



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Activity Newsletter | April 2022

Visit Tunisia



Dear Tourism Friends,

Welcome to our first USAID-Visit Tunisia Activity Newsletter. We are excited to share news from our project, the industry, and opportunities for funding and technical assistance. You will receive these monthly newsletters from us, looking back at the activities from the last month and informing you about what's to come. We also encourage you to visit our newly launched website for more frequent updates.

We hope you enjoy the content and consider opportunities to partner with us as we promote sustainable tourism experiences and support broad-based economic growth. We are excited about the progress we are making, and hope you are too.

Warm regards,

Leila Calnan, Chief of Party

[Visit Tunisia](#)

USAID VISIT TUNISIA ACTIVITIES & NEWS



USAID Visit Tunisia Website Launch

The Visit Tunisia activity launched a public website to share information about the activity, results, and opportunities for tourism stakeholders to partner with us. The website will be continuously updated with news and partnership opportunities. [Visit the site](#)



Visit Tunisia Officially Launches Project

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) officially launched its Visit Tunisia Activity on February 2, kicking off a five-year, \$50 million project to design and promote experience-based tourism throughout Tunisia. [Learn More](#)



National Tourism Strategy and Launch Event

Visit Tunisia supported the establishment of a National Tourism Strategy (NTS) Working Group, made up of 27 private and public tourism stakeholders. The first NTS workshop convened on March 28th under the patronage of Tunisian Prime Minister Najla Bouden, and was attended by government ministers, public sector agencies, private sector representatives, and tourism experts. [Learn More](#)



Domestic Tourism Survey Provides Market Insights

The USAID Visit Tunisia Activity conducted a nationwide survey on domestic tourism that provided critical insight into Tunisian tourists' demographics, travel preferences, and spending habits to inform the country's tourism strategy and marketing campaigns. [Learn More](#)



Understanding the Priorities of Tourism Stakeholders

To better understand Tunisia's tourism climate and receive input from industry professionals, Visit Tunisia conducted eight country-wide workshops, bringing together more than 440 tourism stakeholders. [Learn More](#)



Smithsonian Supporting Tunisian Event and Festival Organizers

Visit Tunisia's partner, the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, held a series of event and festival training sessions throughout Tunisia, engaging remarkable artisans, organizers, and heritage lovers in conversation and workshops about how to improve experiences and offerings. [Learn More](#)



Understanding Tunisia's Tourism Potential and Opportunities

In October, Visit Tunisia embarked on a three-week roadshow of the country that took project members from the forests of Kef to the desert of Tataouine. [Learn More](#)



USAID VISIT TUNISIA ACTIVITY - ACCELERATING TUNISIA'S TOURISM RECOVERY AND BUILDING A RESILIENT INDUSTRY

Visit Tunisia is a five-year, USAID-funded activity designed to grow and diversify Tunisian tourism, generating sustainable jobs and increasing tourism revenues. We also aim to develop a high-quality tourism industry and mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

OUR GOALS

\$20+ million
of investment to be
facilitated in the
tourism sector

11.3 million
arrivals to be
reached in 2026

20% increase
in visitor spending

15,000
sustainable jobs
generated

WORDS FROM OUR PARTNERS

Visit Tunisia's work is of great importance for the development of tourism in Kairouan... Many tourism professionals, investors, craftsmen, and civil society actors from the region have already expressed a desire to partner with the project because of its positive, global impact.

Mourad Alouini
REGIONAL TOURISM DELEGATE, KAIROUAN



Visit Tunisia's work to strengthen the Tunisian tourism sector is critical to the industry's recovery. Kebili's Regional Tourism Commission (CRT) will work alongside the program to make it a success for the benefit of Tunisian tourism.

Mohammad Sayem
REGIONAL TOURISM DELEGATE, KEBILI



US INJECTS \$50 MILLION INTO TUNISIA'S TOURISM SECTOR WITH VISIT TUNISIA PROJECT

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) officially launched its Visit Tunisia Activity on February 2, kicking off a five-year, \$50 million project to design and promote experience-based tourism throughout Tunisia.

The project's launch event, held in the archeological site of Sbeitla in west-central Tunisia, was attended by US Ambassador Donald Blome and high-ranking Tunisian government officials, including Tunisian Minister of Tourism and Handicrafts Mohamed Moez Belhassine and Kasserine Governor Adel Mabrouk.

