

LA
TRIPOLITAINE

ET
LA TUNISIE,

Avec les renseignements indispensables au voyageur

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Tripolitania and Tunisia
With information indispensable for the traveler
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THE STEAMER LINE

From Tunis to Sousse, 130 miles, journey of 14 hours.

Upon leaving the harbor of Goulette one travels 33 milles [1 *mille* = approximately 1950m] to the 60° west of north, leaving to the port side the light of Cap Carthage. Hammam Korbès lies to the right, on the coast. From there, one travels 9 miles to round Cap Bon, at $\frac{3}{4}$ mille from the northern end is a high tower 125 meters above sea level surmounted by a revolving red light which makes its revolution in 90 seconds. The duration of eclipse is 85 seconds, that of the glare 5 seconds. One then crosses 18 miles to the south 30° east, then 66 miles to the south 25° west, passing successively at the level of the towns of Kélibia, Menzel-Têmine, Kourba, Nabel, Hammamet, and Herglah, whose mosque is 33 meters in height.

The steamer drops anchor in the harbor of Sousse at approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ mille from the city. During the bad season, when the wind blows from the northeast, any communication with the land is impossible; it is the same in Monastir, Mehdia and Gabés. The worst months to disembark are December, January and March; however it is not rare at that season to find periods of good weather.

The town of Sousse (Hadrumentum) has approximately 9,000 inhabitants; it extends from the north to the southeast at the edge of the sea and is surrounded by a wall with rounded crenels flanked here and there with small square towers. Seen from the harbor, Sousse offers aspect of a white mass dominated by the minaret of the grand mosque and the tower named El Nadour. Three doors give access to the city, they are: BabEl-Bahr or the Sea Gate, Bab-Elgharbi or Western Gate, finally Bab-El-Djedid or the New Gate. At the south-western angle of Sousse the Kasbah rises, a quite large construction which contains a barracks and the dwelling of the general. The arches of the entrance are covered with arabesques of various colors, among which blue, green and red dominate. This fortress is armed with some guns and is commanded by the tower El Nadour or from the vedette which contains the powder magazine. Lastly, beside Bab El Bahr is erected Kasr El Ribat, a castle flanked with three towers on each face.

The countryside begins immediately outside the wall of the city.

To the northwest one meets sand dunes strewn with undergrowth, to the west some tombs, to the southeast vast plantations of olive trees. Sousse may have three kilometers of towers. It is divided into two parts: the upper part and the lower part. The walls of the low city, not paved, are rather clean and are bordered here and there with relatively low European houses. The streets of the upper city are bordered with small shops where the Moslems practice their various industries. This description of Sousse can apply to the other Moslem cities of the coast; the type is generally uniform.

After having disembarked, one passes the stores of esparto on the right and one enters the city by the sea gate. At a little distance from this door, one meets successively the arrangements of the Rubattino company, an Italian auberge and the agency of the Transatlantic Company. While ascending towards the upper part of the city, one passes lines of shops garnished with old clothes and one crosses a long arched passage which constitutes the vegetable market, then the Souk or bazaar.

At the city gate, if one turns left to follow the internal wall of the enclosure, one arrives at the entry of the Kasbah. 900 meters from the gate of Bab-el-Gharbi, one can see the remainders of large cisterns and two enormous walls of masonry which probably formed part of a strong castle. To the west of the city is the ancient necropolis whose tombs were often excavated.

Sousse possesses a dozen mosques, a Catholic chapel and a synagogue; its export trade consists of olive oil, soap, skins, wools and cereals; silk fabrics are also manufactured there. Its population, as that of the other cities of the coast, appears singularly reduced when one has just left the brawling porters and robbers of Tunis. In these Arab cities far away from the great centers and rarely visited by travelers, the difficulty of making a profit did not yet banish manners, it is not rare to meet simple and honest populations.

(From Sousse to Kairouan and el-Djem, see below, route 4).

From Sousse to Monastir 15 miles, journey in 1 ¼ hrs.

After having raised anchor, one rounds Cape Monastir and stops in front of the customs building which is approximately 2 kilometers beyond the city; this is the surest anchorage of them all.

