

## KEY FACTS

**Official name:** Jumhuriya at Tunisiya (Republic of Tunisia)

**Head of State:** President Moncef Marzouki (CPR) (from 19 Nov 2011)

**Head of government:** Prime Minister Ali Larayedh (Ennahda) (from 14 Mar 2013)

**Ruling party:** Coalition led by Hizb Ennahda (Nahda) (Renaissance Party), with Al Mu'tamar min ajl il Jumhuriyyah (Congress of the Republic) and At Takattul ad Dimuqrati min ajl il 'Amal wal Hurriyyat (Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties) (from 19 Nov 2011)

**Area:** 164,150 square km

**Population:** 10.78 million (2012)\*

**Capital:** Tunis

**Official language:** Arabic

**Currency:** Dinar (D) = 1,000 millimes

**Exchange rate:** D1.66 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

**GDP per capita:** US\$4,232 (2012)\*

**GDP real growth:** 3.60% (2012)\*

**GDP:** US\$45.61 billion (2012)\*

**Labour force:** 3.77 million (2010)

**Unemployment:** 18.90% (2012)\*

**Inflation:** 5.58% (2012)\*

**Oil production:** 65,000 bpd (2012)

**Balance of trade:** -US\$6.03 billion (2012)

**Annual FDI:** US\$432.67 million (2011)

\* estimated figure

# Tunisia



The political climate in Tunisia took a dramatic turn for the worse on 24 July 2013 with the murder of the leader of the left-wing nationalist Movement of the People party, Mohamed Brahmi. It was Tunisia's second political assassination of the year. On 6 February Chokri Belaid, of the same political party, was also murdered in an assassination that the Tunisian government blamed on Islamic extremists. It turned out that the same gun had been used in both killings. The Tunisian government is led by the moderate Islamist Ennahda (Awakening) party (winners of the October 2011 elections).

Ennahda has been criticised for failing to control its more extremist Islamist elements and, by some critics, for actually encouraging them.

## Assassinations

The murder of Chokri Belaid had already resulted in the then prime minister, Hamadi Jebali, losing his job. The protesters that took to the streets in front of the interior ministry accused Ennahda of having been behind the murders. Ennahda defended itself by pointing the finger of blame at a jihadist Salafist grouping bent on derailing the democratic process. One

Tunisian political commentator was quoted as questioning any Ennadha involvement: ‘I just don’t believe that Ennadha would throw stones on its own roof. A third possibility is that the murderers are nostalgic for the *ancien régime*, creating chaos so that people think that the old times were better.’ One Ennadha building was burnt down in Sidi Bou Said, the home of Mr Brahmi and of the Tunisian revolution that led to the Arab Spring. The government, now led by the Islamist Ali Larayedh claimed to have identified Mr Brahmi’s killers.

Mr Larayedh assumed the premiership in the face not only of challenges from within his own party but from the country at large. He had been the head for more than a year of the interior ministry, generally considered to be in need of reform. On his watch large numbers of the population and the media had been constantly critical of his methods. Human Rights Watch (HRW) stated that ‘There’s a mixed picture on the human-rights record from this minister. Under Ali Larayedh, there were several incidents that posed a series of concerns.’ Not the least of the ‘incidents was when the police fired on unarmed protesters in the capital.

Many observers consider Tunisia the only Arabian country remotely capable of achieving democratic rule. The events in Egypt were a shot across the Ennadha bows, reminding Tunisia’s ruling party of the importance of keeping the overall support of those who had voted against it, notably the members of the Movement of the People party. In Tunisia the political process had appeared to be moving forward, symbolised by the final phases of the preparation of the country’s new constitution. Expectations, however, that the constitution would be completed by the end of 2013 began to look optimistic in mid-2013. Deputies in the National Assembly, in which Ennadha has a majority, were unable to agree on the role that Islam would play in the state and in its legal system. President Moncef Marzouki is on record as acknowledging the existence of an ‘ideological abyss’ between the ‘two Tunisias’. Rashid Ghanouchi, the parliamentary leader of Ennadha, was quoted as recognising that both sides had made concessions to avoid a rupture. Despite Ennadha’s reassurances that it supported a pluralistic, religious-neutral constitution which maintains or advances women’s rights, secular groups feared that the new constitution will have religious underpinnings. Ennadha has adopted a more conciliatory stance than that taken by Egypt’s

