



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# VISIT TUNISIA

Activity Newsletter | October 2022



## Greetings friends and supporters of Tunisian tourism,

It has been another busy month for the USAID Visit Tunisia Project as we continue collaborating with key industry stakeholders around the country. October brought opportunities for us to support large- and small-scale activities to advance Tunisia's tourism industry.

On an international stage, the Visit Tunisia Smithsonian Folklife Incubator supported the annual Mouled festival, which brought over one million visitors to the city of Kairouan. On a domestic level, we continued our youth engagement activities to promote cultural heritage through a fun and educational children's scavenger hunt. I invite you to read more in the interview and impact stories below.

The collective impact of all these projects sustains our momentum toward a bright, resilient future for Tunisian tourism, whose economic benefits reach thousands of hardworking Tunisians.

Here's to a productive November,

**LEILA CALNAN**

Chief of Party, USAID Visit Tunisia Activity

## USAID VISIT TUNISIA ACTIVITIES & NEWS



### USAID Visit Tunisia Signs Multi-Year Cooperation with FTADD

The agreement outlines USAID Visit Tunisia's commitment to promoting Destination Dahar by supporting public and private partnerships to advance tourism in Southern Tunisia.

[Read more about this partnership](#)



### Engaging Kairouan Scavenger Hunt Combines Cultural Heritage Education With Fun for Tunisia's Youth

A cultural treasure hunt was held in collaboration with local stakeholder groups. The event was built upon the Kairouan public awareness campaign.

[Learn more about this initiative](#)



### USAID Visit Tunisia Smithsonian Folklife Incubator Supports Mouled Festival

After several months of training through USAID Visit Tunisia's Smithsonian Folklife Incubator program, the 2022 Mouled Festival was a smashing success.

[Learn more about the festival and the incubator](#)

# USAID VISIT TUNISIA SIGNS MULTI-YEAR COOPERATION WITH TUNISIA'S FIRST DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION, FÉDÉRATION TOURISME AUTHENTIQUE DESTINATION DAHAR (FTADD)



The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), represented by USAID Visit Tunisia Chief of Party, Ms. Leila Calnan, and the Fédération Tourisme Authentique Destination Dahar (FTADD), represented by organization president Mr. Mohamed Sadok Dabbabi, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Monday, September 19, 2022, at the newly-opened USAID Visit Tunisia office in Lac 2, Tunis.

His memorandum of understanding reflects the willingness of both parties to cooperate in supporting FTADD's long-term sustainability, their continued support of the small and medium-sized enterprises that are FTADD members, and their promotion of Destination Dahar to increase visitor spending in the destination. Working in partnership, USAID Visit Tunisia and FTADD will help achieve various objectives of the USAID Visit Tunisia activity by supporting public and private sector partners to enhance and diversify the tourism industry by improving tourism management at the regional level and improving the marketing of innovative tourism products and experiences. The USAID Visit Tunisia team will assist FTADD develop and implement an organizational business plan to ensure financial sustainability of the organization and a destination marketing plan to promote the destination and FTADD's members.

FTADD is Tunisia's first destination management organization (DMO), a term for a local tourism organization that unifies all tourism players in a destination (guides, hotels, attractions, restaurants, and more) to collaborate and facilitate better marketing, visitor experience, overnights, and tourist impact. Though this model of facilitating sustainable and equitable tourism for inhabitants and visitors is common worldwide, it was a new concept in Tunisia. The development of the FTADD DMO was financed by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and realized by SwissContact, through the Project Destination Sud-Est. The DMO was officially created in March 2018.



The Dahar region is the geographical area in the southeast of Tunisia, which stretches from the Mediterranean coast to the Sahara desert. It takes its name from the sandstone mountain chain, The Djebel Dahar, with 100km in length, crosses three administrative governorates: Gabes, Tataouine, and Medenine. The DMO has given tourism players across these governorates a collective space to work together.



**The Dahar Region is known for its mountains, allowing adventure-minded visitors an opportunity to explore Tunisia in a unique way © FTADD**

As of 2022, nearly 90 percent of the Dahar region's tourism providers are members of FTADD, validating strong support from the community. Through collaboration with USAID Visit Tunisia, these local tourism businesses will continue to grow, flourish, and realize their full potential.

This MOU formalizes a months-long process of communication and collaboration, including multiple site visits to the region. The Visit Tunisia team is extremely optimistic about the future of this union, and greatly believes in the potential of this DMO to elevate Tunisia's tourism offerings and expand international awareness to a new level.

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**One of the striking landscapes in the Dahar Region © FTADD**



# ENGAGING KAIROUAN SCAVENGER HUNT COMBINES CULTURAL HERITAGE EDUCATION WITH FUN FOR TUNISIA'S YOUTH



Thanks to the collaboration of many local stakeholders, the USAID Visit Tunisia activity held a cultural treasure hunt in the Kairouan medina, engaging more than 80 children and youth. The project collaborated with several youth and environmental civil society organizations on the activity, including the Kairouan municipality, the National Tourism Office (ONTT), and local hotels and restaurants. This initiative completed the second phase of the Kairouan public awareness campaign.



