EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Ancient Carthage and Desert Oases (TN 2014)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TOUR DURATION **12** DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Busy
Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Standard
Tour Code: TN

Tour Highlights - Ancient Carthage and Desert Oases

- Tunis - Visit the ruins of the ancient city of Chartage
- Sidi Bou Said - Walk through narrow streets and discover the local white and blue architecture
- Matmata - Visit Troglodyte dwellings and spend a night in a hotel carved out of the rocks!
- Bulla Regia - Explore underground roman villas
- Bardo Museum - Admire the remarkable collection of roman mosaics and antiquities
- El Djem - One of the most magnificent Roman amphitheatres in the Mediterranean
- Dougga - An impressive Roman city perched in a plateau with its famous capitol

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	8 nights Standard Hotel 1 night Simple Hotel 2 nights Comfortable Hotel
Included Meals:	11 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 1 dinner
Start Point:	Join tour: Tunis
End Point:	Tour ends: Sidi Bou Said
Transport:	Bus, Train
Countries:	Tunisia

Ancient Carthage & Desert Oases

Roman ruins, coastal towns and Troglodyte caves are all part of this trip to Tunisia. We tour the capital Tunis, explore the remains of the Phoenician city of Carthage and visit the Roman cities of Sbeitla, Le Kef, Bulla Regia and Dougga. We also discover the Great Mosque of Kairouan - Tunisia's holiest site - and the magnificent amphitheatre at El Djem.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Busy

Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour Tunis

We start our tour in Tunis, the modern bustling capital of Tunisia. Depending on the schedule of your flights, you might be able to explore the city independantly, before meeting the group and the Tour Leader at the hotel.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 2 In Tunis; Visit the Bardo Museum

Despite being a dynamic city, Tunis still retains its distinctive Arab flavour with a colourful Souk crammed with exotica from hubble bubble pipes to baklava. Our morning tour will take us on foot around the Medina with its concentration of streets and souks in the heart of the old city. In the afternoon, we take local transport to visit the Bardo Museum, housed in an old palace. It is an excellent National museum

brimming with treasures of Tunisian history dominated by the Punic, Roman and Christian periods. It is said to house one of the best collections of Roman/Byzantine mosaics.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 3 Visit Carthage; drive to Kairouan

We take a short drive to visit ancient Carthage. Founded around 1000 BC by the Phoenician Queen Dido, Carthage grew to be the most important and powerful trading centre on the Mediterranean and in the known world. The mighty fleet of hundreds of armed ships was an efficient deterrent against invaders for many centuries. Its geographical situation as the gateway to Africa (today only six hours by boat from Sicily), meant that it was a crucial strategic post which the Romans fought hard to attain. After the 3rd and final Punic war the Romans sacked Carthage in 146 BC, destroyed much of the old town and set about constructing the Pro-Consular capital of Africa from the debris. Today many of the ruins date from the Roman period but we'll also see the two ancient Punic harbours, once the very foundation of Carthaginian prosperity. We drive to Kairouan this afternoon, the holiest city in Tunisia which retains a strong spiritual feel. It is also the birthplace of great poets and doctors of religious law, echoing the traditional Islamic link between Art and Faith. In the afternoon we take a sightseeing tour through the Medina. The imposing archway through the walled ramparts leads us into the labyrinth of the medina and covered market. Here traditional crafts such as copper and silver engraving, carpet weaving and saddle making are carried out. This is a good place to stop for a coffee scented with rose water or try a local delicacy 'makroudh'. They are small wheat cakes soaked in honey and stuffed with dates.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 4 Drive to Sfax via El Djem

This morning we will visit the Great Mosque, the 4th holiest Islamic centre after Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. Originally constructed in the seventh century, the Mosque has a myriad of columns and arabesque bas-reliefs surrounding an immense marble courtyard. We also visit the Mosque of the Barber, richly decorated with exquisite patterns and carvings. Leaving Tunisia's spiritual centre, we head for Sfax, her economic centre. En route we visit the magnificent amphitheatre in El Djem, second only to that of Rome, which looms unexpectedly out of the plains rich in olive groves. The olives were the wealth of the region and commercialisation of olive oil led to 'Thysdrus' becoming an important and prosperous trading centre for agricultural products. The huge amphitheatre, larger than those at Nimes and Arles, was constructed with stone from quarries over 30 kilometres away! Later we travel on to Tunisia's second city of Sfax. Sfax is certainly the wealthiest and most sophisticated city in the country. The great medina, with its impressive gateway and towering solid walls topped by jagged ramparts, hide a multitude of narrow alleyways leading to the mosque in the centre.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 5 Explore the spice market in Gabes and visit Djerba's capital city

Today we drive to Djerba stopping in Gabes en route. The only seaside oasis in the world, Gabes presents unique features combining mountain, sea and desert. After a visit to the spice market, we continue to Mareth before travelling to Djerba by ferry. Situated off the South-East coast of Tunisia in the Gulf of Gabes, Djerba is a Mediterranean island characterised by picturesque villages with white washed houses and outdoor cafes, palm trees and miles of unspoilt sandy beaches. Djerba is also believed to be the island of lotus eaters described in Homer's Odyssey. Today we have the chance to visit the charming capital city of Houmt Souk, famous for its Ottoman era caravanserails and its bustling market.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 6 Visit the troglodyte houses in Matmata

