



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Visit Tunisia Activity Newsletter | July 2023

VISIT TUNISIA



**Dear Partners and Friends,**

Greetings from a very sunny and warm Tunis! As temperatures continue to rise, I hope you are enjoying the summer, while staying safe and cool. Like elsewhere in the Mediterranean, Tunisia experienced exceptionally high heat levels last month, resulting in wildfires in the Tabarka region, which have taken a terrible toll on the ecosystem and our tourism partners in the north. I hope you'll [join us in supporting those who have been affected](#) - to help rebuild their businesses.

Despite the heat, the Visit Tunisia team are on the road working hard around the country with our tourism partners. In July's update, you'll find stories of our continued support of small tourism experience providers, from nature and adventure to food and culture. This work includes marketing initiatives and campaigns featuring tourism experiences, along with visitor and market readiness assistance programs. Our access to finance partners Microcred, Advans Tunisie and TAMSS continue to spread opportunities for microfinance and grant support across Tunisia.

Check out our social media channels! Through our ongoing Nature & Adventure SME campaign designed to reach independent travelers in Tunisia and abroad, we continue to spread the word about lesser-known exciting outdoor activities, helping our partners generate bookings this season and beyond.

We hope this newsletter and the activities showcased will inspire you to visit, explore, and participate in our programs. **Tunisian tourism businesses:** get in touch! We have programs to accelerate the development of your business and help get your products and experiences to the market!

Warmly,

**Leila Calnan**  
Chief of Party  
USAID Visit Tunisia Activity



# BRINGING 30 CULTURAL EXPERIENCES FROM TOZEUR, KEBILI, TABARKA, KAIROUAN, TATAOUINE, AND GABES TO THE MARKET



Through its Tunisia's Living Culture assistance program, USAID Visit Tunisia Activity is assisting 30 culture-focused experiences from Tozeur, Kebili, Tabarka, Kairouan, Tataouine, and Gabes in developing or enhancing their touristic offerings. Imagine local and international visitors learn how to make their own "makroudh", craft traditional teas and essential oil-based cosmetics, or create their own plant-based basket and so much more!

Tunisia's Living Culture (TLC) is an activity designed in partnership with subcontractor Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage which aims to support Tunisian culture and tradition bearers such as artisans, cooks, and musicians in creating touristic experiences. TLC's objective is to support 30 key experiences from the project's six priority destinations (Tozeur, Kebili, Tabarka, Kairouan, Tataouine, and Gabes) from an initial pool of nearly 300 participants. In addition to technical support, the supported experiences will also receive top-notch customized marketing content and be eligible to apply for a grant to implement priorities identified during the technical assistance phase.



“Thanks to TLC, our project has reached a level of unexpected growth, allowing us to create income and sustainable livelihood from our experience. We frankly never imagined that we could turn our experience into a paying tourism offer for visitors.”

— Thoraya Mallat, Halima Barrak’s partner in the “Make your own Makroudh” experience, one of the 30 experiences participating in the TLC’s assistance program.

## Helping Develop Key Components of the Culture-Focused Experiences

### Creating Tourism Experiences Workshop

In January, USAID Visit Tunisia successfully held “Creating Tourism Experiences” workshops in Gabes, Kairouan, Tozeur and Tabarka engaging over 280 artisans, cooks, musicians, storytelling and others — recognized as tradition bearers who keep Tunisia’s cultural practices alive from one generation to the next — to support them in creating touristic experiences around gastronomy, craft, music, dance, and storytelling. TLC aims to bring these individuals and their communities into the tourism supply chain, establishing new, market-ready tourism experiences and sharing them with the world.

### Selecting 30 artisans/experiences from the initial pool of workshop participants

Following the workshop, USAID Visit Tunisia selected 30 experiences from the initial pool of 280+ workshop participants based on a combination of selection criteria and several site visits conducted in the six targeted destinations in partnership with the established Intangible Cultural Heritage Scientific Committee, composed of anthropologic scholars from the Tunisian academic community.

