



# Trekking in the Tassili n'Ajjer

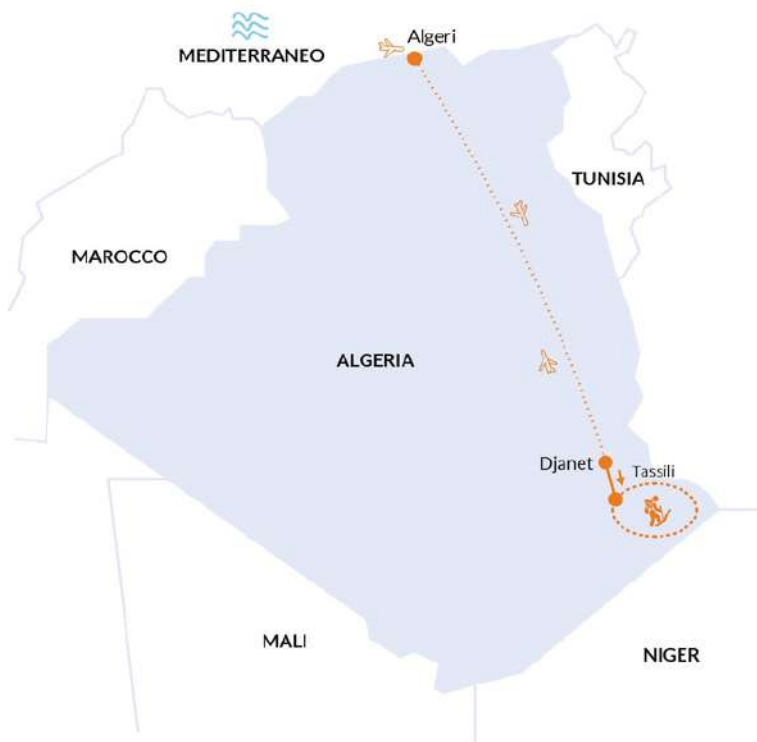
ALGERIA



9 days

21-29 November 2024

English speaking tour leader



## The 'unforgettable' of the trip:

- The magnificent **rock art sites of Tassili n'Ajjer**
- Meeting the **Tuaregs**, the 'blue men', dinners around the fire, starry nights
- **Tan Zoumaitak's paintings** of the 'Round Head' period
- The imposing figure of the **'God of Sefar'**, a mystical vision among the caves of the plateau
- The famous engraving of *La vache qui pleure* at **Tagharghart**
- The charm of **Algiers**, with its kasbah, period mosques and white French buildings



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**North of the town of Djanet, the desert scenery is occupied by the spectacular rock face of the Tassili N'Ajjer, a sandstone plateau, which runs parallel to the dune belt of the Erg Admer, heading south-east to the Libyan border. The mountain of the Kel Ajjer, the Tuareg tribe that inhabits the region, hides within its inaccessible meanders, one of the most incredible treasures that the Sahara desert has ever yielded.**

The Tassili is a cultural park, Unesco heritage site and biosphere reserve. Around 500 km long it looks like a compact sheer wall, which can only be crossed on foot or by donkey, via a few sporadic natural passages that climb and creep up its flanks. Reaching the top of the plateau, a world of extraordinary lunar scenery opens up, characterised by a vertiginous maze of sandstone 'forests', stone deserts and labyrinthine canyons, monumental rock formations eroded by atmospheric agents, ravines and caves hidden among the stone backdrops, excavated by the numerous wadis that have now dried up. An incredible geological landscape that in turn hosts an extraordinary desert biodiversity, with the survival of some naturalistic species now extinct in the rest of the Sahara, such as the Saharan myrtle and cypress.

But as the largest troglodyte site in the world, its uniqueness lies above all in the archaeological evidence of human settlements and civilisations that followed one another over at least 10,000 years. Amongst numerous lithic artefacts, mounds and concentric stone burials, and pottery from various eras, the Tassili n'Ajjer contains the highest concentration, stratification and iconographic variety of rock art ever found, with some 15,000 depictions, including paintings and engravings, currently listed. An immense 'Sistine Chapel' in the heart of the Sahara, as it is commonly referred to.

