Tour Code
AG2

ADVENTURESABROAD

ALGERIA & TUNISIA

18 days

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Day 1 Arrival in Algiers - Gateway to the Maghreb

Today we arrive in Algiers - welcome to Algeria!

The Mediterranean sparkles below as we descend toward Algiers, a city whose very name—Al-Jaza'ir, "the islands"—recalls the rocky islets that once guarded this strategic harbour. Built into the rolling Sahel hills, Algeria's capital stretches ten miles along the sweeping Bay of Algiers, its white buildings cascading down toward azure waters like an amphitheatre facing the sea. Today, elegant French boulevards wind between Socialist-era monuments and the timeless Islamic heart of the hillside Casbah, creating a visual symphony of architectural eras.

We settle into our accommodation, preparing for tomorrow's exploration of this remarkable city where three continents converge.

Overnight in Algiers.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Algiers Touring - Fly to Ghardaia

This morning we step into the labyrinthine Casbah, where centuries-old traditions pulse through narrow alleys lined with whitewashed houses. Built in the 16th century, this UNESCO treasure reveals itself slowly — each turn unveiling hidden courtyards, ornate doorways, and glimpses of daily life unchanged by time. The maze-like streets once confounded invading armies; today they embrace us with their timeless rhythm.

Descending toward the bay, we discover the elegant boulevards created during France's 130-year presence (1830–1962). The 17th-century Ketchaoua Mosque stands as one of the Ottoman period's finest surviving monuments, while the remarkable Palais des Rais — three interconnected palaces guarding the seafront — rewards exploration of its secret chambers and terraces. The bustling Martyrs' Square, the palatial Grand Post Office in its early 20th-century Moorish revival grandeur, and the tranquil Botanical Garden of El Hamma round out a morning rich in architectural contrast.

This afternoon we transfer to the airport for our early evening flight south to Ghardaïa (departing 18:55, arriving 20:25), trading the Mediterranean's blue horizons for the golden edge of the Sahara. The M'Zab Valley awaits — a UNESCO World Heritage landscape where traditional Islamic society has preserved its distinctive character for over a thousand years.

Overnight in Ghardaia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Ghardaia: M'Zab Valley, El-Atteuf & Bou Noura

We awaken in a different world. The M'Zab Valley, home to the conservative Ibadite Muslim community, preserves social traditions and architectural forms virtually unchanged since the 11th century. Here, five fortified towns — Ghardaia, Melika, Beni Isguen, Bou Noura, and El-Atteuf — represent one of humanity's most successful experiments in sustainable desert living.

The Ibadites, who separated from mainstream Islam nine centuries ago, created these settlements as earthly reflections of spiritual ideals. Every aspect of daily life follows ancient codes: women wear traditional white haik coverings that leave only one eye exposed, while men sport elaborately pleated saroual loubia trousers. These aren't tourist performances — they're living traditions in communities that have maintained their identity despite centuries of outside pressure.

We explore marketplaces where the rhythm of commerce follows patterns established centuries ago. Narrow streets designed to channel cooling breezes past whitewashed walls demonstrate sophisticated understanding of desert architecture. The traditional palm groves, irrigated by ancient foggara (underground channels), transform the valley into an oasis of green abundance — a reminder that human ingenuity has sustained life here in one of Earth's harshest environments for a millennium.

Overnight in Ghardaia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Fly to Algiers - Church of Notre Dame d'Afrique

Our morning flight carries us from the ancient rhythms of the M'Zab Valley back to Algeria's bustling capital. The aerial perspective provides a dramatic reminder of this country's scale — Saharan oases giving way to Atlas Mountain ranges before the Mediterranean coast resolves into view.

Back in Algiers, we make our way to the majestic Church of Notre Dame d'Afrique, perched dramatically above the Bab El Oued district. Here, colonial architects married European ecclesiastical design with North African sensibilities in a structure that continues to draw pilgrims of all faiths. The panoramic views from this hillside vantage point encompass the entire sweep of the bay — a vista that has inspired poets and painters for generations. The church's inscription above the altar, addressed to "Our Lady of Africa" for "the Christians and the Muslims," captures something essential about the religious complexity of this city.

The remainder of the afternoon is ours to absorb the contrast between the M'Zab's preserved traditionalism and the capital's dynamic modernity — two authentic faces of contemporary Algeria.

Overnight in Algiers.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Through the Atlas to Djemila - Continue to Constantine

Rolling hills dotted with olive groves and wheat fields accompany us eastward as we leave the coastal plains for the dramatic landscapes of the interior. Our destination, Djemila — "beautiful" in Arabic — sits 900 metres above sea level, where Roman engineers once faced the challenge of adapting classical urban planning to mountainous terrain.

