



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**Visit Tunisia Activity Newsletter | May 2023**

**VISIT TUNISIA**



**Dear friends and supporters of Tunisian tourism,**

I hope this message finds you well as we embark upon a vibrant summer season. I am delighted to share our May updates, where we have continued to work closely to develop, support, and promote small tourism businesses and experiences.

With the support and guidance of our Festival Incubator, the towns of El Jem and Matamata hosted captivating events to celebrate their rich heritage. These festivals served as a testament to the immense talent and cultural diversity present in Tunisia, and we were honored to contribute to their success.

I am also delighted to share the outstanding results of the #AuthenticTunisia international marketing campaign that showcased Tunisia’s most breathtaking destinations, extraordinary experiences, innovative small businesses, and hidden gems. This campaign captivated audiences worldwide generated thousands of views, shares, and saves.

Tourism holds the power to uplift communities, preserve natural landscapes, and safeguard cultural heritage. Together with our partners and friends, we are proud to champion this vision and create a positive impact across Tunisia. Our team appreciates your support, and we eagerly await the opportunity to welcome you to this beautiful country.

**Sincerely,**

Leila Calnan

Chief of Party,

USAID Visit Tunisia Activity



# AUTHENTIC TUNISIA: INSPIRING INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS TO ADD TUNISIA TO THEIR TRAVEL BUCKET-LIST (PART I)

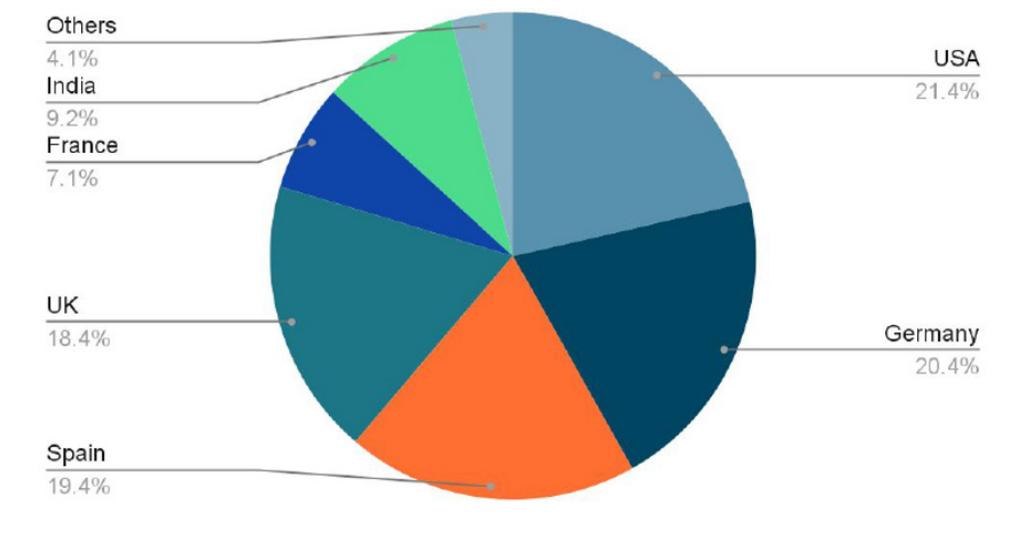


Photo ©André Alexander/USAID

**The international marketing campaign “Authentic Tunisia”** reached over 3 millions people from over 28 countries with the aim of inspiring them to add Tunisia to their top travel bucket-list. From May 1st to May 12, they followed the adventures of 12 influencers from Italy, France, UK, Germany, Spain and Belgium across Tunisia. The online content generated extremely high user engagement and provided easy-to-save itineraries featuring over 50 SMEs and experience providers with information on what to do and how to book during their visit to Tunisia.