Although Djerba is mainly a Muslim island, a Jewish community established itself on the island during Roman times and still counts approximately 1,000 people. Today we visit El Ghriba, Africa's oldest synagogue, which is visited every year by the Jewish pilgrims who live in Tunisia. We also visit Guellala, famous for its traditional pottery, which was produced here and distributed all over the Sahara. Still today there are approximately 450 artisans in the village and it is possible to visit their workshop with the typical painted local pottery. We then continue to Matmata. This area is one of the most famous sites in Tunisia due to its 'invisible village' first recorded in the 4th century. Camouflaged by the sandy pockmarked landscape and situated within craters, are 50 or so hidden underground dwellings. Home to one of the oldest Berber tribes, many of the caves are still in use today. Circular pits with vertical walls have been dug out of the sandstone and a sunken courtyard created with tunnels cutting into the walls to form caves and rooms. This subterranean home is cool in the summer and warm in the winter. We have the opportunity to experience this unique dwelling style in our 'cave hotel' this evening.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**

DAY 7 To Tozeur via the Chott El Jerid

This morning we cross the Chott-el-Jerid - the largest salt flats in the Sahara - where we may see mirages. We then continue on to Tozeur, the capital of the south. It is a busy market town and baskets made of palm fibres hang from every corner. During your free afternoon you may wish to visit as this is the place to pick up some exotic bargains but you must be sure to barter! Alternatively you may opt to visit the fascinating Dar Cherait Folklore Museum (if open) with displays of treasures from the Arab world and scenes of simple Tunisian life or take a caleche ride (optional).

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 8 Visit the ancient Roman ruins in Sbeitla

Today we drive to Le Kef (The Rock), stopping at Gafsa en route. We will visit the Roman ruins of Sbeitla, or 'Sufetla', reached through a huge triumphal arch built in 138AD while Antonius Pious was Emperor. All that is known about this town comes from its inscriptions in its walls and stones. The most impressive ruins are those of the Forum. The Forum is entirely surrounded by a well-preserved 70m x 67m wall and contained within are 3 temples dedicated to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva. Ruins of the great baths, churches and two Byzantine fortresses can also be seen. The prosperity of the town was ensured by the production of olives, the staple diet of Rome's legions. Some of the ingenious olive presses can still be seen today, but its history still remains obscure.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 9 Explore Bulla Regia and Le Kef

This morning we drive to Bulla Regia. This unusual Roman site is distinctive in that villas were built underground to avoid the searing heat. Colourful mosaics are found scattered through the site, their vivid colours having been well-preserved in the cool and shade. We then drive back and take a sightseeing tour around Le Kef (The Rock). The city clings to Jebel Dyr - the largest mountain in the region. From its Kasbah, a beautifully preserved monument constructed by Arabs and rebuilt by the Turks, commanding views over the plains. Some scattered remains date back to the Roman period including those of large baths, cisterns, fortifications and Christian basilicas, as well as a few Arab monuments. It is worth visiting the museum where there is a well presented exhibition on the life of the nomadic tribes whose tents can be sometimes spotted in the surrounding plains. We then continue to Dougga where we stay overnight.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 10 Visit Dougga and transfer to Sidi Bou Said

This morning we visit the magnificent Roman city of Dougga perched on a plateau surrounded by fertile land fed by abundant springs. The capitol, dedicated to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva in 166 AD is arguably the most beautiful Roman monument in North Africa. We'll see the amphitheatre where the 'Comedie Francaise' regularly performs, the square of the twelve winds and even the town brothel! After a long drive, we visit the attractive town of Sidi Bou Said, where scarlet bougainvillaea cascades over the walls of the narrow streets, and colourful shops overflow with carpets, pottery and jewellery. Providing fantastic views over the Mediterranean, Sidi Bou Said is a beautiful coastal town situated on a cliff and it is famous for its white and blue architecture, as well as for having inspired many artists who resided here or visited it such as Paul Klee, Louis Moillet and Andre Gide.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 11 Visit the ancient sites of Thuburbo Majus, Zaghouan and Oudhna

Today we explore the archaelogical sites of Thuburbo Majus, Zaghouan and Oudhna. Arguably one of the most important Roman sites in Tunisia, Thuburbo Majus was originally a Punic town. Founded by Augustus, it was elevated to the status of municipium by Hadrian and to the status of colony by Commodus. The excavations have yet to be completed but have so far revealed the remains of a forum, an amphiteatre, temples, baths, houses, as well as many beautiful mosaics and fragments of a colossal statue of Jupiter. Oudhna is an archeological site situated 30 kilometers south of Tunis on the road leading to Zaghouan. The most impressive buildings are the Capitol, perched on a hill with its fine mosaics and underground Byzantine vaults, and the amphitheater which could seat up to 10,000 people. We finally visit Zaghouan, with its magnificent aqueduct that was used to supply Carthage with fresh water and is still in use today to supply water in the area around Zaghouan. We transfer back to Sidi Bou Said where we overnight.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 12 Tour ends Sidi Bou Said

The tour ends after breakfast.