The result, dating from the 1st century CE, astounds with its ingenuity. Unlike the flat, grid-pattern Roman cities of the plains, Djemila flows with the contours of the landscape. We walk streets where toga-clad citizens once strolled, past a remarkably preserved forum where merchants haggled over goods from across the empire. The site's temples, basilicas, and triumphal arches demonstrate how Rome adapted its architectural vocabulary to diverse environments — each column capital and decorative element telling stories of cultural fusion.

In the Djemila Museum, extraordinary mosaics and sculptures reveal daily life in this mountain outpost. Intricate floor designs depicting hunting scenes, mythological figures, and geometric patterns showcase the wealth and sophistication of Roman North Africa. These aren't mere decorative elements — they're windows into a society where African, Mediterranean, and Roman influences created something entirely new.

As afternoon shadows lengthen across ancient stones, we continue our journey eastward to Constantine, the dramatic "City of Bridges," where we'll rest before exploring another Roman masterpiece tomorrow.

Overnight in Constantine.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Timgad: Trajan's Perfect City & Royal Mysteries

Morning finds us journeying through the foothills of the Aurès Atlas Mountains toward Timgad, Emperor Trajan's bold experiment in urban planning. Founded in 100 CE as a military colony for retired legionnaires, Thamugadi was designed for 15,000 inhabitants — yet prosperity soon burst these boundaries, creating a fascinating study in organic versus planned development.

Standing at Timgad's western gate, we witness Roman city planning at its most ambitious. The original settlement follows a perfect grid, its

straight streets intersecting at precise right angles like a textbook illustration. But look beyond the planned core, and we see how success created its own challenges: the expanding city spilled organically beyond its geometric boundaries, creating irregular neighbourhoods that speak to human nature's resistance to rigid order. We walk the Cardo Maximus past the magnificent Arch of Trajan, through markets where North African grain once fed the empire; the theatre, with its soaring stage backdrop, echoes still with centuries of performance under the African sun.

Our afternoon brings us to the mysterious royal Mausoleum Immedghassen — a circular stone monument predating Roman conquest. Built for a Numidian king whose identity remains lost to time, this tomb stands 18 metres high on 60 engaged columns, a reminder that Rome built upon foundations laid by earlier civilizations.

We return to Constantine for the night, the dramatic gorge city waiting to reveal its own stories tomorrow.

Overnight in Constantine.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Constantine City Tour - Drive to Algiers

Built astride a spectacular gorge carved by the Rhumel River, Constantine appears to defy gravity itself. Known to Romans as Cirta, it became Constantine the Great's namesake in the 4th century, but its story stretches back over two millennia to Numidian kings who recognized this natural fortress's strategic perfection.

The gorge — 120 metres deep in places — creates a natural moat around three sides of the city. Ottoman, French, and modern engineers have spanned this chasm with increasingly ambitious bridges, each generation adding its own architectural signature to this vertical cityscape. From these swaying vantage points we peer down into the gorge where traditional tanneries still operate as they have for centuries, their colourful leather goods drying in the North African sun.

The Constantine Museum reveals artifacts spanning millennia, while the Kasbah district preserves the intimate scale of Ottoman residential architecture. At the Palace of Ahmed Bey, we encounter 19th-century attempts to blend European palatial grandeur with Islamic decorative traditions, before the Emir Abdelkader Mosque — one of the world's largest — offers a final meditation on how contemporary Algeria honours both heritage and innovation.

This afternoon we begin our drive back toward the capital, the landscapes shifting from mountain drama to coastal plain as Algiers draws near.

Overnight in Algiers.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 From Algiers: Tipaza & Cherchell

The Mediterranean coast west of Algiers reveals layers of North African history. At Tipaza, Phoenician merchants first established trading posts over 2,000 years ago; what began as a commercial outpost evolved under Roman rule into one of Christianity's most important North African centres. Walking among ruins that cascade toward the sea, we witness how early Christians adapted Roman architectural forms to serve their revolutionary faith. The site's most poignant story emerges from the Vandal conquest of 430 CE, when most inhabitants fled to Spain rather than accept Arian Christianity — a tale of devotion that has lingered in local memory ever since.

After sampling Tipaza's renowned seafood, we continue to Cherchell, ancient Caesarea. This former capital of Mauretanian and Numidian kingdoms reveals how local rulers adopted Roman imperial symbols while maintaining African cultural traditions. The archaeological museum's treasures — mosaics, sculptures, and architectural fragments — illustrate the sophisticated fusion culture that flourished on this coast.

