

DISCOVER THE WONDERS

SPIEKERMANN

TRAVEL SERVICE



ALGERIA

The Garden of the Sahara

October 19 - November 05, 2024

Led by Lecturer, Guide and Historian, Mohamed Halouani

Algeria is a vast country of breathtaking scenery, well-preserved Roman ruins, pre-historic cave paintings, impressive museums, and a strong Berber culture. This journey will take us from the sweeping shores of the Mediterranean to the majestic green mountains, through the vast Sahara Desert, and into the palm-fringed oases. Explore the Roman ruins of Timgad, the former Roman port of Caesarea, the oasis town of Bou Saada, the Kasbah of Algiers, and the unique fortified town of Ghardaia and its Mozabite villages. No tour of Algeria would be complete without a visit to the dramatic city of Constantine, the "city of gorges and bridges." From here, the tour travels to the western region of Algeria to the tranquil Mediterranean city of Oran and on to Tlemcen, a beautiful town with a rich diverse culture and lush vineyards and olive plantations. The trip ends on a high note in the heart of the Algerian Desert to explore the oases, ksours (fortified villages), ancient and holy cities, massive sand dunes, and much more in and around Timimoun, the "Red Oasis," the oasis town of Béni Abbès home to seven castles, and the ancient desert city of Adrar.

Ihab Zaki
Managing Director

Saturday, October 19

Arrive Algiers



Upon arrival in **Algiers**, the capital and largest city in Algeria, meet the local representative, and transfer to *El Aurassi Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(D)**

Note: Dinner is served for those checking into the hotel prior to 8:00pm

Sunday, October 20

Algiers - Annaba - Tiddis - Constantine



Transfer in the morning to the airport for our flight to **Annaba**, and upon arrival, head to visit the site of **Hippo Regius**, an ancient city that was the home of the philosopher Augustine of Hippo. The **museum** here displays many relics found at the site, including a sculpture of Emperor Vespasian. Visit the 19th-century Roman Catholic **Basilica of St. Augustine**, then continue to **Tiddis**, an old Roman outpost, to admire its **arches, Temple of Mithras, baths, forum, and cisterns**. Continue the drive to **Constantine** and, upon arrival, transfer to *Marriott Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Note: The visit to Tiddis may require a lot of climbing over uneven terrain.

Monday, October 21

Constantine



Spend the day exploring **Constantine**, commonly known as "The City of Bridges." It is a picturesque city of precipitous cliffs, deep gorges, and a lofty setting for one of Algeria's most labyrinthine **Kasbahs**. Visit the **Cirta Museum**, known in particular for its stunning Roman mosaics, Punic artifacts, and fine sculptures. Visit the impressive **Ahmad Bey Palace and Gardens**, the former home of the Ottoman ruler. Also, visit the **Monument of Sidi M'Cid** (commemorating the victims of WWI) and the **Mosque of Emir Abdelkader**, the second-largest mosque in Algeria. It is named after the founder of the modern Algerian and the leader of the popular resistance against the French invasion of the country. Also, visit the beautiful **Opera House**. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, October 22

Constantine (Medracen & Lambaesis)



Begin the day with a visit to the 3rd-century **Royal Tomb of Medracen**, a massive round stone structure that once housed the remains of Numidian royalty. Continue the drive to the well-preserved Roman town of **Timgad**, considered the "Pompeii of Africa", Founded by Emperor Trajan around 100 A.D., this city was the most significant Roman settlement ever built in North Africa. It was later abandoned and taken over by the sand, preserving many of its ruins. Explore the **colonnaded streets, temples, public buildings, villas, and a museum**. See **Trajan's Arch**, one of the city's most impressive structures, and the **theater**, which was cut into the hillside. In the afternoon, visit the nearby city of **Lambaesis**, a Roman garrison town with an **amphitheater, a set of baths, the Arch of Severus, and the praetorium** (Roman camp) of the Third Augustan Legion. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, October 23

Constantine - Djemila - Bou Saada



After breakfast, head to **Djemila**, one of North Africa's most monumental sites. The wheel-rutted streets of ancient Cuicul, founded by Emperor Nerva Trajan in the first century A.D. to house his veterans, are lined with **colonnades** and a clutch of elaborate **houses, Byzantine churches, and ancient temples**. Djemila's stunning **museum** is equally as impressive, where every square inch of its immense walls is plastered with striking mosaics. In the afternoon, drive to **Bou Saada**, an important trading post for nomads nicknamed "the happy city." Nomads come here to sell jewelry, metalwork, carpets, and bousaidi knives. Transfer to *Kerdada or Le Caid Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, October 24