The campaign's profile-raising photos and videos were a huge success and created buzz around destinations in Tunisia – from the most popular to the off the beaten path spots. To date, Authentic Tunisia campaign:

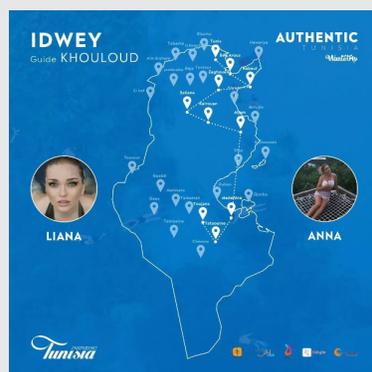
- Reached 3.7 million views
- Generated high user engagement of 40% across 28 countries
- Engaged mostly with audiences from USA, Germany, Spain and the UK
- Sparked high interest towards Southern destinations (including the Sahara Desert and Djerba) and Sidi Bou Said



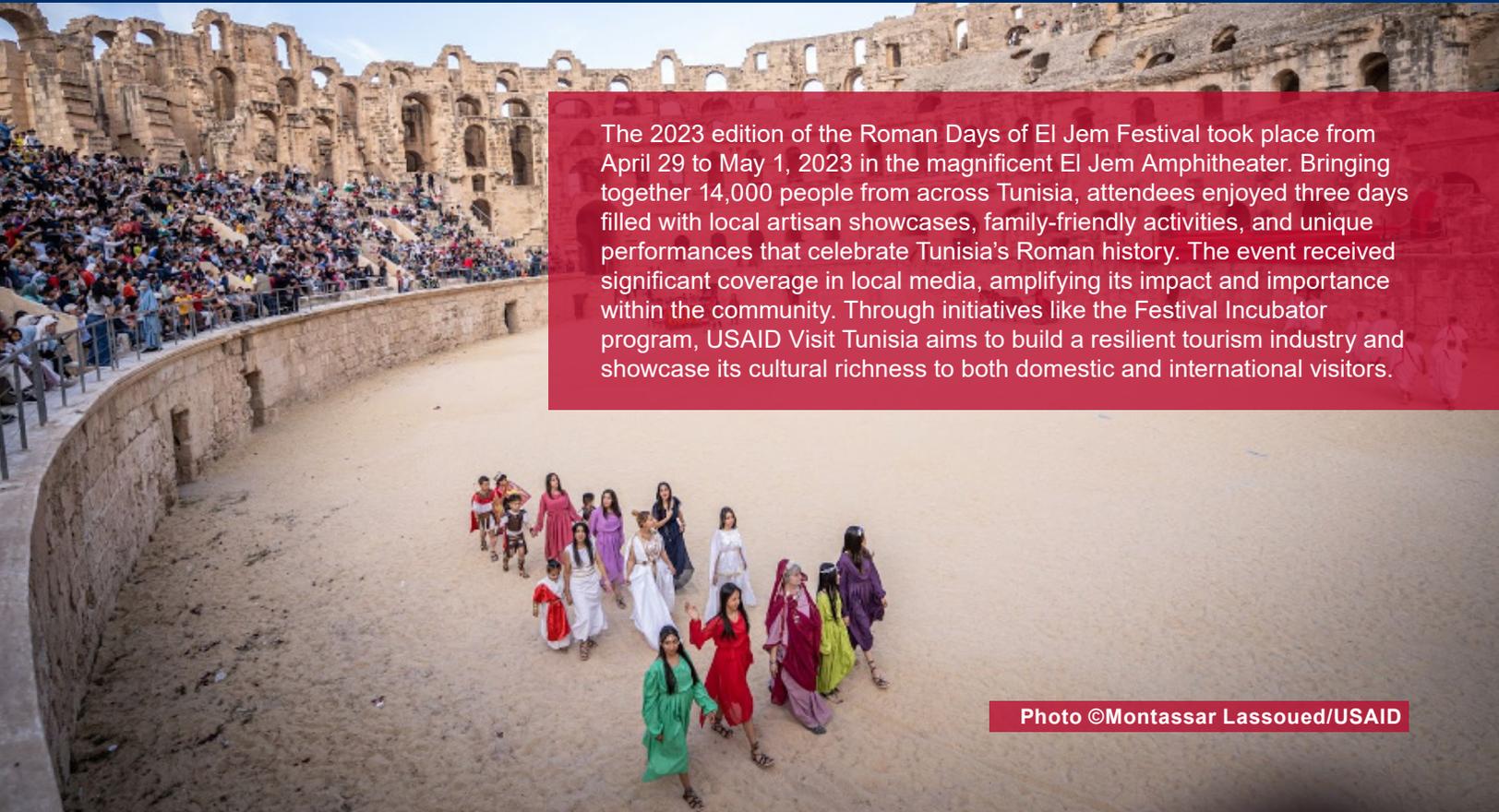
## Promoting 50 Tourism SMEs Across Tunisia and Accelerating Economic Growth

