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*Ancient view of a camel caravan in the Sahel area of Tunisia*

## **“FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA TO THE SAHARA”:**

### **THE GRAND TOUR OF TUNISIA**

Monday, March 30, to Saturday, April 11, 2009

Tour cost from Toronto, based on double occupancy and including 3 meals daily as well as airport taxes/security fees/fuel surcharges: \$3,495 - Single room supplement: \$285

*A 13-day exploration of this fabulous country, from the olive groves on its Mediterranean coast to the sand dunes of the Sahara on the Algerian border, featuring the ruins of Carthage, Roman ghost towns, berber cave dwellings, Islamic holy cities, and amazing landscapes which served as backdrop to blockbuster movies such as 'Star Wars', 'Indiana Jones', and 'The English Patient.' This tour is organized in cooperation with the Guelph Arts Council (GAC) and will be conducted by historian Jacques R. Pauwels, PhD.*

#### **PROPOSED ITINERARY:**

##### Day 1 – Monday, March 30:

Late afternoon departure for Paris with Air France. Dinner and breakfast will be served on board.

##### Day 2 – Tuesday, March 31:

Morning arrival in Paris, and short connecting flight to Tunis, arriving in late morning. Transfer to the centrally-located 4-star/first-class Hotel Tunisia Palace Golden Yasmin, a restored turn-of-the-century Art Nouveau building ([www.goldenyasmin.com/tunisia-palace/en/region.htm](http://www.goldenyasmin.com/tunisia-palace/en/region.htm)). Check in, followed by free time to settle in and get some rest after your overnight flight. In late afternoon, leisurely walking tour of the “medina,” the picturesque old town with its colourful souks (shops). Dinner in the restaurant of our hotel.

### Day 3 – Wednesday, April 1:

After breakfast we visit the Bardo, North Africa's most important museum after Cairo's National Museum, bursting with treasures of Phoenician, Carthaginian, Roman, and Islamic origin. The Bardo is particularly famous for its superb collection of Roman mosaics! Afterwards we visit the harbour and the ruins of ancient Carthage, the mighty city of Phoenician origin which challenged Rome for supremacy in the Mediterranean, and paid for its ambition with its destruction at the end of three ruthless "Carthaginian" wars - in spite of the best efforts of hometown heroes such as Hannibal. We also explore Salamambo, site of Carthage's infamous "tophet," where human sacrifices allegedly took place, and the neighbouring artist colony of Sidi Bou Said, one of the most picturesque villages in Tunisia.

*Ancient view of the ruins of Carthage >*

### Day 4 – Thursday, April 2:

Sidetrip to **Dougga**, an archaeological site full of Roman ruins, including a well-preserved theatre of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD that had room for 3,500 spectators and the Capitol, a temple-like public building featuring impressive monolithic columns. Return to Tunis in late afternoon.



*< The Capitol in Dougga*

### Day 5 – Friday, April 3:

Departure from Tunis after breakfast. We motor south to the old walled town of **Monastir**, inhabited by Carthaginians and Romans before it developed into an important coastal fortress as well as an Islamic center of pilgrimage. The main sights here are the "ribat", a castle constructed during the Middle Ages by Muslim soldier-monks who were the (tough) Muslim opponents of the Crusaders, as well as the splendid mausoleum of Bourguiba, the father of Tunisian independence. On to **El Jem**, where a huge Roman amphitheatre, very similar to the Colosseum in Rome, punctuates the steppe-like landscape. Then we continue through the fertile "Sahel" coastal plain full of gardens, orchards, and olive groves to **Djerba**, the biggest island of North Africa, reached via a short ferry-ride. Once the main terminal of trans-Saharan trade routes as well as the haunt of notorious pirates such as Barbarossa, this beautiful island now attracts countless sun-seeking Europeans on account of its magnificent beaches, wonderful golf courses, and many other attractions! Dinner and overnight in the very comfortable first-class resort Hotel Vincci Alkantara

([www.vinccihoteles.com/en/hotels/tunisia/djerba/vincci\\_alkantara\\_thalassa](http://www.vinccihoteles.com/en/hotels/tunisia/djerba/vincci_alkantara_thalassa)) or similar.