Bou Saada



Begin the day with a visit to the famous **Museum of Dinet**, a French artist (1861-1929) who established himself in Bou Saada and is buried here. Marvel over his original collection of paintings and then visit his tomb. Then head downtown to see the **handicraft center** and

explore the **old medina** or "ksar" within the city walls. After lunch, make the short drive to **El Hamel**, a small town built during the 11th century at the foot of Mt. Omrane. and explore the enormous religious **Complex of El Hamel**, founded in the 19th century by an Islamic scholar Sidi Mohammed Ben Belgacem, and see the **mausoleum, mosque, and madrassa**. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, October 25
Bou Saada - Ghardaia



Begin the drive across the **M'zab region** via the historical city of **Laghout** (halfway between Bou Saada and Ghardaia and visit the **Ethnographical Museum** to learn more about the local culture. In the afternoon, continue the drive to **Ghardaia**, founded about 1,000 years ago by the Mozabites, a Berber ethnic group of Southern Algeria. At the center of this fortified town is the historical **Mozabite area**, where white, pink, and red houses of sand, clay, and gypsum are built around a pyramid-shaped mosque. The people of this charming town have managed to maintain the original medieval architecture, allowing us to feel as if we have taken a step back in time. Transfer to *M'Zab Guesthouse or similar* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, October 26
Ghardaia (Mozabite Villages)



After breakfast, begin the day exploring Ghardaia and marvel at the art and architecture of the Mozabites, who live in a unique valley amid the desert and along the River M'zab. Explore its fascinating **old town**, including the bustling **market** and austere **mosques**. Then visit **El-Ateuf**, the oldest city in the region, to see its simple, white-washed **mosque** and **tomb**. After lunch, continue the drive to the tight-knit community of **Beni Izguen** and stroll through this attractive 10th-century town. Admire the unique architecture known as "vernacular" in this medieval city and World Heritage Site and may spot the women covered in white veils. Return to the *Guesthouse* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

NOTE: While visiting some of the villages in the Ghardaia area, photos are strictly prohibited, and getting caught taking pictures may cause them to be deleted or possibly even confiscate your camera.

Sunday, October 27
Ghardaia - Algiers



Early morning transfer to the airport for our flight back to **Algiers**, where we will spend the rest of the day exploring the city. Begin with a stroll through the **Kasbah**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and excellent architectural masterpiece. This Kasbah remains one of the world's most mythical labyrinths while its brilliant, white-washed houses appear to tumble down the hillside and spill out into the sea. Stop at **Place des Martyrs**, a large monument commemorating the Algerian War for Independence. Visit the **Emir Abdelkader Squar**, where a statue of the founder of the Algerian nation sits in the

center of the square Transfer to *El Aurassi Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, October 28
Algiers



After breakfast, stop to admire the unique features of **the opera house** and the neo-Moorish **Grande Poste** before continuing to the impressive **Bardo Museum** in a Moorish-style villa. Also, visit the **Antiquities Museum** and see a fine collection of **mosaics** from various archaeological sites throughout Algeria. If time permits, stop at the 19th-century **Cathedral of Notre Dame d'Afrique**, which overlooks the **Bay of Algiers**. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, October 29
Algiers (Cherchell & Tipasa)



Begin the day with an excursion to the Roman town of **Cherchell**, stopping en route to see the **Tombeau de la Chrétienne (Mausoleum of Mauritania)**, one of North Africa's most enigmatic archaeological wonders. This 3rd century B.C. tomb was the original resting place of Queen Cleopatra and Mark Antony's only daughter, Princess Cleopatra Selene II, and the King of Mauritania, Juba II. Upon arrival in **Cherchell**, visit the **Archaeology Museum**, which contains an impressive collection of statues, mosaics, and coffins from the Roman era. Visit the UNESCO World Heritage site of **Tipasa**, an ancient Punic trading post built near the sea during the 5th century B.C. It was later conquered and colonized by the Romans in the 2nd century A.D. After being defeated by the Vandals in the early 5th century, the city was abandoned and fell into ruins. Take a stroll among the **amphitheater, basilica, and forum**, and visit an interesting **museum** while enjoying spectacular views of the Mediterranean and the rugged coastline. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, October 30
Algiers - Oran - Tlemcen



