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U.S. Army

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POCKET·GUIDE



TO

**TUNISIA**

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## POCKET GUIDE TO TUNISIA

### CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
Three Years of Struggle .....	2
Tunisia Springboard of Europe.....	3
Object of this Guide .....	3
Present Day Difficulties .....	4
Details of Native Dress .....	7
Shops and Markets .....	9
The Faith of Islam .....	12
Position of the Jews .....	14
Tunisian Social Life .....	14
Rules for Health .....	16
Some General Rules .....	18
List of Do's and Don'ts .....	19



## INTRODUCTION

YOU are to do duty in North Africa as a soldier of the Allied Forces, and this guidebook has been prepared to assist you in serving in a strange country as well as to give you a more complete understanding of why you are fighting there and to make your service a more worthwhile personal experience.

No other Allied force has been given a more important mission. After the close of the First World War, one of the great strategists of Europe predicted that the next great war would be won in North Africa. He foresaw such a rise in air power as would make the Mediterranean Sea virtually a defile for all shipping. If their enemies were to come into complete possession of the Mediterranean shores, an almost insupportable strain would be put upon the nations dependent on sea power. On the other hand, if the North African coast could be held by the seapower nations — Great Britain and the United States — its air and sea bases would become the springboard to the reconquest of Europe and the final defeat of the forces dominating that continent.

### THREE YEARS OF STRUGGLE

FOR more than three years, events have sustained this prophecy, and the armed forces of the United Nations and of the Axis have been locked in a tremendous struggle for North Africa. One campaign has followed another across its desert spaces. None was finally successful. For a time it seemed as if the whole of the Mediterranean and the land which surrounded it would be lost to our side. Fighting against tremendous odds and handicapped by shortages of air power and the necessity for deploying their war vessels over most of the waters of the globe, the British had to cease convoying through the Mediterranean except in cases of extreme emergency. Our supply had to make the 13,000-mile journey around the Cape of Good Hope to sustain the Allied forces in the Middle East and Egypt.

But while the Mediterranean lifeline was strained almost to the snapping point in those difficult years, it never broke. At the eastern end the British rallied around the defense of Alexandria and the Suez. At the western end of the sea the great fortress of Gibraltar held. In the center, menacing the German-Italian supply line to Africa, the island of Malta maintained one of the most heroic stands of the war supported by convoy moving in at times from either end of the Mediterranean.

### TUNISIA SPRINGBOARD OF EUROPE

SLENDER though they seemed, Allied hopes for a successful turning of the war were fixed on these three points. Time is proving that this was the decisive calculation. The strong links in our vital supply line are again being pulled together by Allied weapons and manpower. Our armed forces are bringing North Africa under control, and from this base they will make the entry into Europe which will become the death wound of the Nazi and Fascist dictators and of their forces. The soil of Tunisia will probably be the starting point of our attack.

You are a part of this great enterprise. How well you fight and work and how properly you conduct yourself in North Africa will mean much in furthering the cause of your country and her Allies.

### OBJECT OF THIS GUIDE

It is the duty of your chiefs to face the material difficulties which are brought about by the stay of a huge army on the soil of such a little country as Tunisia, ruined already by the war. But you, yourself, will be every day in contact with its inhabitants — Europeans, Jews, Moslems — the latter being those whose reactions are, moreover, the most difficult to foresee. The object of this book is to help you in your



daily acquaintances with men, to make things easier for the Allies, by creating an atmosphere of good will and friendship. It is also, to make of yourselves, combatants and citizens of the Allies the best contrivers of that work, those of whom they will talk a long time, in Tunisia, after your departure, for the honor of your countries.

### **PRESENT DAY DIFFICULTIES**

DURING the past sixty years of French control, Tunisia has experienced a long reign of peace, work, and prosperity. It was in this country that a great liberal experiment was tried for the first time ; for France desired to keep local institutions intact by appointing a resident-general to assist the Bey, and naming directors who were at once advisers and organizers. 2,000 kilometers of railways, 9,000 kilometers of highways, 4 great ports, and important mines were put into operation. Meanwhile, the population has doubled, the number of olive trees has tripled, model farms have multiplied and 500 schools have been opened.