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

Tunisia is a developing country and as such, the accommodation standards are not equivalent to those in Europe. Although the properties we use are often built in traditional style with local decor and have been chosen for their welcoming atmosphere, comfort levels can be basic compared to Western standards. Although this is to ensure that we provide an authentic experience and we think you will be often surprised by the standard and character of the accommodation we use, please bear in mind that some of the properties might have some outdated or simple furniture and the level of service may vary depending on the location. You may find that availability of hot water is variable or limited in certain locations. Breakfasts are generally continental style.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 11 breakfasts, 1 lunch,1 dinner included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Tipping - Tour Leader

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Local Crew: Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow £20 for tipping.

Foreign Exchange

Tunisia

ATM Availability: Main cities and towns only.

Credit Card Acceptance: Accepted throughout the main cities and towns.

Travellers Cheques: Not recommended

Local Currency: Tunisian Dinar.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US$, Euros or GBP. Cash is generally easier to exchange than travellers cheques.

Where to Exchange: Banks or 'Forex' offices in main towns/cities.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

For passengers making their own travel arrangements, please ensure you join the group as described on day one of the tour itinerary. If you are considering purchasing your own airline tickets, you can book these through any travel agent, directly with an airline or through an online flight consolidator. In all cases, we would be happy to arrange transfers to and from the joining point of your tour if required.

Joining Tour Abroad

Clients booked on **'Land Only'** arrangements should make their own way to the joining point. Please refer to separate **'Joining Instructions'** for time and place of rendezvous with tour leader

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining **any** of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable.

If you require travel insurance for your tour, Explore Worldwide is an appointed representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority. Our travel insurance policy is specially tailored to the needs of the adventure traveller and will cover you for any included activity on any Explore trip. You can either purchase this at the time of booking or call us on 0844 499 0903 after you have booked.

Visa Information

Tunisia: Visas are not required by UK, US and Canadian citizens. Australian and New Zealand citizens do require a visa, other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Tunisia

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against hepatitis A, polio, tetanus and typhoid. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider.

Preparing for your Tour

Climate

Tunisia

Tunisia has a Mediterranean climate with hot summers tempered by sea breezes and mild winters. Spring has the most rainfall but is the best time for flowers. In winter, days in the desert can be warm but come prepared for cold days, whilst at night temperatures can drop below zero. Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at http://www.explore.co.uk/weather. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Clothing

During the winter, days are generally warm and lightweights should be sufficient, however a sweater of thin fleece may be useful for cooler days and thermal clothing for cold nights in the desert where temperatures drop dramatically.

Equipment

Please bring a torch. Please note that towels are not provided at the Matmata Hotel. However, these can be purchased locally. Wet wipes and anitbacterial “dry wash” are useful. An umbrella may be useful for more inclement weather.

Footwear

Well broken-in lightweight walking boots for the walks, exploring sites and sandals, or similar.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Total allowance: 44lb/20kg. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Food

The prices for meals and drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive. The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Tunisia

Lunch £: 6.00

Dinner £: 12.00

Drink

Tunisia

Bottle of Beer £: 2.20

Water £: 1.00

Country details

Tunisia

Population: 10,432,500

Size of Country: 163,610 sq km

Major Language: Tunisian

Religion: Islam

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Electric Supply & Plugs

Tunisia

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditional, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: The Sunshine Orphanage (which cares for abandoned children in Luxor, Egypt), Education for All (sponsoring children through their secondary education in Morocco), The Hope Foundation (helping an Indian Village to recover from the 2004 Tsunami) and the Mufindi Orphanage, which support AIDS orphans in Tanzania.

We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation, Travel Operators for Tigers (helping save the Bengal Tiger from extinction) and Friends for Conservation. We have also adopted a beautiful Sri Lankan Elephant called 'Serendip'.

We are delighted to have received a Five Star sustainable tourism status from the Association of Independent Tour Operators in recognition of our on-going commitment to sustainable tourism.

Cool Earth

Explore are delighted to support Cool Earth to reduce carbon emissions through preventing the illegal deforestation of the South America rainforest. One of the top sources of global carbon emissions, rainforest deforestation equivalent to the USA's annual emissions, it also destroys flora and fauna, sometimes to the point of extinction. It also degrades the lives and communities of the 350 million residents of the rainforest.

Cool Earth prevents the deforestation through its support of local communities as forest guardians and by focussing on areas in immediate danger of deforestation. It has so far protected over 350,000 acres of rainforest, with each acre saving an emission of 260 tons of CO2, as well as protecting rare animals and plants. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year. In addition to mitigating emissions, when you travel with Explore, you are

helping to protect the source of 20% of the world's fresh water and oxygen, as well as the livelihoods of the 1.6 billion people who are reliant on the rainforest. www.coolearth.org

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2013 and 31st December 2014.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2014 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2014. 2015/16 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2015.

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