

Cap Bon الوطى القبا



Cap Bon is Tunisia's tourism hot spot, pointing its crooked thumb towards Sicily, only 150km away. It has long had close links with Europe – geologists speculate that the land masses were once joined – split by the rising Mediterranean 30,000 years ago. Crowded with citrus trees and vineyards, the region is famous for its wine, particularly Kélibia's fragrant muscat.

The action centres on the resort of Hammamet, stretching along an amber-sanded beach that has attracted tourists since the 1920s. Then a jet-set playground, it's now a popular package destination. Clever planning restrictions have kept it an attractive place to visit. Hotels have large capacities but don't tower over the bay, and are surrounded by greenery.

Venture away from Hammamet and the busy craft centre of Nabeul and you'll find Cap Bon a surprising adventure. Its other towns have a charming nothing-much-to-do feel, and if you have your own transport and want to find a deserted beach, you're in luck.

Kélibia, a northern backwater, has a small, busy port, a mighty fortress and a dazzling beach, with only one hotel plonked on it so far. Nearby are the ruins of Punic Kerkouane – the most complete remains of the Carthaginian civilisation. Small town El-Haouaria, at the peninsula's northern tip, feels even more remote, lying near coastal quarries that date back more than 2500 years and supplied stone for Rome's Colosseum.

The west is more rugged and difficult to get around. A dramatic road clinging to the rocky coast leads to faded small spa Korbous, where a scalding hot spring spills directly into the sea, as if performing a magic trick.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore the mysteries of the ancient Punic civilisation at **Kerkouane** (p117)
- Discover the soft, white sands and azure waters near Kélibia at **El-Mansourah** (p115)
- Watch peregrine falcons swoop from the end-of-the-world cliffs near **El-Haouaria** (p119)
- Revel in sun, fun, sand and sea at **Hammamet** (opposite)



History

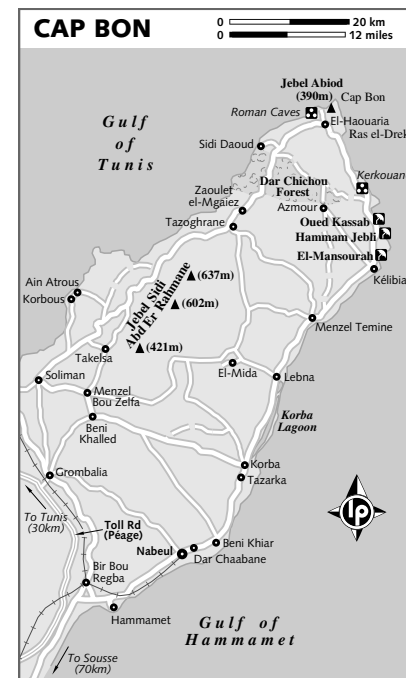
Cap Bon was under Carthaginian control by the early 5th century BC, a lush agricultural region that kept the Punic capital in fruit and veg, and formed a key – if not very successful – part of its defence system, centred on fortified Aspis (Kélibia). The problem was that it was geographically vulnerable. Both Agathocles of Syracuse (in 310 BC) and the Roman general Regulus (in 256 BC) invaded through here during their respective assaults on Carthage, sacking Aspis en route. Kerkouane survived Agathocles, but was trashed by Regulus and abandoned forever.

The Romans called the region the 'beautiful peninsula' – Pulchri Promontorium – and settled in. They took over Aspis, renaming it Clypea, and built the large town of Neapolis (Nabeul). The countryside is dotted with relics of other settlements. Prosperity continued until the Arabic conquest. Clypea became a Byzantine stronghold that held out against the Arabs until the late 7th century AD, long after the rest of Tunisia had fallen.

But then piracy and unrest led to decline from the 14th to 16th centuries. Cap Bon was constantly threatened from the sea, forcing many coastal communities to shift inland – you'll notice that Nabeul and Kélibia are a few kilometres from the coast.

A wave of Andalusian immigrants arrived from the 15th century (feeling persecution by Christians in Spain), revitalising the area, and it was favoured by European settlers during the 19th-century French era: the countryside is dotted with the ruins of old, red-tiled farmhouses and great agricultural buildings. The French developed the vast citrus groves around Beni Khalled and Menzel Bou Zelfa and the vineyards around Grombalia.

An exclusive kind of tourism took off in the 1920s, triggered largely by Romanian millionaire George Sebastian building his luxurious villa outside Hammamet. Less-welcome visitors took over the villa in 1943 when Axis forces retreated to Cap Bon and ran their campaign from there, until the surrender that ended the North African phase of WWII. Today it's Tunisia's biggest resort, a holiday playground. Even President Ben Ali has a holiday home here.



Climate

Cap Bon has a blessedly balmy climate – as a coastal region it is cooler during the summer and warmer in winter than other parts of Tunisia.

Getting There & Away

The nearest airport is Tunis-Carthage. There are many buses and louages (shared-taxis) serving the region, with Hammamet and Korbous around an hour from the capital. Nabeul and Hammamet are also connected to Tunis by train.

Getting Around

Louages and buses connect the coastal towns. It's more difficult to cross the Cap Bon peninsula – Soliman and Korbous are better reached from Tunis.

HAMMAMET

pop 52,000

With a soft curve of sandy beach, densely blue Mediterranean, little Noddy trains, all-facility hotels, with everything you need to make life easier, Hammamet ('the baths'

حمامات

TOP FIVE OFF-THE-BEATEN-TRACK BEACHES

Cap Bon has more than enough beaches for everyone and there are some lovely undiscovered spots. Let us know what you think of these and if you discover any more at lonelyplanet.com/feedback.

- Across the causeway over Korba Lagoon is a remarkable white-sanded beach (p114), a local secret.
- A few kilometres beyond lovely El-Mansourah near Kélibia try Hammam Jebli (p115).
- Near the Centre National de la Jeunes, 7km north of Kélibia, lies pearly white Oued Kassab (p115).
- The locals know about Ras el-Drek (p120) but you'll rarely meet other foreign tourists here.
- At Barrage Port Princes (p121), overlooked by a golden-stone castle, is a charming small bay in a protected area.

in Arabic) is Tunisia's biggest resort, with a hotel capacity of 57,000. But early planning constraints said hotels should not overreach the height of a tree and, though there are some broad interpretations of this, buildings in Hammamet are restrained – it's nothing like the brutal developments scarring Spanish coasts. Hotels, set back from the beach, are mostly surrounded by lushly planted gardens, with lots of trees. However, there's a strange equation here between the traditional elements of a Tunisian town (mosques, the call to prayer, women in headscarves and men in cafés) and a European-favoured resort, with skimpily dressed tourists wandering down to the beach.

The town feels small-scale, attractive and cheery. The small, picturesque centre is packed with restaurants and shops, overlooked by its Disney-perfect medina (walled city), and the sea is surreally dotted by galleon-style tourist boats. Evenings usher in a carnival atmosphere.

The metamorphosis from quiet fishing village began in the 1920s with the arrival of millionaire George Sebastian (his villa now houses Hammamet's International Cultural Centre) and the European jet set. Today, hotels stretch all the way to the fantasy tourist zone of Yasmine Hammamet, 5km to the south. Where the hotels stop, abruptly, the beach is once again wild and untouched.

Orientation

Hammamet's medina is central, overlooking the sea on a small spit of land jutting out into the Gulf of Hammamet. There are

two main streets in the town. Ave Habib Bourguiba runs north from the medina and links up with the road to Hammamet Sud (around 2km) and the newest development of Yasmine Hammamet. Ave de la République meanwhile heads northeast from the medina to Hammamet Nord and on to Nabeul.

Information

EMERGENCY

Infirmary (☎ 72 282 333; 29 ave Habib Bourguiba)
Police (Map p103; ☎ 72 280 079; ave Habib Bourguiba)

INTERNET ACCESS

Access costs TD1.5 to TD2 per hour.
Publinet (117 ave de la Libération; ☎ 8.30am-11pm)
Publinet (Map p103; ave Taieb Azzabi; ☎ 9am-11pm)
Publinet La Gare (163 ave Habib Bourguiba; ☎ 7am-midnight)

MONEY

Banks and plenty of ATMs are concentrated around the junction of aves Habib Bourguiba and de la République.

Many hotels and shops can also change cash and travellers cheques.

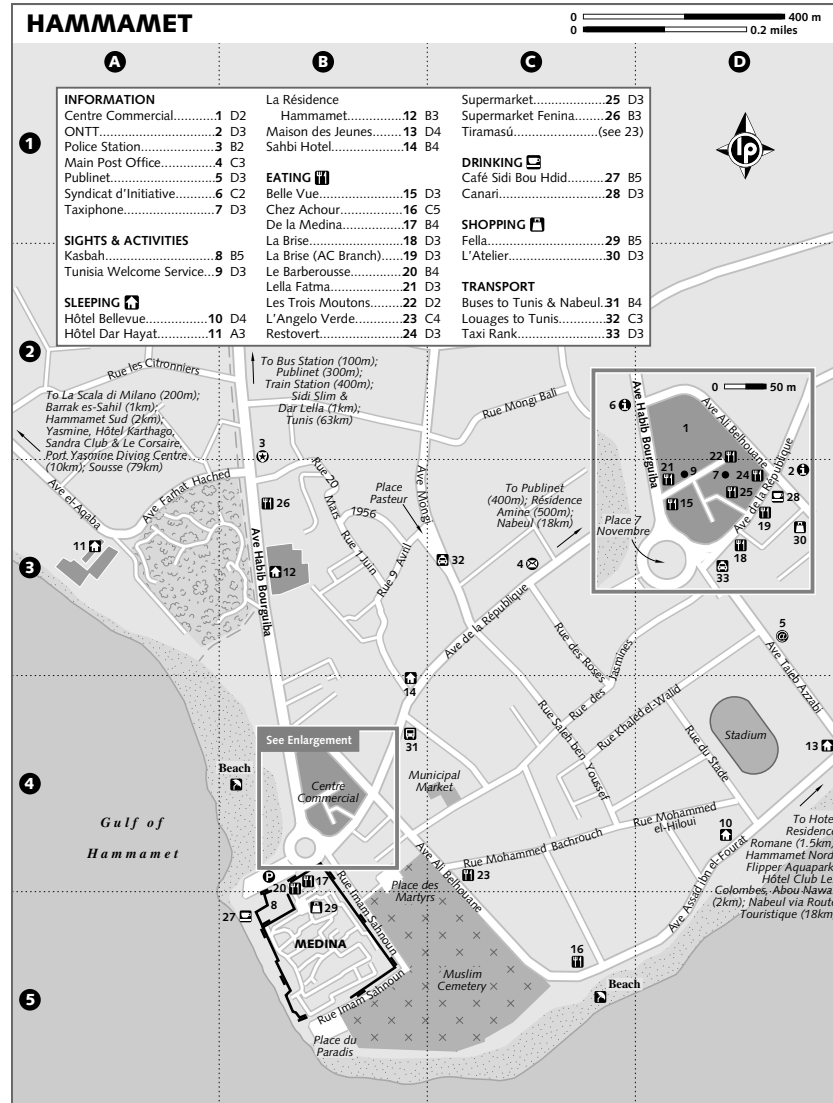
POST

Main post office (Map p103; ave de la République; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 8am-12.30pm Sun Sep-Jun, 7.30am-1pm & 5-11pm Mon-Sat Jul, 9-11am Sun Jul & Aug)

TOURIST INFORMATION

ONTT (Map p103; ☎ 72 280 423; ave de la République & ave Ali Belhouane; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Sep-Jun, 9am-midnight Jul & Aug) Provides free maps of Hammamet and Nabeul.