The development of education has resulted here, as in so many other Eastern countries, in the appearance of an educated middle class anxious to play an important, if not exclusive, part in the government of the country and the exploitation of its resources. And so,

while the countries of the Near East which exercise an influence on Tunisia were becoming national states, the desire for self government grew apace here.

One great danger threatened the country however — the menace of an Italian colonization which would have rounded off the work of Fascist conquest accomplished in Lybia, Ethiopià, and Albania. The French, even more conscious of this peril than the Moslems, were trying especially to keep the country in good order and in readiness for defense.

The defeat of 1940, followed by the disastrous period of the armistice and the occupation, gradually weakened the authority of the French officials, while at the same time increasing the power of the Armistice Commissions. After the German landing of November 12, an entirely new situation presented itself. While the French Resident-General was reduced to a mere puppet, the German advisers were turning the head of the Bey and other important people by promising them a flattering independence. Simultaneously they were bringing in Italian reinforcements in an effort to keep a solid base in Africa in spite of the efforts of our armies. With devilish cleverness, using lying one moment and deceit the next, they succeeded, for almost the first time in the history of Islam, in turning a portion of the Moslem population against us.

Our victory — that of the U.S. troops, the English troops, and the French troops-will restore things to their proper order. You are entering a land of ruins,



among a terrified people who have been awakened from their sinister dreams, and among the oppressed will be crying for vengeance.

The duty of soldiers in such circumstances is to leave internal affairs to the political leaders, and to see to it that order is preserved in their own immediate neighborhood so as to allow them to continue the war under the best conditions possible until victory is won.

Don't take sides. Try to be humane towards everybody, towards the French who have been hopefully waiting for your coming, towards the Italians who will be trembling in their defeat, and towards the Native Moslems, whether they have remained faithful or were momentarily led astray by the trickery of an unscrupulous enemy.

With Europeans, who are Christians like yourself, it will be easy. Your relations with the Moslems will be much more difficult, because their society is foreign to us, and their customs different from ours. They belong to a civilization with which you have never been in contact before. The pages which follow are specially intended to help you in your relations with them, and assist you in understanding them and gradually making them our friends once more.

Do not forget that there are Moslem troops throughout North Africa who have already been tried on the battlefield. If you have been through Algeria on

your way to Tunisia, you may have read on the memorials of the last war, mixed among the names of Frenchmen who gave their lives for the cause of liberty, the names of Moslem brothers-in-arms who also sacrificed themselves for the common victory. The Moslems, if they are friends of the Allied nations, will be as loyal with us in this war as their fathers were with yours in the last.

#### DETAILS OF NATIVE DRESS

THE study of costumes and of native dress is one key to an understanding of the people. While the Moslems of Morocco and Libya do not as a rule wear western dress, many in Algeria and Tunisia do so, adding a red fez to their attire to indicate that they are not Christians. Away from the towns, one rarely sees European dress and it is usually easy to guess from a man's costume what country he is from, and what social class he belongs to. Same thing for women.

In Tunisia, neat European clothing, with a fez, is worn by the young man of the middle-class who is, or pretends to be, an intellectual.

The old upper middle-class gentlemen still wear the traditional clothes, including baggy trousers, embroidered waistcoat and one or several ample overcoats made of light weight wool. Turbans cover the head of the religious scholars.

In the Mountains, you will find peasants wearing short overcoats with sleeves made of gross wool ; the bedouin shepherds in the southern plains wear white woolen burnous ; those in the extreme south, Touareg berbers, have their faces veiled, and their heads and bodies wrapped in dark blue cottons.

