Tunisia Journey

Tunisia: Kasbah to Sahara, History, Arts & Traditions

May 9-19, 2009

Saturday May 9, 2009: Departure from the US

Sunday May 10, 2009: Arrival in Tunis

Personalized welcome by PromoTunisia staff at Tunis Carthage Airport. Transfer and check in Hotel Tunisia Palace 4*, a boutique hotel restored ottoman palace. The hotel is located in the heart of the Medina of Tunis. Free time to rest. Dinner at leisure. Overnight in Tunis, Dar el Medina.

Monday May 11, 2009: Medina of Tunis

Today is dedicated to visiting the nearby Medina of Tunis, the largest in North Africa (larger than Fez or Cairo) where we will stroll through the various souks and main monuments including palaces being restored and traditional homes which illustrate the way of life and customs of the nineteenth century Tunis. Lunch at local restaurant serving exquisite and genuine Tunisia food.

Spend some time in the Medina and its Souks, colorful local markets to discover the exquisite craftsmanship of Tunisia's artisans and discover the traditions and cultural heritage of Tunisia in the various libraries and bookstores.

Dinner at leisure-recommended nearby Dar el Jeld, the best restaurant in Tunis http://www.dareljeld.tourism.tn/site2.htm. Overnight in Tunis, Tunisia Palace.

Tuesday May 12, 2009: Bardo Museum/Carthage/ Sidi Bou Said

Morning visit to the Bardo museum, considered one of the richest museums in the world. Housed in one of the former Husseinite palaces, it encloses all the treasures of Tunisian history: from pre-historic times to the Punic civilization, the Roman era, Christian's times, Muslim civilization and up to the twentieth century and features the world's largest collection of mosaics. Lunch at leisure (suggestion is Pheonix Carthage).

In the afternoon, we will visit to **the UNESCO World Heritage Site City of Carthage,** the oldest phoenician settlement on the coast of North Africa, and its glorious monuments: the Anthonin thermes, the Tophet at Salambo, the Amphiteatre, the Punic ports and the Acropolium. Continue to the WWII american cemetary of Cathage (General Patton's Kasserine Pass battle).

Continue to Sidi Bou Said, a 17th century village with immaculate white and blue houses, that has managed to preserve its charm and peacefulness. Stroll through Sidi Bou's narrow streets bordered by whitewashed houses with blue shutters and doors. Check out the various art galleries, try a bambalouni, light and crispy Tunisian style doughnut with some mint tea in one of the cafes of Sidi Bou Said and enjoy the superb view of the gulf of Tunis from one of Sidi Bou's traditional café.

Dinner in Sidi bou Said, restaurant Au Bon Vieux Temps, featuring Tunisian and Mediterraanean specialties. Overnight Tunisia Palace.

Wednesday May 13, 2009: Testour/Dougga/Kairouan

Depart from Tunis. Visit the ancient city of Dougga, one of **the best-preserved roman cities in Africa. Listed in 1997 in the UNESCO World Heritage List**, the town of Dougga, built on an elevated site overlooking a fertile plain, was the capital of Punic and Roman states.
Lunch in Thugga. Continue to Kairouan, the holy city of Tunisia with its impressive Islamic monuments some dating to 670AD. Walk at your leisure in the souks, taste the traditional local pastry stuffed with dates called makroudh, and learn about the traditional savoir-faire of women making rugs.
Check in and private dinner at your hotel (La Kasbah 5* lies at the heart of the holy city of Kairouan. This hotel, with a luxurious inside and a sober outlook, merges harmoniously into the Arab-Islamic architecture of the city of Kairouan).

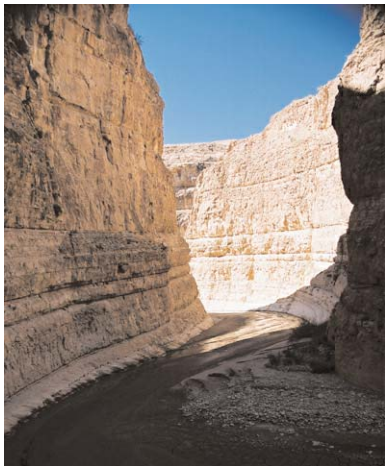
Thursday May 14, 2009: Kairouan/el Djem

Morning visit to the ninth century great mosque of Oqba ibn Nafi, an important reference point in Islam and Islamic architecture. Continue to el Djem's spectacular amphitheatre that dates from 238 A.D, and is the second largest in the World only to Rome's. Visit the newly opened small museum and the excavations extending behind the museum where beautiful mosaics have been found. Lunch le Bonheur. Return to Kairouan towards the end of the day. Dinner and overnight Kasbah Kairouan.