HAMMAMET



INFORMATION		EATING 🍴		DRINKING 🍷	
Centre Commercial.....1	D2	Belle Vue.....15	D3	Supermarket.....25	D3
ONTT.....3	D3	Chez Achour.....16	C5	Supermarket Fenina.....26	B3
Police Station.....3	B2	De la Medina.....17	B4	Tiramású.....(see 23)	
Main Post Office.....4	C3	La Brise.....18	D3		
Publinet.....5	D3	La Brise (AC Branch).....19	D3		
Syndicat d'Initiative.....6	C2	Le Barberousse.....20	B4		
Taxiphone.....7	D3	Lella Fatma.....21	D3		
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Les Trois Moutons.....22	D2	SHOPPING 🛍️	
Kasbah.....8	B5	L'Angelo Verde.....23	C4	Fella.....29	B5
Tunisia Welcome Service.....9	D3	Restovert.....24	D3	L'Atelier.....30	D3
SLEEPING 🛏️				TRANSPORT	
Hôtel Bellevue.....10	D4			Bus to Tunis & Nabeul.31	B4
Hôtel Dar Hayat.....11	A3			Louages to Tunis.....32	C3
				Taxi Rank.....33	D3

Syndicat d'Initiative (Map p103; ☎ 72 262 891; ave Habib Bourguiba; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) This small office carries similar items to the ONTT, but charges for its city map.

Sights

MEDINA
 The Hafsid Ottomans built this sandcastle medina (1463-74), with 2m-thick walls, on

the site of a 9th-century Aghlabid structure. Up to 1881 the medina was Hammamet – a fortified village of 300 inhabitants. The three gates were closed at night and for Friday prayer. Souvenir shops envelope the weblike old souqs, but the southern residential district is particularly well preserved.

The **Kasbah** (Map p103; ☎ 72 782 264; admission TD3, camera TD1; 🕒 8am-5pm Oct-Mar, 8am-6pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 8am-8pm Jul & Aug) is an immaculate building in the northwestern corner of the medina. In the 15th century this was the city governor's residence (a sole tower remains from those days). Adapted for fire-arms in the 16th and 17th centuries, it was in military use right up to the 19th century. There are sweeping views across the coast and tangled medina from a small (expensive) ramparts café.

INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL CENTRE

Hammamet's **International Culture Centre** (Map p105; ☎ 72 280 410; ave des Nations Unies; admission TD3; 🕒 8am-6pm Feb-Sep, 8am-5pm Oct-Jan) is the ultimate party house. It's a mansion designed and built by Romanian millionaire George Sebastian from 1920 to 1932. Frank Lloyd Wright said it was one of the most beautiful places he knew: the appreciative architect was just one of Sebastian's many illustrious, bohemian guests. It has a central colonnaded swimming pool, a huge black marble dining table and a baptistery font-style four-seater bath surrounded by mirrors. Nazi Erwin Rommel used the house as an Axis headquarters during WWII,

and after the war British Prime Minister Winston Churchill stayed here to write his memoirs. It's bizarre to imagine them here in these decadent surroundings – hopefully they enjoyed the four-person bathtub.

The house feels unloved, but its faded feel evokes a sense of good times past. It now hosts interesting displays of art. The terrace faces a rich view of flowers, greenery and sea-flooded horizon, and you can walk down to the beach, where there is a small café serving drinks. It's a particularly lovely stretch of beach frontage and it's usually empty, so bring your beach kit with you.

The 14-acre grounds include a Greek-style amphitheatre, built in 1962, used during July and August to stage Hammamet's annual International Cultural Festival, with entertainment ranging from classical theatre to Arabic music. Tickets are sold at the tourist office and at the door.

The cultural centre is 3km northwest of the town centre – a taxi will set you back TD1 or so.

PUPPUT

پوپات

The Roman site of **Pupput** (Map p105; route Touristique; admission TD2; 🕒 9am-5pm mid-Sep-Mar, 8am-7pm Apr-mid-Sep) is 6.5km southwest of the

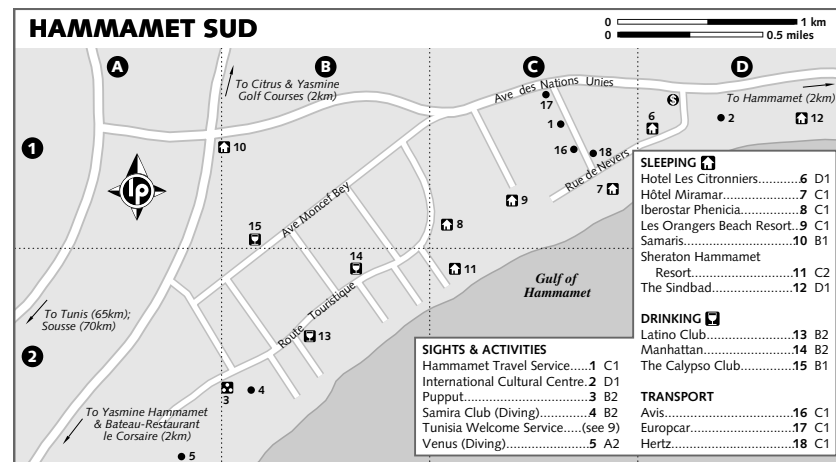
CRAXI ON THE RUN

Bettino Craxi, the notorious mid-1980s Italian prime minister, fled to Hammamet in 1994 following corruption charges. He had been accused of bribery connected with contracts for the Milan subway system. Craxi spent the rest of his life in seaside exile, under the wing of his friend President Ben Ali. Convicted in absentia on multiple counts, Craxi faced up to 10 years in prison in his home country. He died at the age of 66 in 2000.

The controversial leader was a socialist who had modernised his party, crushing the left wing and changing its image. He became Italy's first socialist prime minister in 1983 and its longest serving (four years) until Berlusconi. He is internationally remembered for standing up to Ronald Reagan over the *Achille Lauro* cruise ship PLO hijack, when he refused to allow US troops to detain the hijackers, arguing that, on Sicilian soil, the Americans had no jurisdiction.

His star fell when investigators from the Italian corruption crack-team 'Operation Clean Hands' exposed huge bribes paid by businesspeople to politicians – charges that demolished the government. Craxi argued that it was common knowledge that political parties accepted illegal funding. A disillusioned public were unimpressed and he was pelted with coins outside his residence in Rome. Fleeing to Tunisia, he stayed here rather than return to Italy for required medical treatment for complications relating to his diabetes, which contributed to his eventual ill-health. He spent his time making pottery, campaigning to free his name and visiting his favourite restaurant, La Scala di Milano (see p108). His tombstone – in Hammamet's Catholic Cemetery – reads 'My freedom is my life'.

One of Craxi's good political friends was one Silvio Berlusconi, media magnate and ex-Italian prime minister, who apparently has also bought a villa in Sidi Bou Saïd – who knows when it might come in handy.



Hammamet town centre. Wedged between Hammamet's hotels and nightclubs, this was once a staging post on the Roman road from Carthage to Hadrumetum (Sousse). The name suggests that it occupies the site of an earlier Punic settlement. The Byzantine and Roman remains are scant, but of interest if you're a history buff. The 5th-century House of Figured Peristyle retains a couple of columns and some mosaic flooring, but most memorable are the bleached-out Byzantine tomb mosaics displayed on a wall.

Activities

BEACHES

Hammamet is all about beaches. The best stretches northwest from the medina. Dotted by private hotel areas, it has plenty of public bits, and water-sports facilities at regular intervals (see below). There's a lovely stretch outside the International Cultural Centre (see opposite). If you have your own transport, you can drive out beyond Yasmine – after the buildings stop, the beach is empty and wild, and seems to go on forever.

The beach running towards Nabeul is also well worth spreading your towel on.

WATER-SPORTS

Places offering paragliding (TD25), water skiing (TD10 to TD15), jet skis (TD35 for 10 minutes), windsurfing (TD25 per hour) and other such delights punctuate the beaches at Hammamet Nord and Sud from April to September.

A couple of hotels have open-water diving centres offering certification courses (around TD380) and sets of five dives (TD180). There are some WWII wrecks and sea life to explore, and readers have had fun learning to dive here – Odysea has provided good reports.

Samira Club (Map p105; ☎ 72 226 484)

Venus (Map p105; ☎ 72 227 211)

Port Yasmine Diving Centre (☎ 72 319 741; charrad.jalel@planet.tn)

Odysea Diving School (Hotel Le Sultan; ☎ 72 280 588; www.odyseadiving.com)

FLIPPER AQUAPARK

A water park in Hammamet Nord, **Flipper Aquapark** (Map p103; ☎ 72 261 800; www.aquaflipper.com; Route Touristique; adult/child TD15/10; 🕒 10am-7pm) has winding slides and splashy features for small and big kids. It gets pretty busy.

GOLF

Golf is big business, with two clubs west of town.

Citrus (Map p105; ☎ 72 226 500; www.citrusgolf.com), beside the main Tunis-Sousse road, is a huge, lush complex laid out among citrus and olive trees. Built in the 1990s, it includes two demanding 18-hole courses and a nine-hole short course. Green fees cost TD45/86 for nine/18 holes. **Yasmine** (Map p105; ☎ 72 227 665; www.golfyasmine.com), about 2km to the north, has an 18-hole course and a beginners' nine-hole. Green fees are TD48/69.