Early morning transfer to the airport for our flight to **Oran**, a city located on the Mediterranean in the western region of Algeria. This relaxed, dynamic, and welcoming city is home to **Rai** music, **Yves Saint Laurent**, and a strong Spanish population. Upon arrival, head to visit the historic **Bey's Palace**, the 14th century fort of **Merinid Sultan Abou Hassan**, and some fine colonial architecture such as the majestic **train station**, the beautiful early 20th century **theatre**, and the **Cathedral of Santa Cruz**, the first French cathedral built in Algeria. Have a chance to stop at the **plateau of Murdjadjo** for a panoramic view over the old port of Oran, and then continue the drive to **Tlemcen** (2-hr drive) and upon arrival, transfer to *Zianide Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, October 31
Tlemcen



Tlemcen "the town of cherries" was at one time one of the most powerful cities in Maghreb. The entire day is

dedicated to exploring this “Islamic capital of culture” including the 13th century **Mosque of Sidi Bel Hassan**, the **Great Mosque** (one of North Africa's most important Islamic buildings), the enormous ancient mosque ruins of **Mansourah** from the Marinid dynasty, and the beautiful **Mausoleum of Sidi Boumediene** (12th century Sufi leader). We will have an afternoon walk into the **old city**, once home to thousands of Algerian Jews; now only handfuls of Jewish families are living here. We will learn about the long Judaic heritage of this educated and enlightened city. Return to the *Hotel* in Tlemcen for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, November 01

Tlemcen - Oran - Timimoun - Sebkhah Circuit  

After breakfast, drive back to **Oran** and transfer to the airport for our flight to **Timimoun**, also known as “the Red Oasis”. Upon arrival, transfer to *Akham Lodge or similar*, for check-in followed by an orientation tour of the city. Discover the “**foggara**,” a system for transporting water from the hills to the village via an underground aqueduct. In the afternoon, depart on a 4x4-vehicle excursion to explore the **oasis** and “**ksours**” (fortified villages) around the **Sebkhah Circuit** including the fortress ruins of **Ighzer**, the largest in the region, and the small oasis town of **Ouled Said**. We will return to the **dunes** at the end of the day to pick “sand roses” - clusters of gypsum and sand that form a rose-like pattern and watch the dramatic sunset. Transfer to the *Akham Lodge or similar* for check-in, dinner & overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, November 02

Timimoun - Kerzaz - Béni Abbès 

Begin the day with a drive to **Kerzaz** village, a holy city and place of pilgrimage founded in the 15th century. Afterwards, we will continue on to **Béni Abbès** along the **Grand Erg Occidental**, an “ocean” of uninhabited sand, largely unexplored, and difficult to access. Béni Abbès is a date palm farming community founded in the 11th century. It is located along the banks of the Oued Saoura (river or wadi) with the “Grande Dune” dominating the backdrop. Known as the “White Oasis” is home to seven ksars (castles) and a **museum** dedicated to traditional Algerian arts and crafts, desert fauna, and fossils. Visit the **Hermitage of Father de Foucault** where he settled in 1901 and assassinated in 1916. Transfer to *Grand Erg Hotel or similar* in Béni Abbès for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, November 03

Béni Abbès - Tamentit - Adrar 

Begin the day with a drive to **Adrar**, the capital of the **Touat region**, characterized by its red-washed neo-Sudanese architecture. Along the way, we will stop at **Tamentit**, an oasis town that was once a very prosperous and active city from the 13th century until the fall of Granada in 1492. Here we will visit the village **foggara** as well as one of the “**Khizanates**,” private libraries containing rich manuscript collections reflecting the cultural and scientific development that of the Touat

region. We will enjoy a delicious couscous lunch locally made at the **Larbi de Tamentit Guesthouse**, and then continue on to Adrar, the largest of the Touat oasis group. Transfer to *Touat Hotel or similar* for check-in and then take a walk through the city’s popular main square to admire its historical buildings and market and stop for some local refreshing tea. Dinner and overnight at the *Hotel*. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, November 04

Adrar - Algiers  

There will be time for a short visit to the **National Archives Center** to learn more about the area’s history, then transfer to the airport for our late afternoon or early evening flight back to **Algiers**. Upon arrival, transfer to *El Aurassi Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner & overnight. **(B,D)**

Tuesday, November 05

Algiers - USA  

Transfer to the airport for your flight back to the US. **(B)**

We reserve the right to change the order of activities/visits or sites due to unexpected events such as flight cancellations or changes of schedule, or any other reasons beyond our control. We will do our best to ensure that any necessary changes when/if needed to meet the needs of our clients”.