Muslim Brotherhood. Evidence of this was Ennadha’s decision to reduce its power within the ruling coalition following the murder of Chokri Belaid. Following the murders, Rashid Ghanouchi appealed for national unity, maintaining that the murder of Mr Brahmi was designed to ‘thwart Tunisia’s democratic process and suppress the only successful model in the region, especially since the violence in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon.’ On his first visit to Tunisia, the French President François Hollande made France’s position more than clear: ‘You have an obligation to achieve democracy because you are an example, a reference point, for so many Arab peoples.’ Responding, President Marzouki assured the French President that there was ‘No danger of contagion.’

The downfall of Tunisian dictator (and former president) Zine al Abidine Ben Ali may have been the catalyst for a much wider political trend, but Tunisia has – until the two political murders – managed largely to avoid the chaos, often violent, that had characterised the process in many other countries, notably Egypt. One reason for this is the fact that since the country’s liberation from France in 1956 the Tunisian army has never played any prominent political role. The godfather of Tunisia’s independence, the wily Habib Bourguiba, simply did not trust the army. Tucked away on the middle of the Mahgreb coastline,

Tunisia has never been rich enough to buy fancy weapons for its army, nor – unlike Egypt – prominent enough to be given them for strategic reasons.

## Stasiland?

Despite the superficial appearance of an emancipated state, liberal by Middle Eastern standards, Tunisia’s model had been more the former East Germany than West, more Syria than Lebanon. No less than three secret services existed: one reported directly to the head of state, one was run by the police and the third by the then ruling political party, the misleadingly named Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD) (Democratic Constitutional Assembly).

Since the 2011 uprising, Tunisia’s army has had its work cut out controlling the country’s borders – the anarchy that has pervaded neighbouring Libya has resulted in widespread contraband including arms, drugs and even gasoline (reportedly one third of the gasoline consumed in Tunisia is smuggled in from Algeria). The army has found itself co-operating extensively with the Algerian army in an attempt to prevent Islamist guerrillas creating bases in the area. The murderous guerrilla attack on the Amenas natural gas plant at Tiguentourine in Algeria in January 2013 was warning enough.

If Tunisia could justifiably claim to be the cradle of the Arab Spring, one of the

## KEY INDICATORS

## Tunisia

	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Population	m	*10.33	*10.43	*10.55	*10.65	*10.78
Gross domestic product (GDP)	US\$bn	40.30	43.50	44.30	45.86	*45.61
GDP per capita	US\$	3,907	4,171	4,200	4,351	*4,232
GDP real growth	%	4.5	3.1	3.7	-1.2	*3.6
Inflation	%	5.0	3.5	4.4	3.5	5.6
Unemployment	%	14.2	13.3	13.0	13.0	*18.9
Industrial output	% change	4.0	-0.6	4.4	–	–
Agricultural output	% change	0.5	6.0	-7.9	–	–
Oil output	’000 bpd	89.0	86.0	80.0	78.0	65.0
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	19,184.0	14,419.0	16,493.4	–	17,071.1
Oil	US\$m	–	–	–	–	*2,832.0
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	23,194.0	18,117.0	21,005.4	22,623.0	23,101.9
Balance of trade	US\$m	-4,010.0	-3,699.0	-4,512.0	-4,746.7	-6,030.8
Current account	US\$m	-1,711.0	-1,234.0	-2,104.4	-3,385.7	*-3,671.0
Foreign debt	US\$bn	20.6	21.4	–	–	–
Total reserves minust gold	US\$m	8,849.3	11,057.3	9,459.3	9,055.9	8,357.2
Foreign exchange	US\$m	8,812.9	10,646.5	9,000.3	8,583.5	7,899.1
Exchange rate	per US\$	1.23	1.35	1.43	1.39	1.57

surprises about the uprising – or the Jasmine Revolution as it was better known in Tunisia – was that it first showed itself in Tunisia. Equally surprising was the manner in which the Tunisians, long known for the pride they took in the fact that theirs was a secular, egalitarian state, subsequently voted into power an Islamist party, Ennadha. Before the 2011 revolution, Tunisia was probably the most socially liberal country in the Muslim world. Writing in the Madrid daily, *El País*, the Catalan journalist Jordi Vaquer noted that in Tunisia women particularly had ‘benefited from less restrictive legislation, later marriages, fewer children and higher levels of education. Young people, often trilingual, are ready for a more open and connected society. Emigration now produces not only remittances, but the huge potential of new generations of Euro-Mahgrebis, vectors of social and economic change, developing professional and entrepreneurial projects with one foot on each shore of the Mediterranean.’