Friday May 15, 2009: Tozeur

Our cultural journey in Southern Tunisia begins today. Depart to Tozeur, an oasis town rising from the sands of the Sahara desert where we will arrive in the afternoon. Visit the Belvedere of Tozeur, with its 300,000 palm trees and over 400 hot and cold springs.
Check in at Ras el Ain 4*. After dinner at the hotel, visit to the Dar Cheraiet museum, an architectural jewel born of 1001 nights dreams. The museum, partially outdoor features luxurious decorations and gardens with representative scenes of North African life.

Saturday May 16, 2009: Mountain Oases



Depart to Metlaoui. Visit the Selja gorges if the Red Lizard Train is available (the train is not available every day and schedules are not published), the train belonging to the Bey of Tunisia, ancient Ottoman ruler of Tunisia,part of the colonial heritage of Southern Tunisia. With six wagons, including one used by the Bey, the train takes you to discover the famous and otherwise inaccessible Selja gorges.
Continue by 4X4 to the oasis of Tamerza. Lunch in Tamerza. Explore the Mountain Oases of Mides and Chebika, which are perched in granite mountains above the Sahara and provide scenery for filmmakers in search of Biblical landscapes.
Dinner and overnight Ras el Ain 4*.

Sunday May 17, 2009: Douz/Matmata/Djerba

After breakfast, cross the dry salt lake of Chott el Djerid where fantastic forests and cities seem to appear on the horizon, only to be discovered as mirages. Arrive in Douz "gateway to the Sahara." This quiet, oasis village is home to the Festival of the Sahara and features a daily camel market. Lunch Sun Palm Douz.

Depart to the Berber village of Matmata and its famous troglodytes, homes built underground to protect the Berbers from summer heat. Berber Ksours are among the most exciting places to explore in Tunisia. One of these fabulous Berber village with its pitted lunar landscapes was the set of the

Spielberg's movie Raiders of the Lost Arc and Lucas “Star Wars”.

Continue to the Island of Djerba, land of the Lotus-eaters in Homer's Odyssey. Check in and dinner at Sofitel Palm Beach 5* (Alternatively, Movenpick 5* or Radisson 5*)

Monday May 18, 2009: Island of Djerba

Visit the Ghriba synagogue, built in the 6th century BC (fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians), one of the holiest Jewish places that hosts annual pilgrimage of Jews from all over the world and holds one of the most ancient Torah's in the world. Given the Sabbath today, we may have limited access to the Synagogue.

Continue to Houmt Souk, the island's capital, for a chance to experience local markets, crafts and foods, the museum of arts and popular traditions in Sidi Zitouni and the village of Guellala for its potteries. Lunch at leisure (recommended Haroun Djerba).

Dinner and overnight Sofitel 5*.

Tuesday May 19, 2009: Fly to Tunis and Europe/US

Transfer at the airport of Djerba. Fly to Tunis early morning (45mn flight). Connect directly to a flight to Europe and the US (flight from Djerba arrives to Tunis in the morning allowing easy connections to same day flight to Europe and the US).

Price Proposal and Inclusions

- Hotels stays in Double Room
  Boutique hotel Tunisia Palace 4* in the Medina--3 nights, Kasbah Kairouan 5*--2 nights, Ras el Ain 4*--2 nights, Sofitel 5* Djerba (or Movenpick 5*--2 nights)

- All Breakfasts, lunches & dinners as specified in itinerary

- All Entrance fees in sites and monuments
  Sidi Bou Said sites, All Carthage monuments & sites
  All Medina monuments in Tunis (including Bardo Museum)
  All sites in Dougga
  All monuments in Kairouan (great mosque, Sidi Sahbi, Aghlabites Bassin…)
  Museum in Dar Cheraiet
  Sites in Djerba
  Red Lizard Train in Mountain Oases (if available)
  Matmata troglodytes

- Tunisian English-speaking Tour Director (24 years experience working with US museums, universities & Classical studies scholars)
- Mercedes microbus and Toyota 4X4 Comfort AC/Heat with experienced Driver
- Transfers from and to Airport
- Baggage handling/service fees, Parking fees/Highway fees, All Tips but to PromoTunisia Trip Director and Main Driver
- Local Airfare
  One way Djerba-Tunis

TOTAL TUNISIA: Kasbah to Sahara, History, Arts & Traditions Per Person in Double

$2,950

*** Single Supplement= $585**

Mohamed Halouani, quick biography:

Mohamed Halouani, our tour director, transformed his profound passion for travel and history into a creative and diversified educational career, designing and carrying out multiple archaeological and cultural trips for diverse institutions, such as The Detroit Institute of Art, The Textile Museum, The American Museum of Natural History and many more organizations.

After having received his Bachelor degrees in English and Spanish, Mohamed Halouani completed his European Master's in linguistics and Hispanic studies at the Sorbonne University in Paris. He has extensive knowledge on Islamic and secular architecture and Eastern decorative elements.

Mohamed has access to several specialists and private homes/museums as well as families (All these services are included in pricing above) including the architect in charge of restoring an old ottoman palace in the Medina, a private mosaics museum, a local family of Berbers near Matmata and several other "surprises" that provides a unique cultural and people experience to our travelers.