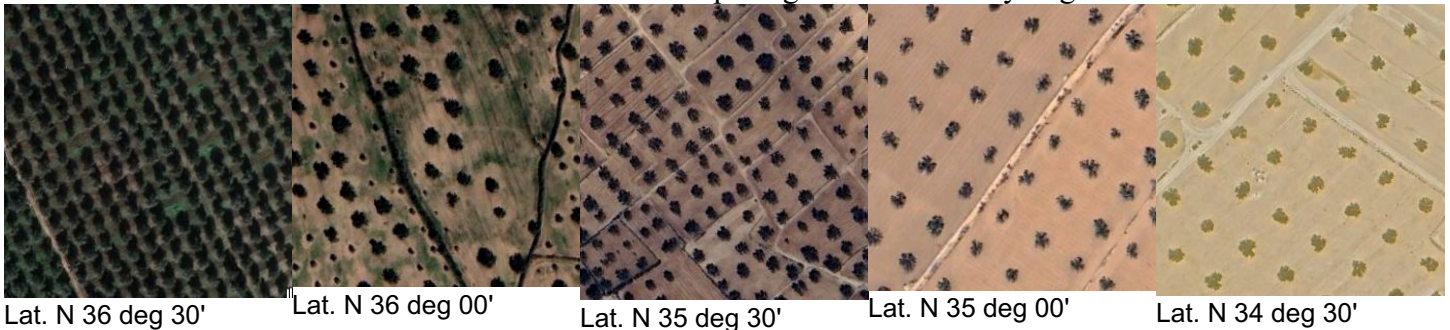


Explore, Part 1. On Friday, 14 July, some of us left Monastir and took a weekend excursion to southern Tunisia to visit several locations. The start of the trip followed a major expressway. Our bus had a tour guide. He explained the abundant fields of olive trees. The spacings between the trees increases southward because of decreasing precipitation towards the Sahara Desert. The ground between the trees has minimal vegetation to reduce competition for water from unproductive plants. That is best seen in satellite views, as follows. These images are somewhat randomly captured from Google Earth at the same 0.5 m resolution, at half-degree latitude intervals. Farther south the trees are at about the same spacings but are not very large.



Olive trees seen from highway

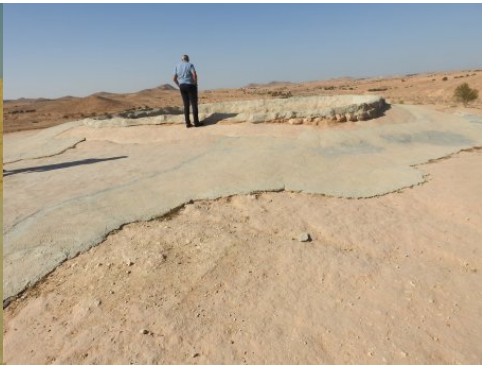


This map shows the route of our weekend trip to the edge of the Sahara Desert. The thin yellow line at the left is the western border of Tunisia. The magenta line traces the roads on which we traveled. The first day we went south, inland from the coast.

Our first stop was in the mountains (gray scratchings) of the Berber settlements at the bend labeled Matmata. There we visited a home that was dug into the soft rock for temperature control. In the city more modern buildings were built on top of the underground homes.

Then we passed through Douz where one of our teams had been sharing English with local residents.

That evening we camped overnight among sand dunes. Tents with beds were available but some of our team moved their beds out under the stars.



Entrances to underground Berber home

Tour guide on home roof

Looking down into home

Our guide apparently has an agreement with this family to show off their unusual home style. He is standing on the concrete roof in the middle photo. The rock is soft and easily eroded in heavy rains, so the concrete roof limits damage. The ground floor is slanted to let rainwater drain out. The underground rooms have nearly the same temperature all year - cool in the Summer heat and warm in the Winter cold.



Entrance tunnel is curved for privacy

A bedroom

Served us bread, oil/honey, mint tea



Rachel examining hand-made garments. Jars of honey below.

Our hostess, home owner

Outer garments, good in sandstorms

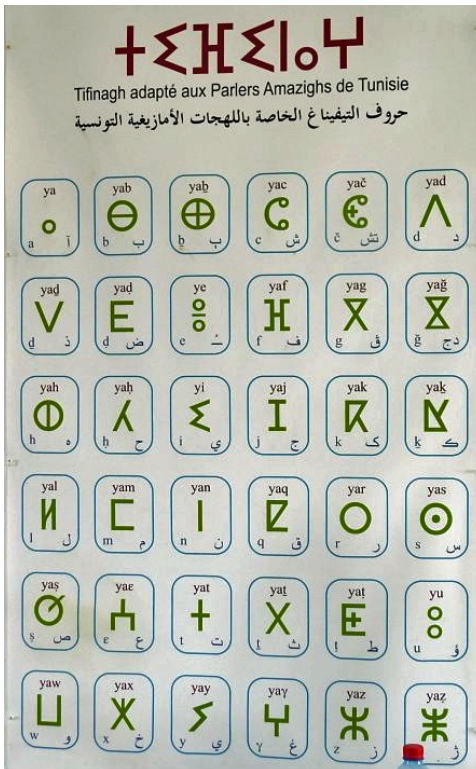


Welcome signs to Matmata

Terraced hillside with shrubs.

City buildings with underground rooms

After descending out of the mountain area, the drive to Douz was across a flat barren landscape. The Douz team joined us for the rest of the weekend.



The Berber alphabet, on Matmata wall



"Desert Rose" samples, mixtures of gypsum and sand found in abundance in this region, but fragile.



A solitary camel, but owned by someone

Then we went to the camp in the sand dunes, arriving at sunset. After some fun in the dunes we saw the hosts bake bread on hot sand heated by charcoals. Dinner was in the dark.



Arrival at sunset



Setting sun



Team members headed for the hills



Dunes controlled by palm mats



Other tourists returning from camel ride



The tent camp at the sand dunes



Making "sand bread"



Dinner under the stars

My tent was initially hot inside, with daytime temperatures near 40 deg. C (more than 100 F). It was comfortable in the morning.



Sunrise



Sunrise



Camels waiting for our team's rides



Men's tents, sleepers. Mine 2nd on left



Some who slept under the stars



Team leaders getting away from the rest



Overnight tracks in the sand

The palm trees of this region are date palms, with a harvest in about September. The shape of the fruit clusters reminded me of the designs of some Jewish coins from 2000 years ago. So the coin designs were of date palms.



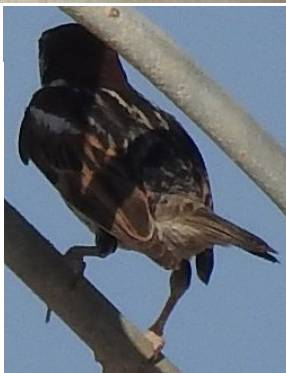
Date palm fruit clusters



L MA
(=year 41)
(=11 A.D.)
palm tree



KAICA POC
(=Caesar's)
barley
ear



Spanish Sparrow

Birds at Matmata

by Dr. Ed Holroyd



KAICA
=Caesar's
barley ear



POC L
year (9 A.D.)
palm tree

more coins at
www.EdHolroyd.info/BiblicalCoins



Eurasian Collared-Dove