### Success – or mistake?

The country’s intellectual élite may have thrown their weight – such as it was – behind the uprising, but only a small percentage of the total population went so far as to participate. Sadly symbolising the failure of the population at large to lend their support to the revolution was the working class Tunis suburb of Ettadhammen which had once been at the heart of the protests. Writing in the London *Spectator* in July 2011, John R Bradley, the author of the book, *Tunisian Tsunami*, (published in December 2011) in a sadly prescient comment said of Ettadhammen that: ‘It now looks like a microcosm of what lies in store for the whole country. These days, only the Islamists are happy. Tunisians belonging to the country’s once vast middle class, who shunned the uprising, have sunk into a collective depression. Many are openly stating what recently was considered sacrilege: the revolution was a terrible mistake.’

In fact, by the end of September 2011, Tunisia’s post revolutionary check list had been an impressive one. Perhaps surprisingly, the military – all 30,000 of them – had returned to their barracks. Also surprisingly, not one, but two civilian governments had been given their marching orders – and gone. The once ruling party of President Ben Ali (the RCD) was not only out of power, it had effectively disappeared, dissolved and discredited. At least

two ministers and a host of civil servants had been placed on trial. Holding the fort between the revolution and the October 2011 elections had been a refreshingly open government lead by Béji Caïd Essebsi who was distinguished for his service in Tunisia’s first government following Tunisia’s independence from France in 1956.

### The economy

According to the World Bank, Tunisia has faced a slow recovery during the transition. Its economic performance deteriorated sharply in 2011, after having recovered in late 2010 from the global financial, fuel and food price crises. With growth stable at 3 per cent, the fiscal deficit down to 1.3 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) and official reserves equivalent to 5 months of imports at the end of 2010, the government began 2011 with the fiscal space to absorb some of the economic shock caused by the January revolution, the knock-on effects from the Libya conflict and the sharp downturn in tourism and foreign direct investments (FDI).

The Interim government in June 2011 approved a supplemental budget to stimulate the economy, increase social assistance and provide resources to lagging regions where the need for jobs and basic services was greatest. The Banque Centrale de Tunisie (central bank) provided a substantial amount of short-term loans to banks to encourage lending and reduce interest rates to encourage borrowing. In spite of these and other efforts, the economy contracted by nearly 2 per cent and unemployment increased from 13 per cent in 2010 to 19 per cent in 2011.

The economic situation in 2012 remained difficult, with GDP growth only moderately positive. Social tensions remained, due to high and increasing unemployment and difficult short-term economic prospects, at a time when Tunisians expected the revolution to improve living standards. Uncertainty about the new leadership led many domestic and foreign investors to adopt a wait-and-see approach. Difficulties in the financial sector were having an adverse impact on the economic recovery. While the authorities’ goal is to minimise external borrowing, the unfavourable international environment and continued fiscal pressures to mitigate social tensions are likely to call for substantial external public borrowing in 2013. The Tunisian recovery could consolidate in 2014, as improved confidence domestically as well as a recovery

in Libya and in the European Union (EU) contribute to raise growth to around 5 per cent.

### Risk assessment

Politics	Fair
Economics	Fair
Regional stability	Fair

### COUNTRY PROFILE

#### Historical profile

670 The Arabs conquered Carthage.

1207–1574 After the Arab Empire collapsed, Tunisia became part of the Moroccan empire of the Almohads before emerging as the independent Hafsid empire.

1600s The Hafsids were defeated by the Ottomans, who developed a system of rule by a local elite descended from the Turks, the Huseinid beys.

1700s Tunisia became a national monarchy.

1881 France invaded Tunisia from Algeria.

1883 Tunisia was declared a French protectorate.

1930s The Néo-Destour nationalist movement developed under Habib Bourguiba, who was jailed by the French.

