



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# VISIT TUNISIA

Activity Newsletter | September 2022



## Greetings friends and supporters of Tunisian tourism,

September is here, and as we welcome cooler temperatures, we also celebrate the many recent accomplishments made by the Visit Tunisia project and our partners.

As we progress through this exciting journey to advance Tunisian tourism, the power of partnership cannot be overlooked. On September 12, we were thrilled to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Tunisian Federation of Travel and Tourism Agencies (FTAV) and the Federation of Authentic Tourism Destination Dahar (FTADD).

This month, USAID Visit Tunisia Activity also collaborated with partners to organize Tunisia's Living Culture Symposium in Gabes, featuring experts, researchers, and other specialists to collectively support and promote intangible cultural heritage in Tunisia. We are also excited about new developments in an environmentally-themed public awareness campaign in Kairouan, an initiative developed with the help of many partners. I invite you to read more about these exciting collaborations in the impact stories below.

Thank you for your continued support of Tunisia's tourism industry.

Warmly,

**LEILA CALNAN**  
Chief of Party, USAID Visit Tunisia Activity

## USAID VISIT TUNISIA ACTIVITIES & NEWS



### USAID Visit Tunisia Signs Multi-Year Cooperation with the Tunisian Federation of Travel and Tourism Agencies (FTAV)

USAID Visit Tunisia signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) at FTAV's headquarters in Tunis, outlining concrete steps for cooperation that will have a powerful lasting impact on strengthening the tourism industry.

[Learn more about this partnership](#)



### Hundreds of Kairouan Youth Clean Up Streets as Part of USAID Visit Tunisia-Backed Campaign

More than 200 youth in Kairouan took part in a week-long clean-up drive in preparation for the Mouled Festival in October, which draws 800,000+ visitors annually to celebrate the birth of Islam's Prophet Muhammad.

[Learn more about this initiative](#)



### "Tounes Lik" Campaign Reaches Largest Audience Yet as it Moves to Bizerte, Haouaria, Kerkennah

Tunisia's National Tourism Office (ONTT's) Domestic Tourism Campaign, "Tounes Lik," continues to generate buzz for Tunisian tourism, spotlighting captivating travel destinations that are often overlooked, such as Bizerte, Haouaria, and Kerkennah.

[Learn more about the campaign](#)



### Inaugurating Tunisia's Living Culture Initiative with a 3-Day Cultural Heritage Symposium

USAID Visit Tunisia Activity, joined by partner Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, brought together scholars from around Tunisia for a symposium on intangible cultural heritage.

[Learn more about this event](#)

# USAID VISIT TUNISIA SIGNS MULTI-YEAR COOPERATION WITH THE TUNISIAN FEDERATION OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM AGENCIES (FTAV)

As part of its mission to strengthen tourism associations and federations across Tunisia's tourism industry, USAID Visit Tunisia signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Monday, September 12, 2022 at FTAV headquarters in Tunis that outlines concrete steps for cooperation that will have a powerful lasting impact on strengthening the tourism industry.

Outlining the goals for collaboration and key actions and initiatives to fully realize the potential of this union, including programs highlighted below, this document was formally signed by USAID Visit Tunisia Chief of Party Leila Calnan, and the President of FTAV, Mr. Ahmed Bettaieb.



Since its creation in 1964, the Tunisian Federation of Travel and Tourism Agencies (FTAV) has remained the first and leading professional trade union organization working to protect, further, and develop the interests of travel and tourism agencies in Tunisia. With 6 regional offices, FTAV represents the evolving needs of the travel and tourism agency industries and the interests of their members in developing strong tourism at the national level. The union is made of 740+ members.

FTAV's commitment to supporting tourism across the country makes them the perfect group for USAID Visit Tunisia to collaborate with under the third component of the project, enabling environment and creating a climate for sustained growth.