Here and there, in the big towns, especially in Tunis. you will see Moslem girls dressed in the European style with an almost transparent little veil on their faces. But everywhere else, Moslem women are usually covered from head to foot in a plain white wrapper, with a white veil stretched across her face just beneath the eyes. She may also dress herself with a black cotton gown, rather sad looking and ungracious. Under this unattractive costume, the women wear garments of very bright colors which are revealed only in the privacy of their homes, the idea being that a Moslem woman is not supposed to look attractive in public. The veil likewise is a sign of respectability, distinguishing ladies from scrub women. In the country districts, where women do the heavy labor of the farm and household, they seldom cover their faces. Oddly enough, however, when a girl from the red-light district walks abroad, she is muffled to the eyes in white wrapper and veil. These few rules are to be strictly observed with relation to the Moslem women :

- Never stare at one.
- Never jostle her in a crowd.
- Never speak to her in public.
- Never try to remove the veil.

Don't pay any attention to well-dressed girls whose faces are covered with a light veil.

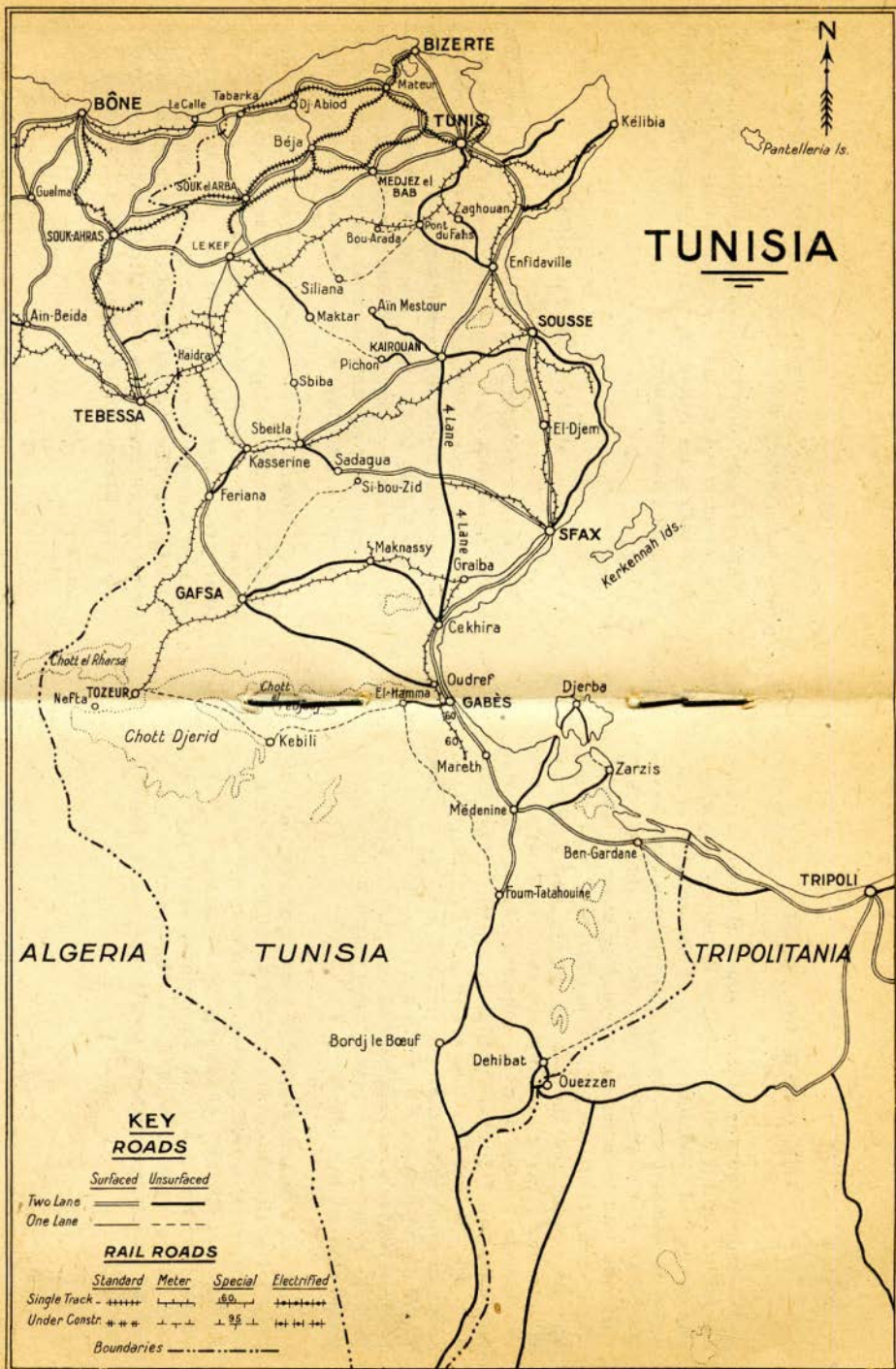
That is very important. Serious troubles and squabbles, even murders, may be the results of it, which would reflect on Allied troop's honor and security, if these rules are not observed.