1942–43 During the Second World War, German and Italian troops, who came to Tunisia to resist allied forces in Algeria, were driven out by the Allies in 1943.

1956 Tunisia gained independence from France under the leadership of Bourguiba.

1957 The monarchy was abolished and the Republic of Tunisia declared.

1961–63 The Tunisian government demanded the withdrawal of French troops from the strategic port of Bizerte; fighting broke out between French and Tunisian forces. French forces left Bizerte following an agreement between the French and Tunisian governments in 1963.

1974 A constitutional amendment named Bourguiba ‘President for Life’.

1981 The first multi-party parliamentary elections since independence were won by President Bourguiba’s party in a landslide victory.

1982–85 The headquarters of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) relocated from Beirut to Tunis, where it stayed until it moved to the Palestinian autonomous areas (Gaza and Jericho) in 1994. In 1985, Israel raided the headquarters in revenge for a PLO attack on a yacht in Larnaca, Cyprus.

1987 In line with the constitution, Prime Minister Zine al Abidine Ben Ali succeeded President Bourguiba, who was declared by his physicians mentally unfit to rule, due to senility.

1989 President Ben Ali won the presidential election; he was re-elected in 1994; both elections were uncontested.

1999 Ben Ali was re-elected for a third term in the first multi-party presidential elections. Mohamed Ghannouchi was appointed prime minister.

2000 Violence erupted in several towns and cities over increasing levels of poverty and price rises in certain basic commodities.

2002 An al Qaeda terrorist bomb killed 19 people in a synagogue in Djerba. A referendum agreed to abolish the three-term limit for incumbent presidents and to raise the age limit of an incumbent president from 70 to 75.

2004 Incumbent Zine al Abidine Ben Ali won 94.5 per cent of the presidential vote, Mohamed Bouchiha won 3.8 per cent. The ruling, Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD) (Democratic Constitutional Rally), was re-elected with 91.6 per cent of the popular vote.

2005 A second parliamentary legislative body, the Chamber of Advisors, was inaugurated with 112 members, drawn from professional bodies, local officials and presidential appointees.

2006 A ban on the wearing in public places of the *hijab* (by women) was introduced. The opposition Mouvement des Démocrates Socialistes (MDS) (Movement of Democratic Socialists), elected May Eljeribi as the first female political leader in Tunisia.

2007 The law banning the wearing of the *hijab* was lifted following a ruling by the Administrative Court of Tunis which deemed it unconstitutional.

2009 President Zine al Abidine Ben Ali (RCD) was re-elected to a fifth consecutive five-year term in office. Two prominent opposition candidates boycotted the elections. In parliamentary elections, the ruling RCD won 84.6 per cent of the vote (161 seats out of 214).

2010 The annual cereal harvest was halved following a drought during the time of sowing; around two million tonnes were imported to make up the shortfall. The UN announced that Tunisia was among one of the few African states to have achieved their Millennium Development Goals. On 17 December, a street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi immolated himself in the town of Sidi Bouzid (central Tunisia), in protest at having his fruit and scales confiscated by municipal inspectors. The next day, his family berated the town's governor by throwing coins over at the office gate, crying 'here is your bribe' and were joined by other protesters complaining about corruption, nepotism and officials taking bribes. As crowds grew, police reacted by beating protesters and

firing tear gas. Extra police were drafted into Sidi Bouzid and two more protestors killed themselves. Demonstrations of solidarity with Sidi Bouzid began in Tunis. Independent trade union activists called on people to demonstrate and about 1,000 people demanded work and an end to corruption and, for the first time, the resignation of President Ben Ali. The president visited Mohamed Bouazizi in hospital. Security forces stopped the demonstration in Tunis as other demonstrations began in provincial cities of Sousse, Sfax and Meknassy. Lawyers staged protests and were violently assaulted by security forces, causing various degrees of injury.