Both clubs demand proof of handicap (better than 36 for Citrus).

HORSE RIDING

You can take short horse rides (one or two hours) in the hills or out to Berber villages – most of the bigger hotels can arrange this for you.

Tours

Lots of tour companies run excursions, including a half-day tour to Berber villages – Takrouna, Zriba and Jeradou – and one-day tours whizzing round Carthage, Sidi Bou Saïd and the Bardo Museum. Try:

Hammamet Travel Service (Map p105; ☎ 72 280 193; www.hts-tunisia.com; ave Dag Hammarskjöld)

Tunisia Welcome Service (☎ 72 280 544; www.tunisia-orangers.com) Hammamet (Map p103; Centre Commercial, ave Habib Bourguiba); Hammamet Sud (Map p105; rue de Nevers)

Festivals & Events

In July and August, the International Festival features international stars from everywhere from Ireland to Mali, as well as closer-to-home Tunisian and Algerian musicians. Concerts take place in the International Cultural Centre's seaside amphitheatre, and films show at various venues. Get a programme from the tourist office.

Sleeping

Three-star-plus places usually offer air-con, a pool and sizable rooms. Such is Hammamet's capacity that you can usually walk up and get a room, and discounts apply (always worth a try) if business is slack. Prices plummet in winter. Rates here include breakfast unless otherwise stated, and children under 12 usually cost 30% to 100% less. There's often a supplement of TD4 to TD20 for a sea view, which is worth paying if you can afford it. If you book via a package deal before you arrive, you'll get big discounts on these rack rates.

CENTRE

If you want to be near the best restaurants and a stuffed-camel's throw from the medina, this is where to stay.

Budget

Maison des Jeunes (Map p103; ☎ 72 280 440; ave Assad ibn el-Fourat; d with shared bathroom TD6, dm TD3)

A cut above most Maisons des Jeunes, this is central *and* beachside, clean and nice, with hot showers. Rooms take two to four and have seafront balconies. In summer it gets booked up, so call ahead.

Résidence Amine (☎ 72 765 500; ave de la Libération; s/d with private bathroom TD15/30) Friendly, spotless, with eager-to-please management, this is an excellent budget choice, with some huge, tiled rooms, all set around an internal courtyard.

Midrange

Hôtel Bellevue (Map p103; ☎ 72 281 121; ave Assad ibn el-Fourat; s/d TD30/60) With breezy sea views, close to the medina, this small beachfront hotel should be a good choice but it's looking very run-down and a bit grubby, with crumbling bathrooms.

La Résidence Hammamet (Map p103; ☎ 72 280 733; www.hammamet-residence.com; 54 ave Habib Bourguiba; s/d/tr/q with private bathroom & kitchenette TD46.5/77/96/112; ☎ ☎) Central, and a bargain if you can get a discount, this is a cheaper package place with sizable wrought-iron furnished studios around a leafy courtyard. It also has a rooftop pool, private beach and a shop where you can buy alcohol. Prices listed don't include breakfast, as it's not up to much.

Top End

Hotel Residence Romane (☎ 72 263 103; rommene.sami@gnet.tn; rue Assad Ben Fourat; s/d TD57/78, 2-/4-person apt TD110; ☎ ☎) With attractive, spacious, unfussy rooms with balconies, this is a great choice. The hotel is well kept and nicely decorated and the pool is surrounded by greenery.

Sahbi Hôtel (Map p103; ☎ 72 266 130; ave de la République; s/d TD56/88; ☎ ☎) This is central and above a lavish carpet shop and overhung with greenery. Large, prettily decorated rooms are a bit musty, but discounts are readily available.

Hôtel Dar Hayat (Map p103; ☎ 72 283 399; ave el-Aqaba; s/d TD150/250; ☎ ☎) Smaller than most upmarket Hammamet hotels, this has bright, elegant rooms with fantastic sea views and an unusual amount of charm, but it feels a bit tired considering the price.

NORD

The beach here is lovely and quieter than the south, but the hotels tend to be older and less flashy.

Top-End

Abou Nawas (☎ 72 281 344; Route Touristique el-Merezka; s/d TD78/95; ☎ ☎) This is up to the usual luxurious standard of the Abou Nawas chain, beachside, with green grounds, attractive, comfortable rooms and friendly service.

Hôtel Club Les Colombes (☎ 72 280 899; Route Touristique el-Merezka; s/d full board TD90/150; ☎ ☎) Right on the beach, this is a well-established if rather staid hotel with a quiet atmosphere. The rooms have terrific sea views.

SUD

The south not only has the balmiest curve of beach but also the bulk of the nightlife.

Budget

Samaris (Map p105; ☎ 72 226 353; ave des Nations Unies; camping per adult/child/tent/car/van/hot shower TD2.8/2/2/2.8/2.3, s/d with private bathroom TD26/52) It's surprising to go from the busy road into this leafy, courtyard-centred place, a few kilometres from the beach. Rooms are old-fashioned but pleasing enough and it's worth staying here for the lush gardens. The camp site is shady and pretty.

Midrange

Hôtel Les Citronniers (Map p105; ☎ 72 281 650; rue de Nevers; www.hotellescitronniers.com; s/d TD40/60; ☎) A small, cheery, lower-end package hotel, this has a good location near the beach, a terrace out the front serving beer, a pool and simple clean rooms with balconies.

Top End

Hôtel Miramar (Map p105; ☎ 72 280 344; rue de Nevers; s/d TD127/194; ☎ ☎) Rooms at this large hotel are big and nicely decorated. There are also George Sebastian-inspired (see p101) suites with two terraces.

Les Orangers Beach Resort (Map p105; ☎ 72 280 144; www.orangers.com.tn; rue de Nevers; s/d full board TD147/252; ☎ ☎) This is something like a much more luxurious, more international version of Butlins. Here you have everything you need for a holiday, with pools, bars, private beach and lots of entertainment. It's huge (391 rooms) and great for families.

The Sindbad (Map p105; ☎ 72 280 122; www.hotel-sindbad.com; ave des Nations Unies; s/d TD166/210; ☎ ☎) The flashy Sindbad gets good reviews. It has an exclusive feel, excellent

service and spacious rooms set in lush grounds with shady terraces. There's also a good pool and private beach.

Iberostar Phenicia (Map p105; ☎ 72 226 533; www.iberostar.com; s/d full board TD175/290; ☎ ☎) Built in the '70s by the presidential architect, this massive place (capacity 720) has been revamped to become a designer hotel, with sharply designed modern rooms that make a refreshing change. There's a practice golf course and putting green.

Sheraton Hammamet Resort (Map p105; ☎ 72 226 555; www.sheraton.com; s/d TD195/300; ☎ ☎) The tasteful Sheraton has an excellent reputation, with helpful staff and good disabled access. With a mere 201 rooms (plus two suites), it feels appealingly smaller scale, with simple and luxurious whitewashed, bungalows set in gardens around an attractive pool. Ask for a sea view.

YASMINE

This is Hammamet's newest development. It's on a different scale, with stark palm-lined boulevards featuring huge mall-style hotels (mostly four- and five-stars) and a marina. If you're on a package, you'll doubtless revel in all-inclusive luxury (the beach is nice too), but if not you've no reason to come here. It did have Carthageland, a theme park enclosed in a spanking-new medina, which added a touch of Vegas-style weirdness, but this was closed long-term at the time of research due to an accident. Special mention should go to five-star neo-castle Lella Baya for out-and-out architectural eccentricity.

Top-End

Flora Park (☎ 72 227 727; www.solmelia.com; s/d TD120/190; ☎ ☎) Unusual in this area, this is a boutique hotel, a bit away from the beach (you have to cross a few roads to reach it), but with an intimate feel, nice spa and tasteful rooms.

Hôtel Karthago (☎ 72 240 666; www.karthago-hotels.com; Station Touristique; d TD210; ☎ ☎) This mammoth marina and beachside five-star is very swish, with a cream-coloured, gold-studded central atrium reminiscent of a huge '70s cruise liner crossed with an airport. The rooms echo the ship design, and there's a classy spa and huge pool. There's an ice rink next door.

Hasdrubal Thalassa (☎ 72 248 800; www.hasdrubal-hotels.com; ave Medina; junior/ambassador/prestige

ste TD450/720/1000; ☎ ☎) One of the Leading Hotels in the World group, this place is hugely swish, if a bit far-flung, with lots of marble, ostentatious pool and super spa. Most people stay here to indulge in its tremendous treatments.

Eating

RESTAURANTS

There are hoards of good restaurants and many open very late (to around 2am) in July and August.

La Brise (Map p103; ☎ 72 280 981; Centre Commercial; mains TD11-20; ☎) This is one of Hammamet's classier restaurants, with an interior like a pretty conservatory stage-set and it serves lots of seafood.

Le Corsaire (☎ 72 240 323; Port Yasmine Hammamet; mains TD13-23; ☎ noon-midnight) At this upmarket boat restaurant floating in the marina, you can sit on the top deck and tuck into top seafood, with great views over the slick, flag-fluttering yachts.

Other recommendations:

Belle Vue (Map p103; ☎ 72 280 825; ave Habib Bourguiba; mains TD6-12.5; ☎ 8-2am) Next door to and cheaper than Lella Fatma, Belle Vue has received favourable reports from travellers.

De la Medina (Map p103; ☎ 72 281 728; mains TD7-15; ☎ noon-midnight) Seating on medina ramparts, but the view is the main draw rather than the food or service.

Lella Fatma (Map p103; ☎ 72 280 756; ave Habib Bourguiba; mains TD8.9-17.9; ☎ 11am-11pm) Opposite the medina, this place is good for people-watching and has reliably palatable food.

Le Barberousse (Map p103; ☎ 72 280 037; mains TD12-24; ☎ 12.30pm-midnight) Also on the medina walls, this is more upmarket than De la Medina, but the lovely beachside views are again the main attraction.

SELF-CATERING
Self-caterers can stock up at the Municipal Market between ave de la République and rue des Jasmines. You can buy beer and a fine selection of local wines at the town's small main **supermarket** (ave de la République; ☎ 8.30am-8pm). Smaller **Supermarket Fenina** (82 ave Habib Bourguiba; ☎ 8.30am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1.30pm Sun) is well stocked and has fewer queues.

chair is enshrined here to prove it. Run by and attracts characters.