USAID Visit Tunisia Activity, with its implementing partner, Tunisian startup **Wantotrip**, successfully completed the first phase of its international private sector led marketing campaign “**Authentic Tunisia**”. From May 1st to May 12, 2023, 12 international influencers from Italy, France, UK, Germany, Spain and Belgium shared over 50 experiences across Tunisia through 6 itineraries.

These itineraries were co-designed, and led by the local travel startups **WildyNess**, **Camp Mars**, **Kabylis**, and **Idwey**. Some experiences were customized for the influencers by **Tajrabi**. Through this campaign, USAID Visit Tunisia and Wantotrip brought together over 50 Tunisian SMEs including start-ups, online marketplace platforms, guesthouses, service and experience providers to promote their offerings and succeeded in creating linkages between entrepreneurs and businesses leading to collaboration opportunities and economic growth.



# THOUSANDS VISIT EL JEM AMPHITHEATER FOR ANNUAL FAMILY-FRIENDLY FESTIVAL FILLED TO CELEBRATE TUNISIA'S ROMAN HISTORY



The 2023 edition of the Roman Days of El Jem Festival took place from April 29 to May 1, 2023 in the magnificent El Jem Amphitheater. Bringing together 14,000 people from across Tunisia, attendees enjoyed three days filled with local artisan showcases, family-friendly activities, and unique performances that celebrate Tunisia's Roman history. The event received significant coverage in local media, amplifying its impact and importance within the community. Through initiatives like the Festival Incubator program, USAID Visit Tunisia aims to build a resilient tourism industry and showcase its cultural richness to both domestic and international visitors.

Photo ©Montassar Lassoued/USAID

## Getting to Know the Magnificent El Jem Amphitheater

The El Jem Amphitheater is one of the world's most remarkable and well-preserved Roman amphitheaters. Built in the 3rd century AD, this UNESCO World Heritage site stands as a symbol of Tunisia's rich historical and cultural past and present. The site showcases impressive architecture and engineering with the potential to attract tourists who marvel at its grandeur and historical importance.

The site serves as a gateway to Tunisia's ancient past, providing visitors with a tangible connection to Roman civilization. It offers insight into the daily lives, entertainment, and architectural prowess of the era. It is a perfect place for a gathering to share history and gather together.