"I'm happy to be with you here today in beautiful Kasserine to officially launch Visit Tunisia," said Ambassador Blome at the kick-off ceremony. "Visit Tunisia will develop tourism products and services beyond the coastal regions, as well as upgrade tourism destinations, such as this magnificent site here in Sbeitla.



US Ambassador Donald Blome speaks in front of the Roman archeological site of Sbeitla, which contains the best-preserved Roman forum temples in Tunisia, on February 2, 2022.

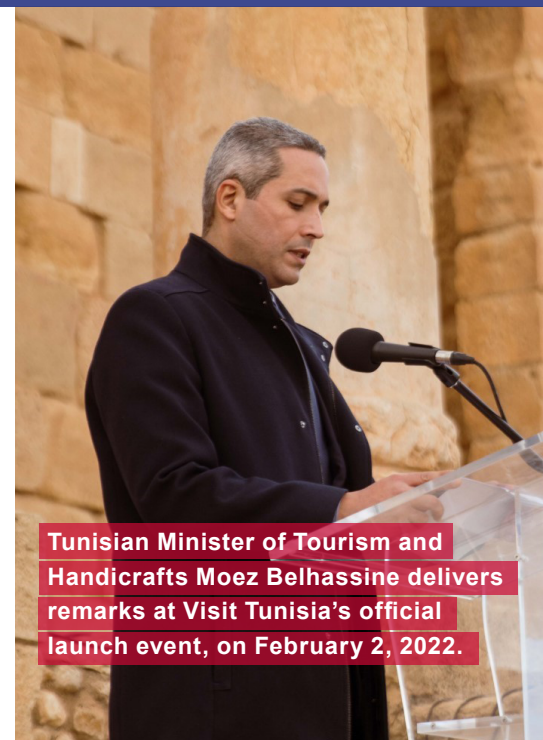
Working hand in hand with Tunisia's Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts, Visit Tunisia will capitalize on the country's rich natural, cultural, and historical heritage to attract new international tourists year-round, especially to underserved areas that are often overlooked. By 2026, the project aims to generate 10,000 new sustainable tourism-related jobs in underserved communities and increase the number of tourists per year to 11.3 million.

Tunisia's vital tourism sector, which employs more than 400,000 Tunisians across the country, has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and will greatly benefit from the fresh development support and investment, Ambassador Blome emphasized.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the tourism sector," Blome said. "Visit Tunisia is a visible commitment from the U.S. Government to assist in the recovery and long-term growth of this critical sector of the economy, which employs more than 400,000 Tunisians across the country."

To help the industry recover and thrive, Visit Tunisia will emphasize year-round tourism beyond the narrow summer season, leading to an increase in tour operators selling Tunisia as a destination. The project's multifaceted support includes the design of tailored marketing campaigns, tourism training assistance, strategic product development, and investment facilitation for hard-hit tourism operators. It will also utilize key public-private partnerships and digital innovations to multiply its impact, focusing on support for women and youth in the industry.

"The U.S. Government is committed to driving economic growth and creating jobs," added Blome in his remarks. "...Forward leaning projects, such as Visit Tunisia, capitalize on (Tunisia's) rich and unique natural, cultural, and historical endowments."



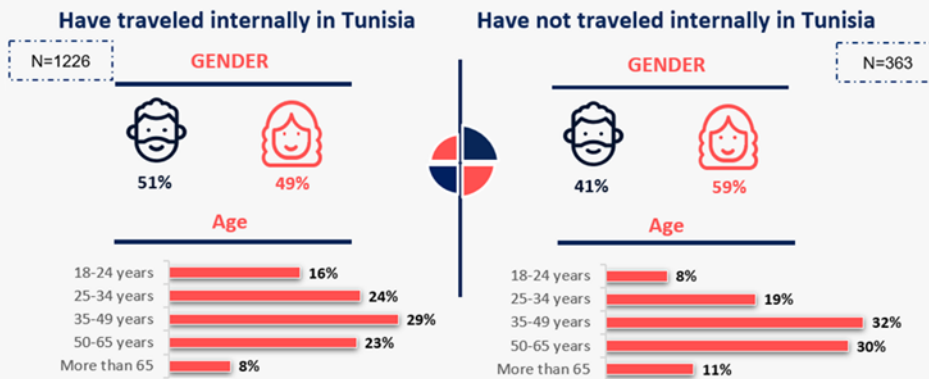
Tunisian Minister of Tourism and Handicrafts Moez Belhassine delivers remarks at Visit Tunisia's official launch event, on February 2, 2022.