Sidi Slim (☎ 72 279 124; 156 ave du Koweit; mains TD10-18.5; ☎ noon-11.30pm; ☎) With fussy décor involving some crazy-paving arches, upmarket local favourite Sidi Slim is welcoming, has good seafood and meat dishes and comes recommended.

Restovert (Map p103; ☎ 72 278 200; ave de la République; dishes TD5.8-8.5; ☎ 9am-1am) Plastered with film posters, this little 1st-floor place is a popular hang-out for young Hammamet, with a balcony for street-surveillance and lots of tasty snacks, such as crepes and panini.

Angolo Verde (Map p103; ☎ 72 262 641; rue Ali Belhouane; mains TD5.8-12.5; ☎ 11am-11pm; ☎) A happening, tucked-away spot, this place is popular and great for children. There's some tree-shaded pavement seating and a long, trendy menu that includes good pizzas, pasta, crepes and panini (no alcohol). Next door is Tiramású (open noon to 1am) with yummy Italian ice cream.

Chez Achour (Map p103; ☎ 72 280 140; rue Ali Belhouane; mains TD7.5-21; ☎) This attractive place is great for a special night out, with seating in a garden courtyard decorated by white lanterns and sunshades. It serves up excellent seafood.

Dar Lella (☎ 72 279 128; off ave du Koweit; mains TD8.5-18.5; ☎ 10am-3pm & 6.30pm-midnight; ☎) Sumptuously decorated (as if ready for a wedding) in a mix of Berber and European styles, this place serves upmarket traditional food and has outside lawn seating.

Scala di Milano (Map p103; ☎ 98 618 713; La Corniche; mains TD10-16; ☎) Well worth the short walk from the centre, this restaurant has some of Hammamet's best cooking, with excellent pasta, bruschetta, fish and meat dishes and a charming small garden. It was disgraced Italian former prime minister Bettino Craxi's favourite haunt, and his

Drinking
Hammamet has some of Tunisia's best nightlife, though this says more about the dearth elsewhere: discos have a cattle-market vibe and clientele is a lively mix of Tunisians and foreign tourists. The best are in Hammamet Sud, bumping and grinding on two parallel streets, so if you get hacked

off with one you can head elsewhere. They peak on Friday and Saturday, charge around TD10, which includes one drink, and open from about 10pm till 4am or 5am.

Manhattan (Map p105; ☎ 72 226 226) A long-standing classic cheesy club, with big flashing lights and pop house tunes.

The Calypso Club (Map p105; ☎ 72 227 530; www.calypso.tunisia.com; ave Moncef Bey) Advertising itself as the best club in Tunisia, this is the haunt of Tunisia's loaded youth and has pricey drinks, go-go dancers and the most see-and-be-seen atmosphere.

Latino Club (Map p105; Route Touristique) This is perhaps Hammamet's best club, with a lively mix from salsa to Arabic pop. Hip Spanish tourists arrive at the airport and head straight here, such is its fame.

Café Sidi Bou Hdid (Map p103; snacks around TD2; ☎ 5.30am-2am) Between the medina walls and the sea, with a mix of locals and tourists, this is a lovely place for an orange juice or a *sheesha*, with tables and chairs or rug-draped low seats and tables.

Canari (Map p103; ave de la République; snacks TD2-4; ☎ 9am-1am, to 10pm Oct-Mar) A popular café with a large, watch-the-world-go-by terrace, this is good for fresh juices and milkshakes. In the back is a bakery and pâtisserie selling wonderful Tunisian sweets and French pastries.

Shopping

Jewellery, leather, clothes, ceramics and carpets are sold in and around the medina. There's lots of choice, though you'll have to sift through some tack and there are better deals elsewhere.

Fella (Map p103; ☎ 72 280 426; Medina; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-9pm Tue-Sun) Sophia Loren, Umm Kolthum, Grace Kelly and Greta Garbo have all floated around in Fella at some point. The boutique has immaculate hand-made Tunisian dresses, jewellery and bits and pieces. A nice *fouta* (cotton beach sheet) costs TD12.

Atelier (Map p103; ☎ 72 261 918; rue Ali Belhouane; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-9.30pm) This small gallery has original, metal-framed etchings by Baker Ben Fredj, starting at TD66.

Getting There & Away

BUS

There are buses to/from Nabeul (TD0.8, 30 minutes, half-hourly) and Tunis (TD3.5,

50 minutes to 1¼ hours, half-hourly) departing and arriving from near the tourist office. Buy tickets on board. There are buses to Sousse (TD5.5, SRTG TD3.8, 1½ hours, five daily), but it's easier to get there via louage (see below).

CAR

Car rental agencies include the following:

Avis (Map p105; ☎ 72 280 164; rue de Nevers)

Europcar (Map p105; ☎ 72 280 146; rue des Hôtels)

Hertz (Map p105; ☎ 72 266 466; rue de Nevers)

LOUAGE

Louages to Tunis (TD4, one hour) leave from Place Pasteur, about 800m northeast of the medina. Other louages, to Sousse (TD4.4, one hour) and Kairouan (TD4.7, 1½ hours), leave from Barrak es-Sahil, 2km northwest of town.

TRAIN

There are trains to/from Nabeul (TD0.6, 20 minutes, 12 to 13 daily) and Tunis (TD3.8, one to 1½ hours, nine daily) – only one Tunis train is direct, the others involve a change at Bir Bou Regba. From Bir Bou Regba you can make connections to Sousse, Sfax and beyond. Hammamet station is about 1.5km from the centre, at the northern end of ave Habib Bourguiba.

Getting Around

The main taxi rank is by the medina. It costs TD3.5 to Hammamet Sud. There are several Noddy trains, run by different companies, chugging around all the major hotels (leaving from outside the medina), and buses run from here to Yasmine Hammamet (TD0.5, half-hourly).

NABEUL

pop 57,400

Nabeul, 18km north of Hammamet, is a working town: the administrative centre of Cap Bon and Tunisia's biggest ceramics centre. It also has an attractive white-sand beach, though lacking shade – it's cleanest in front of the resort hotels, and there are a few beach cafés open in high season. There is a Friday souvenir market that has become hugely famous for no particular reason. Quieter than Hammamet and with fewer hotels, Nabeul has some unusually good pensions. It also has a unique line

in kitsch roundabout architecture. An arts festival featuring traditional music is held in late July and early August.

Orientation

Nabeul is spread out. The centre is about 1.5km inland – a legacy of the 16th century when pirates terrorised the coast. Now that pirates are no longer a pest, the town has slowly spread back seawards.

The two areas are linked by ave Habib Bourguiba, which runs through the middle from the northwest (the road from Tunis), and finishes by the beach. The town centres around the intersections of ave Habib Bourguiba, ave Habib Thameur and rue Farhat Hached (Souq de l'Artisanat).

Information

EMERGENCY

Hospital (Map p112; ☎ 72 285 633; ave Habib Thameur)

Police (Map p112; ☎ 72 285 474; ave Habib Bourguiba)

INTERNET ACCESS

Publinet (Map p112; ave Hedi Chaker; per hr TD2; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Sat, 10am-11pm Sun)

Publinet (Map p112; ave Habib Thameur; per hr TD2; ☎ 8am-11pm)

MONEY

There are plenty of banks with ATMs, mostly along ave Habib Thameur and Habib Bourguiba.

POST

Main post office (Map p112; ave Habib Bourguiba)

TOURIST INFORMATION

ONTT (Map p110; ☎ 72 286 800; ave Taieb Mehiri;

☎ 8.30am-1pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat) Has maps of Nabeul and Hammamet.

Syndicat d'Initiative (Map p112; ave Habib Bourguiba;

☎ 9am-1pm Tue-Sun) Small but convenient, supplies similar stuff to the ONTT.

Sights & Activities

MARKET

Nabeul's bustling, buzzing Friday market is a major tourist event. Thousands of day-trippers turn up to tussle over jewellery, leather, glass, brass and particularly ceramics – the standard things you can buy everywhere in Tunisia but all bunched together in one place. Unsurprisingly, prices are high; stallholders are used to people with more money than time.

Rues Farhat Hached (Souq de l'Artisanat) and el-Arbi Zarrouk get packed. They're busiest between 9am and noon. By 2pm, life is slowly returning to normal.

MUSEUMS

Nabeul's small but impressive **museum** (Map p112; ave Habib Bourguiba; admission TD3, plus camera TD1; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun Apr–mid-Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Tue-Sun mid-Sep–Mar) covers Cap Bon's history and displays Punic jewellery and some amazing statues from Thinissut in an open-air Carthaginian sanctuary. These include a life-size terracotta lion-headed goddess, sphinxes and the nurturing goddess – an ancestor of the Madonna and child. There's also information on the local Roman site Neapolis, with well-restored mosaics and displays on Tunisia's fish-salting factories, which produced the yummy-sounding *garum* sauce (made from fermented fish guts).

This small private museum, **Dar Zmen** (Map p112; ☎ 72 281 461; Imp. No 5; admission TD4), has some lovely antiques, especially jewellery, engravings and furniture, all housed in a beautifully tiled 19th-century house (once home to a Nabeul governor). Some of the rooms are laid out with a bridal trousseau. There's also a bey's (provincial governor in the Ottoman Empire) bedroom and a Berber tent. The pricey admission includes a cup of mint tea.

TOP OF THE POTS

Traditionally known for their fine Punic- and Roman-influenced pots and vases, and for the ornate decoration introduced by 17th-century Andalusian immigrants, Nabeul potters turn out astounding (some in the worst sense) ceramics. There are some beautiful examples of traditional work, particularly bowls and tiling pictures. You can get a good idea of reasonable prices at the well-stocked **ONAT emporium** (Map p112; ave Habib Thameur) – there are artisans' workshops at the back too.

You'll find massive choice at the Friday market, or try the following shops, where you can see artists and potters at work.

Société Kerkeni (Map p110; ☎ 72 221 808; 121 ave Habib Thameur; ☎ 8am-9pm) Some gloriously exuberant designs and a huge fixed-price range.

Hassen Kharraz (Map p112; ave Habib Thameur; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2.30-8.30pm) The most upmarket, this is where to go if you've got a gilt craving. There's also some appealingly cute stuff with animal decorations.