Our final stop presents a puzzle: the pyramid-like Tomb of the Christians, its pre-Roman origins challenging assumptions about North African civilization. Built for unknown Numidian royalty, this monument reminds us that sophisticated kingdoms flourished here long before Roman legions arrived. It makes for a fitting final contemplation — three thousand years of human ambition compressed into a single afternoon on the Algerian coast.

We return to Algiers for our last evening together.

Overnight in Algiers.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Algiers, Algeria - Fly to Tunis, Tunisia

Our flight eastward carries us from Algeria to Tunisia, crossing invisible boundaries that have shaped North African history for centuries. Tunisia—historically known as Ifriqiya—occupies a unique position as the Mediterranean's southernmost anchor, where European, African, and Middle Eastern influences converge.

Tunis, the capital awaiting our arrival, houses one-sixth of the nation's population within the embrace of the Gulf of Tunis. Founded by Berber tribes but shaped successively by Phoenicians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Arabs, Ottomans, and French, the city embodies North Africa's layered history. Modern office towers and European-style cafés share space with the dynamic souks of the ancient medina, creating urban rhythms that seamlessly blend tradition with contemporary life.

The French colonial legacy remains visible in the elegant Ville Nouvelle district, but it's the medina—one of the Arab world's most vibrant—that captures Tunisia's essential character. Here, craftsmen practice trades passed down through generations while merchants negotiate in Arabic, French, and Berber dialects, creating a linguistic tapestry as rich as the goods displayed in their shops.

Overnight in Tunis.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Tunis: The Medina, Bardo Museum & Carthage

We enter the UNESCO-protected medina through the ancient Bab el Bahr (Sea Gate). This labyrinthine quarter preserves medieval Arab life among monuments spanning a thousand years. The Great Mosque, Jemaa Zitouna, anchors the medina's spiritual heart, while narrow lanes reveal Koranic schools, traditional hammams, and Ottoman palaces.

At the Bardo Museum, we see the world's finest collection of Roman mosaics—sophisticated narrative artworks depicting mythological scenes, daily life, and zodiacal symbols. The craftsmanship proves that North African workshops often exceeded metropolitan standards.

We proceed to Carthage. At the Tophet cemetery, thousands of urns testify to religious practices that sustained Carthage for centuries. The reconstructed Punic ports reveal engineering genius—circular military harbours with sophisticated dry-docks that challenged Roman supremacy.

From Byrsa Hill, where Hannibal once planned campaigns, we see how the Cathedral of St. Louis crowns the ancient acropolis. The massive Antonine Baths represent Rome's attempt to outdo Carthaginian magnificence through architectural grandeur.

Our final stop is Sidi Bou Said, perching on clifftops like a blue and white jewel. This artists' village preserves distinctive Tunisian architectural traditions through building codes requiring traditional colour schemes. Wandering cobbled streets past jasmine-scented courtyards, we understand why artists have found inspiration here for centuries.

Overnight in Tunis

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 From Tunis: Bulla Regia & Dougga

This morning we journey toward Bulla Regia, one of North Africa's most ingenious responses to climatic challenges. Here, wealthy Romans created an architectural innovation found nowhere else in the empire: luxurious underground villas designed to escape the brutal summer heat. Descending cool stone staircases into these subterranean palaces, we discover remarkably preserved mosaics and frescoes that have

survived nearly two millennia.

These aren't crude cellars but sophisticated residences with multiple levels, central courtyards, and elaborate decoration. The engineering required to create waterproof underground chambers, ensure adequate ventilation, and manage drainage demonstrates Roman technical mastery adapted to African conditions. Walking through rooms where toga-clad families once escaped the noon sun, we understand how imperial wealth translated into climate-controlled luxury.

After lunch among olive groves that have produced oil for over two thousand years, we reach Dougga—UNESCO's crown jewel of Tunisian archaeology. Spread across rolling hills, this remarkably complete Roman city offers an unparalleled journey through daily life in provincial Africa.
The Capitolium temple, dedicated to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, crowns the forum with imposing grandeur. From its steps, panoramic views encompass green valleys where Roman agricultural estates once supplied grain to feed the empire. The theatre, carved into a natural hillside, seats 3,500 spectators who gathered to watch comedies and tragedies under the African sky.

We explore residential districts where Roman families lived in houses with geometric mosaic floors, private bathhouses, and shaded courtyards. The Cyclops Baths, House of Dionysos and Ulysses, and numerous other villas reveal how provincial wealth created architectural magnificence rivalling Rome itself.