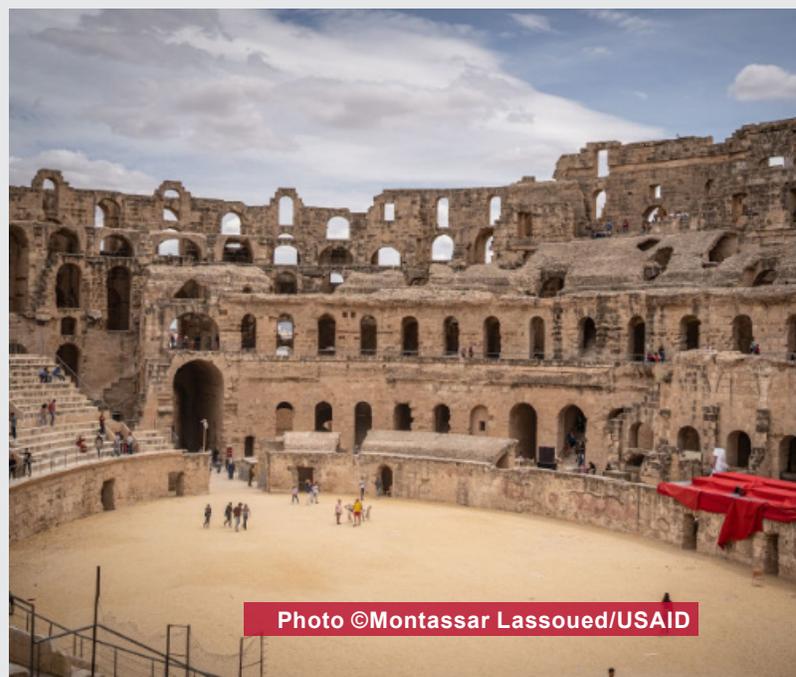


Photo ©Montassar Lassoued/USAID



## Support through the Festival Incubator Program

The USAID Visit Tunisia Smithsonian Folklife Festival Incubator is a comprehensive, multi-year endeavor designed to offer tailored support and guidance to six selected Tunisian festival organizers. Each participating festival receives specialized technical assistance and one-on-one mentoring from industry experts with the Smithsonian Institute and USAID Visit Tunisia. The program focuses on improving various aspects of festival management, including programming, community engagement, design, and marketing. By addressing these critical areas, the program enables cultural heritage festivals across Tunisia to enhance their overall quality, appeal, and impact. Roman Days of El Jem is one of the six selected festivals and has been going through the incubation program for the last year.

Photo ©Montassar Lassoued/USAID

## About the Roman Days of El Jem of Festival

The Roman Days of El Jem Festival, held annually each spring for three days, recognizes the power of the amphitheater to bring people together for cultural activities. The 2023 edition, which took place from April 29 to May 1, was a vibrant celebration of culture and history. The festival attracted 14,000 visitors across the three days with people coming from all over Tunisia to enjoy each day's festivities. Highlights of the festival included family-friendly activities, reenactments in the amphitheater, and a bustling marketplace selling local artisan goods.



Photo ©Montassar Lassoued/USAID

## Supporting Local and Regional Artisans and Businesses

A large part of the event was a "Roman Forum" marketplace which featured dozens of local artisans selling their wares and demonstrating their processes. By facilitating direct sales between artisans and visitors, the El Jem Festival encouraged economic growth within the local community. The festival's support of the private sector allowed artisans to generate income and sustain their businesses. This, in turn, contributed to the overall economic development of the region, fostering entrepreneurship and empowering artisans to continue practicing and preserving their traditional crafts.

The marketplace also served as a platform for cultural exchange, allowing visitors to engage with artisans, learn about their heritage, and appreciate the value of handmade products.



“We implemented some of the best practices and ideas we learned through the Festival Incubator program. For instance, we installed a first aid tent to consider the weather conditions and the participation of children. We also developed a map featuring all the festival’s activities and workshops to improve the visitor experience. We also successfully created a separate marketplace for artisans to sell their products and a separate exhibition space where artisans connect directly with the visitors and share their “savoir-faire” and stories. Thanks to this venue, the visitors were given the opportunity to touch the raw materials of the products and understand the work behind the scenes. This experience evoked powerful emotions and encouraged visitors to buy products directly from the artisans. Creating these spaces for experiences and sales was an important organizational improvement for this year’s edition. We are looking forward to receiving more improvement ideas and recommendations for next year. Thank you for your support.”

- Ridha Hfayedh, Director of the Roman Days of El Jem Festival



Photo ©Montassar Lassoued/USAID

## Integrating Family Fun into Historical Heritage

At the heart of the festival, family-friendly activities created an atmosphere filled with excitement as children and their families gathered to participate in engaging workshops. The kids’ domain buzzed with youthful energy as children immersed themselves in the world of ancient Rome, donning gladiator costumes and emulating the bravery of Roman warriors. This integration of children into cultural events is vital for sustainable tourism as it fosters a deep connection with El Jem’s historical roots and Tunisia’s legacy as a historic cradle for the world. By involving children, we ensure the preservation of cultural heritage as they develop a greater appreciation and understanding of their own traditions from an early age. Additionally, integrating children into cultural events promotes inclusivity, intergenerational bonding, and community engagement, creating a sense of shared pride and fostering the continued celebration of cultural traditions for generations to come.