## SHOPS AND MARKETS

AS to your dealing with the tradesmen, it is wisdom to greet the shopkeeper as ceremoniously as if he were your host. Bargaining and haggling over prices are the expected thing. By accepting it as a game, you should be able to get from one to two-thirds knocked off the original asking price. But bargaining is always to be done politely and abusiveness is a sure way to provoke the hostility of even the humblest Moslem.

In the towns the permanent market is usually built around an open square. Many villages, especially in Morocco and Algeria, hold a market once a week and some are named according to the day, for example Souk el Khemis (sooq-el-kha-MEES) meaning Thursday Market. The market is both a trading and social center where goods are bought and exchanged, marriages are arranged and political deals are made.





## THE FAITH OF ISLAM

TO understand the Moslem you will need to know something of his religion. Islam developed against a background of Christianity and of the religion of the Jews. Mohammed tried to draw the people back to the teachings of the prophets. He declared that there is only one God to whom every man is directly responsible without priests or intermediaries of any kind, and he condemned the use of images and elaborate rituals, and preached against the same vices which are the targets of the average American evangelist. His teachings are reflected in Moslem practice. The mosques are not temples but meeting houses where the congregations foregather for prayers and meditation. There are no priests. The main religious obligations — to proclaim the oneness of God, to give alms to the poor to pray, and to fast — are fulfilled by a high proportion of the people.

All true Moslems observe a month of fasting each year called Ramadan (ra-ma-DAN) which is similar to our Lenten period. During Ramadan the Moslems do not eat, drink, or smoke between sunrise and sunset. Their tempers are accordingly short and they have to be treated with extra consideration. As to special precautions, these points are worth remembering :

Moslems should not be offered food, drink, or smokes during Ramadan except after dark.

They will not permit any substance to be put into their bodies during the days of Ramadan.

Any accident to a Moslem which results in the drawing of blood is apt to have especially serious consequences in this period.

They should not be asked for sustenance of any kind.

In North Africa the Moslems have somewhat elaborated Mohammed's original teachings. One of the added touches is a belief in what is called « el 'Ain, » or the Evil Eye. People may have this power without knowing or wishing it, and it is supposed they put a curse upon anyone on whom they look with envy. Because of belief in the Evil Eye a Moslem hates to have you say to him : « How well you look today ! », or « What a fine son you have today ! » Compliments of this kind if expressed at all should be preceded by « El hamdu li 'Allah » (el HAM-doo-lil-LA) meaning « Praise be to God ! » which takes the curse off it. Some Moslems resent having their pictures taken, because they believe that the camera is an instrument of the Evil Eye.



## POSITION OF THE JEWS

IN the large towns of Tunisia you will find thousands of Jews who have lived on intimate terms with the Moslems for hundreds of years. Many of them are descended from Jewish families which were expelled from Spain with the Moslems a few years before the discovery of America. In North Africa, however, the Jews rarely live among Moslems but occupy a distinct section of the town, which section is called the Mellah (MEL-lah). The traditional clothing for men included a black little skull-cap; women wore a colored shawl and were not veiled. It is still the same in the small towns and in the country, but in the big towns, men and women dress themselves exactly the same as Europeans do.