In collaboration with Jeunes Chambres International (JCI) and the Scouts Organization, students between the ages of 9 and 12 joined the cultural scavenger hunt. On the agenda for the action-packed morning were educational and interactive games that blended mystery and discovery to teach about Kairouan's cultural impact and history. Kairouan is one of the oldest and most influential Islamic cities in the world. Despite transferring the political capital to Tunis in the 12th century, Kairouan remained North Africa's principal holy city. Its rich architectural heritage includes the Great Mosque, its marble and porphyry columns, and the 9th-century Mosque of the Three Gates. The medina of Kairouan has been on the UNESCO World Heritage list since 1988. The students played games and learned about Kairouan's history, as well as important figures who have shaped Tunisia, with an added focus on Kairouan's influential women.



Despite having such a rich heritage, young people have felt increasingly disconnected from traditional culture. As one of the six USAID Visit Tunisia's priority destinations, Kaiouran's potential for tourism is vast. This program aims to help support the sustainable development of the city and greater region. A crucial component of that is inspiring young people to take ownership of the future of their home.



When asked about the importance of involving youth in cultural heritage preservation, the President of JCI Ghassen Kharrat noted, “Young people today don’t know about their city and its origins. Kairouan is one of the most historically significant cities in the Middle East and Africa, but only a few students know its history. Very few young people know about historical figures who have made Tunisia what it is today. This project focused on memorable people who have greatly impacted our society. We wanted to inspire the students and show them that they can also be people who change our city, our minds, and our futures. And, if they learn about their heritage, they will also want to keep the city clean and beautiful for future generations.”

USAID Visit Tunisia Partner Engagement Specialist Ahmed Charfi attended the first iteration of the event in May. When asked about the importance of the Scavenger hunt, he echoed Kharrat’s sentiments by adding, “It was great because it provided awareness for young people to learn about the medina and Kairouan’s history while having fun at the same time. It’s great to be able to combine such a fun event for the purpose of discovery and learning.”



The event built upon USAID Visit Tunisia's activities to engage youth to feel pride in their countries and heritage. In September, a clean-up day was organized in partnership with JCI, Kairouan's Regional Tourism Commission, and the Tunisian Scouts. This beautification event was in preparation for Kairouan to host the Mouled festival, celebrating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad and drawing over 1.2 million visitors to this holy city.



Many sponsors and stakeholders collaborated to make this event a success

For an engaging recap of the event, please watch the video on the USAID Visit Tunisia Facebook [page](#).



# USAID VISIT TUNISIA SMITHSONIAN FOLKLIFE INCUBATOR SUPPORTS MOULED FESTIVAL, WELCOMING 1.2 MILLION VISITORS TO KAIROUAN



Between October 1st and 9th, the city of Kairouan roared to life to celebrate the Mouled Festival, an annual event celebrating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. For this 8-day celebration, domestic and international visitors participated in religious ceremonies, including Quran memorization and reading competitions in various mosques, cultural and artistic events, and exhibitions dedicated to Tunisian handicrafts. The festival included more than 75 events over nine days against a beautiful backdrop: Kairouan's streets were lit throughout the night, with the sweet smell of incense, freshly baked makroudh, and rose water wafting in the air.

The date of the celebration changes each year in accordance with the lunar calendar. The Kairouanaise are faithful to their ancestral customs and continue celebrating “the Mouled” with the same fervor of the past. This was the first gathering of Mouled since 2019, and attendance continues to grow year over year, with an increasing number of international visitors.



In April, the Mouled Festival **was selected as one of six festivals** to join the USAID Visit Tunisia's Smithsonian Folklife Incubator program, an intensive program to build capacity in programming, design, operations, community engagement, and marketing for heritage events in Tunisia. The Mouled Festival was chosen based on its demonstrated commitment to community engagement and cultural heritage representation, economic impact, and geographic representation.

For the last several months, organizers of the Mouled Festival have participated in one-on-one exchange sessions through the incubator program, determined to ensure this year's edition was a success. They discussed issues of custom technical assistance and one-on-one mentoring with industry experts to improve programming, community engagement, design, and marketing.



The week before the festival, the USAID Visit Tunisia and Smithsonian team arrived in Kairouan. Areas of support included security and safety, site management, programming coordination, and volunteer management. The team worked in collaboration with the festival organizers to make on site adjustments and evaluate festival activities.

In a commitment to strengthen the festival offerings and visitor experience, USAID Visit Tunisia and the Smithsonian team are reviewing the festival operations, events, and turnout to ensure next year's iteration is even better. For example, the team identified crowd control and management as an area of improvement for future events, as well as the need for new ways to communicate with guests when they are in Kairouan for the festival.



Continuing the work with the domestic marketing campaign, USAID Visit Tunisia enlisted influencer **Fatma Bououn** to travel to Kairouan with her family to create content around the Moulded Festival. Fatma has 900,000 followers on Instagram, and her posts about the Moulded Festival received over 70,000 likes.

The Festival of Moulded shone a positive light on Kairouan as a culturally-rich destination, and received attention from both domestic and regional media outlets. USAID Visit Tunisia Project Engagement Specialist Ahmed Charfi noted, "In my eyes, one of the best successes the festival had this year was to show the world a positive image of this beautiful, historic city."

USAID Visit Tunisia's partnership with the Smithsonian Folklife Incubator provides an opportunity to ensure many more successful events in the future, attracting tourists from around the globe to Tunisia to participate in these unique cultural experiences. Stay tuned to hear about the other festivals being supported through the incubator happening in the upcoming months.

