

Annaba:

A city that influenced European history

>Mohamed Bokrita

The eastern port city of Annaba is the third largest city in Algeria. It lies 620km east of Algiers the capital and is an important industrial and shipping centre, which was first settled by the Phoenicians as Hippo Regius allied with Carthage.

Hippo Regius was a haven for the Numidian kings until it became a Roman colony in 46BC after Numidia was annexed by Caesar. Under Roman rule Hippo Regius flourished commercially as was also a centre for Christianity until it was sacked by vandals during the 5th century.

Annaba was home to the famous Aurelius Augustinus (Augustine of Hippo or Saint Augustine) who died in 430 AD.

He was one of the most important figures of this ancient city who contributed greatly to the development of Western Christianity. He is one of the church fathers, a saint and the patron of the Augustinian religious order. However, some consider him a heretic.

The Byzantines captured the city and rebuilt it during the 6th century. Following the Muslim

conquest of North Africa in the 7th century, the city of Annaba was built some 2km from Hippo Regius, which was pillaged and neglected by the Byzantines.

The French, during their occupation of Algiers in 1830, were repelled by Annaba's citizens for two years, but the city finally fell in 1832. Annaba was also a base for the allied forces during World War II. It was heavily bombed by the German air force during the winter of 1942.

Annaba is presently a main province of Algeria, a seaport on the Mediterranean Sea, near the mouth of the Seybouse River. The picturesque old sector, with narrow streets and bazaars is fascinating. Fine examples of modern French architecture are standing alongside original native buildings. Annaba is also an industrial

city. It is a chief exporter of minerals on the Mediterranean Sea.

The French named it Bône, but after Algeria's independence on the 5th of July 1962, many place names were Arabised, and the city became known as Annaba. Its population dipped following the independence war as most people of European extraction immigrated to France, but Annaba's charms and attributes soon lured new citizens from across Algeria. Today, Annaba has a population of over 450,000 and the highly regarded Annaba University has an enrollment of over 40,000 students.

Travelers will find that getting in and out of Annaba is relatively easy, as the city is well served by road and rail links as well as by air through Rabah Bitat International Airport. ■



The railway station

محطة القطار



الكاتب (الثاني من اليسار) مع أصدقائه وهم يتمتعون بمحطات عتابة

The writer second from left with some friends enjoying Annaba's ice cream