This memorandum of understanding reflects the willingness of both parties to cooperate to support the management, development, and implementation of a program known as the Tourism Federations and Associations Capacity Building Program. This project will be deployed in two phases to train selected federations and associations on key topics such as organizational enforcement, governance, marketing and communication, resource mobilization, and professional development.

This program will extend for several years, starting first in the capital Tunis, and then extending the program to other cities and governorates across the country to ensure the benefits of the program extend to members of the association, the hundreds of hardworking tourism businesses. The learning modules developed will be accessible on the FTAV online platform, which will be continuously updated with the support of USAID Visit Tunisia. Digitizing the material and uploading it to an accessible e-learning platform will ensure the sustainability and efficacy of the training program and modules into the future.

In press coverage of the MOU signing by TUNISIE.co, Tunisia's leading online tourism news outlet, USAID Visit Tunisia Chief of Party Leila Calnan highlighted her excitement for the collaboration by noting, "USAID Visit Tunisia is very pleased to enter into this agreement. It's been a very good experience this last year working with the association to identify how we might support their important work going forward."

# HUNDREDS OF KAIROUAN YOUTH CLEAN UP STREETS AS PART OF USAID VISIT TUNISIA-BACKED CAMPAIGN



More than 200 youth in Kairouan took part in a week-long clean-up drive in the city, picking up trash and decorating the medina walls, as part of an environmental campaign organized by the USAID Visit Tunisia Activity.

The campaign, from September 11-18, gave the city a facelift ahead of the Mouled Festival in October, which each year draws some 800,000 visitors to celebrate the birth of Islam's Prophet Muhammad.

The local youth were full of enthusiasm during the week-long campaign, laughing, singing, cheering, and documenting each other as they carried out their activities.

Their positive outlook and environmental activism inspired many locals and tourists, many of whom stopped to take photos or lend a hand themselves. Thanks to the hard-work and commitment of so many participants, including representatives of youth organization Jeune Chamber International (JCI), Kairouan's Regional Tourism Commission (CRT), and the Tunisian Scouts, the group fully spruced up the medina even earlier than planned.



A mural on the wall of Kairouan's medina painted during a clean-up campaign organized with USAID Visit Tunisia.

The activity received extensive radio and TV coverage, highlighting the power of community-driven change and youth's commitment to environmental causes. (Watch one video featuring the campaign, produced by local station Web Maga Kairouan, [here](#))

USAID Visit Tunisia will continue the campaign with additional activities to engage youth, such a cultural treasure hunt for children, and a tree-planting activity to further beautify the city and better the environment.

By engaging key players in the tourism ecosystem, hand in hand with local communities, USAID Visit Tunisia is helping promote an environmentally conscious approach to tourism and development.



Members of the Tunisian Scouts help clear trash in the city's medina.



# “TOUNES LIK” CAMPAIGN REACHES LARGEST AUDIENCE YET AS IT MOVES TO BIZERTE, HAOUARIA, KERKENNAH

With USAID Visit Tunisia’s support, the National Tourism Office’s (ONTT) Domestic Tourism Campaign, “Tounes Lik,” continued to generate buzz for Tunisian tourism, spotlighting captivating travel destinations that are often overlooked, such as Bizerte, Haouaria, and Kerkennah.

As the summer tourism season drew to a close, USAID Visit Tunisia released three travel videos from prominent Tunisian influencers [Mayssa Ferchichi](#) and [Fatma Bououn](#). The videos performed extremely well on social media, each drawing at least 1 million views and tens of thousands of “likes.”

Ferchichi, a Tunisian travel and lifestyle blogger, produced her first video on the northern coastal town of [Bizerte](#), before traveling to the south-eastern island of [Kerkanneh](#).

Bizerte, the northernmost major city in Africa, is well known for its idyllic port, beautiful beaches, and delicious seafood. However, it also has a rich history, ancient ruins, and diverse landscape, including forests and lagoons. Due to its strategic position along the Mediterranean, Bizerte endured heavy fighting during World War II, and fell under both Italian and German control at various points.

