

The Algerian City of al-Wadi

Desert Culture and Winter Tourism

by: al-Wadi Directorate for Tourism and Traditional Crafts

Al-Wadi, a city which has an area of 7,720 square kilometers and a population of over 100,000, is located in the south-eastern region of Algeria and is the administrative and economic capital of the State of Wadi Suf. Moreover, the city is situated near the centre of what is known as the eastern route, which extends hundreds of kilometers across the desert and is surrounded by huge sand hills, some of which can reach heights as tall as 80 metres. Being part of the desert, the climate is typical, temperatures reaching as much as 45 degrees centigrade in summer and remaining mild during winter daylight hours and distinctly cool at night. The latter season is therefore the best for organizing tourist excursions and explorations to the area, and is also the busiest time of the year.

Wadi Suf, and in particular its capital, al-Wadi, has a proud Arab and Islamic heritage. Once famously known as "The City of One Thousand and One Domes", its visitors have included writers, historians and experts in architecture and heritage. ➤



رقصة شعبية من مدينة الوادي
A Folklore Dance in Al-Wadi



إحدى الحدائق الجميلة في مدينة الوادي
A Beautiful Garden in Al-Wadi

Historical Profile

Al-Wadi has inspired many poets, writers, religious leaders and Sufi saints who would come not only from other cities in Algeria but also from abroad. Indeed, the Old City of al-Wadi has been a destination for Sufi mystics and spiritual travellers for eons.

Al-Wadi's inhabitants work mainly in trading and farming and the district is regarded as one of the biggest producers of dates in Algeria. The city is also unique in the way that date palms are planted in the desert - a process known locally as *gheetan* - which protects the fruit trees from the strong desert winds and sandstorms, and whose roots are fed directly from the ground waters. This method continues to astound visitors time after time.

The Old City

Al-A'shsh is the oldest quarter and the centre of the city. It was established at the end of the Sixteenth Century following the wars between the tribes of Daruud and Zanatah in which the Daruud were victorious. It was they who dug the *gheetan*, among which are

the Ghoot al-Sardouk, Ghoot Emheris and Ghoot al-Qarawi. The market was established where it currently stands and al-A'shsh is now not only the oldest quarter in al-Wadi but also one of the most populous.

Religious and Cultural Landmarks Mosques, Shrines and Sanctuaries

Al-Wadi is particularly regarded for its traditions of learning, especially in the fields of jurisprudence and the science of *Ahadiths* (Traditions related to the Holy Prophet). It embraces many *zawayas* (religious buildings) wherein the Holy Qur'an is eagerly put to memory, as well as scientific research centres such as the Zawiyat Sidi Salim in the city centre which was established many centuries ago and is affiliated with Zawiyat al-Rahmaniyya in the north of the country. There is also al-Zawiyat al-Qadiriyya, which is the oldest Sufi seminary in the region and which is historically linked to Wadi Suf in the study of science and religion. Occasions such as the birthday of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) are still very much celebrated here and there ➤



قصر الضاوية في مدينة الوادي
Al-Dhawiya Palace in Al-Wadi



صناعة الفخار ونسيج
الزرابي
Pottery and Textiles

- Diabetic Patients Charity

These charities help and aid the poor and needy as well as provide citizens with health and social security.

Old and New Public Markets

There are many public markets selling anything from clothes to food in al-Wadi district and its capital. These markets are distinguished by particular traditional architectural features, notably their corridors and small shops. Each morning, these markets become crowded with ➔



are study days that run through the activities of Sufis and Sufi orders for the benefit of visitors.

Universities and Religious Schools

a - There is a university annex in the city of al-Wadi which contains several scientific and arts faculties.

b- Religious Schools:

- Sidi Salim School
- Qur'anic Teaching School (al-Fateh Mosque)
- Ma'ath bin Jabel School (al-Qawatteen - Bab al-Wadi Quarter)
- Al-Nasr School (al-Nasr Mosque - First Courtyard)
- Al-Hidaya Mosque School (al-Hidaya Mosque - The Second Courtyard)
- Misbah 'Lhwaihiq School (al-Qara Quarter)

Islamic Foundations and Charities:

- Al-Dhawiya Charity
- Cancer Patients Charity

المنارة الضخمة لبلدية وادي سوف
Huge Minaret of Wadi Suf Municipality

locals and locals - including those crossing to the north side as well as those coming from other nearby towns and villages - until the time of the noon-day prayer.