2011 Mohamed Bouazizi died on 4 January. Steep rises in food prices and widespread unemployment underlined the angry protests as riots broke out, which were quelled by security forces, at the cost of 21 deaths. Military personnel were deployed in a number of towns nationwide. The interior minister was sacked. A night-time curfew was launched in Tunis, but was largely ignored as the general population joined protestors, concerned by the weak economy and political frustration with the rule of President Ben Ali. In a speech in January the president announced that he would not stand for election again in 2014. While the country was under a state of emergency, President Ben Ali was forced to resign and went into exile in Saudi Arabia. Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi appointed himself acting president, under Article 56 of the constitution. However, the Constitutional Court declared that Ben Ali had permanently vacated the presidency and Fouad Mebazaa was appointed interim president, under Article 57 of the constitution. Ghannouchi tried to form a government of unity that included members of the opposition. International arrest warrants were issued for Ben Ali and his family, accusing them of illegally acquiring property and other assets and removing state funds aboard. In February, the revised figure of numbers killed during the overthrow of former president Ben Ali was at least 219. The Mebazaa administration decided to suspend and close the offices of the RCD, before a final decision was taken on the future of the party. The lower house of the senate passed legislation to allow President Mebazaa to rule by decree, thereby side-stepping parliament which was still dominated by Ben Ali supporters. A court dissolved the former ruling RCD and thus prevented the party from putting forward any candidates for future elections. Mohammed Ghannouchi resigned as prime minister in February and Béji Caid Essebsi was appointed in his place. The moderate Islamist political party Ennahda was

legalised in March, allowing it to contest presidential and parliamentary elections. President Mebazaa announced that an interim government would stay in power until a new constitution could be written. Elections for members for a council of representatives to rewrite the constitution were scheduled for July. In March around 19,000 Tunisians had fled to the Italian island of Lampedusa, overwhelming local resources and immigration procedures, and prompting Italy to call on the EU for increased funds to deal with the influx. Accusations against ex-president Ben Ali, his family and close associates had, in April, grown to include charges of involuntary manslaughter and drug-trafficking. In June the interim government announced a three month delay to elections originally planned for July. The elections were re-scheduled for 23 October. Ben Ali was tried *in absentia* in June, on charges of possessing illegal drugs and weapons and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment; abroad, he denied all charges of embezzlement and misuse of state funds, nonetheless he was found guilty and he and his wife were sentenced to 35 years imprisonment and fined US\$66 million between them. Later, the ex-president, his daughter and son-in-law were also found guilty *in absentia* of corrupt property dealing and sentenced to 16 years in goal and jointly fined US\$100 million. The election for the 217-seat Tunisian Constituent Assembly (TCA) (of which 18 members represent expatriate Tunisians in North America and Europe) was held in October. The TCA has a mandate to draft a new constitution. In November, the winning, moderate, centre-right, Hizb Ennahda (Nahda) (Renaissance Party) formed a coalition with the Congrès pour la République (CPR) (Congress of the Republic) and the Forum Démocratique pour le Travail et les Libertés (Ettakatol) (Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties). Hamadi Jebali (Nahda) was appointed as prime minister, Moncef Marzouki (CPR) as president and Mustafa Ben Jaafar (Ettakatol) as speaker of the TCA. Interim Prime Minister Béji Caid Essebsi resigned in November. The constituent assembly endorsed Marzouki as president on 14 December with 153 votes (out of 217) in favour. The TCA is a sovereign entity and may set its own timetable for drafting the constitution. It also has the power to either appoint a new government or endorse the current administration until a general election is held.

2012 On 27 March, senior members of Nahda said they would not support moves by the Salafis (ultra-conservative Muslims) to enshrine *Sharia* (Islamic law) into the new constitution, although Nahda itself supported the rule that proclaimed Tunisia

as an Islamic state. A series of clashes with the Salafis began on 28 May, when hundreds attacked bars and shops in Jendouba and were stopped by security personnel. The Salafis rioted again in June, August and October. However in August thousands gathered in Tunis to protest at moves by the Islamist-led TCA with plans to reduce women's rights, when details of the draft constitution were made known. On 10 October parliament was told that the draft constitution was almost ready for consideration, but by mid-December no news of its publication was available.