“When you think about Bizerte, you think about the sea but there’s a lot more to see: history, landscape, nature, and food,” said Ferchichi, who visited the city’s Phoenician ruins, tried the locally renowned lablabi sandwich, and trekked to the stunning “Ain Damous” beach.



Tunisian blogger [Mayssa Ferchichi](#) (L) tries Bizerte’s famous “kaskrout lablabi” (lablabi sandwich).  
(Instagram/ [Mayssa Ferchichi](#))

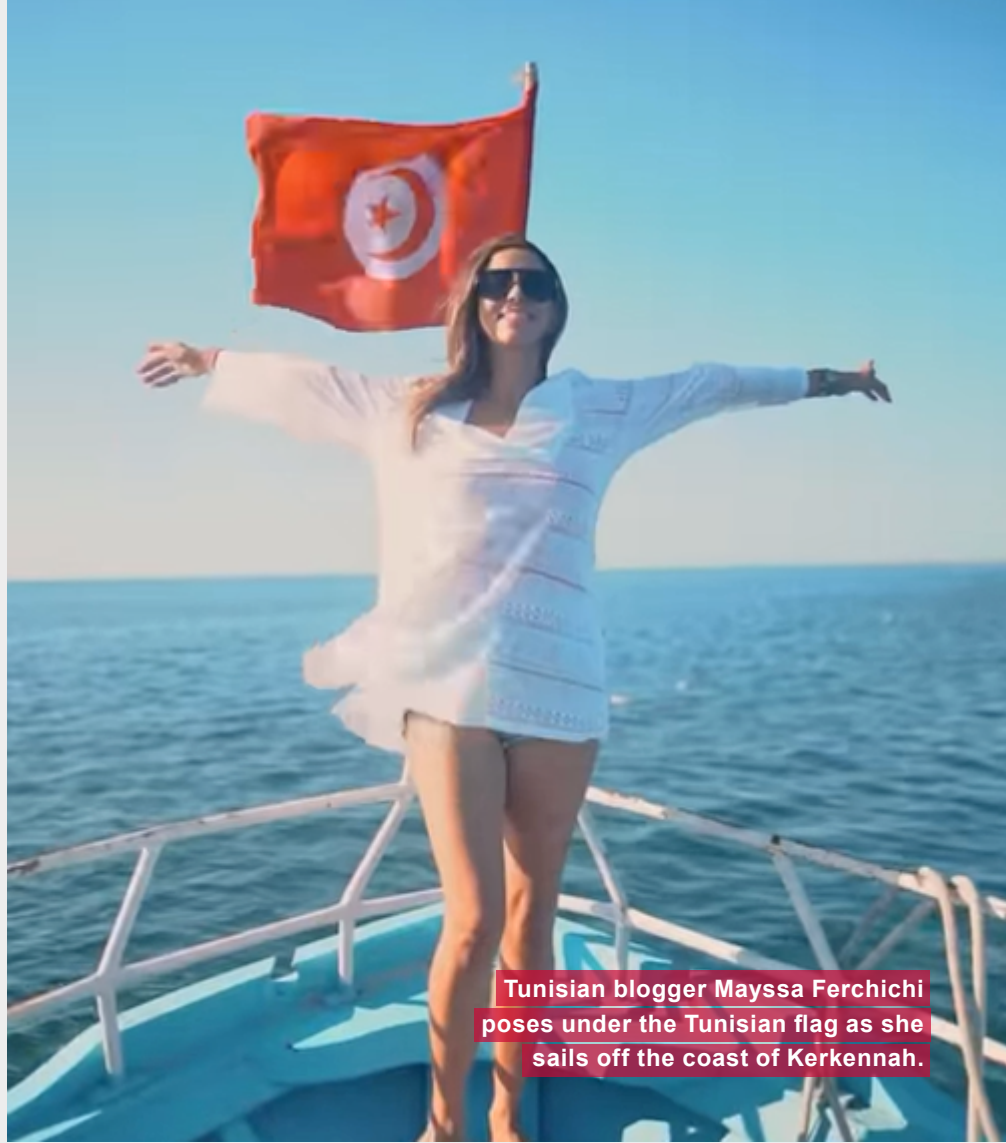
The influencer’s trip to Kerkanneh gave viewers a window into life in another calm coastal town. Kerkanneh, accessible by port from the industrial town of Sfax, is also known for tranquil beaches and fishing, primarily for octopus. “It is a haven of peace where you can totally disconnect,” wrote Ferchichi of the island.

