

Oases Tourism

Nature, Culture and Adventure

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The orient has always been identified in Europe through images of deserts, dunes, camel caravans, mystics, adventure, ancient cultures, spices and palm trees. The Great Sahara in North Africa and the Arabian Desert in Western Asia have been fascinating European travelers and capturing the imaginations of millions in Paris, London, Madrid, Rome, Amsterdam and Berlin for hundreds of years. Since Napoleon's expedition to Egypt at the end of the 18th century and the British, French and Italian colonial and mandatory presence in the Arab World in the 19th and 20th centuries, numerous European painters, photographers, scholars and writers have documented and produced images of the desert. The oases - islands of life in the huge seas of sand, dunes, stones and arid landscapes - played a central role in the culmination process of the fascination and mystique of the desert. The inhabitants of the deserts, the Bedouins and the Berber, who lived mainly in oases, were symbols of courage, hospitality, honesty and beauty.

The Arab World is rich in oases of different types, sizes and at various levels of development. Such ancient and big cities like Damascus and Al-Madina Al-Munawarah are located in oases. Due to the expansion of the urban space for hundreds of years, it is difficult today to recognize the oasis-like character of these places.

From a tourist point of view, three types of oases can be identified: The "modern", the "authentic" and the "historical". The major differences between the three types are to be found in the domination of certain forms of production, construction and lifestyle. In the modern oases, the socio-economic space is dominated by up-to-date infrastructure, business activities and construction. In the historical oases the socio-economic space is dominated by cultural landmarks, ancient ruins and well-established business activities, while traditional agricultural methods and pre-modern lifestyles dominate in the authentic oases.

The oases of Dakhla and Kharga in Egypt



Tozeur.

توزر.

belong to the modern type, but the best representative of this type is the boarder oasis of Al-Ain / Buraimi in the United Arab Emirates and Oman. Today Al -Ain is a very modern city with universities, hotels and hospitals, but the primarily oasis-like character of the city has been preserved and positively integrated into its urban design. The old settlement has been restored and re-constructed in a "museum-like" approach, but it is still partially inhabited and the palm gardens are cultivated. Al-Ain is the

original settlement of the Al-Nahyan ruling dynasty of Abu-Dhabi and the federal UAE. The oasis is a first-class destination for weekend tourism and for cultural events and congresses. Many tourists come here to enjoy the palm gardens, the dry climate, the zoo and the old architecture. The city profits from the establishment of the UAE's first university. Its hotels (Hilton, Intercontinental, Mercure, Rotana etc.) offer excellent leisure and MICE facilities.

The oasis of Tozeur in Tunisia, Palmyra ➤



The luxurious ecological hotel in Siwa. الفندق البيئي الفخم في سيوة.



The oasis of Al Ain. واحة العين.



The oasis of Dakhla - Egypt. الواحة الداخلة - مصر.



The oasis Palmyra - Syria. واحة تدمر - سورية.



The Old Mosque in Al-Ain.