## TUNISIAN SOCIAL LIFE

THE social life of the Moslems of North Africa and, of course, of those of Tunisia, although they are supposed to be more « involved », in the occidental meaning of the word, is very different from our own, not only because of its leisurely character, but because Moslem men do not make companions of their women. A man's wife attends to the home, bears children, and may work in the fields, but she is in the position of a chattel. If her husband cannot afford to support more than one wife, he still can divorce her with ease and be free to marry again.

It is not conventional for men and women to make dates. Should a respectable woman be found conversing with a man not of the family, scandal will result and sudden death is apt to overtake one or both parties. When a woman walks abroad with a man — even though he be a member of the family — she keeps several paces behind him so that people will not notice them together. Ladies never attend parties with men and seldom eat or drink with them even in the family. Feasts at the time of weddings or circumcisions are enjoyed by men and women in separate groups in separate parts of the house.

When Moslem men want the company of women at a party, they engage a troupe of professional dancing girls. These professionals have a unique social position, not as low as that of the prostitute, but still somewhat degraded. They are said to be more interesting company than the Moslem wife because they get around a great deal and know all the answers. They dance for the men, not with them. Men have dances of their own, but when a Moslem gentleman is seen dancing it is usually a sign that he is a bit plastered.

Moslem houses are arranged to obtain the greatest possible privacy. Windows are small and high. The rooms of the larger houses are grouped around a patio where the women work in the open air. The flat roof serves as a private terrace where the family can get the sun in winter and sleep on the warm summer nights.

Moslem hosts do not show their guests into the



bedroom to leave their coats and hats. If you are invited to dinner, visit the rear before you go, since your host will never offer to show you to the toilet and a request to be taken there would cause confusion. Only the room in which you are received is cleared for visitors.

In the homes of the rich upper middle-class, the rooms in which the guests are entertained, are furnished in the European style, sometimes in a sumptuous way. But the women of the house do not appear in them. It would be bad form and even rude to inquire about them.

When visitors knock at the door and have to get into the house, they have to be careful not to try to see women. The best thing to do is, before stepping over the threshold, to give them time to veil themselves, or even to disappear from the central court or from the rooms in which the visitors will be introduced. So, don't be inquisitive.

### RULES FOR HEALTH

SANITARY conditions vary in North Africa. In the European sections of the bigger towns Europeans and Americans have to take no more precautions than at home. But in the rural parts of much of Tunisia sanitation is very poor. An important rule to follow : do

not eat food sold by native vendors in the street or in small shops.

The principal diseases of the country are typhus, malaria, syphilis, all of the typhoid variants, skin diseases, and amoebic dysentery. One form of typhus in North Africa is carried by lice ; another form, similar to our Rocky Mountain fever, is transmitted by ticks. Syphilis and yaws are very prevalent. In some areas almost 100 percent of the population are affected.

Red and black varieties of the scorpion can give a nasty sting, and an unattended bite from a local cobra or asp will kill you.

The same rules for personal hygiene apply as elsewhere. You must keep your body clean. Inspect your clothes frequently for lice and ticks. These insects frequent the seams of clothing. Since they carry typhus they should be disposed of as quickly as possible. You should use your mosquito net if you do not want to contract malaria.

You should do little sun bathing, and though cases of sunstroke are rare, you should particularly be on guard against too much sun in summer. In a hot, dry climate it is very easy to get a bad burn during a relatively short exposure. This is especially true, at the seaside. Never walk about in the sun without some form of headgear. It is not always necessary to wear a conventional sun helmet — a campaign hat or other helmet is usually sufficient.



Great care should be taken in regard to drinking water. Filter the water whenever possible. Avoid drinking from streams and public wells and fountains, above all those in centers of habitation. The safest rule is to drink water only from a chlorinated lister bag. When that isn't possible and you are among Moslems it is a good idea to drink it in the form of tea, if there is any in the country. That is what the natives do and they make sure to boil the water a long time.

You will often hear it said that you must never eat fruits or green vegetables. Since these foods contain valuable vitamins it is desirable to eat them provided they are served by a well-established restaurant or have been inspected by competent military authorities. But by all means avoid all fruits and vegetables which have been lying around in city markets.