USING DATA TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT OF TUNISIA IN DESIGNING A DOMESTIC TOURISM STRATEGY

The USAID Visit Tunisia Activity conducted a nationwide survey on domestic tourism that provided critical insight into Tunisian tourists' demographics, travel preferences, and spending habits to inform the country's tourism strategy and marketing campaigns. The survey results collected from 1,200 Tunisians from all 24 governorates provided a comprehensive overview of domestic tourists' profiles in the country. In addition, the survey also identified the major obstacles preventing non travelers from visiting regions other than their home cities and provided recommendations to overcome those obstacles.



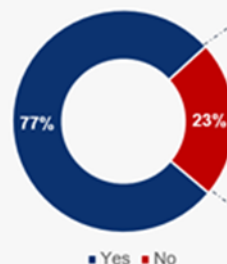
Demographic Characteristics



Its results are helping the project and its government partners, Tunisia's Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts (MoTH) and the National Tourism Office (ONTT), craft an effective national tourism strategy and marketing campaign that prioritizes sustainable tourism projects in underserved regions.

If you are interested in partnering with us, please head [here](#).

Have you traveled internally in Tunisia during the last 3 years?



Why haven't you traveled internally in Tunisia during the last 3 years?



N=363

WORKSHOPS WITH TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS: A DEEP DIVE INTO THE INDUSTRY



Tourism providers around the world have always faced unique challenges. To attract and retain business, their clients must not only be highly drawn to their offerings, but have the transportation, accommodation, and logistics support to access their destination.

To convince travelers to make the journey to a destination, industry providers must offer high-quality, multifaceted, and accessible tourism services and experiences, carefully marketed to target audiences, that display the very best of their destination. This is no different in Tunisia, whose tourism industry has been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To better understand Tunisia's tourism climate and receive input from industry professionals, the USAID Visit Tunisia Activity conducted eight workshops in Tabarka, Kairouan, Tozeur, Douz, Tatouine, Djerba, Sousse, and Tunis. The full-day activities brought more than 440 tourism stakeholders, including local government and administration officials, transport and travel agency representatives, local entrepreneurs, supporting NGOs, tour guides, guest house owners, hoteliers, international donors, media professionals, handicraft workers and

investors, together to discuss tourism challenges and the industry's potential for growth.

During the workshops, Visit Tunisia's team assessed the status of tourism in each region, identifying which tourism products are neglected, underused, or have strong development potential. We also learned about tourism providers' COVID-19-related setbacks and the support they need, including financial and organizational, to overcome the crisis and grow.

Working hand in hand with local tourism professionals, we also explored potential tourism products and circuits to develop, and began identifying potential target markets for their promotion. Our collaboration led tourism providers to reimagine tourism strategies and begin crafting new, creative methods to present and offer their tourism products and experiences.

These events marked the beginning of a new collaboration between Visit Tunisia and regional tourism professionals. There is a renewed hope for strengthened partnerships and new alliances in the sector, ready to prioritize new promotional and development strategies to take the industry to the next level.

VISIT TUNISIA AND SMITHSONIAN TRAIN EVENT AND FESTIVAL ORGANIZERS ACROSS TUNISIA

The USAID Visit Tunisia Activity and its partner, the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, held a series of event and festival training sessions throughout Tunisia, helping Tunisian event and festival organizers better plan, market, and fund engaging cultural events.



From March 2 to March 12, the project held four trainings in southern, central, and northern Tunisia, including in the underserved regions of Tabarka, Kairouan, Douz, and Tataouine. These workshops drew more than 170 event and festival organizers, 90% of whom have events lined up for this year. Visit Tunisia held an additional workshop in Tunis on March 18, reaching 45 event and festival organizers. Many workshop attendees oversee major international festivals in Tunisia, such as the annual Moulded Festival in Kairouan and the International Sahara Festival in Douz, which each attracted more than 1 million visitors last year.



A man guides his camel in the southern city of Douz, Tunisia.



Halle Butvin, Smithsonian's director of special projects, speaks to event and festival organizers during a training session in Kairouan.