### Selection Criteria

- The Scientific Committee used the following criteria for selection:
- Compelling personal story
- Simple, engaging, conversational storytelling style
- Comfortable, clean, accessible, and visually appealing environment
- Connection to the place (local/regional/national)
- Gender
- Connection to other types of living culture
- Hands-on activities
- Memorable moments of laughter, learning, curiosity, and hospitality - Something tangible for the visitor to take away (ideally, to buy)
- Age
- Positive environmental impact



## Partner Spotlight

USAID Visit Tunisia is now working with the thirty experiences participating in the TLC program. Three of them from Ain Drahem and Kairouan are highlighted in this article. More experiences will be featured in the upcoming stories to introduce you to the committed and passionate people behind the USAID-supported experiences. Stay tuned!

### Barrak Patisserie in Kairouan

Halima Barrak runs one of the most successful small bakeries specializing in Kairouan's most famous sweet — “makroudh”. In the ancestral home of their grandfather, who was the famous national muezzin of Tunisia, Halima, Thouraya, and Oumaima are working hard towards creating a special experience for Kairouan's visitors who will not only get to eat their delicious makroudh but learn step-by-step how to make theirs. Beyond the delight for their taste buds, visitors will enjoy the ingredients' scents of rose, cinnamon and incense and so much more.



### L'art de l'osier (“Wicker Art”) in Ain Drahem

Discover the artistry of Rafik Goudri and his talented team of artisans as they carry on a cherished family tradition in the enchanting, forested region of Ain Drahem. Using local plant fibers — the wicker, they craft exquisite furniture and home accessories, weaving together the rich history and culture of basket-making for visitors from all corners of the world. With the support of USAID Visit Tunisia Activity's technical assistance, they are now enhancing their touristic offerings. Imagine creating your own miniature basket or delving into the fascinating origins of this ancient craft, all under their expert guidance.

### La Forêt in Ain Drahem

Meet Zouhair Helali, a passionate entrepreneur from Ain Drahem, who found his calling in the world of aromatherapy and essential oils. After traveling the world and perfecting his skills as an aromatherapist, Zouhair returned to his hometown to create something extraordinary - La Forêt. At La Forêt, Zouhair is not only crafting high-quality

essential oils, but he is also cultivating a unique cultural experience around aromatherapy. To take his business to new heights, he's partnering with us through our assistance program. This program is helping him develop key components of the experience, from gathering herbs and harvesting to learning about vapor distillation and crafting traditional teas and cosmetics.







USAID site visit and behind the scenes at "La Forêt". Photo ©USAID

“Tunisia’s intangible cultural heritage is incredible – it’s important to both increase its awareness among visitors and preserve it. That’s what TLC program is aiming to achieve through creating cultural heritage-based tourism experiences. For instance, the copper market in Kairouan is one of the three largest copper markets in the country. This age-old craft tradition was brought from the Arab Muslims conquerors and passed down from father to son. Copper became an integral part of life, present in several objects, used to prepare food, and even host weddings. It’s also considered as capital for many local couples – after the wedding, the copper gifts are sold by the wife and kept as a project fund. Through the tourism experience under development, the visitors will have the opportunity to witness copper making behind the scenes and make their own. In the process, we will bring back an ancestral technique that has disappeared from the Tunisian market: visitors will enamel on copper which will make the experience even more special.”

— Hamida Trabelsi, Researcher/Anthropologist from the Tunisian academic community and a member of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Scientific Committee established by the TLC program.



A sneak peek of “Learn about coppersmithing and decorate your own ornament” experience in Kairouan which is under development with the support of the TLC program. Photo ©Smithsonian/USAID

Tunisia’s Living Culture (TLC) is an activity designed in partnership with subcontractor Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage which aims to support Tunisian culture and tradition bearers such as artisans, cooks, and musicians in creating touristic experiences. TLC’s objective is to support 30 key experiences from the project’s six priority destinations (Tozeur, Kebili, Tabarka, Kairouan, Tataouine, and Gabes) from an initial pool of nearly 300 participants. In addition to technical support, the supported experiences will also receive top-notch customized marketing content and be eligible to apply for a grant to implement priorities identified during the technical assistance phase.

