

Lifestyle | Travel



A captivating sea-view in Sidi Bou Said.



Roman baths in Carthage.

Then came the visit to the famous Bardeau museum with its splendid historical art pieces such as the mosaic of the Roman poet Virgil with the goddess of poetry and rhetoric Cleo and the goddess of pantomime Melpomene.

To the North West

From the capital Tunis we took the land route to Tabarka close to the border with Algeria. It is a quiet coastal town distinguished for its hills, sea views and bays beside the "Southern Fort" which is a watch fort. It was built in the 16th century and handed over by the Ottoman rulers to the Italian republic of Genoa as a ransom for the Turkish pirate Draguth and remained under Genoese rule for almost two centuries.

On our way to Tabarka, which is also famous for its water-front restaurants, coral and the summer jazz festival, we passed through lush fields and prairies, feasting our eyes on the natural beauty of captivating sites such as Ain Draham and Dougga which is home to the ruins of a wonderfully integrated Roman city and considered as the most accomplished Roman monument in North Africa. It was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997. Dougga is situated in a fantastic geographical area with the still existing Acropolis, or the Trinity Temple, as well as a theater for an audience of three thousand, residential quarters and public baths. After Dougga we went to Bulla Regia, another Roman city which dates back to the 5th century B.C. It was founded in the Numidian period and subjugated by Rome in 64 B.C. It is noted for its theater which was built on flat ground according to splendid architectural design with two luxurious underground houses with their original shape kept largely intact, thus allowing the visitor to experience entering a Roman house built nearly two thousand years ago and seeing examples of architecture, lighting, bedrooms, dining rooms and mosaic-decorated floors and walls.

It is worth noting that before the Roman Empire granted its nationality to its subjects,



Acropolis temple at Dougga Roman site.

The Middle

After our tour of the north west we headed to the middle of the country and the historical city of Qairawan which was the first Islamic city to be founded in the Arab Maghreb in 670 A.D. It is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. It was built as a circle, following the design of the Abbasid capital Baghdad, surrounding the Great Mosque built by Oqba Ibn Nafi. The great streets radiate from the center with traditional shops offering the best in handicrafts and rugs. There is also the Brouta well with folk tales about its being connected to the Zamzam well.

The Mosque is remarkable for its cone-shaped minaret which became the origin of the shape of all minarets in the Islamic Maghreb.

There is also the mosque of the Prophet's Companion Abo Zima Al Balawi which is one of

which is very similar to the Rome colosseum. In the days of the Roman Empire the harshest punishment was one of three choices: sending the convicts to work in mines, quarries or to fight predatory animals as they did in El Jem.

El Jem with its oval shape was deemed one of the most splendid in North Africa. Its larger axis is 149 meters long, the smaller is 124 meters. It is 35 meters high with a circumference of 427 meters. Its capacity of 30 thousand spectators made it smaller than Rome's which had a capacity of 43 thousand (527 meters in circumference). Spectators flocked to the colosseum to watch the fights between the convicts or gladiators and the beasts which were brought from the forests of Tunisia and Africa. They enjoyed sitting on the marble grandstand arranged on five levels, to watch the bloody fight which was a major ritual of heathen Rome but it receded with the advent of Christianity and the Byzantine age.



Mosaic of the Roman poet Virgil beside Cleo, the goddess of poetry and Melpomene, the goddess of pantomime. It is one of the most important pieces in the Bardeau Museum.

Sousse and Monastir

Our Tunisian tour and its surprises continued with enjoying a visit to the coastal town of Sousse, the pearl of the Tunisian coast, famous for its hotels, restaurants and the grand yachts berth in Al Kantawi from where one could take a sea trip around the city. Close to Sousse lies the city of Monastir with its Rabat which was built in 796 AD within a fortified Qasaba: it offers a breath-taking view of the sea, the city and the close-by mausoleum of the late leader Al Habib Bourguiba. The Rabat also contains a museum of Islamic art.

One cannot discover Tunisia, "Almizyana" as the Tunisians call it, in just 10 days. This country is rich in diversity and in natural, historical and cultural wealth which put it at the top of the favorite places to visit.

The events which accompanied the 14th January revolution of 2011 and the following disturbances affected the security and touristic aspects in Tunisia. Nevertheless, it can be said that the country has largely recovered and is gradually regaining its touristic activity and vitality with millions of tourists of various interests returning for recreation, entertainment and medical treatment and to visit the country's historical and natural sites at very convenient and competitive prices. Tunisia is awaiting its visitors with all the welcome, love and beauty it possesses. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of this country is that you grow attached to it and that it offers you something to make you come back and visit again and again.

the attractive historical monuments, and the Ibn Khairoun Mosque built in 866 AD and known as the "Three Doors Mosque", as well as the "Aghaliba" pools with their solemn celebrations, being one of the largest water installations for watering caravans. It is also listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

After Qairawan we headed to Sousse. On our way we stopped at one of the most magnificent architectural achievements in human history. It is the El Jem Colosseum in Al-Mahdiya area



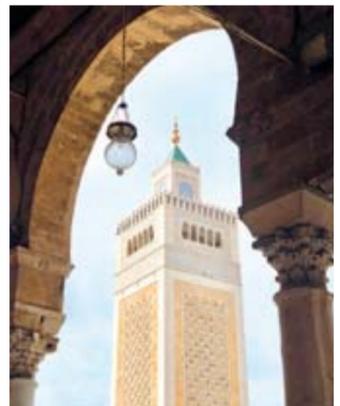
The famous El Jem colosseum in Al-Mahdiya where beasts were fought in the Roman age.



Statue of the founder of sociology Ibn Khaldoun in Tunis.



A gate in the historical city of Qairawan.



Al-Zitona Mosque minaret in old Tunis.



The Carthage Theater which embraces annually one of the most important international arts and culture festivals.

rich city dwellers in its states and regions volunteered to build theatres, buildings and baths in exchange for Romanization or Roman nationality. Some important parts and landmarks in Dougga and Bulla Regia were built in this way. Before reaching Tabarka we visited the city of Testour and its Andalusian-style Great Mosque. It is the city of the Andalusian Moors who came to settle after their exile in the 17th century. The city has a handicraft market which features traditional attires such as the Jubba and the Bornos.



An Inner yard in Ennejma Ezzahra palace of Baron d'Elanger in Sidi Bou Said.



Some of the Bab Tunis team at the Dougga Roman site.



Folklore pieces



The famous Al Kantawi berth which hosts luxurious yachts in Sousse.



Traditional doors.



The old capital.