The markets of al-Wadi are important for the sale of southern Algerian produce, such as vegetables and fruit, and as it borders Tunisia there is much demand for goods such as dates.

Museums

Al-Baladi Museum is noted for Sufi remembrances. The museum itself dates to the colonial era and includes galleries housing traditional crafts, popular arts, animals, desert plants, clothes, rugs and a large number of pots that are still used by Bedouins as well as local inhabitants who live in the city. The museum, which is probably one of the smallest of its kind in the world, might be described as a window looking into the history of Wadi Suf, a desert gallery that attracts visitors throughout the winter.

Landmarks

There are many historical landmarks in al-Wadi, notably the Zawiyat Sidi Salim and its unique minaret which has a particular architectural construct that has fascinated specialists in this field. Other historical landmarks in ➤

أحد منظمي الماراثون
الدولي في مدينة الوادي
One of the organizers
of al-Wadi Marathon
International



سباق الماراثون السنوي
في مدينة الوادي
Annual Marathon

the city belong to the colonial era, such as the Tranzat and railway station which is now the head office of al-Wadi Municipality and is renowned for its remarkable Arab and Islamic features.

Traditional Crafts

The city of al-Wadi is distinguished for its old traditions that continue to be preserved. It specializes, for instance, in producing colourful rugs and woollen cloths, such as *bornus* and *aba'eh*. The craft of pottery-making has regained its glory despite becoming almost extinct in past years, and gypsum, which has been used to decorate houses and mosques for centuries, continues to be a craft that characterizes the city.

Women have contributed to traditional craftsmanship, particularly with regard to clothing and embroidery which is common during the marriage season in the summer and autumn.

The magical beauty of al-Wadi brings in visitors from all over the world who enjoy the courtesy of its inhabitants and the remarkable designs of its architecture and buildings which attracts film stars and other artists, as well as specialists and of course tourists. It is a living picture of desert life with its dramatic colours, beautiful nature, varieties of food and, above all, its people who are enthusiastic about their city and its heritage. It is this enthusiasm and sense of excitement that combines the past with the present, and the life of the Bedouin with the dynamics of a modern civilization. The city of al-Wadi is



صناعة الألبسة التقليدية
Traditional Clothing



الأنسجة الصوفية حرفة
تشتهر بها مدينة الوادي
Woollen Crafts of
Al-Wadi



فندق اللوس في مدينة الوادي
Louss Hotel

generous and hospitable to every visitor in search of the beauty and genuine culture of the desert.

Tourism and Public Service Establishments

Al-Wadi boasts plenty of hotels, both large and small, and catering to suit almost every taste. The smaller hotels, which are categorized as luxury hotels, include the Wadi Suf Grand and the al-Luus. These hotels contain all amenities and mod-cons that any visitor would expect or need, including air-conditioned rooms and restaurants, many reasonably priced, as well as swimming pools and entertainment places. For those looking to venture beyond the outskirts of this fascinating city, travel agencies can organize tours to archaeological and historical sites as well as to places of natural beauty.

Undoubtedly, al-Wadi is a desert city and visitors will be struck by this immediately, but it is a city that is equipped with ➤



آثار قصر تمرنة بجامعة - مدينة الوادي
Remains of Tamurnah Bijamia in Al-Wadi

every available convenience for modern living. This is perhaps the secret of its beauty, particularly with regard to the Old City, whose history, civilization, architecture and people will leave you with a sense of the past and the present. ■

Hotels in al-Wadi and Telephone Numbers (city code: 00.21.33.22)

Gheetan Blas Hotel	5 stars	20.18.12 20.15.39
Suf al-Kabir Hotel	3 stars	24.85.83 24.85.23
Lus Hotel	3 stars	21.00.79
Al-Dhaheb al-Aswad Hotel	2 stars	21.82.19
Wadi Raigh Hotel	2 stars	28.91.38
Si Musa Hotel	unclassified	21.92.07
Al-Markazi Hotel	unclassified	24.88.25
Al-Kuthban Hotel	unclassified	24.80.89

Travel Agencies and Telephone Numbers (city code: 00.21.332)

O.N.A.T. (al-Wadi)	24.81.11
Dunya Travel	24.99.09
Suf Tours	24.21.78
Shna Travel	20.18.18
Al-Wi'am Travel and Tourism	24.65.15

