

## Side Trips

This year there were more teams of teachers for July than in 2023. Our team for teaching English to graduate students and medical doctors at the University of Monastir was of six older adults. In contrast, the other teams were of ages roughly 20, with leaders in their mid-20s, for teens. We all met as a group in Tunis for initial cultural training and final debriefing. We all went on the Carthage tour for historical review. We all were together for visits to places at the edges of the Sahara Desert.



Our 2024 team



All teams at a Sahara Desert camp



All teams in Far, Far Away Tatoonie.



All teams in Tunis

One Sunday parts of our two teams in Monastir took an electric train to the coastal city of Mahdia. There we met with two former students who also functioned as our guides. We visited a museum with historical artifacts.



Arriving in Mahdia by electric train



Chatting with a former student



Blow holes along our coastal walk



Mosaic of Greek story of Prometheus subdues the animals.



Christian period pottery lamps. There is the chi-rho symbol in lower left.



Identifiable Byzantine gold coins.



Mahdia coast viewed from top of the museum.



On our Friday afternoon trip to the south we passed near two significant areas.

View of Sidi Bou Zid, where the Jasmine Revolution was triggered by a merchant's self-sacrifice by fire.



Blowing dust from the Gafsa phosphate mine.



Sunspots were visible on the setting sun



Our hotel, with Tozeur's brick designs that coat an abundance of city buildings.



Southern Tunisia has an abundance of orchards of these date palms.



Satellite view of Tozeur's Chak Wak Park and Restaurant, date palm trees.

We arrived at the Chak Wak Park and Restaurant in darkness for a late dinner for all teams, then a walk through that Park. It was a well-done time line of supposed history from the Earth's formation, geology through the ages, supposed plant and animal progression up to human developments. Then it went through pre-culture through Biblical history, Phoenician developments to Carthage, Roman period, Christian period, Arab conquest and Muslim period thereafter up to modern history. There were full size models of the creatures and of people. The geographic coordinates of the restaurant according to Google Earth are N 33 deg 54' 41.47", E 08 deg 08' 48.67".

On Saturday we had a morning trip by Landcruisers westward into the desert. The first stop was a city wall and



gate facade used as a set for a Turkish movie “Kingdoms of Fire”. Next was a stop at a tall hill for many teachers to climb. Vendors at this below-sea-level location had desert-rose (made of the mineral gypsum or sometimes barite) and other rock samples to sell. We then had a mild “roller-coaster” ride around and over the sand dunes. The transitions from hill climb to crossing the crest to steep descent were often abrupt; the ground ahead could not be seen from the front seat.

We then arrived at the top of a large sand dune overlooking the Tatooine movie set for Star Wars and stopped for the view. Eventually the vehicles drove down the steep slope. Many teachers, young and old, descended on foot. Tatooine was the home of Luke Skywalker in the movie.



2023 view of Tatooine from dune crest



2024 view of Tatooine from dune crest

Our team members testing the slope before going all the way down on foot.

Some of Tatooine’s buildings:



The Saturday evening stop was at a camp on the edge of the Sahara Desert. We had camel rides among the sand dunes, dinner in the dark, and the option of sleeping in tents or under the night sky.



A few went off to try snowboards on the dune slopes.



The moon during the camel rides.



Making bread in hot ashes.



Nighttime dinner in the sand



Nighttime dancing



Our tents in the morning, mostly empty of sleepers.



Sleeping under the stars.



At Matmata on the way back: The Berbers dig their homes underground for seasonally even temperatures - cooler in the Summer, warmer in the Winter - than the air outside.



Our young teachers in Berber wedding clothes



Exterior view of the El Jem Roman Coliseum.

The Roman Coliseum at El Jem, near Monastir, Tunisia, is the world's best-preserved coliseum.

The stands at the right side have been restored. Preparations were being made for a symphonic concert later in the week.

(The distortions in the middle of the interior view are from splicing 3 wide angle photos together.)

by Dr. Ed Holroyd  
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