

# Carthaginian and Roman Tunisia

## The fabulous remains of Carthage, El Djem & Dougga

The rich agricultural lands of Tunisia were once the prized breadbasket of the Roman Empire, and today contain Rome's most complete treasure trove of archaeological remains outside of Italy. 800 years of prosperity are evident in the magnificent mosaics on display both in museums and at the sites themselves, at the spectacular Roman city of Dougga and at el Djem, with its magnificent amphitheatre arguably in better condition than Rome's Colosseum. The remains of the once-mighty capital of the Carthaginian Empire in Tunis tell the story of the epic power struggle between Carthage and Rome during the Punic Wars.

- Marvel at some of the world's most spectacular Roman Mosaics at the Bardo and El Djem Museums as well as in-situ at several Roman villas at Uthina.
- Immerse yourself in Roman life at the well-preserved remains at Dougga, set in magnificent countryside, with its 3500-seat theatre and evocative forum.
- Discover Sousse, Hannibal's base during the Punic Wars, with its UNESCO-World Heritage listed Medina, and the spectacularly-sited ruins of Roman Mactaris.

### Day 1: 13 September - Tour starts in Tunis

The tour starts today in Tunis. Those making their own way there should arrange to arrive at the hotel by 17:30 pm in order to meet as a group for the first time over drinks in the hotel bar at 18:30, followed by dinner.

*Those taking our recommended flights from London will fly from London Gatwick this afternoon with Tunisair on a direct service to Tunis. On arrival, a group transfer will take the group to the hotel to check in.*

**Overnight:** *Sheraton Tunis or similar* | **Meals:** *D*

### Day 2: 14 September - Tunis - Carthage & Bardo Museum

The morning will be spent exploring the once mighty Phoenician city of Carthage, now scattered amidst an upscale suburb of Tunis.

In the afternoon, we shall visit the Bardo Museum in the northwest of the city, which contains the world's largest collection of Roman mosaics, found during excavations at several of the country's famous ancient sites.

Exceptionally well-preserved, the mosaics tend to be more brightly coloured than their Italian counterparts due an abundant supply of coloured limestone and marble in the area.

With depictions of mythological events such as Ulysses resisting the Sirens, portraits of famous figures of the day (most notably, the poet Virgil), and scenes from day to day life, the mosaics provide a fascinating insight into life in Roman North Africa. The museum is housed in a noteworthy Beylic palace complex dating back to the XIXth Century, and along with the staggering collection of mosaics, also contains artifacts from every era of Tunisian history, including a prehistoric altar and Punic statuary and jewellery.

After the visit, return to our hotel for dinner and overnight.

**Overnight:** *Sheraton Tunis or similar* | **Meals:** *B/L/D*

### **Day 3: 15 September 2025 - Tunis Medina**

This morning, enjoy a guided tour to the city's bustling old town, the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Medina of Tunis, a medieval maze of streets and covered souqs, hammams, and lavishly decorated palaces, noble houses and madrassas. Under the Almohads and Hafsids, from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Tunisia was one of the wealthiest cities in the Islamic world, and there are some 700 historic monuments remaining, including the remaining medina gates, two of the souqs and numerous mosques which testify to its grandeur.

The afternoon and evening are at leisure for group members to explore independently, relax back at the hotel and enjoy dinner at a local restaurant of your choice (dinner not included).

**Overnight:** *Sheraton Tunis or similar* | **Meals:** *B/L/-*

### **Day 4: 16 September 2025 - Tunis - Dougga - Mactaris - Kairouan**

A long day today as we check out of our hotel in Tunis and head inland to visit the spectacularly preserved Roman site of Dougga, around a two hour drive away.

Afterwards, head southeast towards Kairouan, stopping half-way to visit the remains of ancient Mactaris enroute. Sacked by Arab tribes in 1050, the once prosperous city has remained in ruins since, and today contains fascinating remains of its various inhabitants up to that time – including Numidian tombs, a Punic temple and a well-preserved Roman bathhouse.

