

# The Algerian Sahara – An Extraordinary Experience

For a first-time visitor, the Sahara gives an out-of-the-world experience owing to its stunning beauty and diverse cultures. There is so much to explore in the Algerian Sahara – the towering sand dunes of the Grand Erg Occidental, the beautiful houses of Ghardaia, the unbelievable camel market of El Oued – and the list goes on and on.



## Tamanrasset and the Hoggar

Tamanrasset, an oasis city, is the capital of the Hoggar mountain region of the Algerian Sahara. It is very close to the huge volcanic fields of Atakor, sharp peaks of Tizouyag and Taguerguiste and the guelta (the desert water source) in Afilal. Upon climbing the peak of the nearby Assekrem Mountain as night falls, tourists can witness one of the most beautiful sunsets in the entire Sahara.

## Djanet and the Tassili

Tassili n'Ajjer, meaning "Plateau of Rivers" in Arabic, is a vast plateau in south-east Algeria located close to the borders of Niger and Libya. Its mountains are home to over 15,000 cave paintings and rock carvings. This region is characterized by towering sand dunes and deep, sheer-sided canyons. Tourists simply get enchanted by the beauty of the seemingly endless forests of rock. Djanet is the major city of the Tassili region. Rock carvings around the city prove that it had been existent even in Neolithic times.



## Ghardaia and the M'Zab

Ghardaia was built over a thousand years ago in the M'Zab valley. It is a part of a pentapolis which is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Filled with pink, white and red houses, Ghardaia is a great spectacle to watch. The town's main attraction, the M'Zabite area which is a pyramid-shaped

mosque and square arcade, is located at its center. French writer and philosopher Simon de Beauvoir describes Ghardaia as "a Cubist painting beautifully constructed". It can be reached by plane within an hour from Algiers.

### **El Oued**

El Oued is famously known as "The City of Thousand Domes" as most roofs of the houses in the city are domed. It is one of the most colorful and bustling towns of the Sahara. The camel market held here every Friday is one of North Africa's most extraordinary sights – an exotic mix of men and beasts.



### **Palace in Sahara**

El Oued has another marvel – a four star luxury hotel in the middle of the desert. It is built on the grounds so fertile that it also features an English-style garden. Among the dunes surrounding El Oued, finest quality dates and potatoes are grown. Also, this place contains the rarest of the sand roses.

### **Timimoun**

The Lonely Planet states that if the tourists can stop at only one of the oases located around Grand Erg Occidental, it should be Timimoun. This town is full of red mud houses studded with wooden spikes. It is surrounded by ancient villages rich in civilization and culture.

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