The expertise of Smithsonian, one of the world's premier cultural research and educational institutions, is a major asset to the project. Based in Washington DC, Smithsonian has over 50 years of experience in event and training management, and organizes an annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival at the US's National Mall that draws more than 1.5 million visitors each year. Halle Butvin, Smithsonian's director of special projects, is a cultural heritage advisor to Visit Tunisia, providing crucial support to trainings and workshops to artisans and event organizers.

During the project's event and festival trainings, participants learned about best practice for cultural events and festivals, with case studies and examples from the Smithsonian Folklife Festival and around the world. They also participated in workshops that covered practical knowledge and tools to develop high-quality events. Topics covered included understanding the visitor, cultural heritage representation, event design – including hands-on activities, balancing visitor and community needs, working with volunteers, budgeting and fundraising, organization and logistics, security, outreach, and more.



An event and festival management training participant reads over training material provided by Visit Tunisia.

The training participants spoke highly of the sessions, which they said introduced them to new organizational concepts and resources that will help them throughout every step of the event planning and management process. They also appreciated Visit Tunisia's training toolkits, which provided detailed information and guidance on event/festival management that they can look to for future reference.

Souad Lotfi, a training participant who manages the Nasrallah Cultural Center in Kairouan, said: "It was truly a great training, as we learned about many aspects of events and festival management, such as networking and setting goals and objectives. I am now taking my next steps to sign partnerships in the cultural sector."

Hamida Hlioui, president of the Spring Arts Festival in Kairouan, added: "The training covered all the points we need to successfully organize our festivals or events... We are also happy with training team, which gave us a lot of hope and energy to continue our events."



To reach even more event and festival organizers throughout Tunisia, the project aims to make similar training sessions available on its website in a Masterclass format. There will also be additional technical assistance or grant opportunities for select organizers.

To track and promote Tunisia's diverse events and festivals, the project is organizing an annual Event and Festival Calendar. If you are an event or festival organizer in Tunisia, complete this brief survey to be included in the 2022 Calendar of Tunisian Events and Festivals, and to receive information about upcoming training, workshops, and grant opportunities.

VISIT TUNISIA'S 3-WEEK CROSS-COUNTRY ROADSHOW PROVIDES A WINDOW INTO TUNISIA'S TOURISM POTENTIAL



Tunisia has a wealth of natural, cultural, and archeological assets that make it a compelling tourism destination for domestic and international travelers. To effectively market and develop Tunisia's offerings to modern tourists, the Visit Tunisia team felt it was important to explore the country -- and the diverse resources it has to offer -- from north to south. In October, Visit Tunisia embarked on a three-week roadshow of the country that took us from the forests of Kef to the desert of Tataouine. Overall, we traveled 1,300 km. to 45 unique tourism sites in 15 cities. These included museums, souks, artisan workshops, film sites, national parks, oases, Amazigh villages, festival sites, archeological sites, oases, canyons, mosques, and synagogues.



The wide-ranging trip gave us the opportunity to hear the perspective of Tunisians from around the country, including key tourism stakeholders, and experience firsthand Tunisia's diverse culture, food, and heritage qualities, which are sure to leave a lasting impression on many types of tourists.

To help brainstorm potential partnership opportunities and marketing strategies, we also assessed the quality of tourism sites and services, evaluating their level of comfort, accessibility, and appeal to target the tourism markets.

Especially valuable were the connections we developed with tourism industry representatives and entrepreneurs. During the roadshow, we held eight workshops that brought together 440 small- and medium-size entrepreneurs (SMEs), members of local tourism associations, local authorities, tour guides, hoteliers, restauranteurs, event planners, travel agents, NGOs, donors, members of the media, handicraft workers, and transportation and adventure operators. Our conversations and interactions with these tourism stakeholders helped us better understand each region's tourism climate, including their challenges and potential.

Based on this experience, our team gained a clearer picture of what Tunisia has to offer as a tourism destination and learned how we can effectively support industry efforts to improve the accessibility and quality of the country's assets for local and international travelers, as well as how to gear Tunisia's offerings towards unique target markets.

Now, the project is building on the roadshow's assessments to craft detailed tourism strategies and marketing efforts with our counterparts in the Tunisian government -- including a National Tourism Strategy, Branding and Positioning Plan, and domestic and international campaigns.