Special Trip Remarks:

We recommend packing light for this tour as porters may not be available at some of the guesthouses and you may be required to carry your own luggage from the hotel to the vehicle. Tourist facilities are very limited in the remote regions of the desert and small villages you will be visiting. In the desert of Algeria, there are few first-class hotels. Hotel A/C's do not cool a room to American standards of comfort.

Participants should understand that this trip involves long drives in hot weather sometimes in 4x4 vehicles. The physical shape you are in will be an important factor in your enjoyment of the trip. There are dangers inherent in any expedition traveling to remote regions such as sickness and lack of modern medical facilities. Knowing the nature of traveling to remote areas, all travelers on this tour will require a high level of flexibility, tolerance, and willingness to go with the flow if things change.

By signing up for this tour, you are acknowledging a full understanding and acceptance of all terms and conditions and are admitting that you are in good physical and mental health and are equipped with an open mind, a sense of adventure, and a tolerant and patient spirit to cope with the tour. Domestic flights may change last minute, forcing us to make necessary changes to the itinerary and the sequence of visits. We have the full right to make changes to the hotels and sites or activities previously described in the itinerary without notice due to possible circumstances beyond our control. It is highly advisable to purchase travel protection insurance for this tour.

Tour Cost (Land Only): \$8,995.00

Per person sharing in double occupancy

Single Supplement: \$1,495.00

Price based on group size minimum of 4 participants and maximum of 12 participants

Trip Grade: II Lodging Level: **-****

Spanish, Mr. Halouani completed his European Master's in linguistics and Hispanic studies at the Sorbonne University in Paris. He has extensive knowledge on Islamic architecture and Eastern decorative elements, as well as Roman archaeology and history. A skilled multilingual interpreter, Mohamed has served as the head tour guide in Tunisia. He now resides in Paris and leads only certain select small groups to the countries in North Africa that boast the highest concentration of Roman Ruins (notably Tunisia and Algeria).

Your Tour lecturer, Mr. Mohamed Halouani... He is a Tunisian native who 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 institutions such as The Detroit Institute of Art, the Textile Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, Cross Cultural Adventurers and many more organizations. After having received his degrees in English and



Tour Includes:

- Airport/Hotel/airport transfers.
- Accommodations in Superior (4*) (except some 2-3* hotels in parts of Algeria).
- Transportation by air-conditioned car/van and 4-wheel drive vehicles.
- Meals as mentioned in the itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch and D: Dinner).
- Bottled mineral water on vehicles during touring.
- All tours as per itinerary including entrance fees.
- Local taxes and service charges on included items.
- Escort of lecturer (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).
- Gratuities to guide, drivers, and porters (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).

Tour does not include:

- International airfare USA- Nouakchott and Algiers-USA.
- Algeria Visa fee (obtainable in USA for approx. \$160 - **your passport must not include any Israeli stamp**).
- Meals not listed or beverages with meals.
- Items of a personal nature (camera fees, laundry, excess luggage, etc.).
- Transfers if not arriving/departing on tour dates.
- Dayroom/overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules or misconnections.
- Trip surcharge to operate below required minimum participants.
- Gratuity to your tour manager (optional).
- Travel protection insurance (Highly recommended).

Trip Grade:

II Active: Some hikes, slightly more demanding walks at or to sites, few elevations, comfortable, but busy schedule, and some very long rides. A few times you may be delayed by the security personnel at some checkpoints necessitating a tolerant and patient attitude.

Lodging Level:

***** Superior:** Some hotels with additional amenities, refined service, and comfort level acceptable to western standards. (3 or 4 stars).

****** Luxury:** Regular style- usually large- hotels, typical western standard with ample venues, and full amenities. (4 or 5 stars).