Henri Lhote, the archaeologist who made one of the first fundamental contributions to this immense heritage, wrote during his expedition in the 1950s: 'indeed, what we have seen in the rock maze of Tassili surpasses all imagination'. In this sentence is contained all the astonishment one can feel in front of the most astonishing examples of what is defined as the 'round-head period'. These are extraordinarily modern images, about which many mysteries and unconfirmed hypotheses still hover. Dating from between 6,000 and 8,000 years ago, they depict imposing anthropomorphic figures and animals with curious 'Martian' features. From the most abstruse conjectures that hypothesised the presence of aliens on earth thousands of years ago, or of 'hallucinogenic' shamanic rituals in vogue at the time, today the most plausible hypothesis remains that linked to tribal representations of masks and vestments, in the context of ancestral rituals, or iconographies that refer to particular burial techniques in the cult of the dead, using vegetable bandages and terracotta pots to wrap around the head of the deceased, thus giving the impression, for example, that the painted figures could be reminiscent of astronauts or divers.



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Equally probable, therefore, is the sacred nature of these walls, caves, ravines, used as places of worship, as the impressive worshipping figures of the 'God of Sefar', with their deformed features, bizarre vestments and mysterious antennae on their heads, would demonstrate. So many hypotheses, only one certainty: Picasso and Matisse knew where to draw their inspiration!

The Tassili N'Ajjer is one of the most important open-air picture galleries in the world, a reservoir of precious iconographies that tell the story of human evolution, flora and fauna, and the geology of the Sahara. They tell us about when the desert was a vast fertile region inhabited by wild animals, such as giraffes, lions, giant-horned buffaloes, rhinoceroses, elephants and hippopotamuses, punctually portrayed in the most ancient graffiti and paintings; they inform us of the first organised societies, through ritual scenes and scenes of daily life, of breeding, hunting and agriculture; they offer us the first chronicles of war, of armed men on horseback, and finally they confirm the inexorable and irreversible advance of the desert, in the depictions of the only animal capable of withstanding the aridity, the camel.

The Tassili speaks to us of all this, between imaginative iconography, naive styles and incredibly realistic images, over a period of time spanning some 8,000 to 10,000 years, in natural settings of indescribable beauty and desolation, the Sahara.



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# Trekking in the Tassili n'Ajjer

## ALGERIA

### Day 1: Thursday 21 November

#### Algiers (ALG)/Flight/Djanet (DJG)/Tassili

Flight to Algiers, formalities upon arrival. Transfer to the national terminal for the Air Algerie flight towards Djanet (scheduled at 22h15). On arrival meeting with Kanaga Africa Tours staff and accommodation at the Grotte des Ambassadeurs hotel or similar, overnight in double room with services.



Welcome to the Algerian south!

### Day 2: Friday 22 November

#### Djanet/Tassili

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for the Air Algerie flight to Djanet (scheduled at 11h00). Arrival in DJANET and departure for TAFILALET where we will meet our donkey caravan, responsible for transporting the camping equipment. Picnic lunch. Start of the TREKKING TOWARD THE HIGHLAND, an altitude difference of around 700 metres, which we will tackle in two half-days, so that everyone can reach the plateau (2/3 hours of walking per day). About halfway along we set up our tented camp, being able to appreciate the magnificent landscape below. Dinner prepared by our cook and overnight stay in double igloo tents.



Tassili n'Ajjar

### Day 3-7: from Saturday 23 November to Wednesday 27 November

#### Tassili n'Ajjar

Days are dedicated to the exploration on foot of the TASSILI N'AJJAR, an incredible open-air museum with more than 15,000 depictions, including rock paintings and graffiti. Arrival in TAMRIT, where we can admire the oldest cypress trees in the world, which have managed to survive thanks to the microclimate and bear witness to when the Sahara was a verdant region covered with rivers and forests. This beautiful area is characterised by rocky columns up to 20 metres high, with valuable paintings. We will admire TAN ZOUMAITAK, the first station to be discovered by Henry Lothe in 1956, where the largest number of paintings from the so-called 'Round Head' period (the 'African women' are famous) can be found. We continue to IN ITINEN, passing through a spectacular scenery of rocks sculpted by erosion, with a large concentration of wall art covering various prehistoric periods, including the depiction of a four-metre elephant and so-called 'justices of the peace'.



"African Women" in Tan Zoumaïtak



Mouflon in Tan Zoumaïtak



# Trekking in the Tassili n'Ajjer

## ALGERIA

(continue)

### Day 3-7: from Saturday 23 November to Wednesday 27 November

#### Tassili n'Ajjar

Finally, we arrive at SEFAR, the most important site, where we can come face to face with the 'God of SEFAR', an imposing figure of more than 2.5 metres in height, with alien features, and who has given rise to many theories about 'Martians' landing in the region. We visit TIN TAZARIFT, with paintings from the Round Head and Bovidian periods, including a scene with a dozen archers, and TIN ABOTEKA with its hunters and oxen herds, before returning to Tamrit. Breakfasts and dinners prepared by our camp cook, picnic lunches, overnight stays in double igloo tents.

### Day 8: Thursday 28 November

#### Tamrit/Djanet(DJG)

Breakfast at the camp and descent on foot to the Djanet oasis. Once there, meet up with the 4x4 to visit the rock art site of TAGHARGHART, that of La Vache qui Pleure (the weeping cow), a work of some 6,000 years ago depicting three long-horned cattle with tears streaming from their eyes. Picnic lunch. Day use rooms at the hotel for a shower. Transfer to the airport in time for the Air Algérie flight to Algiers, dinner with box.

### Day 9: Friday 29 November

#### Djanet(DJG)/Flight/Algiers (ALG)/Flight

Arrival in ALGIERS to coincide with your return flight. End of services.



'God of Sefar'



Dinner around the fire with the Tuaregs



La Vache qui Pleure



*\* The travel itinerary may be subject to variations, beyond our control, as the Algerian government reserves the right to close and open certain desert areas without prior notice, as well as internal flight schedules may be changed by the Air Algérie company.*



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**ALGERIA** (ALG05PS241121)

**9 days**

21-29 November 2024

English speaking tour leader

**Individual participation fee in double room/tent (min. 5/max. 16 pax)**

**1,790 €/pax**

**in promotion at € 1,690  
for booking before 21/08/2024**

**in promotion at € 1,590  
for booking before 21/05/2024**

## Supplements:

- Enrollment fee: **free!**
- Single room/tent: **130 €**
- Single tent: **50 €**
- Algeria pre-visa service: **50 €/pax**

## The fee includes:

- English speaking tour leader
- French-speaking local guide;
- Visits and excursions as scheduled;
- All transfers by minibus to Algiers and 4x4 to Djanet, including drivers and diesel;
- Full board meals except dinners in Algiers;
- Cook and camp kitchen for meals in the desert;
- 8 overnight stays as mentioned in the itinerary (2 in hotels, 6 in tents);
- Field material.

## The fee does not include:

- The visa for Algeria (about 90 Euro coming if you do pre-visa through us);
- Cancellation/health/baggage insurance;
- Air flights (international and domestic\*);
- Drinks and mineral water;
- Sleeping bag and pillow;
- Photo and video tips;
- Tips and expenses of a personal nature;
- Everything mentioned in 'supplements';
- Anything not expressly mentioned in 'the fee includes'.

### \* DOMESTIC FLIGHTS TO BE BOOKED:

#### AIR ALGÉRIE

21/11/24: Algeri (ALG) 22h15 – Djanet (DJG) 00h30 (+1)

29/11/24: Djanet (DJG) 01h30 – Algeri (ALG) 05h50