2013 Prominent secular figure, Chokri Belaid, was assassinated on 6 February. His death sparked mass protests and forced Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali to resign on 19 February. Mr Jebali had attempted to form a non-partisan government, but his Ennahda party rejected it. Ali Larayedh became prime minister on 14 March. The opposition MP for Sidi Bouzid, birthplace of Arab Spring, Mohamed Brahmī, was murdered on 24 July, plunging Tunisia into political crisis. There were reports that the same gun was used to kill both Belaid and Brahmī. Opposition legislators called for the Islamist-led government to be replaced by a national unity administration. Several dozen withdrew from the national assembly. On 1 August the minister of education, Salem Labyedh, a secular politician, resigned following the assassination of Mr Brahmī. His decision came amid growing pressure from opposition groups on the Islamist-led government to step down. There were large demonstrations in Tunis on 7 August, held to demand the resignation of the Islamist-led government. The powerful Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) had called on its 600,000 members to join the demonstrations. A meeting of political parties and civil society organisations (Workers' Party, Nidaa Tounes, the Ettakatol reforming movement, El Kotb, the Socialist Party, the Farmers' Voice, the Arab Democratic Vanguard Party, The Tunisian Anti-Torture Organisation and the Union of Unemployed Graduates) held on 26 July announced the formation of a National Salvation Front (NSF). The NSF has set itself the task of forming a national higher authority for national salvation. On 25 August thousands of Tunisians rallied outside the National Assembly after the NSF called for protests and the resignation of the Islamic-led government. The Salafist Ansar al-Sharia movement was designated as a 'terrorist group' on 27 August. The government accused the hardline group of being behind the killing of two politicians. Talks between the government and its opponents to negotiate a caretaker government

were agreed on 28 September, to start in the week beginning 30 October. The Ennahda government agreed to resign and hand power to an independent transition leadership, and set a date for elections. The UGTT labour union will mediate the talks. On 5 October the deal was signed in Tunis between Ennahda and the opposition; a caretaker cabinet of technocratic, independent figures will be in power until fresh elections can be held.

### Political structure

#### Constitution

The constitution was introduced in 1959. Parties must be officially recognised before they can contest elections. Legal opposition parties are guaranteed a minimum of 34 seats in the lower chamber of parliament.

Constitutional amendments in 2002, included unlimited terms of office for the president and a age limit of 75 years and gave the president control over voting procedures and immunity from prosecution for life.

A new second legislative chamber was also agreed.

#### Independence date

20 March 1956

#### Form of state

Republic

#### The executive

Prior to the Jasmine Revolution in 2011, executive power was held by the president, who was also Head of State, elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term. After the October 2011 elections, the Tunisian Constituent Assembly (TCA) was charged with formulating a new constitution.

#### National legislature

The Tunisian Constituent Assembly (TCA) was elected with 217 members (of which 18 members represent expatriate Tunisians in North America and Europe) in October 2011, with a mandate to draft a new constitution. Although the TCA has 12 months to draft a new constitution it also has sovereignty and may set its own timetable. It has the power to appoint a new government or endorse the current administration until a general election is held.

#### Legal system

The legal system is based on the French civil law system and Islamic law. There is some judicial review of legislative acts in the Supreme Court.

#### Last elections

23 October 2011 (Tunisian Constituent Assembly (TCA))

**Results:** TCA: Hizb Ennahda (Nahda) (Renaissance Party) won 38.9 per cent of the vote (90 seats out of 217), Al Mu'tamar min ajl il Jumhuriyyah (also known (in French) as Congrès pour la

République (CPR)) (Congress of the Republic) 8.37 per cent (30), At Takattul ad Dimuqrati min ajl il 'Amal wal Hurriyyat (also known (in French) as Forum Démocratique pour le Travail et les Libertés (Ettakatol)) (Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties) 6.3 per cent (21), Al 'Aridah ash Sha'biyyah lil Hurriyyah wal 'Adalah wal Tanmiyah (also known (in French) as Pétition Populaire pour la Liberté, la Justice et le Développement (Pétition Populaire) (Popular Petition) 6.27 per cent (20), Hizb ad Dimuqrati at Taqaddumi (also known (in French) as Parti Démocrate Progressiste (PDP) (Progressive Democratic Party) 1.6; seven other political parties won between 2–5 seats, eight other political parties each won one seat and nine independent candidates were elected.

#### Next elections

To be announced.

### Political parties

#### Ruling party

Coalition led by Hizb Ennahda (Nahda) (Renaissance Party), with Al Mu'tamar min ajl il Jumhuriyyah (Congress of the Republic) and At Takattul ad Dimuqrati min ajl il 'Amal wal Hurriyyat (Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties) (from 19 Nov 2011)

#### Main opposition party

There is no main opposition party but a number of small, principally secular, parties, including the new (formed in July 2012) Nidaa Tounes (Call for Tunisia), led by former prime minister Béji Caïd Essebsi.

