



## TRIPOLITANIA

### a) Tripoli

Tripoli is the capital of "Tripolitania", "the land of the three cities" composed of the three Phoenician cities of Oea (now Tripoli), Leptis Magna and Sabratha, of which only Tripoli has remained inhabited up to now. Founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, Tripoli was subsequently ruled by Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Ottomans, Arabs and Italians; All these civilizations have left their marks on the city. The luminosity and style of a typically North African city, combined with the charm of early 20<sup>th</sup> century neoclassic Italian architecture and roman ruins gives it a unique atmosphere... Your tour of Tripoli starts in the "Green Square", with the visit of the "Assraya Al Hamra" (Red Castle) which houses the National Museum in the "Serail". The Museum goes through Libyan history from prehistoric times, to recent history, including interesting Roman and Greek sections as well as a section on tribal culture. The Museum displays an impressive collection of mosaics, statues and artifacts from the Hellenistic period (with sections dedicated to Leptis Magna, Sabratha etc...). The visit of the Museum is followed by the visit of the old town, the "Medina". The walk through the narrow streets of the Medina takes you through an authentic North African "souk", the "Khans" (hostels for the Caravans), followed by the visit of traditional houses and mosques. The largest and most beautiful mosque is the "Ahmed Pasha Karamanli" mosque. To reach the famous Marcus Aurelius arch (the only Roman remain in Tripoli, you will pass by the Church constructed by the Italians at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### b) Leptis Magna

Leptis Magna was founded by the Phoenicians around 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. The city was first dominated by Carthage; it became an important commercial and transit point on the North African coast, and more particularly for the slave trade, as well as the trade of ivory and metals; It was under Roman rule that Leptis Magna reached its golden age (the Romans had regained control of the region during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Punic War). Leptis achieved its greatest prominence in 193, when Lucius Septimus Severus (born in Leptis Magna), became emperor. He favoured his hometown above all other provincial cities, and made Leptis Magna the third most-important city in Africa, rivalling Carthage and Alexandria. The famous arch which can still be admired in Leptis (after a great restoration work) was built by Severus Septimus. Leptis Magna remains nowadays one of the best preserved roman sites in the world. Listed in the famous UNESCO World Heritage, the site is striking by its size: the extent of the ruins which spread over more than 10 square kilometres easily puts the visitor in a position to imagine what this great city must have looked like. The visitor



walks along the well preserved Cardo Maximus (North-South street) and the Decumanus Maximus (East-West street) and admires villas and temples, the Forum (still paved with marble), the market, the Hadrian Baths...

The Hadrian baths are exceptionally well preserved. Covered with its original marble, the pool is still intact; the tepidarium and caldarium give the visitor a precise idea of the level of refinement of the Romans. The public toilets (covered with a pierced block of marble) also leave the visitor with a vivid image of Roman customs and way of life. Further down near the market, the Amphitheatre stands almost identical to what it must have looked like 2000 years ago, facing the blue Mediterranean sea.

Last but not least, on the east side, stands the Circus, exceptionally well preserved; you can almost hear the shouts of the crowd cheering for their favoured gladiator...

### c) Sabratha

Sabratha, located 65km west of Tripoli was the westernmost of the "three cities" of the Tripolitania.

Also founded by the Phoenicians, the city thrived under Carthage rule and after the 3<sup>rd</sup>

Punic War, under Roman rule. Sabratha's proximity with Leptis Magna (favoured city of Septimus Severus) gave the city a boost in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

Sabratha was badly damaged by earthquakes during the 4th century, particularly the quake of AD 365. It was rebuilt on a more modest scale by Byzantine governors. Within a hundred years of the Arab conquest of the Maghreb, trade had shifted to other ports and Sabratha dwindled to a village.

Besides its magnificent 3-storey amphitheatre, dating back from the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century (partly rebuilt by the Italians at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), Sabratha is admired for its temples (dedicated to Liber Pater, Serapis and Isis), and its Christian basilica of the time of Justinian. Sabratha is however mostly famous for its remarkable mosaics, some of which are still on the site (although the best pieces are preserved in the adjacent museum and the Tripoli Museum). The visitor can admire the colored patterns of the seaward (or Forum) baths, directly overlooking the shore, and the black and white floors of the Theatre baths.