# OVER 1,000 CITIZENS AND CHILDREN: THE NEW AMBASSADORS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN KAIROUAN



USAID Visit Tunisia successfully completed the last activity of its public awareness campaign with tree planting in key touristic spots in Kairouan including the Syouri Park and the Medina. The activity took place between June 14 and June 30. Through its various components including tree planting, school educational sessions, treasure hunts and clean-up activities, the awareness campaign engaged over 1,000 citizens from the community, mainly children and youth, and led to significant coverage on regional and national media amplifying our message.

## Sowing Seeds of Awareness throughout Kairouan's Community

Through environment-focused activities mixing education and fun, USAID Visit Tunisia raised a public awareness on the importance of adopting an environmentally conscious approach to tourism. Its importance for Tunisia was brought to the attention to young children and local communities in Kairouan — one of our six priority destinations that has a high level of currently unrecognized cultural attractions and opportunities for sustainable tourism.

In a nutshell, the awareness campaign in Kairouan — which started in September 2022 and ended in June 2023 — engaged with more than 1,000 citizens from the local communities including children and youth, and including people with disabilities through 4 main activities:

- Educational sessions and tree planting at schools;
- Tree planting and beatification of public touristic sites.
- Streets clean-up with hundreds of youth;
- Treasure hunt, first edition;
- Treasure hunt, second edition;





## Toward a More Sustainable Tourism in Kairouan

Through its campaign in Kairouan, USAID started sowing the seeds of community awareness in the schools among the young and future generations, in the streets among people of disabilities and citizens of Kairouan including touristic sites.

USAID Visit Tunisia led the way towards a more sustainable tourism in Kairouan. As a tourism destination, Kairouan is starting to consider its current environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, environment and host communities.

We extend our thanks to all our partners and express our sincere appreciation for their commitment and dedication in making this campaign possible.

USAID Visit Tunisia continues to work with partners from the private sector to help develop their business and offerings in the tourism sector in Kairouan.

To know more about Kairouan campaign-related past activities:

- [Hundreds of Kairouan Youth Clean Up Streets as Part of USAID Visit Tunisia-Backed Campaign](#)
- [Engaging Kairouan Scavenger Hunt Combines Cultural Heritage Education With Fun for Tunisia's Youth](#)
- [Over 450 Tunisian youth and persons with disabilities bringing awareness to sustainable tourism in Kairouan](#)
- [USAID Visit Tunisia Activity Engages 300 Children in Kairouan's Schools to Raise Awareness About Sustainable Tourism](#)



The Kairouan campaign aims at raising public awareness on the importance of adopting an environmentally conscious approach to tourism through engaging young children and local communities in fun and educational activities such as treasure hunts, clean-ups and tree planting in schools and key touristic sites. The campaign is implemented by USAID Visit Tunisia in partnership with key local stakeholders and civil society: [Jeunes Chambres International \(JCI\) Kairouan](#), [Commissariat Régional au Tourisme de Kairouan](#), [The Scouts Kairouan](#), [Dar Allanni](#), [We love Kairouan](#), [Municipality of Kairouan](#), [Office National du Tourisme Tunisien \(ONTT\)](#), [APNEK](#), and the [Commissariat Regional de l'éducation de Kairouan](#).



# BOOSTING THE VISIBILITY AND BOOKINGS OF 12 ADVENTURE-FOCUSED TOURISM EXPERIENCES



Content produced by USAID under the Nature & Adventure SMEs campaign. Photo ©USAID

Since the launch of its digital marketing campaign in June, USAID Visit Tunisia Activity promoted adventure-focused tourism experiences across Tunisia – fun activities for groups or independent travelers to explore this summer and in the seasons ahead. The “Nature and Adventure SME” campaign promoted to date six experience providers from an initial pool of twelve and will run through August. Since the launch of its digital marketing campaign in June, USAID Visit Tunisia Activity promoted adventure-focused tourism experiences across Tunisia – fun activities for groups or independent travelers to explore this summer and in the seasons ahead. The “Nature and Adventure SME” campaign promoted to date six experience providers from an initial pool of twelve and will run through August.