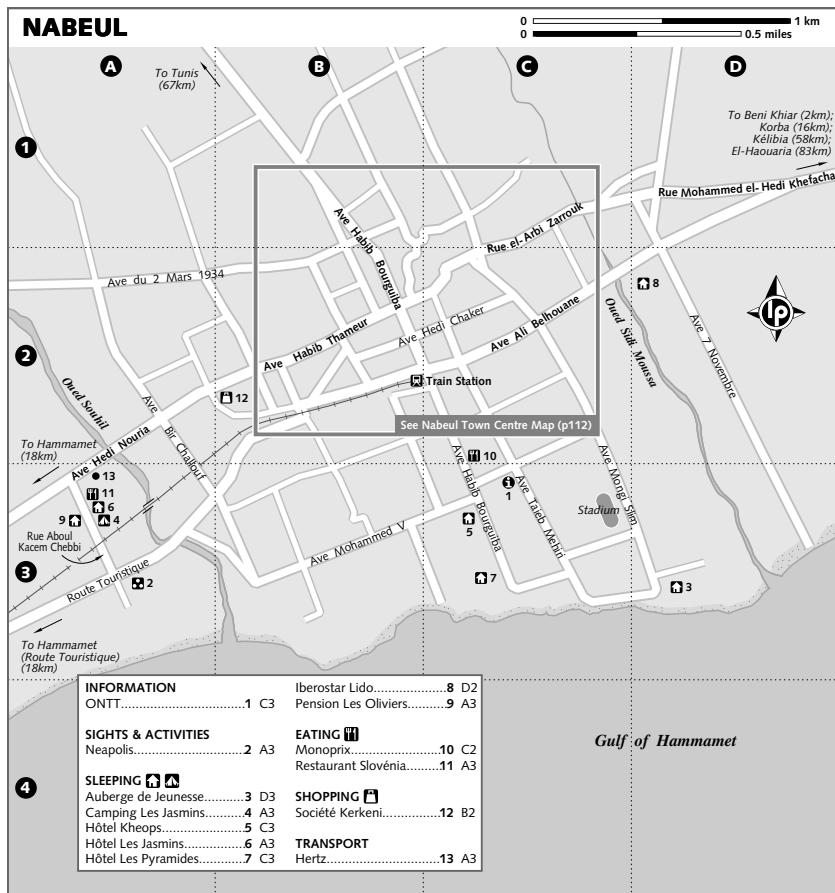
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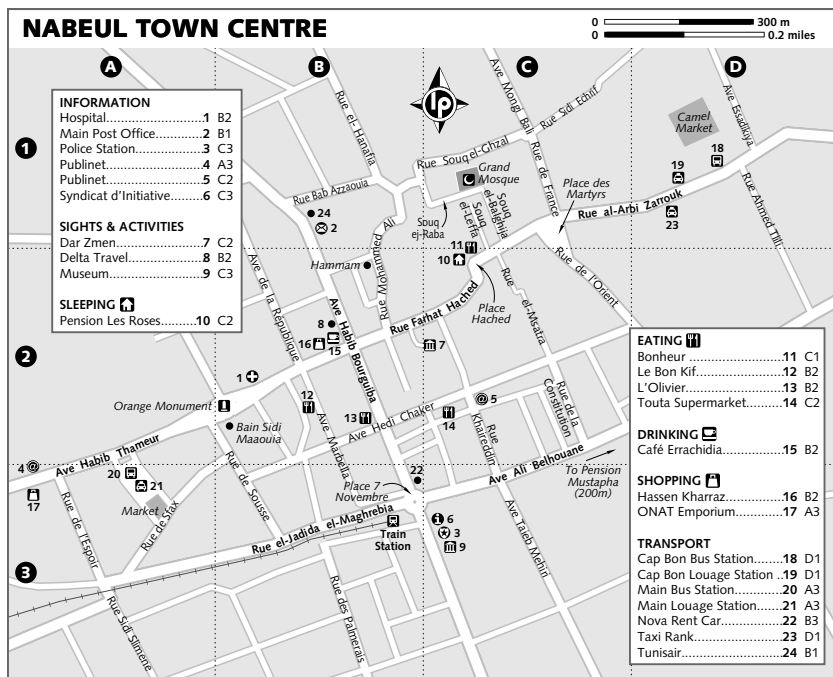
نيابوليس

Ancient **Neapolis** (Map p110; route Touristique; admission TD2, camera TD1; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sun), meaning 'New City' in Greek, is a seaside site, about 1.5km southwest of the centre. The Punic settlement, established in the 5th century BC, was invaded by Agathocles in 310 BC, and destroyed during the Third Punic War. It was later re-established as a Roman town, and a major producer of fermented-fish-guts *garum* sauce, which must have made for fragrant streets. Several full amphorae were unearthed in the 1960s, and after extensive excavations the site is open, though there's not a lot to see. Nabeul museum displays information about the site and some beautiful mosaics found here in 'House of the Nymphs'. There's a clean, attractive stretch of beach in front of the site, with a few small seasonal restaurants.

Tours

Delta Travel (Map p112; ☎ 72 271 077; 3rd fl, 113 ave Habib Bourguiba) runs excursions to Dougga and so on, and longer trips down south. You can also arrange tours at **Nova Rent Car** (☎ 72 222 072; 54 ave Habib Bourguiba; ☎ 8am-1pm & 4-8pm).





Sleeping

Nabeul has lots of character-filled, family-run pensions and several midrange hotels.

BUDGET

Camping Les Jasmins (Map p110; ☎ 72 285 343; rue Aboul Kacem Chebbi; adult/child/tent/caravan/vehicle/hot shower TD2.8/2/2/2.5/2/2.3; 🚻) Les Jasmins, next to Hôtel Les Jasmins, occupies a shady olive grove and is a five-minute walk from an uncrowded stretch of beach.

Auberge de Jeunesse (Map p110; ☎ 72 285 547; ave Mongi Slim; camping per person/tent/caravan TD1/5/5, dm TD5) On the beach, this has a great location, and separate spic-and-span single-sex dorms in barrel-ceilinged *ghorfas* (rooms), each with their own bathroom. There's a camping area too.

Pension Les Roses (Map p112; ☎ 72 285 570; Place Hached; s/d with shared bathroom TD8.5/17, plus hot showers TD1) In souq central, Les Roses is friendly and good for the price. It feels like a step back in time – with shuttered windows onto balconies and basic, cleanish, fanless rooms.

Pension Mustapha (☎ 72 222 262; rue Habib el-Karma & ave Ali Belhouane; s/d TD17/30) Sited on a

busy junction, this is nevertheless a good choice: friendly and clean; prices include breakfast and rooms have fans and some have balconies.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Pension Les Oliviers (Map p110; ☎ 72 286 865; rue Aboul Kacem Chebbi; s/d TD41/51) This is a Nabeul gem; it has simple rooms with balconies and is surrounded by olive and citrus groves. It's near a clean, unbusy stretch of beach. You can have breakfast on the lawn. The charming owners (ex-high-school teachers) speak excellent English, and can direct you to worthy places to see and buy ceramics.

Iberostar Lido (Map p110; ☎ central reservations Spain 34 922 070300 ; www.iberostar.com; ave 7 Novembre; 3-night minimum stay, s/d TD50/70; 🍷 🍷) This has been recommended by a reader and is an appealing place, with helpful staff, some bungalows, bright rooms, sea views and lush grounds. The food is apparently good too.

Hôtel Les Jasmins (Map p110; ☎ 72 285 343; off ave Hedi Nouria; www.hotelesjasmins.com; s/d TD50/78; 🍷) Relaxed, tree-shaded and attractive, the

rooms here are in two-storey whitewashed buildings and have balconies. There are tables set amid the woodland for breakfast and other meals, or there's Restaurant Slovénia (see below) next door. It's 300m from the beach.

Hôtel Les Pyramides (Map p110; ☎ 72 285 775; ave Habib Bourguiba; s/d TD86/108; 🍷 🍷) Packed with Eastern European tours, this big package place has nothing-special rooms with small balconies, but it's near the beach. Facilities include tennis courts and a disco.

Hôtel Kheops (Map p110; ☎ 72 285 444; ave Habib Bourguiba; s/d TD110/144; 🍷 🍷) Nabeul's snazziest hotel, with good facilities, this place is nonetheless down-at-heel. It looks like a great artificial pudding and is usually packed with Eastern European package tourists. Rooms are large but business-hotel sombre (trouser press anyone?). There's a mammoth pool.

Eating & Drinking

Self-caterers should head for **Touta supermarket** (Map p112; ave Hedi Chaker; 🛒 8.30am-8pm) or **Monoprix** (Map p110; ave Habib Bourguiba; 🛒 8.30am-8pm). There are also a few good restaurants around town.

Bonheur (Map p112; ☎ 72 220 563; rue Farhat Hached; mains TD3-8; 🍷 10am-5pm year-round, 7-11pm Aug-Sep) The best of the cheapies, tucked off the main pedestrianised shopping street, this place has the requisite tiled walls and TV, fast service and simple dishes such as couscous and *brochettes* (kebabs) – it also serves beer.

Le Bon Kif (Map p112; ☎ 72 222 783; 25 ave Marbella; mains TD5-18; 🍷) This is a relaxed and pleasant choice, with the regular menu of reasonably good couscous, seafood and meat dishes. There's a small tiled courtyard.

Restaurant Slovénia (Map p112; ☎ 72 285 343; Hôtel Les Jasmins; mains TD10-16; 🍷 noon-3pm & 6pm-midnight; 🍷) Nabeul's finest restaurant, run by one of Tunisia's most innovative chefs, Rafik Tlatli. The cooking has Tunisian, Indonesian, Andalusian and Slovenian influences. Try delicious dishes such as lamb with rosemary or crispy-coated prawns. Seating is in a low-lit leafy garden or cosy interior.

L'Olivier (Map p112; ☎ 72 286 613; ave Hedi Chaker; mains TD11-20; 🍷 noon-3pm & 6-11pm; 🍷) This snug place, on two levels, is one of Nabeul's best, with an excellent reputation for cooking with a French slant. There's lots of seafood.

Café Errachidia (Map p112; ave Habib Thameur; 🍷 9am-midnight) This lovely café is perfect for people-watching on the porch with a *sheesha* (water pipe) and a mint tea or excellent Turkish coffee, accompanied by the café's own delicious biscuits.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Tunisair (Map p112; ☎ 72 286 092; 178 ave Habib Bourguiba) faces the post office. The nearest airport is Tunis-Carthage.