### A) CYRENAICA

#### a) Green Mountains

The Jebel Akhdar (Green Mountain) are the highest mountains in Libya. They form the separation between the Sahara and Libya's north-eastern coastline and drop steeply into the Mediterranean from a height of 600 meters. Living up to their names the Green Mountains are very fertile and host most of Libya's agricultural activities.

#### b) Cyrene

Cyrene was the oldest and most important of the five Greek colonies (Pentapolis). Cyrene lies in the lush valley of the Jebel Akhdar (Green Mountain). It was named



after a spring, Kyre, which the Greeks consecrated to Apollo.

Cyrene was founded by the Greeks of Thera, led by Battos, about 630 BC, ten miles from its port, Apollonia. It reached its peak of prosperity in the 5th century BC and became a republic in 460 BC. After the death of Alexander the Great (323 BC), Cyrenaica became part of the empire controlled by the Ptolemaic dynasty from Alexandria in Egypt; It was subsequently taken over by the Romans during 1st century BC. Cyrene was the birthplace of philosopher Eratosthenes (who demonstrated that the earth was round). Cyrene is also mentioned in the New Testament (Simon of Cyrene carried the cross of Christ)

Cyrene's biggest export was the medicinal herb silphium (an antiseptic and purgative, but also used as food dressing and aphrodisiac – the plant was pictured on Cyrenian coins), until it was harvested to extinction. Cyrene, with its port of Apollonia (Marsa Susa), remained an important urban center until the earthquake of 365. The City declined very quickly after the 5th century AD.

Cyrene is still very well preserved. One of its more significant features is the Temple of

Apollo which was originally constructed as early as 7th century BC. Other ancient structures include a Temple to Demeter and a partially unexcavated Temple to Zeus. There is a large necropolis between Cyrene and its ancient port of Apollonia.

#### c) Apollonia Ç susah Ė

Apollonia is situated approximately 20km north of Cyrene on the shore. The site is not as well preserved as Cyrene. Apollonia was established towards the end of the seventh century BC as the harbour for Cyrene. Because Apollonia was dependent on the older city, it was never a very important city and shared in Cyrene's fate (taken over by the Romans and ruled by the Ptolemias, and partly destroyed by the same earthquake in 365).

Apollonia became a rival to Cyrene in the late Roman period as it was considered less

vulnerable to attack than cities further inland, and it was made capital of a newly created province, Libya Superior, by the emperor Diocletian (284-305). The port remained one of the last bases of the Byzantine who constructed five basilicas.

#### d) Ptolemias

Founded in the 4th century BC as one of the five cities of the Pentapolis, Ptolmeita fell into decline with the arrival of the arabs but was the last city to fall. The excavated areas (only 10%) mostly date from the 1st and 2nd centuries BC during thriving Hellenistic period. The site is most remarkable for its system of underground cisterns providing water to the whole city.

#### B) DESERT AND BERBER TOWNS

95% of Libya is covered by desert; however, if by desert one thinks of sand dunes, they cover only 20% of the territory. The desert is rich by its diversity: mountains,



sarirs, oasis, lakes, wadis... offers endless pleasures to the visitor.

The Sahara is diagonally split into a western and an eastern half by a series of highlands.

The eastern part, called the Libyan Desert (which covers part of Egypt) is totally unfit for human habitation. Some places of the Great Sand Sea have periods of 20-30 years with no rainfall.

In the West one seldom needs to travel more than 100 kilometres between areas with water and vegetation. The south western part and the Fezzan region is home to some of the most spectacular and most diverse desert sceneries in the world. The majestic sand dunes of the Idehan Murzuq and Ubari Sand Sea cover thousand of square kilometres and can reach 125m high. The deep valleys within the desert conceal several idyllic palm-fringed salt lakes; further down west, the massifs of Akakus and breathtaking rock formations hosts pre-historic paintings and carvings dating back more than 12,000 years.

#### a) Ubari Lakes

Located near Sabha are several beautiful salt lakes. They appear like a miracle or idyllic mirage in the Sand Sea; the most famous is Lake Gaberoun; it is one of the largest. The inhabitants of the Gaberoun Lake are known as the "worm eaters" as their diet includes tiny red shrimps found in the lake. The most beautiful is probably Lake Um-Al-Ma. The most particular is Lake Mavo as it changes color (from green to red), due to algae's in the water; Another famous one is lake Mandara but the water has dried out over the past years.