Snapshots from the Instagram feed of the Nature & Adventure supported SMEs. Photo ©USAID

## “Nature and Adventure SME” Campaign: Promoting 12 Experience Providers Worth Visiting and Booking.

The “Nature and Adventure SME” campaign is a nationwide digital marketing campaign promoting 12 businesses offering adventure-focused experiences directly to travelers. The campaign runs from June to July and aims to increase SMEs’ brand awareness as well as their sales by at least 10%.



Building on the first nationwide domestic tourism campaign “Tounes Lik” (“Tunisia is Yours”), USAID Visit Tunisia Activity developed a second domestic campaign to connect domestic travelers with tourism SMEs and experience providers. The objective of this 2nd domestic campaign featuring nature and adventure tourism experiences throughout Tunisia is to engage locals in exploring more of Tunisia’s hidden gems and natural wonders in a fun way and to introduce and connect local visitors including families with kids, friend groups, and independent travelers with adventure tourism businesses. In January, USAID Visit Tunisia successfully held

**In March, 152 SMEs applied to a call for nature and adventure tourism SMEs to participate in the marketing campaign.**



**In April 2023, 12 SMEs were selected based on visitor readiness criteria** developed under USAID Visit Tunisia’s Market Readiness program and detailed in the call. The first stages of the campaign included the selection of Tunisian “influencers” whose followers’ profiles are aligned with the campaign targets, and the production of high-quality content that will be provided to the promoted-SMEs to support in their marketing efforts.

**To further convert engagement with the campaign into bookings**, USAID partnered with 4 highly engaged digital marketplace platforms that succeeded in establishing business partnerships with the promoted SMEs. The booking links are consistently featured by the influencers to ensure conversion. The campaign also promotes its sponsors operating in the tourism sector such as guesthouses and national booking platforms and boosts their visibility.

## Impact to date: Significant Boost of the SMEs’ Visibility

The influencers’ first visits led to a significant increase in the SME’s number of followers on Instagram – exceeding USAID Visit Tunisia’s initial target of 20%. To name a few positive tangible results to date:

- Dar El Ain’s number of followers increased **by 60%**;
- Zaghouan Adventures’ number of followers **skyrocketed from 400 to 11.3 K**;
- SAWA Gite Rural’s number of followers **increased by 300%**
- **Snorkeling Kerkennah’s** number of followers **increased from 1 700 to 13.2K**;
- Pro Glisse’ number of followers **increased by 200%**.

USAID Visit Tunisia is now working with the thirty experiences participating in the TLC program. Three of them from Ain Drahem and Kairouan are highlighted in this article. More experiences will be featured in the upcoming stories to introduce you to the committed and passionate people behind the USAID-supported experiences. Stay tuned!



Photo ©USAID

“I want to thank the entire team for your fantastic support that allowed us to take our diving center Subway Mahdia to the next level. This is such an incredibly important step forward for us! Only through your help are we now able to provide experiences to a much wider range of visitors. We enjoyed offering the Instagrammeuses an experience they won’t forget. They have helped us spread the word about Subway Mahdia more than expected. Thank you once again for what you have done for us. Kind regards from Nesh and the entire Subway Mahdia team”

— Nejmeddine Daldoul, Owner of Subway Mahdia, a diving center in Mahdia and one of the twelve supported SMEs through the “Nature & Adventure SME” campaign.