BUS

The bus station is on ave Habib Thameur. Buses go to Hammamet (TD0.7, 30 minutes, half-hourly 5.30am to 9pm, to 11pm July and August) and Tunis (normal/confort TD3.4/2.9, 1½ hours, half-hourly 6am to 8pm). Buy tickets on board. Other services include Kairouan (TD5.4, 2¼ hours, three daily) and buses to Zaghuan and Sousse (TD6, SRTG TD4.4, two hours, five daily).

Buses for elsewhere in Cap Bon leave from rue el-Arbi Zarrouk, including those to Kélibia (TD2.6, 1¼ hours, 13 daily). For El-Haouaria take a Kélibia bus and then take a louage or a taxi. For information, head to the main bus station.

CAR

There are lots of rental agencies:

Hertz (Map p110; ☎ 72 285 327; ave Habib Thameur)

Nova Rent (Map p112; ☎ 72 222 072; 54 ave Habib Bourguiba; 🍷 8am-1pm & 4-8pm)

LOUAGE

Cap Bon services, including Kélibia (TD3.2, one hour) and Korba (TD1), leave from next to the bus station on rue el-Arbi Zarrouk. For El-Haouaria take a louage to Kélibia then a taxi or another louage. Other services leave from behind the main bus station on ave Habib Thameur; destinations include Tunis (TD3.5), Kairouan (TD6), Sousse (TD5.2) and Zaghuan (TD3.5).

TAXI

A shared taxi to Hammamet charges TD1 to TD2, while one all to yourself costs TD6 to TD8.

TRAIN

The station is central, on ave Habib Bourguiba. There are trains to Hammamet

(TD0.6, 20 minutes, 12 to 13 daily) and Tunis (TD3.8, one to 1½ hours, nine daily). Only one Tunis train is direct, otherwise you must change at Bir Bou Regba, from where there are also connections to Sousse, Sfax and beyond.

Getting Around

Nabeul is reasonably spread out, and in summer it's an effort to walk from the centre to the beach. A taxi costs about TD1 (TD0.5 shared); you can take a *calèche* (horse-drawn carriage), but bargain hard and agree on a price before setting off (around TD10 per hour).

AROUND NABEUL Dar Chaabane

دار شعبان

This small village, 4km northeast of Nabeul on the road to Kélibia, is Tunisia's stone-work capital. Most people here are masons, and the main street is lined with workshops, carving everything from ashtrays to antelopes. It's an interesting skill to watch, and if you need a couple of monumental lions, you're in luck. Workshops can arrange international delivery.

Any bus heading north can drop you here, or you can take a local bus from the beach (TD0.3, hourly 9.30am to 6.30pm July and August). A taxi costs about TD3 from Nabeul.

Beni Khiar

بني خيار

This village, about 2km east of Nabeul, is a weaving centre, where you can visit **Co-operative des Tisserands el-Fauz** (☎ 72 229 387; ☎ 8am-noon & 3-6pm). It's a fascinating place, the all-male workers skilfully operating the ferociously complex looms and spinning wool. Some have worked here for more than 30 years. There's a small shop selling their products at low fixed prices.

There are buses (TD0.3, hourly 10am to 6pm, to 8pm Sunday July and August) from the beach, or a taxi costs about TD3.

Korba Lagoon

قرية

A long, narrow lagoon that follows the coast for 15km, this beautiful dark-blue stretch, edged by a streak of white sand, is one of the finest bird-watching areas in Tunisia – the wetlands attract a spectacular wealth of birdlife. In winter, the lagoon becomes dappled in pink as

flamingos amass; juveniles can be seen year-round.

It begins at the little town of Korba – whose main business is producing tomatoes – 16km northeast of Nabeul, and gets more tranquil and scenic the further north you head. Around 3km after Korba on the Korba–Kélibia road, a causeway runs across the lagoon – cross it to reach a white-sand beach that lacks shade but is beautifully clean. It's popular with local farm workers who come here in trucks, by tractor and with their donkeys.

The main road to Menzel Temine and Kélibia runs parallel to the lagoon, so any bus or louage travelling north can drop you where you choose. Buses to Korba leave about hourly (TD1, 15 minutes).

KÉLIBIA

كَلْبِيَا

pop 36,000

Kélibia, 58km north of Nabeul, appeals partly because it's a resolutely ordinary town with few tourists. But it's also blessed with nearby El-Mansourah beach: a silver-sanded strand edged by translucent sea, overseen by a towering fort.

The town centre, a mix of functional shops and men-packed cafés, is 2km inland. It survives on fishing and agriculture, with tourism as a sideline – foreign voices you hear in the restaurants are as likely to be here on business as on holiday. The attractions are all on the coast to the east, where you'll find a small beach, the picturesque port and a few low-key resort hotels. The town's also famous for Muscat Sec de Kélibia, a fragrant dry white wine.

Every other year, in July, Kélibia hosts an international film shorts festival, which is worth a look.

History

Once there was a Berber settlement here, taken over by the Carthaginians in the 5th century BC. They called it Aspis, meaning 'shield', either for its defensive status or the shape of the land. Whatever the reason, the fort they built was key to Carthage's defence. It proved ineffective against both Agathocles and Regulus, but the town made it through to be reborn as Roman Clypea, traces of which are scattered around town in excavated fragments. It remained one of Tunisia's major cities until the 11th

PIRATES!

The north African coast, known as the Barbary (a medieval term for the Maghreb) Coast, was once overrun with pirates. Piracy had been a popular career option since the decline of the Roman Empire, but it was in the 14th century that it became really rife, right up to the early 19th century.

Previously raids were carried out for political gain, but piracy reached its height in the 17th century when it was all about slaves and cash. The Tunis rulers lined their pockets with plunder. Colonial expansion led to an explosion of shipping and the pickings were rich. Muslim pirates preyed on Christian shipping on the Mediterranean, and Christian swashbucklers from across the water gave as good as they got. The Barbary pirates captured thousands of Christian slaves, using them to power their galley ships.

From the 17th century the introduction of sailing ships increased the pirates' scope, but didn't reduce the appetite for the lucrative slave business – important people were held to ransom and less-illustrious ones sold in the markets.

European countries didn't try to discourage this lawless trade, as each nation was keen to suppress others by forming alliances and negotiating immunities. It was only in the early 19th century that Europeans began to clamp down in earnest, particularly after a cheeky raid by a Tunisian crew who carried off 158 people from Sardinia. However, piracy wasn't fully suppressed till 1830 and the arrival of the French.

century, but was later damaged by Sicilian pirate attacks, and even moved inland to escape raids.

Orientation & Information

Most travellers will arrive at the bus and louage station on ave Ali Belhouane. The centre is just east, around the junction of rue Ibn Khaldoun and ave Habib Bourguiba. To get there, head north along ave Ali Belhouane (towards El-Haouaria) from the bus and louage station, and then turn right into rue Ibn Khaldoun. There's no tourist office. There are a couple of banks (ATMs often don't work at weekends), a supermarket on rue Ibn Khaldoun, and the post office is on ave Habib Bourguiba. The fort and port are 2km east of here along ave des Martyrs.

There's a central **publinet** (59 rue des Martyrs; per hr TD1.5; ☎ 8.30am-midnight).

Sights & Activities

BEACHES & THE PORT

At **El-Mansourah beach**, 2km north, soft white sand tapers gently into blissfully clear-as-glass sea. It's exposed (a sunshade is handy) but otherwise brilliant. There are a few buildings, with just one monster mustard-coloured hotel, Club Kélibia (packages only) marring the background, but if you walk beyond this, empty beach stretches on as far as the eye can see.

There are beaches from here nearly all the way to Kerkouane, with a particularly fine stretch at **Hammam Jebli**, about 4km from Kélibia. Beyond this **Oued Kassab** is another lovely section.

The beach at Kélibia itself is small and not that flash, but nearby, close to the fort, is the interesting **fishing port**, packed with boats decked in fluttering flags, overlooked by a few restaurants and cafés.

FORT & ROMAN EXCAVATIONS

The fabulous polygonal **fort** (admission TD3; ☎ 9am-5pm mid-Sep–Mar, 9am-8pm Apr–mid-Sep) dominates the harbour, on a hilltop shrouded by eucalyptus. Views from the ramparts are so broad that the horizon curves like the rim of a vase.

Built by the Carthaginians for use by their maritime police, the fort was dismantled in the 3rd century BC, during the First Punic War, but reconstructed after the war ended. It successfully repelled the Romans during the Second Punic War, but the Romans razed it in the 2nd century BC, and political unity in the Mediterranean meant there was no need for fortifications here. In AD 580, the Byzantines set up their usual small fort within the old walls, still visible, and it was their last refuge when driven out of Carthage in AD 698. It became important following the Arabic conquest, and was rebuilt to defend against the Normans.

From the 13th to 16th centuries it became a Sufi religious centre, seeing action again in the 16th century during Turkish-Spanish spats. The Ottomans rebuilt the fort in the 17th century, and it next withstood bombardment by the French. The most recent additions are gun emplacements, built by Italian-German forces during WWII.

A road leads up to the fort from opposite the Maison des Jeunes on the Mansourah road.

From the battlements you get a good view of some excavated villas at the base of the hill – the remains of Roman Clypea.

Sleeping

Kélibia doesn't have many hotels; most are at the beach by the harbour.

Centre National de la Jeunes (☎ 72 721 601, 72 22 767 613; camping per person TD3) Set on the coast under fluttering eucalyptus trees, 7km north of Kélibia, this pretty 200-person site is mainly used by youth groups, but the friendly staff welcome independent travellers. It's 10m from the beautiful beach of Oued Kassab and a small excavated Punic-Roman site.

Maison des Jeunes (☎ 72 296 105; dm TD5) This institutional blue-and-white building supplies the basic place to lay your head. It's often full in summer so call ahead. Single female travellers may not feel comfortable here.

Hôtel Florida (☎ 72 296 248; Kélibia Plage; s/d with private bathroom TD21/33) Built in 1946, this is a shabby option that's not recommended for single women; it has a nice shaded terrace by the water's edge that's beloved by boozing locals. Small, run-down, fairly clean rooms open onto a little garden.

Hôtel Palmarina (☎ 72 274 062; Kélibia Plage; s/d TD46/72; 🍷 🍷) This is one of the town's better choices. It has a pool and pleasant rooms with shady, sea-facing balconies, but is fraying at the edges and lacks much care.