## Spotlight on Roman Days of El Jem

In the aftermath of the festival, the event, along with its actors, attendees, organizers, and artisans, received significant coverage in local newspapers, radio stations, and television outlets. This attention from the local media plays a crucial role in amplifying the impact and importance of the festival within the community. By featuring the event on various media platforms, it brings wider awareness to the festival, its cultural significance, and the efforts of the individuals involved.

Screenshot from the Roman Days of El Jem Facebook page, highlighting artisan Shukri Makhloufa being featured in local media



Photo ©Montassar Lassoued/USAID

## Building Tunisia's Resilient Tourism Industry Through Quality Festivals

By combining the expertise of industry professionals with the passion and creativity of Tunisian festival organizers, the program fosters a collaborative environment where knowledge is shared, ideas are nurtured, and innovative approaches to festival design and management are explored.

The collaboration under the Festival Incubator program sparks a dynamic exchange of ideas, expertise, and inspiration. It cultivates fertile ground for growth, enabling festivals to evolve into vibrant showcases of Tunisia's cultural richness, fostering a deeper sense of pride among Tunisians, and leaving lasting impressions on both domestic and international visitors.

This was the fifth festival supported through the Festival Incubator. Stay tuned until September for the last festival in the series: the Zaghuan Mountain Film Festival.

# THE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF MATMATA: CREATING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN LOCAL BUSINESSES AND THOUSANDS OF VISITORS



The 15th edition of the International Festival of Matmata took place from April 28 to May 1, 2023 in the legendary Matmata region. Bringing together more than 18,700 people, visitors enjoyed four days rich in local food tasting, traditional crafts exhibitions, music, and performances to fill up on fun. Drawing inspiration and support from the Festival Incubator program, the event installed a crafts marketplace amplifying the connections between the local community and the visitors and contributing to the economic growth of the region.

## Enhancing the Festival's Quality, Appeal and Impact

The "Festival Incubator" program is an intensive specialized technical assistance and one-on-one mentoring from industry experts, funded by USAID Visit Tunisia Activity and implemented in partnership with Smithsonian Folklife to build capacity of six Tunisian festival organizers to help them better design, organize, and market their event. The International Festival of Matmata is one of the six selected festivals and has been receiving assistance to improve their event management, including programming, community engagement, security, volunteer management, design, and marketing.



**"We implemented some of the best practices we learned from the incubation program. Involving our community including the citizens, the local tourism businesses and artisans in the creation of participatory experiences was a huge success. We also improved many aspects of our festival management such as security, organization, and hygiene thanks to the lessons learned at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington in June 2022 thanks to USAID Visit Tunisia. This year, the festival was different from past editions and held outside of the usual holidays period – which could have impacted the visitors' attendance. Despite of the time change, our 15th edition was a success drawing more than 18,700 visitors thanks to all our volunteers and team effort as well as the technical assistance, recommendations and mentoring advices we received from the program."**

— Adel Katrouch, President of the International Festival of Matmata.

In addition to the Festival Incubator's specialized support, USAID Visit Tunisia Activity produced and delivered to the festival organizer a hundred high-quality photos as well as a video capturing the essence of the festival to be used as valuable assets for their marketing and communications. Check out the [full photo album](#)!



## Supporting Local and Regional Artisans and Businesses through Traditional Crafts Marketplace

Drawing inspiration from [the Smithsonian Folklife Festival](#) and based on the incubation program's recommendations, the International Festival of Matmata installed a marketplace for dozens of local and regional artisans to demonstrate their creative process, exhibit and sell their handicraft and products such as traditional outfits and natural fiber made accessories.

Thanks to the "marketplace", the festival helped artisans of the private sector to generate income and sustain their businesses – which contributes to the economic growth of the local community, and empowers artisans, including women and youth, to continue their entrepreneurship journey.



Apart from facilitating direct sales between artisans and visitors, the idea behind the "marketplace" was to create human connections. The marketplace served as a platform for cultural exchange, allowing visitors to engage with artisans, learn about their heritage, and appreciate the value of handmade products.

All Photos and Videos ©Montassar Lassoued/USAID



The festival was also brought directly to kids and persons with disabilities through a special needs center within the festival premises.

For more content, check the [festival's Facebook page](#) and stay tuned for the 16th edition!