering the Sahara, comprises five towns: Ghardaïa, Melika, Beni Isguen, Bou Noura and El-Atteuf. Often referred to collectively as "Ghardaïa", the once distinct villages gradually expand, but each retains a distinct identity. Our afternoon is free before we meet again for dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at the Ghardaïa Hotel M'zab (or similar). *B/L/D*

 **Day 5, Wednesday 23rd October
GHARDAIA – CONSTANTINE**

Today, we go back in time with a full day excursion exploring the M'Zab Valley. The M'Zab is home to a conservative Muslim sect known as the Ibadites, who broke away from traditional Islam about 900 years ago. It is a country unto itself, with ancient and unchanging social codes. The traditional white haik (a head-to-toe woollen wrap) is worn by most women, who cover their entire face, exposing only one eye. Men wear extravagant pleated pants called saroual loubia. While the locals here can be reserved, it's a friendly and surprisingly laid-back place. We'll spend a day visiting the traditional markets, enjoying the lively atmosphere, colours and buildings. We will walk through the narrow streets, visit important religious monuments and mosques and enjoy the natural beauty. Dinner is at the hotel. After dinner, a late evening flight to Constantine departing 22:35 hrs (arriving 23:50 hrs TBC).

Check in to the Constantine Protéa where you'll stay for three nights (or similar). *B/L/D*

 **Day 6, Thursday
24th October
CONSTANTINE**

Today, we leave for our full-day excursion to Constantine, which straddles a spectacular gorge that divides the city in two. We'll start the day with a visit to Tiddis, hovering on a barren mountain slope about 30 km outside Constantine. The ruined city is perhaps the most impressive of all the Roman sites in Algeria. The Romans arrived in the time of Augustus but built much of what can be seen today in the 3rd century AD, adapting their basic rule of urban planning - two straight central streets that intersect at the heart of the community - to the curves of the site. Tiddis had no water sources, so one of the most interesting features of the houses here are the canals and cisterns. After, we'll return to Constantine, where we will embark on a tour of the city, visiting the Cirta Museum, the hanging bridges, the Constantine Museum, the Kasbah and the Palace of Ahmed Bey. Dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at the Constantine Protéa (or similar). *B/L/D*



 **Day 7, Friday 25th October
MEDRACEN – TIMGAD – CONSTANTINE**

After breakfast, we'll depart for Timgad (a 2.5-hour drive). Timgad (Roman Thamugadi) is today a World Heritage Site located on the northern slopes of the Atlas Mountains of the Aures. Originally founded as a military colony by Emperor Trajan in 100 AD for a population of 15,000, the city quickly outgrew its original specifications. It spread beyond the grid in a more loosely organised fashion, an excellent example of Roman urban planning. After our visit, we will have lunch and return to Constantine for dinner at the hotel. *B/L/D*

 **Day 8, Saturday
26th October
CONSTANTINE -
DJEMILA – SETIF**

After breakfast, depart for Sétif via Djemila (Arabic for "pretty town"). Located 900 m above sea level, this World Heritage Site is considered one of Algeria's most remarkable Roman sites. During our half-day walking tour, we will explore Roman Cuicul, visiting the forum, temples, basilicas, triumphal arches and houses. Cuicul was an interesting example of Roman town planning adapted to a mountain site. Djemila stands out as one of the best-preserved Roman ruins in North Africa, and the adjoining Djemila Museum is full of the most famous Roman mosaics. After our visit, we'll continue towards Sétif and check in to our hotel late in the afternoon. Dinner and overnight at the hotel where you stay for just the one night *B/L/D*



 **Day 9, Sunday 27th October
SETIF – ALGIERS**

This morning, we visit the archeology museum at Setif. This small museum offers insight into the area's history,

particularly the Roman period, where artefacts and architectural remains abound. In the afternoon, we continue our trip to Algiers and check in at our Lamar Arts Hotel (or similar) hotel. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. **B/L/D**



 **Day 10, Monday
28th October**
ALGIERS

Today we visit The National Museum of Antiquities and Islamic Art in the Parc de la Liberté in the heights of Algiers. The collection was set up in 1835, five


years after the French occupation, by the then Governor General Marshal Clauzel. From 1838 onward, the early museum hosted pieces of Algerian provenance from Antiquity up until the Ottoman period, including many mosaics, Greco-Roman sculptures, and bronzes. Then, we head to the National Museum of Bardo. Located in a historical house of the 18th century, its collections are dedicated to prehistory and ethnology. Lunch is at a restaurant. In the afternoon, we'll visit a few other local areas of the city before heading back to the hotel. Our farewell to Algeria dinner is in the Kasbah. Overnight at the Lamaraz Arts Hotel (or similar). **B/L/D**