Pension Anis (☎ 72 295 777; ave Erriadh; s/d/tr with shared bathroom TD30/40/47, d with private bathroom TD60; 🍷 🍷) Next to the municipal market, this pleasant place is notably friendly and relaxed, with nice staff and a mostly Tunisian clientele. It has pristine rooms, some of which are huge, if a bit stuffy and lacking views. There's an excellent restaurant (see Eating, right).

Hôtel Mamounia (☎ 72 296 088; s/d with private bathroom TD63/86; 🍷) This faded place is

pleasantly small-scale, and features simple rooms with balconies, a seaside setting and a small pool. It's ludicrously overpriced, but rates may drop to TD50 or less a double.

Eating

Kélibia has a small but good array of restaurants.

Petit Paris (rue Petit Paris; mains TD2.5-12; 🍷 9am-2am) If you're on the beach but don't feel like a full-on meal, this cheery place has great views over the sea and offers lots of snack food.

Pension Anis (☎ 72 295 777; ave Erriadh; mains TD8-12; 🍷 10am-3pm & 6.30-11.30pm; 🍷) Kélibia's best restaurant. Its unusually wide range of dishes – specialising in rich seafood – attracts a wide range of customers. The intimate, stuck-in-time interior is divided by wooden lattices, and there's a respectable wine list and good service.

Le Goéland (☎ 72 273 074; Port de Kélibia; mains TD8-16; 🍷) At the port, this has fantastic sea views from its two breezy levels, and reliable food – the traditional Tunisian options, lots of seafood and pizzas.

Les Arcades (☎ 72 274 062; Hôtel Palmarina, Kélibia Plage; TD6-18; 🍷) A hotel restaurant with tasty salads and hearty fish and meat dishes. It's airy, quiet and decorated with some kitsch stained-glass.

El-Mansourah (☎ 72 295 169; El-Mansourah Plage; mains TD13-17; 🍷 noon-midnight; 🍷) On a small headland at the south of Mansourah beach, this place has tables set into rocks in the sea, overlooking crystal-clear rockpools. Perfect for a long lunch of fresh fish, washed down with chilled Kélibia muscat.

Drinking

Café Sidi el-Bahri (☎ 72 296 675; 🍷 7am-3am) In the port, this is a place to while away time over tea and a *sheesha*, though it also has OK snacks. It has a great setting with seating right down to a rocky beach and is particularly popular at night.

Café el-Borj (🍷 9am-2am) This is a little domed place just below the fort with colourful rugs spread over stepped seating overlooking woodland, and there's a roof terrace. The splendid views make this a memorable place for a mint tea or Turkish coffee (though a bit overpriced at TD2 a pop) and a *sheesha*.

Getting There & Away

Buses and louages all leave from ave Ali Belhouane. There are buses to Tunis (TD5, 2¼ hours, hourly), Nabeul (TD2.5, 1¼ hours, hourly) and El-Haouaria (TD1, 40 minutes, hourly). There are also regular louages to these destinations – louage is the best way to get to El-Haouaria (TD1.5). There is a single daily bus to Kairouan (TD7.5, 3½ hours), Sousse (TD6.8, three hours) and Monastir (TD7.6, 3½ hours).

Getting Around

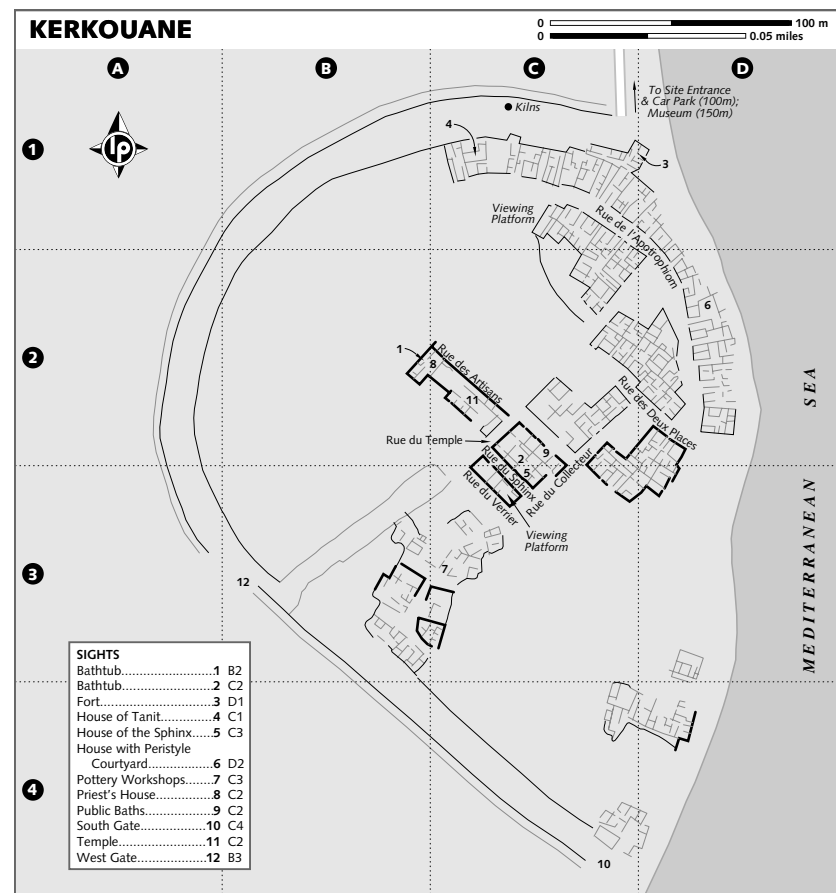
The bus station is 2.5km from the harbour and beach. A taxi to the bus station costs about TD1.5 (shared TD0.5). Buses

go to/from Mansourah beach hourly from 10.30am to 6.30pm (TD0.3).

KERKOUANE

Set on a dazzling curve of turquoise coast, the remote Punic settlement of **Kerkouane** (admission TD3, camera TD1; 🍷 9am-4pm mid-Sep-Mar, 9am-6pm Apr-mid-Sep, museum open Tue-Sun only), 12km north of Kélibia, is the world's best-preserved example of a Carthaginian city. Abandoned in its prime in the middle of the 3rd century BC and never reoccupied, it offers a unique insight into all things Punic. There's a useful guidebook (TD15) available at the site shop.

The site is clearly signposted off the road between Kélibia and El-Haouaria. Buses and



louages can drop you at the turn-off, leaving a pleasant walk of 1.5km to the site.

History

Little is known of the town's history, not even its name. Kerkouane was coined by French archaeologists, who stumbled on the site in 1952.

Finds suggest it was an established Berber town when the Phoenicians arrived in the 8th century BC, but Berber and Phoenician cultures blended and it evolved into a Punic town. The oldest remains date to the early 6th century BC, but the ruins today are mainly 4th- to 3rd-century BC.

Although ancient writers waxed about the fertility of the peninsula, no evidence of agricultural activity has been found here. Kerkouane, it seems, was home to an urban elite of merchants and craftsmen. It had around 300 houses and 2000 inhabitants. Excavations have uncovered pottery workshops and kilns, as well as evidence of jewellery and glass making, and stone carving. The town also produced the Phoenicians' favourite colour: a dye known as Tyrian purple (after their first capital, Tyre). It was extracted from murex, a species of shellfish once plentiful along the coast, and the site retains evidence of production here.

The large necropolis has yielded many decorative and precious objects, indicating the town's wealth and tastes (including imported Greek pottery and the extraordinary woodcarving *Woman of Kerkouane*), though many tombs were ransacked and damaged by treasure hunters in the early 20th century.

An earlier plunderer was Agathocles in 310 BC, but the town recovered – only to be burnt by Roman general Regulus in 256 BC, during the First Punic War. This time the site was abandoned, overgrown by dwarf palms and drowned by sands until uncovered during 1957–61 excavations. Kerkouane was added to the World Heritage list in 1982.

Sights

Kerkouane was a harmonious, well-planned town, protected by double fortifications around 15m wide. The outer wall was built after Agathocles' attack.

Cap Bon was exalted in ancient literature and, although exaggeration played its part, it

was doubtless a region of plenty – historian Diodorus wrote of Agathocles' invasion: 'all the lands that he had to cross were set with gardens and orchards watered by numerous springs. There were well-constructed country houses, built with lime...' To protect this good life, forts and towers were added, such as the small coastal **fort** on the northern side and the fortifications around the south gate. None of which did any good when Regulus went on the rampage.

The main entrance was through the distinctive **west gate**, also known as the Port du Couchant (Sunset Gate), built into an overlap between the walls. The houses are the main attraction, particularly those of the wealthy northeastern quarter, with some wonderful examples of *opus signinum* flooring (scatter-pattern mosaic). Most remarkable are the numerous well-preserved bathrooms, each with a red-lined bathtub, a well and a drain for the used water. Unlike the Romans, Carthaginians preferred to bath in the privacy of their homes rather than in grandiose public structures.

Check out 3 rue de l'Apotrophiom, better known as the **House of Tanit**, which features a simple white Tanit sign (representing a Punic god) set into the floor, seemingly a kind of talisman or protective symbol.

Along the street is the town's finest address: 35 rue de l'Apotrophiom, with a sublime seafront setting. It has a peristyle (colonnaded) courtyard and an impressive bath, with a seat and armrests, decorated with white mosaic – the bather possibly even had a sea view.

The town also had **public baths**, on rue des Artisans. Unlike Roman baths, these are small-scale and functional. They were probably used by local artisans, and are also near the temple so may have been used to wash up pre-worship.

The remains of the principal **temple** run west from rue du Temple. Along one side **pottery workshops** used to produce votive objects have been discovered. The temple was the scene of one of the site's strangest finds: a small cache of Roman lamps and bowls that had been hidden away, dating from the 3rd century AD – 500 years after the town was abandoned. West of the temple, at 2 rue du Sphinx, is the **Priest's House**. In its centre, protected within a small room, is a circular bread oven, like the *tabounas* still used here.

Rue du Sphinx is named after a sphinx on a solid gold ring (which you can see in the museum) found at No 1 (**House of the Sphinx**), which has a fine bathroom with a double bath.

MUSEUM

The museum holds startling finds from the site necropolis, most notably the 3rd- to 4th-century BC *Woman of Kerkouane*, a full-size cypress-wood sarcophagus, thought to represent the goddess Astarte. There are also some beautiful pieces of gold jewellery, everyday objects such as razors, kohl pots, tweezers and baby bottles, and funerary statues. Imported Greek, southern Italian and Egyptian artefacts demonstrate the sophistication of the residents' taste and their wealth. Labels and explanations are in French and Arabic.