المسجد القديم - العين

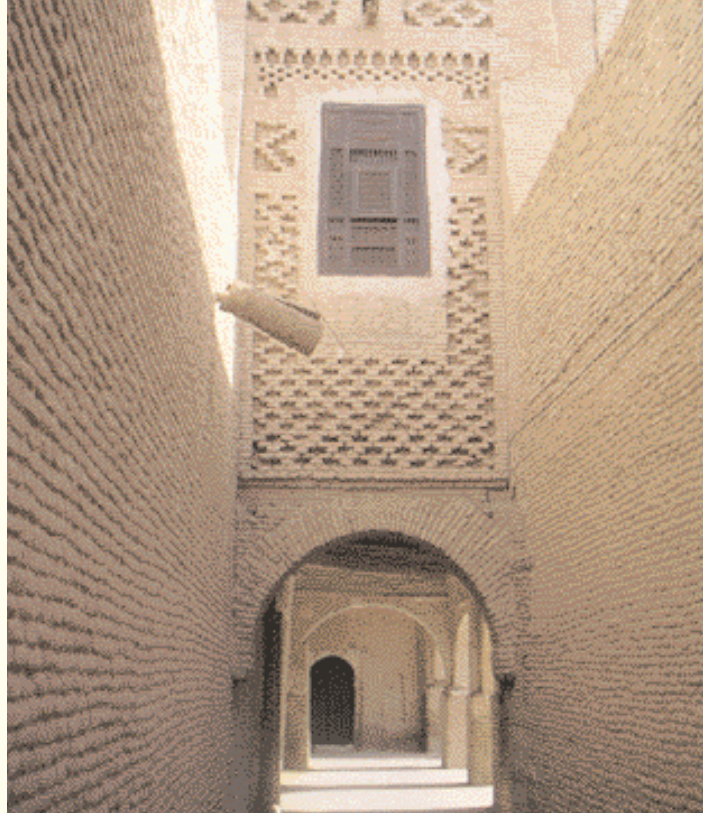
(Syria), M'zab-Ghardaia (Algeria) and Shibam (Yemen) exemplify the historical tourist oases. These are oases that host at least one major unique historical-cultural attraction and are more or less well-integrated into the tourist markets. In general, the oases are frequently visited by international tourists, and the local tourist agents include them in various package tours. The tourist has the possibility of exploring the cultural heritage in the area and to enjoy the oasis, which offers palm gardens, springs and/or lakes and desert landscapes.

The oasis of Tozeur is one of the most highly developed historical oases. The vegetation flourishes with year-round green palm gardens and a magnificently preserved and inhabited unique old Berber village built in the traditional manner. It is a well-established destination in ➤



القرية القديمة التي أعيد بناؤها - العين.

The re-constructed old settlement of Al Ain .



Tozeur- A unique architecture in Tunisia.

توزر- معمار فريد في تونس.



The Temple of the Oracle.

معبد البشارة.



The ruins of the old Berber village of Siwa

بقايا قرية بربرية قديمة في سيوة.

the international tourist market, visited by thousands of tourists. The on-location facilities include various hotels, travel agencies, restaurants, sports and MICE facilities.

The authentic type of tourist oases is less frequented by visitors. These oases are still partially under-developed due to their geographical location and isolation from the outside world. They were able to preserve their "authentic character" in terms of production and lifestyle. The oases of Figuig (Morocco), Nefta (Tunisia), Ghadames (Libya) and especially Siwa (Egypt) belong to this category.

The oasis of Siwa in west Egypt, near the Libyan border, was connected for the very first time in 1980 with the coastal city of Marsa Matrouh, 300 kilometres away, by paved road. Until then, it took 40 days to reach by camel caravan. The

whole area was closed off to tourists and individual visitors for security and military reasons. This restricted and limited access allowed the inhabitants to preserve their lifestyle and natural landscape. Siwa consists of 80 square kilometres of palm and olive gardens surrounded by two lakes and the north-eastern parts of the Great Sahara. In cultural and historical terms, the oasis hosts the remains of an ancient Egyptian "Temple of the Oracle" (Temple of Amun) that was visited by Alexander the Great, "Cleopatra's Bath", "Mountain of the Death" that consists of a necropolis of ancient pharaonic tombs and the ruins of a Berber settlement. The oasis is historically strongly connected to the Senusi Sufi Order, which explains the ban on alcohol. The few hotels in the city are cozy and charming, located in palm

gardens with their own springs that are used as swimming pools. A new five-star ecological hotel on the western coast of the lakes attempts to merge the local architectural style and construction materials with exotic and luxurious services - there is no electricity and only oil lamps are used. Siwa offers adventure tourism at its best: dunes, and the cold springs in the desert, the unique handicrafts and the spirit of an ancient culture.

The combination of nature, culture and adventure overwhelms the visitor. Every oasis is irreplaceable, inimitable and exclusive in its genesis, setting and structure. The "islands of the sand seas" are unique socio-geographical entities that have to be protected and preserved. They must be visited now, before the inevitable wave of neo-liberal globalization. ■