 **Day 11, Tuesday 29th October**
ALGIERS TO TUNIS, TUNISIA

Today we depart Algiers for Tunis, the capital of Tunisia. Before our flight, we will visit the National Museum of Fine Arts. Opened in the 1930's it has thousands of works including famous Dutch and French masters. (Make sure you visit the patio at the top of the museum for the wonderful views over the gardens and to the ocean). Then we'll stroll through the gardens and have lunch before heading to the airport. (Flight TBC).

Welcome to Tunisia! We will be met and transferred to the hotel on arrival in Tunis, the capital city of Tunisia. This modern city extends along the Mediterranean coastal plains into the surrounding hills. Tunis is a bustling metropolis on the Gulf of Tunis, home to one-sixth of the country's population. A city of contrasts; modern office buildings, shopping malls and European cafes, the French colonial architecture of Ville Nouvelle, and the dynamic Arab souks of the old Medina. Overnight at Dar El Jeld Medina Tunis (or similar). Dinner will be at the hotel restaurant. **B/D**




 **Day 12,
Wednesday 30th
October**
**BARDO MUSEUM –
CARTHAGE – TUNIS**

After breakfast, depart to visit Bardo Museum. This extremely rich archaeological museum is famous for its

collection of Roman mosaics. Housed in the wing of an old biblical palace which has retained some of its decoration it also boasts some superb ancient statues and valuable objects from the prehistoric, Punic, and Muslim periods. We'll then drive to Carthage for a panoramic visit to the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Built in 814 B.C. it was Rome's biggest rival. This wealthy little town is built over

the remains of one of the most glorious cities of Antiquity, founded by the Phoenicians in the ninth century BC, destroyed, and then rebuilt by the Romans to become one of the most brilliant provincial capitals of their empire. Return to the historic centre of Tunis' medina where its general appearance for more than 500 years has remained. Winding streets, vaulted passageways, beautiful doors framed in sculpted stone give a changing appearance to the town, which is inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Explore the medina and its souks and colourful local markets. Dinner in the restaurant at Dar El Jeld Medina Tunis. **B/D**

 **Day 13,
Thursday 31st**

October
**TUNIS – DOUGGA -
TOUKABER FARM –
TUNIS**

After breakfast, the group will depart for Dougga (Ancient Thugga), about 2 hours, where you'll visit the archeological site covering 60 acres and laid out on a steep slope some 2,000 feet above the plain. It is still used to this day for modern concerts! Continue to Thuccabor and visit the Ben Ismail Family Reserve in Medjez El Bab. Here, you'll have a wonderful lunch from local produce and also learn about the olive industry (complete with tasting). Drive back to Tunis for dinner (if you can fit it in). **B/L/D**



 **Day 14, Friday 1st November**
TUNIS – OUDHNA – ZAGHOUAN – KAIROUAN

Depart to the Roman colony of Oudhna (ancient Uthina) to visit the Uthina amphitheatre. Then drive to Zaghuan lying seductively on a few hills below the dramatic Zaghuan Mountain. It was an important town in Roman times, then known as

Ziqua, administering one of Carthage's most important water resources. Some interesting traces of this past are in town, including the triumphal arch and a fountain as big as a temple. Continue to Kairouan, the holy Islamic city Founded in 671 by Okba Ibn Nafâa, inscribed in UNESCO's WORLD Heritage list. It has continued to be a holy city whose medina and monuments occupy a special place in Tunisian heritage. Dinner is in a local restaurant in the Medina of Kairouan. **B/D**



 **Day 15, Saturday 2nd November**
KAIROUAN – SBEITLA – TOZEUR

After breakfast, depart for the huge Mosque Sidi Okba, one of the most ancient mosques in the world and a monument that is counted among the most impressive in North Africa. The Great Mosque is the symbol of Kairouan, not only for its religious prestige but also for its historical importance and its remarkable architecture. The structure was built in 670 by the Arab General Okba Ibn Nafi. It was rebuilt in its current form in 836, under the dynasty of the Aghlabids, a time of prosperity when Kairouan was the capital of a vast

province. Continue to Sbeitla one of the few ancient Roman cities that is famous not only for its strategic role but also for its politics. Finally, arrive in Tozeur, one of the most famous oases in the world which is surrounded by 200 springs. It is sheltered by a palm grove of more than 1000 ha – about 400,000 palm trees and world-renowned dates, also known as Deglet Nour, which means “fingers of light”. Dinner in the hotel. **B/D**