#### b) Akakaus

The Akakaus mountain range (also known as "Tadrart"s) is very ancient, having formed much before the sandstones surrounding them. It's one of the most magnificent natural sites of Libya. The landscape of dark basalt stone monoliths is listed as UNESCO world Heritage and conceal pre-historic rock paintings and carvings some dating back at least 12,000 years.

#### c) Ghadames

Ghadames is an oasis town that lies along the borders of Algeria and Tunisia, 700km South West of Tripoli. The City of Ghadames was founded over 2000 years ago and was constantly inhabited up to the 1980's until the population was relocated in modern houses in the "new city"

Ghadames is well known for its beautiful and inventive architectural style. Houses (made of mud, lime and palm tree trunks) were designed to withstand the extremes of the hot Saharan climate. People still use the old city during the hot summer months as

its old architectural styles offer relief from the Saharan heat (when modern houses don't)

The legend of Ghadames:



According to the legend, the city was established where the source Ayn Al Fares was discovered. One day the merchants of a caravan stopped for the night; the next day, after resuming their journey, they realised they had forgotten their cooking tools. One of them said “we must have left them where we had lunch yesterday”. Lunch in Arabic is “Ghada” and yesterday is “Ames”.

When they returned on the site where they had left their cooking tools, one of the horses was so thirsty that he began to fumble through the sand; suddenly a gush of water exploded. The source was called “Ayn El fares” (the source of the horse) and the place “Ghada-Ames”.

The entrance is through “Bab al Bar” (“the door to the outside”). The town is divided in two main sections as the city was owned by 2 main tribes: the Beni Walid (who owned

the north) and the Beni Wazid (who owned the south);

The town is divided in 7 main streets. Each street has its own square, and its own mosque. The Mosque also serves as public bath (showers for the ablutions) and school (madrassa attached to the Mosque).

On the streets levels, only the men could walk. The women were only allowed to walk on the second level (above the roofs of the houses) which is another reason why the city was built with connecting roofs.

The visit of the old town also takes you to see the famous Ayn Al fares source. 5 canals are connected to the big tank of turquoise-blue water to provide water to the whole city and its numerous gardens.

The visitor finishes his visit with a lunch in a traditional Berber house.

#### d) **Ghat**

Ghat is a Tuareg city, one of the most attractive of the Libyan oasis cities with its well preserved mud-brick Medina. Ghat used to be an important trade post over for passing caravans but it remains a living city. First built by the Garamantians, the medina was built in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC on top of an old settlement known as Rana. Most of what is still visible dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Tuaregs used to call it “the

land of peace” while it’s known in the old Libyan language as the “Land of the Sun”.

#### e) **Germa: extinct civilization of the Garamantes**

The ancient historian Herodotus (5<sup>th</sup> century BC) spoke of the Garamantian who lived in the part of Libya “where wild beasts are found”. The Garamantes have become a people of Legend. Archaeologists have found traces of thriving urban centers, and agree that they were probably one of the most advanced and forward thinking people of their times, introducing horses, camels, wheeled-transport to the Sahara. They are also known for their agricultural techniques although they lived far from water resources (hundreds of underground channels were found). By 500 AD, the last of the Garamantes people had either died or left Germa as underground water supplied



dried up as a result of over exploitation.

### Culture and Traditions

#### a) Libyan population

Libya has population of around 6 million; most of the populations are Arabs, although ethnically there is a mixture of races including Turks, Berbers and sub-Sahara Africans.

#### b) Berber and Tuaregs

Berber is nowadays used as a loose term for native speakers of the various Berber dialects; most of the Berbers prefer to define themselves according to their tribe. The Tuaregs (of a population of no more than 17,000) are the bearers of a proud desert culture across Algeria, Mali, Niger and Libya. This once nomadic tribe live sedentary life in the south western desert around Ghat, Ghadames and Murzuq, while a small minority still follow semi nomadic patterns; Tuaregs refer to themselves as “Kel Tamashek” (speakers of the Tamashek language) as the word “Tuareg” actually derives from the Arabic word “Tawarek” (abandoned by god), reference to their freewheeling

independence (the majority belong to the Kharijite sect (Sunni muslim family). The Tamashek language uses a different alphabet than the Arabic (very similar to the Phoenician alphabet). Berber and Toureg are very egalitarian cultures; Tuareg women enjoy high status. Inheritance is through the female line.