### **SOME GENERAL RULES**

WHEN you meet a Moslem he will want to shake hands. Do it gently ! Do not pump his hand or squeeze too hard. Many of them, especially the city Moslems, have fine hands which are easily hurt. A Moslem may even kiss your hand, or raise his fingers to his lips afterward. Do not laugh at him ; it is his way of showing politeness. Above all, do not slap him on the back and do not handle him ; do not push him in fun or try to wrestle with him, or touch his body in any way, even if you think you know him well.

Moslems do not let other people see them urinate. Do not urinate in their presence. They do it squatting and dislike to see people do it standing up. These things may seem trivial, but they are important.

Tunisians, by and large, have an excellent sense of humor. You will not find it difficult to joke with them because they see the humor in situations easily. If they laugh at you, take it ; don't get angry. Above all, never strike them. They do not know how to box; one right on the jaw would knock a Moslem down. You would make an enemy of everyone that saw you, and word would soon spread around that all Allies are bruisers.

Aside from these few rules, it is well to remember that a man may wear skirts and a beard and still be a man. We need the friendship of these people. We need their willing cooperation in maintaining ourselves in their country and we may require their active help in the fight against the common enemy. To be deserving of it, we must treat them with respect and with dignity. Not to do so may make the difference between success and failure in the great undertakings now facing you and your fellow Allies.

### **LIST OF DO'S AND DON'TS**

DON'T enter mosques.

Smoke or spit somewhere else ; never in front of a mosque.



If you come near a mosque, look away and keep moving.

Avoid shrines or tombs in the country.

Discuss something else ; never religion or women with Moslems.

Keep silent when Moslems are praying, and don't stare at them.

Don't refer to the people as heathen; they are very religious.

Shake hands gently and avoid touching other parts of the body.

Remember that the Moslems are a very modest people and avoid any exposure of the body in their presence.

Always say Bismillah before food when eating with North Africans.

Always say Hamdullah at the end of the meal.

Start eating only after your host has begun.

Always tear your bread with your fingers — never cut it.

Eat with your right hand — never with your left, even if you are a southpaw.

Leave food in the main bowl — what you leave goes to the women and children.

Eat only part of the first course — there may be four or five more coming.

Don't give Moslems food containing pork, bacon, or lard, or cooked in pork products.

Don't eat pork or pork products near Moslems.

Be pleasant if Moslems refuse to eat what you offer. They may consider it religiously unclean.

Don't give Moslems alcoholic drinks.

Don't drink liquor in the presence of Moslems

Knock before seeking admission into a house. If a woman answers, wait outside until she has had time to retire.

Take off your shoes before entering a room — leave your socks on.

When visiting, don't overstay your welcome. The third glass of tea or coffee is the signal to go, unless you are quartered there.

Don't bring a dog into the house.

Be kind to beggars. They are mostly honest unfortunates. Give them one franc occasionally if you can spare it.

When you see grown men walking hand in hand, ignore it, They are not « queer ».

Be kind and considerate to servants. The Moslems are very democratic.

Avoid any expression of race prejudice. The Moslems draw no color line.



Speak Arabic to the people if you can. No matter how badly you do it, they like it.

Avoid talking about or praising Europeans.

Don't use the French word indigene, meaning « native ». This is an insulting term.

Don't believe all that the local Europeans will tell you. Some of them, towards Moslems, are understanding and just ; but others are rude and ignorant.

Don't imitate the attitudes or behavior or all the local Europeans. Some are not held in high respect by the North Africans.

Shake hands gently on meeting and leaving.

If you wish to give someone a present, make it tea, sugar, or, cigarettes. A polite gift is three large conical loaves of sugar.

If you are stationed in the country, it is a good idea to take tea, sugar, and cigarettes with you when you visit a North African home.

Bargain on prices. Don't let shopkeepers or merchants overcharge you. But be polite.

Treat people of all classes as equals.

Be polite. North Africans appreciate courtesy.

Be generous with your cigarettes.

Use common sense on all occasions. These people are basically no different from anyone else.