Dougga's preservation stems from its abandonment—when trade routes shifted, residents gradually departed, leaving this urban masterpiece frozen in time for archaeologists to rediscover centuries later.

Overnight in Tunis

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Tunis - Monastir - Kairouan: City Touring

Tunisia's fertile northern landscapes unfold around us as we journey southward through valleys that have earned the country its traditional epithet: "Tunisia the Green." Here, ancient agricultural patterns persist—olive groves, wheat fields, and vineyards that have fed civilizations for millennia. Storks perch atop telephone poles and minaret towers, their massive nests testament to the enduring rhythms connecting human settlement with natural cycles.

Monastir introduces us to a unique Islamic institution: the ribat, a fortified monastery where soldier-monks combined religious devotion with frontier defense. Built in the 8th century when Muslim expansion faced Byzantine counterattacks, the Ribat of Monastir exemplifies how early Islamic civilization created institutions unknown in Christian Europe. From its towering walls, we survey coastlines where medieval fleets once launched expeditions across the Mediterranean.

Modern cinema has discovered Monastir's dramatic appeal—this ribat provided locations for Monty Python's "Life of Brian" and Zeffirelli's "Jesus of Nazareth," its ancient stones playing roles in stories spanning religious traditions.

Kairouan, our ultimate destination, holds unparalleled significance in Islamic history. Founded in 670 CE by the Arab general Uqba ibn Nafi, it became the first Islamic city established in North Africa and the fourth holiest city in Islam after Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. Seven pilgrimages to Kairouan equal one to Mecca—a medieval ruling that established this oasis as North Africa's spiritual heart.

The Great Mosque of Kairouan astounds with its forest of columns—hundreds of marble shafts looted from Roman sites across North Africa and repurposed to support Islam's expanding architectural needs. Each capital differs from its neighbours, creating a museum of classical design within a revolutionary religious context. The mosque's 8th-century minaret, among Islam's oldest, established architectural forms still followed across the Islamic world.

At the Mausoleum of Sidi Sahab, legendary companion of the Prophet Muhammad, we witness how popular Islam transformed austere early mosques into centres of devotional art and architectural splendour.

Overnight in Kairouan

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Kairouan - Sbeitla - Tozeur

The Roman city of Sufeitula—modern Sbeitla—presents one of North Africa's most photogenic archaeological ensembles. Three perfectly preserved temples dedicated to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva rise from the forum like a classical textbook illustration, their harmonious proportions exemplifying Roman architectural ideals adapted to African settings.

Sbeitla prospered during the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE through olive oil production—the "liquid gold" that made North Africa Rome's wealthiest province. Walking past ancient olive presses, we understand how provincial cities accumulated the wealth to construct monuments rivalling Rome itself. Stone-paved streets lead past public baths, theatres, and Christian basilicas with elaborate baptisteries, their colourful mosaics illustrating how early Christianity transformed Roman architectural forms.

Our route south carries us across landscapes that shift dramatically from Mediterranean fertility to Saharan vastness. This transition zone—the Sahel—has witnessed some of history's most significant cultural exchanges as trans-Saharan trade routes connected sub-Saharan Africa with Mediterranean civilizations.

Tozeur emerges from shimmering heat mirages as a palm-fringed jewel. This legendary oasis city controlled medieval caravan routes carrying gold, ivory, salt, and slaves between North and West Africa. Medieval accounts describe over 1,000 camels departing daily, laden with deglet nour dates—the "fingers of light" still considered among the world's finest.

The Eden Palm Museum introduces us to oasis agriculture's sophisticated techniques: the three-tier cultivation system where date palms provide shade for citrus trees, which shelter vegetable crops below. This ancient agricultural wisdom maximizes water use in environments where every drop is precious.

Wandering through the palmerie as afternoon light filters through date palm fronds, we experience the profound peace that has drawn desert travellers to oases for millennia. Here, the harsh beauty of the Sahara meets human ingenuity, creating landscapes of almost mystical serenity.

Overnight in Tozeur.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Tozeur - Mamata - Djerba

Our journey begins crossing Chott el Jerid, Tunisia's largest salt lake—a crystalline expanse covering 5,000 square kilometres. This depression preserves evidence of ancient seas that once covered North Africa. The salt floor creates otherworldly reflections—pink and yellow hues that shift with the sun's angle while heat mirages transform the horizon.