The small town of Monastir (Ruspina) counts from 2,500 to 2,800 inhabitants: it is attached to the caïdat of Sousse. A crenelated wall surrounds it, and, at the south east angle the Kasbah is erected, itself dominated by a minaret. The streets of Monastir are less irregular than those of the majority of the cities of Tunisia; a dozen mosques are observed there. The trade is the same as that of Sousse. Monastir has an agency of the Transatlantic Company and a Rubattino agency also. Not far from the shore are three small islands, including one, Tonnara, which contains two marabouts, about fifteen cisterns and a basin dug in the rock. The third contains about fifty caves of which the origin probably goes back to the Phoenicians.

From Monastir to Mehdia, 33 miles, journey in 4 ½ hrs.

The steamer drops anchor at approximately a third of a mille from the city.

The town of Mehdia, of which one can estimate the population at 7,800 inhabitants, is almost an island attached to the continent by a long isthmus of approximately 700 meters. The houses of Mehdia are less white than those of Sousse and Monastir, and the city offers a different view. In the vicinity are some country houses surrounded by palm trees. The old basin has the form of a rectangle, its entry closed by an iron chain fixed by its ends at two columns which still exist. Currently, it is partly filled.

The point of this almost-island contains a great number of tombs dug in the rock and some cisterns distinctly seen from the anchorage. No inscriptions have been discovered in Mehdia with the possible exception of a Latin epitaph engraved on a tomb stone which covers the remains of a knight of Malta named "de Piscatory". The remains of this stone were transported to the Catholic church by the care of Mr. Mattei, vice-consul of France in Sfax. Mehdia has agencies of the Transatlantic and Rubattino Companies.

From Mehdia to Sfax, 144 miles, journey in 15 ½ hrs.

From Mehdia, the steamer sails around the KerKennah islands, because there is not enough depth between them and the coast, and drops anchor two miles from Sfax.

The town of Sfax (Taphrura?) counts approximately 25,000 inhabitants, it includes the Moslem city itself and the European suburb. The high or Moslem part is surrounded by a crenelated wall lined with towers some round, and others square; at the top the Kasbah, which is dominated itself by a high tower that is named El-Nadour or the vedette. This part of the city contains five or six mosques, some zaouias and bazaars. The European suburb, surrounded by a simple wall, extends along the shore; its streets are very dirty. Sfax is fed with water by some cisterns and Nasriah, or Obole ['Gifts'], a series of several hundred basins contained in a vast enclosure, and lastly by two immense tanks named Feskias.

The trade of this city consists of indigenous olives, wools, oils, fabrics, bath and table linen, common sponges, esparto, dates, etc. the amount of average export is around 3,000,000 piastres; the imports are somewhat less. In a zone of 18 kilometers all around the city, are reckoned to be five hundred thousand olive trees. The donkeys of Sfax are very beautiful.

The surroundings are strewn with gardens and country houses; along the coast extend tuna nets. Sfax has agencies of the Transatlantic Company, and the Rubattino Company, a warehouse of the Maritime Company, two insurance companies and an agency of the Circle-Transport Company. The caïdat of Sfax has 40,000 inhabitants.

From Sfax to Gabès, 60 milles, journey in 6 hours.

The steamer sets its course to the south 38° west, crosses the gulf of Gabès (Syrtis-Minor) and moors approximately a third of a mille from the city of the same name.

Gabès is located in El-Arad, the strongest province of Tunisia which extends from Mahrès as far as the borders of Tripolitaine. It is formed by the union of two boroughs and a number of oases; one of these boroughs bears the name of Djara, the other of Menzel. The population of the whole province can be estimated at 60,000 inhabitants, in which Djara and Menzel together account for 3,000 and the other oases for 2,000.

One disembarks at the mouth of the wadi Gabès and follows the bank of this watercourse. On the right a forest of palm trees extends and on the left an arid plain where our faithful fellow traveller, the greyhound "Priam", exerts his long legs grown

numb by enforced travel. After approximately two kilometers, one meets the first borough or Djara; it is composed of low houses built without order around a vast open central space. Approximately a kilometer further one reaches Menzel where one notices several mosques, a bazaar and a market. This borough is managed by a caïd, it has a French Consulate and an agency of the Transatlantic Company. Though all the inhabitants of this part of the coast are armed, one with an old escopette, one with a gun in the shape of a tromblon, the population is very good. Many Arabs from Gabès will work in Tunis in the capacity of porter. From the sap of the palm tree they manufacture the lakbi, fermented liquor, probably of comparable nature as that of which Ulysses and his companions made an immoderate use.

From Gabès to Jerbah, 38 milles, journey in 5 hours.

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