Sleeping

Résidence Dar Zenaïdi (☎ 22 774 705; darzenaidi@planet.tn; s/d with private bathroom TD75/100; 🏠 🚽) Off the road to Kerkouane is this large white house, with five big airy, nicely decorated rooms with countryside views, and a pool. Reception is filled with traditional hand-painted furniture.

EL-HAOUARIA

pop 10,300

Under the mountainous tip of Cap Bon, the middle-of-nowhere town of El-Haouaria feels appealingly out of the way. It has the enticing unspoilt beach of Ras el-Drek on the southern side of the point, and some impressive cliff walks up to nearby desolate headland Jebel Abiod, jutting out to sea and just 150km from Sicily. The town is famous for its coastal caves, 3km northwest of town, cut into the cliffs by the Phoenicians, who used the stone in building many settlements, including Kerkouane and Carthage. They are often referred to as Grottes Romaines (Roman caves), as the Romans were partial to El-Haouaria's stone too, and continued the practice. El-Haouaria is also famous for falconry, and has a festival devoted to hawking in July.

From this part of the coast you can spot the shadowy rocky islands of Zembra and Zembretta, off-limits as nature reserves and favoured nesting spots for grey pelicans.

Apparently the cliffs south of the Roman caves are good for cliff jumping – we were

unable to verify this so, if you do, let us know how you get on at www.lonelyplanet.com/feedback.

The town has a choice of hotels and restaurants and there are a couple of banks on the main street.

Sights & Activities

JEBEL ABIOD

This 390m peak, north of town, is the northeastern tip of the Tunisian Dorsale and feels like the edge of the world. You can either walk up or drive along the road to the top, from where there are magnificent views over sheer cliffs, dropping down to incredible blue sea. It's a fantastic bird-watching spot, a prime migration route for thousands of raptors travelling between Africa and Europe. In May and June, the skies can be thick with birds waiting for the thermals to carry them across the Straits of Sicily. You can find information on local species at **Les Amis des Oiseaux** (☎ 72 269 200), which also runs bird-watching outings, signposted off the northern end of the main street.

According to readers, you can hike up the peak from the town:

A 40-minute hike following the path north of Pension Dar Toubib leads to an absolutely spectacular view (including an old wrecked ship). We managed to find two decent camping spots and were not bothered by anyone as we slept under the stars.

James B & Daniel K

Otherwise access to the mountain is by a road that leads north of rue Ali Belhouane in the town centre. The road finishes at a telecommunications tower at the summit – an eerie, desolate place humming with radio waves. For beautiful views, there is a path on the left, a few hundred metres before you reach the summit, marked by a sign headed 'Zone de el-Haouaria'. The rocky but gentle path leads to a dip in the cliffs and a small shack, a stunningly peaceful place.

ROMAN CAVES

This remarkable complex of **Roman caves** (admission TD3, camera TD1; 🕒 9am–5pm mid-Sep–Mar, 8am–7pm Apr–mid-Sep) is on the dramatic stretch of rocky coast to the west of El-Haouaria. The cliffs here are formed of an

easily worked, highly prized yellow sandstone, and the Carthaginians began exploiting this in the 6th century BC, later followed by the Romans, who prised stone out here to build the Colosseum in Rome and the stadium at El-Jem (see p208). Small pyramid-shaped shafts remain, lit by hacked-out oblong skylights; you can still make out the marks of quarrying tools on the walls.

The quarriers discovered that the quality of the stone was much better at the base of the cliff than on the surface, and opted to tunnel into the cliffs rather than to cut down. The end result, after almost 1000 years of quarrying, was caves stretching almost 1km along the coast. It was a highly sophisticated operation. The cut stone was dragged out through the caves and loaded onto ships for transportation.

The caves are signposted 3km west of town. It takes about 45 minutes to walk here, but there's plenty of passing traffic for hitchhikers (for information on the risks associated with hitching see p311).

RAS EL-DREK

Also known as El-Haouaria *plage*, this lovely white-sand beach is a local favourite, backed by clusters of villas (many are for rent) and a couple of cafés. To reach here, follow indications for Le Port (there is a small fishing port nearby) and/or 'Restaurante les Pecheurs, Pointe de Cap Bon' from town. It's about 3km from the centre and louages run here in season, or a taxi costs around TD2.5.

BOAT TRIPS

Excursions by boat run from Le Daurade. They are for a minimum of 12 people and cost TD50 per person for a full day.

Festivals & Events

El-Haouaria has a tradition of falconry, and stages an annual **Festival d'Epervier** for four days in July, with daily demonstrations of the birds near the caves, sailing shows, live music and market stalls. Sparrowhawks are captured during their spring migration, trained for the festival and then released afterwards.

Sleeping

Besides the town's few hotels, there are numerous notices of places to rent around town and by the beach.

Pension Dar Toubib (☎ 72 297 163; s/d with private bathroom TD24/48) This is El-Haouaria's nicest place to stay. It's welcoming and has a relaxed, traveller-friendly feel. Rooms are bright, cheery and spacious, if basic, and set around a garden courtyard. To get here, follow the 'Hotel' signs from the main square out towards the mountain. It's a 10-minute walk. If the owner's not here, ask around and someone will track him down.

Hôtel L'Epervier (☎ 72 297 017; 3 ave Habib Bourguiba; s/d TD30/50) In the middle of town, this friendly place has a variety of comfortable, old-fashioned rooms with small terraces, set around a small courtyard. There's a good restaurant.

Pension Les Grottes (☎ 72 269 072; www.centre-grotte.com.tn; Route les Grottes; s/d TD35/70; ☎ ☎) Although this has a good hilltop position and small pool, there's a somewhat desolate atmosphere, though the restaurant is busy with local men. Rooms are small and bright but the bungalow architecture is not that attractive and makes little of the views.

Eating

La Daurade (☎ 72 269 080; mains TD5-15; ☎ noon-midnight) Out by the caves, this friendly place has an incredible seaside setting and excellent seafood. There are lovely open terraces and seating down to the water's edge. No alcohol is served. Management can arrange boat trips (see left).

Hôtel L'Epervier (3 ave Habib Bourguiba; mains TD8-15) has tree-shaded courtyard seating, and **Pension Les Grottes** (Route les Grottes; mains TD6-15) has a reasonable restaurant with good views, popular with local drinkers. Both serve alcohol.

Getting There & Away

El-Haouaria is well served by public transport. There are buses travelling along the north coast to Tunis (TD4.5, two hours, seven daily), via Soliman, and to Kélibia (TD1, 40 minutes, eight daily). There are regular louages to Kélibia (TD1.5), and less frequent ones to Tunis (TD4.5).

SOLIMAN

Soliman, 10km southwest of Korbous, is a popular local beach getaway – packed at weekends – that's quick to access from Tunis. The white-sand beach has lots of cafés and a couple of package hotels, and is

سليمان

framed by shadowy mountains, but it has a desultory feel. If you are hankering after a beach stay, it's worth striking out further into Cap Bon.

Buses and louages run to/from Soliman (TD1.4, one hour) from Tunis. You can then catch a shared taxi to the beach (TD0.5).

KORBIOUS

Korbous is just one street, with two hotels, a spa and a *hammam*, all set in a narrow ravine and surrounded by cliffs. It's an old-fashioned beauty spot, with the faded feel that permeates forgotten British seaside resorts and spa towns. It's famous for its hot springs and the few stalls in the main street specialise in scrubbing mitts and big knickers.

The approach to Korbous from Soliman is spectacular, especially the final 6km when the road hugs the coastal cliff-face. The road south along the coast has been closed for the last six or so years, but may have reopened by the time you read this, and should be fantastically dramatic. At Aïn Atrous, about 1.5km north of Korbous, a hot spring empties directly into the sea, providing a small patch of heated ocean that's always jostling with people. It's a unique place: the spring has been channelled through several small pools before it reaches the sea, so you can dangle your feet above the steaming, sulphurous water. Next to the spring there are a few small hole-in-the-wall restaurants specialising in grilled fish priced from around TD4.

Readers have camped near Korbous:

Due east of the main road in town – a 10-minute climb up the valley – is a nice spot that we were told is used by scouts for campouts. It seems the villagers are used to people coming into town and camping there. We too found a nice spot there!

James B & Daniel K

But if you prefer a hotel, welcoming **Hôtel Residence des Thermes** (☎ 72 284 520; ave 7 Novembre; s/d with private bathroom TD35/50; ☎ ☎) has simple white-walled rooms, with balconies, some bigger and better than others and there's a pleasant restaurant.

قربص

Hôtel Les Sources (☎ 72 284 540; ave 7 Novembre; s/d TD46/72; ☎ ☎ ☎) has more facilities, unintentionally funky '70s textiles in the rooms, good balcony views and a pool (TD4), but is somehow less appealing than Residence des Thermes. It's a bit run-down and was something of a building site when we visited – apparently it will reopen as a five-star hotel, which will have to be seen to be believed.

Restaurant Dhib (☎ 72 284 523; ave 7 Novembre; mains TD2.5-6; ☎ 11.30am-9pm) is Korbous' sole restaurant outside the hotels. It's simple with the usual Tunisian favourites on the menu and outdoor seating on a small street-side terrace.

In the centre are the run-down **Stations Thermales et Touristiques** (☎ 72 284 585; ☎ 8am-8pm), offering some daunting-sounding water treatments and more-relaxing massages that are something of a bargain: a general massage costs TD8 for 20 minutes, while an anti-cellulite 30-minute massage costs TD15.

Nearby is the ancient and suitably decrepit *hammam* (Turkish bath; admission TD1.5; ☎ 8am-8pm). It's a popular, atmospheric place, with separate sections for men and women, and the subterranean pool is remarkably hot.

If you have your own transport, there is an appealing golden curve of beach at **Barrage Port Princes**, a protected area. Coming from Korbous, take the Doula road, pass through Doula and carry straight on towards Bir Meroua for 3km, then turn left at the road signposted Barrage Port Princes. The road is paved for around 3km to 4km, then becomes a dirt track that is passable in dry weather. Follow this for around 4km (when the road forks, take the left fork). On the headland is a golden-stone castle (private property), otherwise the remote beach has a small rickety pier, a small shop and some sunshades.

Getting There & Away

It's easier to get to Korbous from Tunis than from the southern side of Cap Bon. From Tunis' southern bus station, there are buses to Soliman (TD1.4, one hour) from where you can take a shared or private taxi or direct louages (TD2.5).

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