Tuaregs are tall and dark skinned people that when in full dress are a colorful sight. Men, not women, wear veils called *tagulmust* which consist of long strips of cotton material wrapped around the head, neck, chin and face up to the eyes. The color of the material may be black, white, green or blue. The blue *tagulmust* are worn by those

who claim noble descent and the blue dye used in the *tagulmust* and clothing frequently transfers to the skin, causing the Toureg to be known as "blue men." The *tagulmust* is always worn, both indoors and out.

#### Location:

Libya is situated on the coast of North Africa and is the fourth largest country on the continent. It borders with Egypt in the east, Sudan in the southeast, Chad and Niger in the south, Algeria to the west and Tunisia in the northwest and the Mediterranean Sea in the north.

Libya forms part of the North African plateau extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. The highest point is 10,335 ft, a peak in the extreme south. The main geographical areas are Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Fezzan. Tripolitania consists of a series of terraces rising slowly from sea level along the coastal plain of the Jafara to sharp escarpments commonly called the Jabal. These are the most important agricultural areas of Tripolitania. South of the Jabal is an upland plateau of sand, scrub and scattered masses of stone. Further south are depressions extending from east to west. Here are found many oases and artesian wells. An upland plateau rising to 2,000 ft gives a rugged coastline to Cyrenaica.



This plateau, the Green Mountain (Jabal Akhdar) contains three of Libya's leading cities - Benghazi, El Bayda and Darnah. Further south, the desert is studded with oases such as Jalu and Jaghub. South of Cyrenaica is the Tibesti Mountains. The Fezzan is largely a series of depressions with occasional oases. There are no perennial rivers in the whole country

**Official Name:**

Al-Jamahiriyah al-Arabiah al-Libiyah ash-Shabiyah al-Ishtirakiyah al-Auzma.

**Official Religion:**

The religion of the country is ISLAM, and almost 100% Sunni Muslim, and Libyans are conservative, though not fundamentalist, Islam is kept as a way of life rather than political force.

**Official Language:**

Arabic is the official language in Libya and knowledge of it is great help, as you'll find few people who speak English outside the main centers.

Those often speak English in business and some older Libyans speak Italian.

Some Berber groups, notably in the Jebel Nafusa, still speak their own language and Tuaregs in the south, in addition to Arabic, also speak Tifinagh (also known as Tamashek).

**Currency:-**

The unit currency is the Libya dinar, (LYD), which equals 1000 dirhams Dinars are issued in ( 20, 10, 5 , 1 , 0.5 , 0.25 notes. Coins are rarely used now days are available in (500 dirhams, 250 dirhams, 100 dirhams, and 10 dirhams)

Many ATMs are available in most cities. It is also possible to exchange at banks and most of the hotels.

**Climate:-**

Due to the lack of natural barriers, the Sahara deserts on the one hand and the Mediterranean on the other affects Libya's climate. Summer is generally very hot, with temperatures on the coast around 30°C, often accompanied by high humidity, while in the south they can reach a sweltering 50°C.

In the winter, the weather can be cool and rainy on the coast, even snowing occasionally in the Jebeles, while the temperatures can drop to subfreezing at night.

Periodically during the spring, you may encounter the gable, a hot, dry, sand-laden wind which can raise the temperature in a matter of hours to between 40°C and 50°C

**Business hours:-**

Libya operates an Islamic working week, with Friday as the day off only recently Saturday has been added as a day off also, during the week days Government offices open from 8 am

– 14 pm.

Bank hours 8 am –13 pm, and on Wednesdays from 8am to noon and from 3 pm to 5 pm.

Schools from 8 am – 1 pm

Shops and markets in winter from 8 or 9 am to 2 pm – afternoon form 5 – 8 pm.

In summer time 9 – 10 am to 2 pm and afternoon 6 – 10 or 11 pm .

Time: Libya is GMT/UTC plus two hours.

**Best time to visit:**



Costal trips can be done all year round, but summers can be very hot. For the desert, it's best to go during spring or autumns.

#### Drinks:-

Alcohol is prohibited in Libya and it is not possible to buy alcoholic drinks anywhere. Non alcoholic beer is available.