*The Roman amphitheatre of El Jem >*



### Day 6 – Saturday, April 4:

This morning we tour the island, visiting a traditional pottery workshop, the island's only town, Houmt Souk, and the legendary synagogue La Ghriba, the pride and joy of the small local Jewish community, whose ancestors settled here at the time of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, perhaps even earlier! Return to our hotel and afternoon free to relax around the pool of our hotel, explore the nearby beaches...or play a round of golf!



< Beach in Djerba

Day 7 – Sunday, April 5:

Departure from the hotel after yet another lavish buffet breakfast. We leave Djerba via a causeway originally constructed by the Romans! Short visit to the war museum at the "Mareth-Line," a kind of Tunisian "Maginot-Line" where a great battle was fought in 1943 between Rommel's *Afrika-Korps* and Montgomery's British troops. Then we venture into the deep south of Tunisia, the arid region between the Libyan and Algerian borders and the great sand sea of the Sahara. A lunar landscape awaits us, similar to Turkey's Cappadocia; Steven Spielberg filmed "Star wars" and "Indiana Jones" here! Visit to **Matmata**, a village where the local Berbers still live in caves and underground dwellings, and lunch in an excellent Berber restaurant. In the afternoon we continue to **Douz**, Tunisia's gateway to the Sahara, surrounded by sand dunes and palm groves. Opportunity to enjoy an optional camel ride across the sand dunes. Then we transfer by jeep to the Encampement Mehari, a tourist "camp" situated amidst fabulous desert scenery, with sand dunes stretching as far as the eye can see, for dinner and overnight. (For details, see [www.goldenyasmin.com/mehari-zaafrane/en/index.htm](http://www.goldenyasmin.com/mehari-zaafrane/en/index.htm)).



Entrance of the Encampement Mehari

Day 8 – Monday, April 6:

Douz lies near the southern shores of the **Chott el Djerid**, the biggest salt lake in the Sahara, which stretches from the Algerian border towards the Mediterranean coast over a total length of approximately 200 km! Crossing this "lake" via a dam originally built when the French were still Tunisia's colonial masters, we notice thick layers of salt in strange formations, shining brilliantly in the sun, and perhaps we will also witness a mirage, a common phenomenon in these parts. On the north shore, we reach the town of **Tozeur**. A provincial capital and an increasingly important tourist centre, Tozeur is famous for its superb oasis with 400,000 date palms! We visit the old town and the oasis, including the garden known as "the paradise." Then we're off to nearby **Nefta**, a typical Sahara-settlement and one of the most attractive towns in the country, whose oasis also counts hundreds of thousands of date palms! Formerly Tunisia's most important desert caravan station, Nefta is also a first-rate Islamic religious centre with many mosques and "marabouts", i.e., tombs of saints. Return to Tozeur for dinner and overnight in the first-class Hotel Ksar Rouge or similar.

Camels in Nefta oasis >

Day 9 – Tuesday, April 7:

This morning we board our 4WD-vehicles and enjoy an exciting drive to the isolated but fascinating oases **Tamerza, Midès, and Chebika**, tucked away in the mountains on the Algerian border. Lunch in the deluxe hotel



Tamerza Palace. In the afternoon we explore the desert region of **Oung Jemel**, whose superb landscapes served as the dramatic background of many scenes in the film "The English Patient." Return to our hotel in Tozeur in time for dinner.

Day 10 – Wednesday, April 8:

Departure from Tozeur after breakfast. We motor to **Gafsa**, an oasis surrounded by mountains which separate the desert to the south from the steppe of central Tunisia. During the Second World War, this region also witnessed very heavy fighting between Rommel's Germans and American troops advancing from Algeria. Leisurely walking tour of the old town, with the Roman pools, the oasis, and the Kasbah. On to **Sbeitla**, where we visit the ruins of a Roman (and Byzantine) town, Sufetula, a Tunisian Pompeii with triumphal arches, baths, temples, basilicas, a forum, and other impressive monuments! Late afternoon arrival in **Kairouan**, since more than 1000 years the Muslims' holiest city in North Africa, and also a great cultural centre with a famous university and plenty of mosques, mausoleums, and monuments, especially the great mosque built in 670 AD! Dinner and overnight in Kairouan's former casbah-fortress, converted into a 5-star deluxe hotel, La Kasbah ([www.goldenyasmin.com/la-kasbah/en](http://www.goldenyasmin.com/la-kasbah/en)).