The Berber village of Matmata challenges every assumption about desert architecture. Here, ingenious adaptation to harsh climate produced one of humanity's most distinctive building traditions: homes carved directly into soft sandstone, creating subterranean courtyards surrounded by chambers that maintain comfortable temperatures year-round.

These "troglodyte" dwellings—some over 400 years old—demonstrate sophisticated understanding of thermal dynamics. The circular pit design captures cool air while radiating heat upward. Visiting a local family's traditional home, we witness how architecture shapes social organization, with central courtyards serving as communal space while individual rooms provide privacy.

Our final destination, the island of Djerba, floats in the Mediterranean like a fragment of myth made real. Connected to the mainland by a Roman causeway still in use after 2,000 years, Djerba has maintained distinct cultural identity through successive conquests. This may be Homer's legendary land of the Lotus Eaters.

Overnight in Djerba

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 The Isle of Djerba

Today we focus on Djerba's most significant cultural and historical sites, allowing for relaxed exploration of this extraordinary island.

El Ghriba Synagogue represents one of Judaism's most significant pilgrimage sites. Legend claims Djerba's Jewish community arrived after the destruction of Solomon's Temple in 586 BCE, making this one of the world's oldest continuous Jewish settlements. The synagogue's

architecture reflects centuries of cultural fusion—Jewish religious requirements interpreted through Islamic decorative traditions and Mediterranean construction techniques.

The building houses ancient Torah scrolls and preserves traditions linking contemporary worship to biblical times. Each year, thousands of pilgrims gather here for the Lag B'Omer festival, creating one of the Jewish world's most significant gatherings in an Islamic country—testament to Djerba's remarkable tolerance.

Just nearby, we explore the Djerbahood Street Art Walk, a remarkable open-air gallery where international and local artists have transformed the village of Erriadh into a vibrant canvas. Over 250 murals cover walls, houses and public spaces, creating a unique dialogue between traditional Djerban architecture and contemporary artistic expression. This project demonstrates how art can revitalize communities while respecting cultural heritage.

In Houmt Souq, the island's main town, medieval Borj el Kebir fortress recalls the bloody conflicts of 1560 when Ottoman and Spanish forces fought for Mediterranean supremacy. Today's fish auctions and vegetable markets continue traditions established when this port connected North Africa to European trading networks.

The fortress offers panoramic views across the Mediterranean while its massive walls tell stories of centuries when this strategic position controlled shipping lanes between Europe and Africa.

Overnight in Djerba

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 16 Djerba Touring - Sfax

Guellala village reveals one of North Africa's oldest pottery traditions. Here, families have worked clay for over a thousand years, their techniques passed down through generations of master craftsmen. The kilns, some medieval in origin, still fire vessels whose forms echo ancient Phoenician and Roman prototypes.

The Guellala Museum introduces us to traditions that have evolved over millennia. Traditional costumes, wedding ceremonies, and household implements illustrate how island isolation preserved customs lost elsewhere. The intricate arts of weaving, calligraphy, and metalwork demonstrate how Djerba's artisans adapted Mediterranean, African, and Middle Eastern influences.

We depart Djerba in the early afternoon for Sfax, Tunisia's second-largest city, a working port that processes olives, almonds and phosphates while maintaining one of North Africa's finest preserved medinas. We arrive in time to settle in and enjoy a relaxed evening.

Overnight in Sfax

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17 Sfax - El Djem - Tunis

Depending on group energy and interest, our Tour Leader may offer an optional stroll through Sfax's medina before we leave.

We then tour the massive Roman Amphitheatre of El Djem, rising from flat agricultural plains like a sandstone mountain—a monument to imperial ambition and provincial wealth. With capacity for 30,000 spectators, this colosseum rivals Rome's own, yet its superior preservation makes it perhaps more impressive than its famous model.

Built during the brief reign of emperors Gordian I and II (who ruled mere weeks before Roman legions crushed their African rebellion), the amphitheatre demonstrates how quickly provincial wealth translated into monumental architecture. Here, gladiatorial combats and wild beast hunts entertained crowds drawn from across Roman Africa.

The adjacent Archaeological Museum's extraordinary mosaics, relocated from wealthy Roman villas, include the unique House of Africa mosaic—the only known representation of the personified African continent. Climbing to the amphitheatre's upper tiers, we survey landscapes where Roman agricultural estates once supplied grain to feed the empire, while basement chambers preserve sophisticated mechanical systems that created theatrical spectacles for bloodthirsty crowds.

Our day's journey brings us full circle back to the capital in time to settle in a bit before our final dinner in Tunisia.

Overnight in Tunis.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 18 Departure

Departure from Tunis.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast