



DAHAR

Destination

Journey inside authentic lands

TUNISIA



مرحبا

Marhbé

Insouf Siyoum

Bienvenue

W E L C O M E



DAHAR, A REGION AND A DESTINATION



DAHAR MAP

THE MOST ORIGINAL REGION OF TUNISIA

What makes the Dahar so mysterious? What magic does it exude that enchants so many of its visitors?

It is perhaps the region's unusual character and enveloping serenity that charm the visitor and invite him for further exploration.

Nestled near the mythical beaches of the Island of Jerba and the magnificent dunes of the Sahara Desert, the mountainous region of Jebel Dahar offers a curious mixture of arid lunar landscapes, a magnificent plateau, and tiny fertile valleys.

Steeped into three thousand years of human history, the Dahar was the sanctuary of the Amazigh Berber tribes of Tunisia who knew how to profit from the region's strategic location smack in the middle of the caravan roads through the desert.

Over the years the indigenous people of Dahar have, with a great deal of ingenuity, built a proud civilization perfectly in harmony with the region's austere nature. With patience and perseverance, they've literally melted into the rocky landscape while learning and borrowing from the many people and civilizations that came through the region.

Despite the profound changes in their way of life and widespread mixing with other populations, the Dahar inhabitants have remained remarkably attached to their traditions. They have above all remained hospitable and warm with interested visitors.

Endowed with an exceptionally rich geography and paleontology, and blessed with a unique historical and cultural heritage, the Dahar region still enchants travelers in search of discoveries: hikers and trekkers, culture aficionados, scientists, or just plain visitors seeking peace of mind and a change of scenery amidst family and friends.

The Dahar region is easily accessible. The international airport of Jerba is just 100 km away and the capital city of Tunis is 550 km by land roads. Yet, Dahar is still little known, even to Tunisians themselves. Those who grab the opportunity to visit this enchanting spot will certainly experience Tunisian history, unexpected landscapes, and the legendary hospitality of the local population.

Dahar Destination has partnerships with local service providers and inhabitants wishing to engage in tourism which is soft and mindful, cultural, close to nature, and supportive of the local economy, and who are eager to cater to visitors with an eye for authenticity, far from the beaten tracks and crowds of mass tourism and international standards.



TROGLODYTE ACCOMMODATIONS: A SERENE NIGHT-SLEEP INSIDE MOTHER EARTH

Inside troglodyte caves, time and silence take a different dimension.

Since prehistoric times, troglodyte dwellings have given the local populations perfect shelter from the hot and dry climate of the Dahar region. Over the centuries, these natives have developed elaborate construction techniques of troglodyte dwellings. Whether perched on steep mountain flanks or dug underground at surface level, troglodyte houses are carved out right inside the limestone layers.

Troglodyte dwellings in the Dahar region vary with the type of soil and the terrain slope. Those of Matmata in the north of the region

for example are quite different from those of Tataouine in the south. About fifteen of these original dwellings have been enthusiastically transformed by their owners into quaint guesthouses and rural gites to give guests a picturesque welcome inside the protective cocoon of mother earth and steeped into the region's cultural heritage. Some owners will in addition offer meals which are shared around the family table.



KSAR MRABTINE

THE KSOURS: DAHAR'S GRANARIES AND MEMORY

There are 150 ksours in the Dahar region; some are definitely worth a visit.

A characteristic feature of Tunisia's south-east, the *ksours* are fortified granaries where the Amazigh nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes used to store their belongings to protect them from marauding tribes since Roman times. They are now a major tourist attraction in the Dahar. The *Ksours* melt right into the surrounding landscape. The oldest were constructed high on mountain tops; they served as defensive lines and look-out towers controlling the surrounding valleys and trade routes. Built initially on hilltops and on mountain flanks, the *ksours* were multiplied and in time invaded the plains below. Each *ksar* was composed

of a series of individual *ghorfas* or chambers stacked on top of each other up to a height of 5 stories in some places.

If the *ksar* belonged to the tribe, the *ghorfas* were the private property of individual families. They were constructed with limestone and had vaulted roofs. The walls and ceilings were covered with clay and decorated with traditional motifs. The central court of the *ksar* served as a market place and was accessible through a hallway called *skifa*. It had one gate which could be blocked by one huge and solid door made of palm tree wood and held together by pegs and pins made of olive tree wood.

WATER MANAGEMENT AND *JESSOURS*

In Dahar, water is a precious commodity.

Water is crucial for survival in the Dahar region. The local villages were structured and managed around its collection and allocation systems. There were in use sophisticated modes and rules for cooperation and social order regulating water collection and distribution in the region.

The *jessours* are sophisticated water harvesting structures used in draining rain run-off water and collecting it behind small dykes and dams constructed in the ravines.

Thanks to these techniques, it was possible to establish small date tree groves, grow olive trees, and even plant barley and other basic food necessities in a region where rainfall does not exceed 200 mm a year.

The *jessours* have made human settlement in the region possible for the past 2000 years. By contrast, the surrounding plains have always been barren.

MYSTICISM IN DAHAR

Several underground mosques “protect” the Dahar region. One such mosque is Ennakhla Mosque in Douiret which is dug out right inside the flank of the hill and is still being used. In the village of Chenini, the visitor can experience the mystique of the Mosque of the Seven Sleepers. Legend has it that the giant tombs there are those of seven Berbers who took refuge in a cave to escape Roman soldiers and who fell asleep for 309 lunar years. They converted to Islam when they woke up.

In Dahar, one can also attend ceremonies called *ziyara* celebrating the memories of the many Soufi saints and sanctuaries in the region. Chanting, dancing, trances, and feasts called *zardas* are part of the celebrations.

If you’re interested in the history of Islam in North Africa, you can consult in the town of Matmata some ancient parchment pieces recording the history of Koranic schools and the Malikite brand of Islam in the region which have been handed down by generations of Imam families in Tunisia.



OLIVE TREES

In Tunisia, the olive tree is king. In Dahar, it shares that honor with the fig tree. There are several varieties of olive trees native to the Dahar region. These varieties have adapted to the local climate and produce small size olives. Olives are picked in autumn by the whole family and immediately pressed. The oil collected is of exceptional quality.

Some of the oldest olive trees in Tunisia exist in the Dahar region. The Dahar is also reputed to be home to the biggest and oldest olive tree in the Mediterranean basin. According to its owners, the tree is over 900 years old and covers an area of 2000 square meters. The Akkari family from Douiret has also said that a memorable picnic for 60 guests was held under the tree. It is, well, known to have produced the largest crop ever recorded with more than 1500 litres of oil.



UNDERGROUND OLIVE OIL PRESSES

Olives in the Dahar region were crushed and processed in underground oil factories. They were crushed in rotating huge stone mills probably inherited from Roman times. Donkeys or camels were used to drive these mills. There are about one hundred of these mills in the Dahar. Some of them are still functional in Chenini and Matmata. The abandoned village of Ksar Mrabtine alone has about ten of these mills and must have served as olive oil extracting center for the entire surrounding region. Olive oil solidifies at five degrees centigrade. The mild and constant temperature inside the underground olive oil factories was ideal for extracting and stocking this precious commodity. The autumn season is perfect for a discovery tour of these troglodyte olive mills and for stocking up on pure "bio-troglodyte" olive oil.



FAUNA

With the first rains of winter, patches of green grass and colorful vegetation sprout all over the Dahar region.

All-year long, fauna aficionados will find in the Dahar an original collection of fragrant and medicinal plants such as rosemary, fringed rue, thyme, cistus labdanum, caper, and sumac. White truffles appear in March and are used to flavor local dishes like couscous. They are also collected and sold in the markets of the capital city Tunis or abroad.

The Dahar is truly an open-air pharmacy which has provided for the daily health needs of the local populations. Amateurs of phytotherapy are sure to find herbal remedies for all sorts of ailments.



HISTORIC FORTIFIED VILLAGES

Undistinguishable at first, the citadel villages of the Dahar region are well camouflaged inside the surrounding landscape.

Built on mountain and hill tops, their bare stone walls are barely distinguishable from the rocky flanks. These impressive primitive constructions continue to defy erosion and time.

Some houses are still occupied or have been equipped to receive guests who will be able to explore the underground olive oil factories and mosques which measured the tempo of daily life in the region in bygone days.

DOUIRET

Once a prosperous village until the beginning of the 19th century thanks to the trans-Saharan trade, Douiret is now almost a ghost village. Two families only are still living there today and are always happy to receive visitors.

GUERMESSA

This deserted village is perched on top of a cone-shaped hill and reveals its special charm at sunset.

CHENINI

Chenini is the best-known village in the Dahar and is still inhabited. It is a mixture of authenticity and modernity.

TOUJANE, TAMAZRET, RAS EL OUED, ...

The Dahar region is sprinkled with interesting historic Berber villages. In the ones which are still inhabited, visitors can meet warm and welcoming people who are more than happy to showcase and share their lifestyle and rich heritage.





CHENINI, BERBER HOUSES CARVED IN THE MOUNTAINS



DAHAR TASTES AND FLAVORS

Amazigh traditional dishes deserve to be discovered. Some guesthouse owners will be happy to provide them on demand. So don't let go of this culinary escapade.

The traditional menu of *couscous*, *brik*, and *chorba* reigns supreme in Dahar; but a typically Berber dish is without a doubt the *krabiz*. It is a basic dish of fresh wheat paste cooked in a thick spicy sauce flavored with *kadid* (salted and air-dried meat) and legumes (chick peas, lentils, or fava beans). The best *krabiz* can be had in the village of Tamezret for example.

Most guesthouses provide breakfast with accommodation. The typical Dahar breakfast includes freshly baked traditional bread called *tabuna*, olive oil, honey, *shriha* (dried figs), and *bsisa* (barley flour mixed with spices and olive oil).

WOVEN CLOTH AND CLOTHING

Every Dahar bride must have her own trousseau. Most of it is locally handmade. Looms are part of Dahar homes and weaving skills are transmitted from mother to daughter.

A typical garment worn by the local women is called *bakhnoug*. It is a sort of cotton shawl, white or multicolored and decorated with geometrical motifs specific to each family or tribe.

These Amazigh motifs and symbols are called *ragma* and are also found in handwoven cloth and carpets. It takes about 20 years of practice to master the weaving of some of these motifs. The best pieces of handwoven material can be found in the village of Toujène. Female artisans there are organized in family groups and each group specializes in one motif.



MUSEUMS AND CULTURE HALLS

The recently restored paleontology museum, “Mémoire de la Terre”, in Tataouine is worth a visit.

The Military Museum of the town of Mareth, 30 km south of Gabes, tells the history of the Battle of Mareth Line during WWII. The battle of Mareth was a major defeat for Rommel and his Afrika Korps and marked the beginning of the end of the Axis forces in Tunisia.

A number of small private museum halls have been set up by unconditional fans of Amazigh culture in Tamezret and Matmata. Their owners will be happy to show visitors traditional everyday objects and daily lifestyles in the region. A panoply of handmade objects, jewelry, clothes, and ancestral costumes are on display in addition to representations of customs and wedding ceremonies.

CULTURE FESTIVALS

Strongly protective of their traditions, the local inhabitants of the Dahar hold many traditional celebrations and festivals to celebrate their region. No less than 30 festivals are held each year at different villages and on different occasions. Foreigners are welcome at these festivals and will be accorded special treatment. There will always be a local inhabitant who will be happy to show you around and explain what's going on.

During the month of May, many villages hold wool shearing festivals. Tataouine has its own Ksour Festival and Ghomrassen its drum festival. All of them are rich in color and will leave lasting memories.

NATURE AND TREKKING

The best way to discover the region and appreciate its unique scenery is by foot.

It is also the best way to make contact with the locals, whether shepherders in the barren plains or mountain dwellers who will be happy to show you ancestral foot paths.

Whether in Beni Khadeche or Matmata or high on the hill crests of Toujène, you can choose among several available footpaths adapted to your physical capacities or desires. There are half-day treks up all

the way to ten-day treks. You can go by foot or on all-terrain bikes, all part of the “smart trekking” possibilities in Dahar.

Many foot paths in Beni-Khadeche, Zammour, and Chenini are marked. You can discover them on your own with no need for a guide or simply take walks with your host near your guesthouse.

Your travel agent can arrange for you guided hiking tours of several days or you can even try traversing the entire region of Dahar in the company of your guide and a donkey for your luggage.



GEOPARKS

UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.

With over 20 geological and paleontological sites and even more virgin territories, Dahar can vie for UNESCO's classification as a geopark.

The most remarkable site in Dahar is that of Djebel Tebaga near Medenine. It is in the process of being listed as a UNESCO geopark. It boasts unique geological features and is of great scientific interest.

PALEONTOLOGY

In the Dahar, you're as close as you can get to a real "Jurassic Park". With numerous fossil remains of creatures from the end of the Paleozoic era, right before the extinction of dinosaurs, the Dahar is a vast open-air museum.

Novices in paleontology will never realize that the long rock they've just stepped on is in fact a petrified branch or a fossilized dinosaur shin bone.

Recent discoveries of the fossil remains of a 155 million years-old huge crocodile and the entire skeleton of a 110 million years-old 15 meter-long herbivore dinosaur which was dubbed "Tataouinea Hannibalis", have piqued the interest of numerous international and local scientists.

The well-preserved geology of the region is also attracting scientists interested in the study of the local biotopes of the vanished Dahar creatures.

With a little effort and a good guide, a visitor in the Dahar can get to walk in the fossilized footsteps of a vanished dinosaur!

GEOLOGY

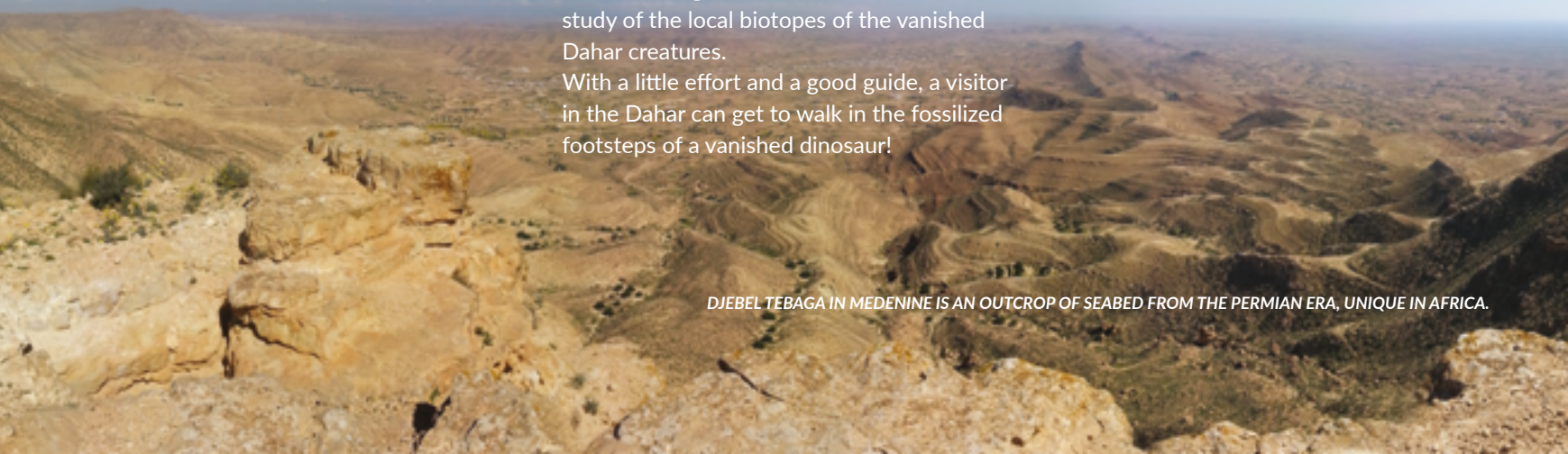
For amateurs, teachers, and researchers alike, the Dahar is a geological treasure island.

Formed nearly 250 million years ago, the Dahar region is located in the separation zone of the single continent Pangea, between the African continent, Gonwana, and the European plate, Eurasia.

Of great interest to geologists, Dahar geology reveals Earth's history through visible and decipherable geological layers and thanks to an existing documentation.

Dahar geology is perfect for hardcore research and for popularizing geology. Because Dahar region is easily accessible and only a 2-hour flight from Europe, it has become a favorite destination for geology students and amateurs.

DJEBEL TEBAGA IN MEDENINE IS AN OUTCROP OF SEABED FROM THE PERMIAN ERA, UNIQUE IN AFRICA.



DISCOVERING THE DAHAR

A unique, beautiful, and welcoming region, it'll be difficult to ever forget the Dahar.

Travelers to the Dahar will find it difficult to forget this authentic and surprising region which lies practically on the southern flank of Europe just a few hours away from Tunis.

The Dahar is an ideal destination for everybody and especially for families with children eager to experience sleeping inside troglodyte caves.

For persons with limited mobility however, we recommend that they consult with a travel agent to find them a suitable circuit in the Dahar.

The ideal period to visit Dahar is between the months of October and May, summer being too hot for traveling and walking in the Dahar. Between December and February, daytime temperatures are very nice; Nighttime temperatures however can fall to 5°C.

With the exception of some sites which have been in service for over forty years, the Dahar is not equipped for intensive tourism. The local infrastructure is still good though with reliable road, electricity, phone, and Internet networks.

Besides registered hotels and tourism professionals in the region, most other providers of tourist services in the Dahar do not practice tourism as their main activity; so they cannot provide services aligned with international standards. In fact, the type of tourism found in the Dahar is an important part of its charm and attraction.

Water is available in the Dahar but must be used wisely given its scarcity.

Similarly, the local population is hospitable and open on foreign cultures but visitors must show some respect for the local values and traditions. To communicate with the locals, Arabic and/or French are the languages most commonly used. Only a handful of service providers are multilingual.

Safety and security in the Dahar are guaranteed by the presence in the region of the official security institutions and also by the local population for whom a visitor is "sacred". The official authorities are always present in the region and remain both discrete and efficient. It is always recommended that you let the Tourist police know beforehand your destination and itinerary. This formality

is obligatory in the case of stays organized via a travel agent. A 2015 poll of 150 visitors having spent more than one night in the region found that 95% of them felt safe and would recommend the Dahar to their relatives.

Traveling to and in the Dahar is an adventure that is easy to arrange through a travel agent or taken independently. When you consult a travel agency via Internet, always ask them if they have done business in the Dahar before because not many have.

«To help you plan your stay in Dahar, the Destination Dahar application is available on Google play and App store for free.

In Matmata, an information centre is open if you need complementary information during your trip.

A travel guidebook, a map of trekking, hiking circuits will, in the course of 2019, be available.

You can also contact the service providers in the Dahar directly (see the list below), or contact us and we'll be happy to provide you with the needed information for your trip.

So, come on down to the land of beautiful sunsets.



DESTINATION DAHAR SERVICE PROVIDERS

CHÉNINI

GÎTE KENZA

Rural gite
Nédra Boulila
+216 97 284 086
Tel/fax : 75 860 540
www.kenzachenini.com
kenza.chenini@planet.tn

AZUL CHENINI

Guesthouse
Lotfi Missaoui
+216 95 151 462
www.azulchenini.com

DOUIRET

GÎTE CHEZ RAOUF

Rural gite
+216 97 497 242
www.gitedouiret.com
raouf@gitedouiret.com

RÉSIDENCE ASNAPED

Rural gite
Fadhel Laffet
+216 75 878 066
+216 97 864 181
www.residenceasnaped.com
resa@asnaped.org

GHOMRASSEN

GÎTE KSAR HADADA

Rural gite
Hafedh Sassi
+216 24 511 333
www.ksarhadada.com
gite.ksar.hadada@gmail.com

DOMAINE OUED ELKHIL

Guesthouse
Radhouane Tiss
+216 98 668 284
www.domaine-elkhil.com
Domaine.oued.el.khil@gmail.com
tiss1968@yahoo.fr

KSAR HALLOUF

DAR SANA

Guesthouse
Nacer Saadaoui
+216 27 648 013
www.dar-sana.com

DAR IHEB

Guesthouse
Massoud Brini
+216 26 249 762
+216 92 134 934
www.dar-iheb.com

MATMATA

HOTEL SIDI DRISS

Tourist hotel
Adel Khatrouch
+216 20 550 061
www.hotel-sidi-idriss.com
akhatrouch@hotmail.fr

HÔTEL MARHALA

TOURING CLUB
Tourist hotel
+216 98 468 178
www.hotelmahala.tn

HÔTEL MATMATA

Tourist hotel
Salaheddine Abouda
+216 23 961 153
+216 75 240 177
www.hotelmattata.com
contact@hotelmattata.com

DIAR EL BARBAR

Tourist hotel
+216 75 240 074
www.diarelbarbar.com
contact@diarelbarbar.com

DIAR AMOR

Museum
Faysel Ben Ali Habib
+216 98 420 509
+216 25 420 509
www.diar-amor.com

MADRASSA JOMANIA

Museum of manuscripts
Moussa Ltaief Jomni
+216 97 330 882
www.madrassa-jomania.com

DAR ZMERTIN

Guesthouse
Ali Bouhela
Nejma Zmertni
+216 96 392 975
www.dar-zmertin.com

DIAR MATMATA

Tourist hotel
Mohamed Salah Oueslati
+216 96 461 746
www.diar-mattata.com

MÉDENINE

HÔTEL EL KSSOUR

MÉDENINE
Tourist hotel
Adel Arjouné
+216 97 737 550
+216 75 643 879
www.hotel-kssour.com
hotel-kssour@gnet.tn

LA CUESTA

Guesthouse
Leila Gammar Ghourabi
+216 96 059 845
www.lacuestamedenine.com
lacuestamedenine@gmail.com

TAMEZRET

DAR AYED

Rural gite/Tourist station
Slim Ben Mamou
+216 22 935 670
+216 55 267 409
www.dar-ayed.com
darayed2007@gmail.com

DAR TAMEZRET ET MUSÉE

MONGI
Guesthouse
Mongi Bouras
+216 98 567 266
www.dartamezret.com

TATAOUINE

TATAOUINE LES BAINS Guesthouse

Mabrouk Daghari
+216 97 325 370
www.tataouine-lesbains.com

DAR AICHA Guesthouse

Aicha Kadi
+216 58 164 508
+216 93 346 502
www.daraycha.com
aichakadi88@yahoo.com

HÔTEL DAKYANUS Tourist hotel

Slim Soula
+216 98 438 199
+216 75 832 199
www.hoteldakyanus.com
dakyanus@gnet.tn

HÔTEL SANGHO PRIVILÈGE Tourist hotel

Mohamed Habib Khnissi
+216 75 860 102
www.sangho.fr
sangho.tataouine@planet.tn

DECOUVRIR TATAOUINE Local Guide

Selma Mkadmini
+216 21 286 149
www.tunisianguide.com

DAR TAHER Rural gite

Saad Zorrage
+216 23 410 256
www.dar-taher.com

TADARROMT HOME Guesthouse

Fatma Talbi
+216 25 785 493
www.tadarromthome.com

TIJMA

AU TRAIT D'UNION Guesthouse

Habib Hsoumi
+216 20 206 409
+216 98 279 609
www.dar-tijma.com
autraitduniontijma@gmail.com

TOUJANE

TROGLO AUBERGE DU DAHAR Guesthouse

Béehir Hasnaoui
+216 98 663 482
www.troglauberge.com

DAR EL MARGOUM Guesthouse

Kamel Hasnaoui
+216 97 989 172
www.darelmargoum.com

TOUJANE CARPET Tourist station

Abdallah Dadi
+216 97 773 095
www.toujanecarpets.com
toujane.info@yahoo.fr

DAR TOUATI Museum

Habib Hasnaoui
+216 97 797 538

AUBERGE BEN AHMED Guesthouse

Fathi ben Ahmed
+216 96 958 004
fathi004@hotmail.fr

ZAMMOUR BENI KHADECHE

DAR SABER Guesthouse

Hechmi Sabeur
+216 98 232 818
+216 29 232 818
www.darsaber.com

DAR JEDDI Guesthouse

Mohamed Zammouri
+216 23 275 144
+216 23 275 177
www.dar-jeddi.com
lapublicitezms@yahoo.fr

DAR YASMINE Guesthouse

Mohammed Nacef Jaàfar
+216 94 367 630
www.daryasmin.com
nacef_zammouri@yahoo.fr

DAR HAYET Guesthouse

Ayoub Zammouri
+216 22 183 382
www.dar-hayet.com
ayoub.zammouri@yahoo.fr

DAR ANNAÏM Tourist hotel

Rjab Harabi
+216 23 398 379

DOWNLOAD THE APPLICATION

DAHAR
Destination





Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Département fédéral de l'économie,
de la formation et de la recherche DEFR
Secrétariat d'Etat à l'économie SECO



République Tunisienne
Ministère du Tourisme
et de l'Artisanat

INSPIRING
Tunisia


swisscontact



@DestinationDahar

info@destinationdahar.com
www.destinationdahar.com

Edit by: Fédération Tourisme
Authentique-Destination Dahar

© Destination Dahar is a trademark