### Population

10.78 million (2012)\*

Approximately 8 per cent of the population live below the national poverty line.

**Last census:** September 2004: 9,932,400

**Population density:** 60 inhabitants per square km. Urban population 67 per cent (2010 Unicef).

**Annual growth rate:** 1.2 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

#### Ethnic make-up

Arab-Berber (98 per cent), European (1 per cent), other (1 per cent).

#### Religions

Islam is the state religion – observance is strong (98 per cent); Christianity (1 per cent); Jewish (1 per cent) – there has been a Jewish population on the southern island of Djerba for 2,000 years and there remains a small Jewish population in Tunis which is descended from those who fled Spain in the late fifteenth century.

### Education

Education is free up to university level – the government typically spends as much

as 20 per cent of its revenues on an extensive education system. Primary education begins aged six, and lasts for six years. Secondary education begins at 12 and lasts seven years. Registration at primary schools is 95 per cent (100 per cent of boys and 89 per cent of girls) – the highest in north Africa and the Middle East. A compulsory schooling period of nine years has been introduced, although some children still leave school at the age of 12, especially in rural areas. A stronger emphasis has been placed on scientific and technical subjects at secondary level. **Literacy rate:** 73 per cent adult rate; 94 per cent youth rate (15–24) (Unesco 2005).

**Compulsory years:** Six to 16.

**Pupils per teacher:** 24 in primary schools.

### Health

State healthcare is provided free of charge to the families of employees paying social security contributions and at least nominal tax. This covers an estimated 70 per cent of the population. Free state healthcare is also available for those with any kind of disability. The discrepancy between urban and rural access to healthcare diminished during the 1990s, with most rural areas having at least basic health clinics.

There is a well-developed private healthcare sector, with private clinics in towns providing substantially better facilities than state hospitals. Many healthcare professionals have carried out at least part of their training abroad, mostly in France.

### HIV/Aids

**HIV prevalence:** 0.1 per cent aged 15–49 in 2003 (World Bank)

**Life expectancy:** 72 years, 2004 (WHO 2006)

**Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate:** 2.0 births per woman, 2010 (Unicef)

**Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000):** 16 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012); 4 per cent of children under aged five are malnourished (World Bank).

**Head of population per physician:** 1.34 physicians per 1,000 people, 2004 (WHO 2006)

### Welfare

The social security system provides pensions for the elderly and disabled, and welfare for orphans and the needy. A total of 945,500 employees, or 47.7 per cent of the workforce, are insured under the social security system. The scheme is financed by compulsory levies from employers and employees. There are no contributions from the state budget. The main social security institution is the Caisse Nationale de la Sécurité Sociale

(CNSS) (National Social Security Organisation), which deals with about 45 per cent of outlay.

There is a graded scheme for contributions. The non-agricultural private sector pays most as a proportion of the employee's salary: 11.5 per cent paid by the employer and 6.25 per cent by the employee. In the public sector, where contributions are made to the Caisse Nationale de Retraite et de Prévoyance Sociale (CNRPS) (National Pension Fund), the employer pays 8 per cent and the employee 7 per cent. State pensions are paid to CNSS and CNRPS contributors.

### Main cities

Tunis (capital, estimated population 743,724 in 2012), Ariana (329,396), Sfax (288,745), Ettadhamen (242,050), Sousse (221,388), Qabis (128,358), Kairouan (128,225), Binzart (124,791), al Muruj (99,168), Qafsah (92,804).

### Languages spoken

French is the business language. The number of Tunisians speaking English is increasing.

### Official language/s

Arabic

### Media

The government maintains control of all media reporting by and encourages widespread self-censorship, with fines and imprisonment as ultimate sanctions.

### Press

The government uses mandatory pre-screening and controls the advertising revenue to censor 'unacceptable' publications. While the constitution guarantees freedom of expression, the Press Code gives allows wide-ranging powers to ban publications.

There are several independent newspapers and magazines, including two opposition party journals.