#### Clothing:

Libyans are very friendly to tourists but it is best to dress conservatively, for example short skirt and tight tops should be avoided, trousers, long shorts for both sexes will be okay, and ladies should cover their heads when visiting the mosques, and shoes off in the mosque also

for both sex.

Due to cold weather in the desert at night, bring a warm jumper.

#### ECONOMY AND POLITICS :

The Libyan economy depends primarily upon revenues from the oil sector, which contribute about 95% of export earnings, about one-quarter of GDP, and 60% of public sector wages. Substantial revenues from the energy sector coupled with a small population give Libya one of the highest per capita GDPs in Africa. Libyan officials in the past five years have made progress on economic reforms as part of a broader campaign to reintegrate the country into the international fold. This effort picked up steam after UN sanctions were lifted in September 2003 and as Libya announced in December 2003 that it would abandon programs to build weapons of mass destruction. Almost all US unilateral sanctions against Libya were removed in April 2004, helping Libya attract more foreign direct investment, mostly in the energy sector. Libyan oil and gas licensing rounds continue to draw high international interest; the National Oil Company set a goal of nearly doubling oil production to 3 million bbl/day by 2015. Libya faces a long road ahead in liberalizing the socialist-oriented

economy, but initial steps - including applying for WTO membership, reducing some subsidies, and announcing plans for privatization - are laying the groundwork for a transition to a more market-based economy. The non-oil manufacturing and construction sectors, which account for more than 20% of GDP, have expanded from processing mostly agricultural products to include the production of petrochemicals, iron, steel, and aluminum. Climatic conditions and poor soils severely limit agricultural output, and Libya imports about 75% of its food. Libya's primary agricultural water source remains the Great Manmade River Project, but significant resources are being invested in desalinization research to meet growing water demands.

#### Libyan food:-

Libyan food is a mix of many different Mediterranean influences. It includes typical Maghreb dishes like couscous or Tajine but it also kept many Italian specialities like pasta ("Maracona") and Pizza.

The meal always starts with a soup ("chorba") or lentils or vegetables. The Libyan Chorba is a tomato base with spices and Persil and contains small pastas and mutton meat.

Typical dishes include:

Ousban : sausage prepared from mutton meat with spices and Persil.



Roushda : small pasta accompanied by a sauce made of cannelle, safron and beans.

Bazzen : This typical dish is rarely found in the restaurants. It is served for special occasions like weddings, but also for the Friday lunch. A paste made of flou ris served in a dome-shape and served with vegetable sauce, eggs and meat.

#### Shopping :

In the souks, one can find the typical Arabic products like local carpets (the most famous is the Misrata carpet), silver products, multicolored hand made Ghadames sandals and other varieties of local products.

#### Holidays:

Libya observes all the Muslim festivities. The dates of these festivities depend on the lunar calendar and differ from one year to another when it comes to the solar (European) calendar.

The public holidays in Libya

#### National Holidays

First of September (Al-Fateh) Revolution September 1st

Declaration of the Authority of the People March 2nd

Evacuation of the British forces March 28th

Evacuation of the American forces June 11th

Evacuation of the last Italian settlers October 7th

Egyptian Revolution July 23rd

#### Religious Holidays

Islamic (Lunar) New Year 1st Moharram

The Prophet's Sacred Birthday 12 Rabii Al-Thani

Eid Al-Fitr (end of fasting month) 7 , 2, 3 Shawal

Eid Al-Adha 9, 10, 11, 12 Dhul-Hijja

#### Festivals :-

Every year (in October for Ghadames, December for Ghat), folkloric festivals bring the old cities alive in a riot of colors, dancing, singing, most of which are performed in traditional dress.

#### International Festivals

Attoumour. Festival October

Ghadames Tourism Festival October

Folklore and Popular Poetry Festival September

Equestrian Festival September

Maalouf Festival First week of the Islamic month of Rabii Al-Thani

Haun Tourism Festival October

Ghat Tourism Festival December

## Distances (KM)

Sabratha	70	Tokra	70
Leptis magna	125	Ptolemias	105
Misrata	205	Al marj	100
Benghazi	1015	Qasr Libya	159
Tobruk	1235	Al Bayda	202
Girza	190	Cyrene	219
Gharyan	90	Apollonia	239
Nalut	275	Ras al Hillal	269
Ghadames	650	Athroun	278
Sebha	780	Darnah	307
Germa	940	Alwainat	1200
Ghat	1342		