< *The great mosque in Kairouan*

Day 11 – Thursday, April 9:

The morning is devoted to sightseeing in Kairouan, including visits to the great mosque with its vast courtyard and imposing minaret, the Barbier Mausoleum, the Cisterns of the Aghlabites, water reservoirs constructed in the 9th-century AD, and the Bir Barouta, a camel-operated mechanism to draw water from a well. Afternoon free to shop, explore Kairouan on your own, or simply relax around the pool of our hotel. We conclude this exciting day with an “au revoir” dinner, perhaps accompanied by a folklore show, in the hotel or in a local restaurant.

**LECTURES EN ROUTE!**

Tunisia has an extremely ancient history, (arguably) beginning with the arrival of the Phoenicians, approximately 1,000 BC. They were followed by the Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals, and Arabs. The latter “arabized” the population and converted them to Islam. The Turks also ruled Tunisia for hundreds of years, but in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the French became the country’s colonial masters. WW II saw heavy fighting here between Rommel’s Afrika-Korps and the Allies, and independence was achieved in 1956. The professional Tunisian tour guide will have much to say about all of this, and your tour escort, historian Jacques Pauwels, will give background lectures - in the bus and in the hotels before or after dinner - on important topics such as “the Phoenicians,” “Romans and Carthaginians,” “the Arab Conquest of North Africa,” “Islam,” and “WW II in North Africa.”

Day 12 – Friday, April 10:

Early morning transfer to Tunis Airport, and flight with Air France to Paris, departing around noon. Late-afternoon arrival in Paris, and transfer to a hotel near Charles de Gaulle Airport for a free evening. (Please note that the accommodation this evening is c/o Air France due to the lack of a same-day connecting flight to Toronto.) If time permits, and if there is sufficient interest, a tour of Paris and/or a special dinner in a typical restaurant may be offered on an *optional* basis.

Day 13 – Saturday, April 11:

After breakfast, short transfer to the airport and return flight to Toronto with Air France.

**Tour cost from Toronto, based on double occupancy: \$3,495**  
**Single room supplement: \$285**

*Included in the price are:*

- Return flight to Tunis;
- \*\*\***The standard combination of airport taxes, security fees and fuel surcharges, presently (August 2008) approximately \$350, but subject to increase due to government regulations and currency fluctuations, any increase will be reflected in your final invoice;**
- Accommodation based in 4- and 5-star (i.e. “first-class” and “deluxe”) hotels but also one overnight in a camp of tents with in Tunisia, and a tourist-class in Paris on day 13, featuring rooms with private facilities, and based on double occupancy – the single room supplement is \$285);
- Buffet breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily, except on day 12, when breakfast only is included;
- Overland transportation via private coach;
- All visits and sightseeing as outlined in the itinerary, including admission to museums and monuments mentioned;
- Hotel taxes and gratuities;
- Gratuities for the Tunisian guide and coach driver.

*Not included:*

- Wine, beer, soft drinks with lunch and dinner;
- All expenses of a personal nature;
- Travel Insurance.

All-inclusive insurance package:

Up to age 59: \$234.36

Ages 60-64: \$286.20

Ages 65-69: \$344.52

Ages 70-74: \$465.48

Over 74: Call for rates

Non-medical insurance package:

Up to age 59: \$197.64

Ages 60-64: \$222.48

Ages 65-69: \$248.40

Ages 70-74: \$281.88

Over 74: Call for rates



*Sand dunes in the Tunisian Sahara*

(For more great pictures of Tunisia, see [www.flickr.com/search/?q=tunisia](http://www.flickr.com/search/?q=tunisia))



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**TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

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**RESERVATIONS AND DEPOSITS:**

Reservations should be made as early as possible to ensure the departure of your choice. A deposit of \$750.00 is required at the time of registration. **Your reservation is confirmed upon receipt of your deposit and application form. No reservations will be accepted without a signed application form.**