 **Day 16, Sunday
3rd November
TOZEUR – CHOTT EL
JERID – MATMATA –
DJERBA**

After breakfast, we'll visit the Medina of Tozeur and Dar Cherait museum. Then, continue to

Matmata via Chott El Jerid Salt Pans with its sunbaked surface, composed of a hard crust of sodium chloride, conceals underground water sources. Visit Matmata (places where the movie Star Wars was made), a troglodyte village with completely subterranean dwellings, craters carved into the soft rock serve as a central courtyard. Lunch is provided at a troglodyte house nearby. Then, drive on to Djerba by the Roman road. This is the only land entrance to the island. Check in to our lovely hotel for two nights and dinner. **B/L/D**

 **Day 17, Monday 4th November
DJERBA**

After breakfast, explore Djerba Island. First, we'll visit the Guellala village on the island's south coast, which is famous for its pottery. We'll discover Erriadh, a village made up of a Jewish minority who have lived on the island for more than 100 years. The Ghriba Synagogue is the oldest outside of Israel and holds one of the oldest Torahs in the world. Drive to Houmet-Souk (the capital of Djerba, the administrative capital of the Tunisian island of Djerba. The city of Houmet Souk would have developed on the site of an ancient Roman city called Gerba or Girba, the birthplace of two Roman emperors, Trebonius Galle and his son Volucien, who named the island. Return to the hotel, free afternoon (a swim in the lovely pool), dinner and overnight. Walk around the hotel's local streets to see the wonderful street art. **B/D**



 **Day 18, Tuesday
5th November
DJERBA – TUNIS –
HAMMAMET**

It's an early start today. Transfer to Djerba airport for the flight Tunis (1 hour). On arrival, we'll be collected and driven to Sidi Bou Said - a


lovely town on the outskirts of Tunis. Stroll through the narrow streets, check out the various art galleries and try some mint tea in one of the traditional street cafes while enjoying the superb view of the Gulf of Tunisia. (Try the bambalouni - the Tunisian donut dipped in sugar). Visit Le Baron D'Erlanger Palace, built by a European who fell in love with the village in 1912. Baron Rodolphe d'Erlanger transformed it into a museum; he was a French painter and musicologist, specialising in North African and Arabic

music. Also visit Dar El Annabi which was originally built near the end of the 18th century. In the 20th century, it was redeveloped as a summer resort for Taib El Annabi, son of Mufti Mohamed Annabi. It is now a museum showing the typical Islamic architecture on the outside and the atmosphere and lifestyle of a traditional Tunisian family on the inside. There's a lovely lunch planned in Dar Zarrouk Restaurant. Then, in the afternoon, we'll proceed to Hammamet and check in to the hotel. **B/L/D**

 **Day 19,
Wednesday 6th
November
HAMMAMET – EL JEM
– MONASTIR –
HAMMAMET**

After breakfast, the group will drive to El Jem, which has one of the world's largest and most spectacular Roman Amphitheatres – a tour highlight. Built in 238 ADS, the Amphitheatre can hold up to 35,000 spectators. This monument illustrates the grandeur and extent of the Roman Empire. Then, we will drive to Monastir, which retains its 9th-century ribat and Great Mosque. Visit the Ribath & Habib Bourguiba's mausoleum. Return to Hammamet, dinner and overnight in the hotel. **B/D**



 **Day 20, Thursday
7th November
HAMMAMET –
KERKOUANE –
HAMMAMET**

After breakfast, we'll take a walking tour of Hammamet, a seaside resort known for its orange trees and fine sand beaches. Then, the group will drive to Kerkouane, a Carthaginian archaeological site on the seafront. Return to the hotel and free afternoon. For dinner, we'll experience a wonderful meal and cultural show at Sheherazade Medina Yasmine Hammamet. **B/D**



**Day 21, Friday 8th November
DEPARTURE**

This morning, after breakfast, we have a late check-out from our hotel. We'll be transferred to Tunis Airport for the flight back to Australia. **B**

**Day 22, Saturday 9th November
In transit.**

**Day 23, Sunday 10th November
Arrive home.**



Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required: eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. **An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section.** Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.