

TUNISIA

Tunisia officially the **Republic of Tunisia** is a country located in North Africa. It is bordered by Algeria to the west and Libya to the southeast. It is the northernmost country on the African continent, and the smallest of the nations situated along the Atlas mountain range. Around forty percent of the country is composed of the Sahara desert, with much of the remainder consisting of particularly fertile soil and a 1300 km coastline.

Recent History

The French granted independence to Tunisia in 1956, and Habib Bourguiba, who led the Independence movement, became the first Tunisian president. In accordance with the pattern prevailing across the developing world in that era, the liberator turned dictator. His style was marked by a strong anti-Islamic fundamentalist stance.

Bourguiba's successor has continued to clamp down on Islamic fundamentalism, and - despite early liberalizing tendencies, such as the introduction of some press freedoms - displays a similar penchant for consolidating his own power base. Today the main opposition parties remain disenfranchised and media censorship is commonplace.

Geography

Tunisia is a country situated on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa, midway between the Atlantic Ocean and the Nile Valley. It is bordered by Algeria in the west and Libya in the south-east. An abrupt southern turn of its shoreline gives Tunisia two faces on the Mediterranean.

Despite its relatively small size, Tunisia has great geographical and climactic diversity. The Dorsal, an extension of the Atlas Mountains, traverses Tunisia in a northeasterly direction from the Algerian border in the west to the Cape Bon peninsula. North of the Dorsal is the Tell, a region characterized by low, rolling hills and plains, although in the northwestern corner of Tunisia, the land reaches elevations of 1,050 meters.

Climate

Tunisia has a Mediterranean climate, with hot, dry summers and mild winters. Visiting is best in springtime, between mid-March and mid-May, with warm (but not scorching) temperatures and wild flowers covering the countryside

Population

The population of Tunisia consists of 97% Berbers, Arab or a mixture of two. The Berbers are the indigenous population of North-Africa. The Berbers primarily speak Berber languages, often called Shelha.

Currency: Tunisian Dinar (TND) = 1,000 millimes.

Living as an expat – Housing

Tunisia's law is pro-landlord, in the free market segment. The rent can be freely agreed between the landlord and tenant in all market segments. There is no legal maximum annual rent increase for free market tenancies, but any increase must be stipulated in the contract (annual increase is usually 5%).

In certain cases if the tenant is a non-Tunisian individual a tenancy contract will require preliminary authorization. The tenancy contract may stipulate a rental deposit or a security deposit. The applicable law depends on how long the tenant has occupied the building, and on the building's age.

The duration of the contract can be freely agreed between the parties. At term, the lease may be renewed by tacit agreement for the same period, until a notice is being given by either of the parties in advance through bailiff or by registered mail. During the contract term, the tenant can rarely be evicted. However in case of non-payment of rent by the tenant, after a reasonable notice (commonly two months) the owner can obtain a court order for eviction through a summary procedure.

Getting there around

The main airports for international (predominantly charter) flights are Tunis-Carthage, Monastir and Jerba, with Tozeur and Tabarka picking up a stray flight here and there. Tunis Air, the national airline, flies to a range of destinations in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, but there are no direct flights between Tunisia and North or South America, Asia or Oceania. There is no departure tax in Tunisia

Tunisia has a well-developed transport network, with just about every town of any consequence linked daily with the capital

The national bus company, Société Nationale du Transport Interurbain (SNTRI, pronounced 'sintry'), operates daily air-conditioned buses to just about every town in the country. In addition, there are regional bus companies that are cheap, but slower than SNTRI, and almost never air-conditioned. Tunisia's shared, long-distance taxis - called *louages* - take five passengers and won't leave until they're full (which never takes long). Louages are the fastest way to get around and the cost is only slightly higher than that for a bus.

More information

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