**REFUND OF UNUSED ARRANGEMENTS:**

Because the rates of Pauwels Travel Bureau Ltd. are based on group participation, no refund can be made for any tour accommodation or tour service or tour feature not taken. If cancellation occurs while the tour is in progress, no refund can be made for the tour portion not taken. We strongly suggest that to allow for any unexpected contingencies, you purchase the all-inclusive insurance.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:**

Refund of deposit is made in full if cancellation is received in writing by Pauwels Travel Bureau Ltd. more than 90 days prior of the departure date of the tour less a \$500.00 non refundable administrative fee per person. For cancellation received in writing 90 days prior or less the following cancellation charges apply:

90 days to 46 days before departure: 25% of tour cost  
45 to 15 days before departure: 50% of tour cost  
within 14 days prior to departure: 100% of tour cost

**RESPONSIBILITY:**

Pauwels Travel Bureau Ltd. reserves the right without notice, to withdraw any part or all of the tour. Factors such as airline schedule changes, hotel overbookings, inclement weather, etc. may necessitate changes in the itinerary as outlined. There may also be other circumstances in which changes become necessary or advisable. Any savings realized by these changes will be passed on to the passengers, any resultant expenses shall be borne by the passenger. Pauwels Travel Bureau Ltd. acts only as an agent in securing hotel, transportation and other travel services and in no event shall be held responsible for the failure by any person or company to render any transportation, lodging or other travel service to be provided on the tour. All hotel, transportation and other travel services are provided to tour members subject to all the terms and conditions under which they are offered to the public generally. The acceptance of the initial service to be provided under the tour shall be considered an acceptance by the tour member of those conditions. Pauwels Travel Bureau Ltd. also reserves the right to decline, to accept or retain any person as a member of the tour, in which case equitable refund will be made at the discretion of the tour operators.

**AIR TRANSPORTATION:**

Trans Atlantic economy flight by scheduled, IATA carriers, based on charter class fare. Other fares may also be used. All fares are subject to specific rules and regulations, to changes and to government approval.

## APPLICATION FORM

Please book \_\_\_ seat(s) on the "Grand Tour of Tunisia", March 30 – April 11, 2009.

Enclosed is my/our deposit of \_\_\_\_\_ (\$750 per person, *plus* insurance premium if taken.)

**Deposit and insurance premium, if taken, are due with registration. You will be invoiced for the balance approximately 45 days prior to departure.**

**WE NOW REQUIRE A COPY OF YOUR PASSPORT (INFORMATION PAGES ONLY) TO BE SENT WITH YOUR APPLICATION FORM AT TIME OF REGISTRATION.**

**Name as on Passport.** Indicate the appropriate title before each name (Mr., Mrs., Miss, Dr., Ms.)

NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_

If applicable, give your commonly used first name as you would like it to appear on your name tag: (e.g. "Liz" for "Mary Elizabeth") \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: (Residence) \_\_\_\_\_ (Business) \_\_\_\_\_ (Fax/Email) \_\_\_\_\_

If traveling alone, please indicate your willingness to share accommodations: YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

SINGLE ROOM REQUIRED: \_\_\_\_\_

(We will try to find a roommate for those willing to share, but cannot guarantee success in doing so. For single travelers we are not able to match, the single supplement will apply.)

**SPECIAL REQUESTS:** (Dietary, wheelchair assistance, frequent flyer number, twin beds, etc.)

Please list here so we can do our best to assist you. (We will do our best to assist you but cannot guarantee success, especially in the case of requests for specific seating arrangements, since airlines do not normally allow individual seat selections for groups.)

I/we agree to the "terms and conditions" attached to the program. \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance, I/we accept:

All-inclusive Package \_\_\_\_\_ Non-medical Package \_\_\_\_\_ Decline Insurance \_\_\_\_\_

Signature (s) \_\_\_\_\_

If purchasing travel insurance, we require your date of birth:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

### PAYMENT:

Cheque payable to Pauwels Travel     Visa     Mastercard     American Express

Amount Paid: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please forward this completed form, copy of passport and payment to:**

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