“The “Nature & Adventure” campaign has had a significant impact on our business. We have doubled our bookings from this time last year. Thanks to your continued and invaluable support, we attracted more travelers from all over the world highlighting the beauty and diversity of Kerkennah as a unique tourism destination in Tunisia. We succeeded in increasing awareness of the importance of ecotourism among the local community and visitors. We are deeply grateful for our collaboration with USAID Visit Tunisia and promise to continue to work with dedication and diligence to promote sustainable tourism in Tunisia.”

— Boulbaba Soussi, Owner of Snorkeling Kerkennah, a center promoting Kerkennah’s treasures and one of the supported SMEs through tour “Nature & Adventure” campaign.



Photo ©USAID

## Promoting 12 Ready-to-Book Adventure-Focused Experiences this Summer

To date (July 24), and since the launch of the campaign on June 24, USAID Visit Tunisia promoted the following six businesses whose experiences are ready to book by visitors. We invite you to explore them and hit the “Like” and “Follow” buttons on their Instagram and Facebook pages and save these good plans for later!

### 1. Dar el Ain: Immersive Adventures in Northwest Tunisia



Photo ©USAID





## 2. Zaghouan Aventures: Zaghouan Mountaineering



## 3. Subway Mahdia: Underwater Treasures of Mahdia



## 4. Snorkeling Kerkennah: Kerkennah Island Exploration



## 5. Sawa Gite Rural: Cottage and Guestrooms in Cap Bon



## 6. Pro Glisse: Water Sports & Adrenaline Rush



USAID Visit Tunisia also partnered with sponsors to provide free accommodation to the influencers such as [Dar Houda](#) in Tabarka, [Dar Evelyne](#) in Mahdia and [Manaret](#) in Kerkennah. For instance, in return for their investment, Dar Houda a Tabarka-based guesthouse was featured in the influencers' stories leading to significant increase of their followers and bookings. Dar Houda is now fully booked until September, with only a few room nights remaining.

### Introducing Marketplace Platforms to Experience Providers and Local Visitors to Generate More Bookings

USAID Visit Tunisia onboarded 4 digital marketplaces platforms and succeeded in developing linkages between them and the twelve campaign-related businesses. These facilitations led to several official partnership agreements. The following partner-marketplace platforms are now offering experiences provided by our supported SMEs: [WildyNess](#); [RésaPrivée](#); [Wesloop](#); and [Tunisia Experiences](#).

Throughout the campaign, USAID Visit Tunisia hopes to inspire positive change in Tunisians' consumer behavior and bring to them new alternatives to book experiences. The campaign aims to contribute to shifting their mindset from booking – directly and only – from the experience providers to booking through local and 100% digital marketplace platforms as a secure and great alternative that also supports the Tunisian tourism. Changing deeply rooted habits in Tunisian's habits and introducing them to marketplace platforms is one of the campaign's aspirations.

### Living the Fun Through the Influencers' Experiences

The influencers USAID Visit Tunisia partnered with shared their experiences through stories highlights. If you missed it, check it out through the links below!

- **Dar el Ain** – Check the stories highlights of [Ilef Baatout](#) and [Eya Naccache](#).
- **Zaghuan Aventures** – Check the stories highlights of [Ilef Baatout](#) and [Eya Naccache](#) & [Emna Sadfi](#).
- **Subway Mahdia** – Check the stories highlights of [Ilef Baatout](#) and [Khouloud Moalla](#).
- **Snorkeling Kerkennah** – Check the stories highlights of [Emna Sadfi](#) and [Eya Naccache](#).
- **Sawa Gite Rural** – Check the stories highlights of [Ilef Baatout](#).
- **Pro Gliss** – Check the stories highlights of [Ilef Baatout](#), [Emna Sadfi](#); and [Eya Naccache](#).

### What's Next?

The campaign will continue to produce engaging content, promote the remaining businesses and marketplace platforms throughout August. USAID Visit Tunisia will release business-focused stories in the upcoming weeks. Stay tuned for more!

- [La Ferme Tarenti](#)
- [Tunisia Balloons](#)
- [Zencamp](#)
- [Tunisian Campers](#)
- [Green Trek](#)
- [Divertima](#)