Influencer Fatma Bououn, meanwhile, posted content on the northern town of **Haouaria**. Based in the Nabeul governorate at the end of the Cap Bon region, Haouaria has some of Tunisia's most stunning views – as well as amazing Roman-era caves carved out of sandstone.

“Tunisia is for you, for me, and for us -- we just need the will (to discover it)” said Bououn as she recapped her trip.

Like previous “Tounes Lik” content, the videos drew a wave of positive comments from Tunisian viewers, with many asking for the names of local restaurants and touristic sites featured in the videos so they could visit for themselves.

The content, along with previous videos commissioned by USAID Visit Tunisia, have so far garnered more than 12 million social media views, attracting more domestic tourists to Tunisia's beautiful hideaways and bolstering business for local tourism operators.



Tunisian blogger Mayssa Ferchichi poses under the Tunisian flag as she sails off the coast of Kerkennah.



Tunisian influencer Fatma Bououn rides a paddleboard off the coast of Haouaria, northern Tunisia.

# INAUGURATING TUNISIA'S LIVING CULTURE INITIATIVE WITH A 3-DAY CULTURAL HERITAGE SYMPOSIUM



Between September 10-12, the USAID Visit Tunisia Activity, led by partner Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, brought together scholars from around Tunisia for a symposium on intangible cultural heritage held. The success of this engaging 3-day event held in Gabes was made possible with additional support from the Agency for Heritage Development and Cultural Promotion and the Museum Development Division of the National Heritage Institute.



The symposium was the first installment of Tunisia's Living Culture, a year-long initiative to develop cultural heritage tourism experiences.

Over the course of the multi-day event, attendees shared their rich knowledge to share knowledge on topics such as oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, historical relationships with nature, artisanship, culinary routines, and more. The contributions and ensuing discussions were rich, drawing on personal insights regarding the richness of Tunisia's cultures and customs.

The successful symposium puts a spotlight on Tunisia's distinctive cultural practices and aids the Center's further work with understanding the important perspective of Tunisians and their traditions.

"Tunisia's vibrant intangible cultural heritage—gastronomy, craft, music, dance, and storytelling—is underdeveloped and often missing from the tourist experience," the Smithsonian Center's Director of Special Projects, Halle Butvin says. "Tunisia's Living Culture will support tradition bearers and their communities to create tourism experiences, where they can share cultural practices with visitors and directly benefit from tourism revenues."



Participants in the event were selected via a call to participate that was open until late August. A diverse participant pool was sought out and recruited, to assemble the best-positioned Tunisian scholars and cultural heritage professionals from USAID Visit Tunisia Activity's six focus regions: Tabarka–Aïn Drahem, Kairouan, Gabes, Tozeur, Kebili–Douz, and Tataouine.



This year-long program will continue with a series of events and workshops dedicated to promoting the sustainability of cultural heritage practices in USAID Visit Tunisia's six target regions. This emphasizes the importance of community-based cultural heritage representation in tourism development. This initiative also highlights Tunisia's commitments to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003).

The next event in the series is scheduled for November, where Halle Butvin will lead training workshops for local scholars and tradition-bearers to develop concepts for new tourism experiences.

Keep up with USAID Visit Tunisia to read more about this exciting initiative and see how it continues to unfold in the next year.



A promotional graphic for the symposium.

Join us at the Intangible Cultural Heritage Symposium from September 10th - 12th in Gabes