Continue the last part of the journey to Kairouan and check into our hotel for a two night stay. A one-time Aghlabid capital during the 8th century and the fourth most holy city of Islam, Kerouan's medina is a UNESCO World Heritage site, its fortified walls home to one of the oldest sites of Islamic worship, the Great Mosque, which dates to 670AD.

**Overnight:** *La Kasbah Kairouan or similar* | **Meals:** *B/L/D*

**Day 5: 17 September 2025 Kairouan – El Djem - Kairouan**

This morning after breakfast, travel southeast to El Djem, home to the second-largest colosseum in the Roman world, today arguably considered in even better condition than its larger and more famous counterpart in Rome.

Built between 230 and 238 AD in what was at the time one of Roman North Africa's wealthiest cities (Thysdrus), the 30,000 seat stadium could hold considerably more people than resided there. An elliptical sandstone structure with three gallery levels, it is a marvel of engineering, collecting rainwater to function as a cistern, a clever adaptation in this arid region where water is a scarce commodity. There are 16 cells for gladiators and animals

Also visit the small local museum, at which one can find a superb collection of richly coloured Roman mosaics in excellent condition, as well as the remains of several excavated Roman villas, with mosaics still in situ.

Return to Kairouan and visit the medina and Great Mosque, which reused hundreds of pillars from classical sites, including Carthage.

The evening is at leisure for group members to enjoy dinner independently at a local restaurant of your choice (dinner not included).

*Overnight: La Kasbah Kairouan or similar | Meals: B/L/-*

**Day 6: 18 September 2025 Kairouan – Sousse - Hammamet**

Depart Kairouan this morning and head for the coast and the city of Sousse, a bustling coastal resort, with an exceptional UNESCO World-Heritage listed medina. Its strategic port was used as a base by Hannibal during the Second Punic War, and later by Caesar, before falling to Arabs in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

Visit the atmospheric medina, with narrow streets filled with leather and carpet souks, and the Kasbah, built into the city walls in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and housing the Sousse Archaeological Museum. Inside, an extraordinary collection of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century mosaics can be found which were recovered during excavations of sites in the surrounding Roman region of Byzacium.

Afterwards, continue north up the coast to the coastal resort of Hammamet on the fertile Cap Bon Peninsula, to check into our final hotel of the tour for a two night stay.

*Overnight: La Badira Hammamet or similar | Meals: B/L/D*

**Day 7: 19 September 2025 Hammamet - Oudna - - Thuburbo Majus - Hammamet**

After breakfast, drive inland to Oudna (Uthina) a city established by Emperor Augustus, known for its amphitheatre and extravagant in-situ mosaics. On the way, stop to see a surviving section of Carthage's aqueduct.

Continue to visit Thuburbo Majus, a little-visited yet rewarding site of Punic origin, surrounded by wheat fields and olive groves. Initially punished by Rome for siding with Carthage during the Third Punic War, the city was later used by Augustus as a settlement to house war veterans and their descendants. The city evolved into a major agricultural centre, evidenced by the fact that its wealthy inhabitants bestowed numerous public buildings decorated with mosaics of a standard to rival those found at Carthage and Sousse – including several now housed at the Bardo museum. The remains of the city's Capitolium are of particular interest.

Return to Hammamet for the rest of the afternoon at leisure to enjoy the hotel pool and the sandy beach surrounded by verdant hills and citrus groves.

Enjoy a farewell dinner with the group this evening.

**Overnight:** *La Badira Hammamet or similar* | **Meals:** *B/L/D*

### **Day 8: 20 September 2025 - Tour ends in Hammamet –Airport**

After breakfast, transfer to Tunis Airport, where the tour ends.

Those who have arranged to extend their stay in Tunisia with a private extension, or who are not travelling on the group flights, can opt to remain at the hotel until it is time to check out (onward transfers will therefore be at their own expense – we are happy to arrange a quote).

Those flying on our group flights will check in for a direct flight back to London Gatwick with Tunisair early this afternoon.

### **Private Extensions**

For those with more time to explore, we're able to arrange transfers, hotels and private guiding to visit any part of Tunisia (such as flying to the oasis Tozeur to explore parts of the Sahara), or simply extend with a relaxing few days at the beach. Please ask our team for more information and a quote.