**Dailies:** In Arabic, *Al Horria* ([www.tunisieinfo.com/alhorria](http://www.tunisieinfo.com/alhorria)), published by the RCD political party, *Assabah* ([www.assabah.com.tn](http://www.assabah.com.tn)) and *Essahafa* ([www.essahafa.info.tn](http://www.essahafa.info.tn)). Publications from Tunis include *Al Chourouk* ([www.alchourouk.com](http://www.alchourouk.com)) and *el Wahda* ([www.elwahda.org.tn](http://www.elwahda.org.tn)).

In French, *La Presse* ([www.lapresse.tn](http://www.lapresse.tn)), published by the RCD political party, *Le Renouveau* ([www.tunisieinfo.com/LeRenouveau](http://www.tunisieinfo.com/LeRenouveau)).

**Weeklies:** In French, *Réalités* ([www.realites.com.tn](http://www.realites.com.tn)) and *L'Observateur* and *L'Avenir*. In Arabic, *Ar Rai* and *Al Moustaqbal*. Others are *Dialogue*, *Al Tariq al Jadid* and *Al Mauqif*. In English, *Tunisia News* is published in the Maghreb, on Saturdays.

**Business:** *L'Economiste Maghreb* ([www.leconomiste.com.tn](http://www.leconomiste.com.tn)), is published bi-monthly.

**Periodicals:** There are many magazines published in Arabic, French and one in Italian.

### Broadcasting

**Radio:** Tunisian Radio ([www.radiotunis.com](http://www.radiotunis.com)), with four stations covering, news, youth, culture and live transmissions. Other private, commercial stations include Radio Mosaïque FM ([www.mosaiquefm.net](http://www.mosaiquefm.net)), Jawhara FM ([www.jawharafm.net](http://www.jawharafm.net)) and the religious station Ezzitouna Radio.

**Television:** La Télévision Tunisienne (<http://tunisiatv.com>) is the national, state-run TV with two channels, Tunis 7 and Canal 21. The other domestic channel is Hannibal TV ([www.hannibaltv.com.tn](http://www.hannibaltv.com.tn)), with a wide variety of programmes. Pan-Arab channels are readily received.

**National news agency:** Tunisian News Agency (TAP) (in Arabic, French and English)

### Economy

The geography of Tunisia has an important influence on its economy. In the southern half of the country desert conditions limit production, while the fertile northern region is heavily populated, with tourism a major source of foreign exchange. The service sector dominates the economy, constituting around 60 per cent of GDP; industry and manufacturing accounts for over 30 per cent of GDP and agriculture less than 10 per cent. Although agriculture has fallen in its primary significance to the economy it nevertheless employs just under a quarter of the labour force.

At the end of 2011, proven oil reserves were 400,000 barrels, with production of 78,000 barrels per day (bpd) (down from a high of 80,000bpd in 2010). As long-term production in oil and gas has fallen the government has attempted to diversify the economy further, into other industries and an expanded manufacturing base, with a programme to enhance productivity in preparation for global competition.

Other industries include mining, (iron ore, phosphates and salt) and manufacturing of, among others items, food processing, clothing and textiles, fabricated and finished products, parts and materials, chemicals, ceramics, glass and crystal, plastics and paper. Tunisia is self-sufficient in seafood, crops, dairy and meat, of which beef and lamb dominates, and it is a leading producer of olive oil, dates and potatoes, as well as other fruits, grains and livestock and seafood, most of which are exported.

GDP growth was 4.5 per cent in 2008, at a time of high world prices for fuel and food. The economy weakened in 2009, falling to 3.1 per cent as the global economic crisis cut trade. Growth did not increase in 2010, at a time when global trade picked up and GDP was 3 per cent. The Arab Spring revolution tumult began in Tunisia in 2011 and adversely affected the service sector, with visitor numbers dropping dramatically and revenue from tourism cut by 50 per cent causing negative growth of -1.2 per cent. Tourists returned in 2012 and GDP growth was forecast to climb to 2.7 per cent. Remittances in 2010 were US\$2.1 billion (4.4 per cent of GDP), but were estimated to have fallen to US\$1.96 billion in 2011. Tunisia is a country where 55 per cent of the population is aged under 25 and where a growing work force has led to an official unemployment rate of around 14 per cent; however with high underemployment this rate may not reflect the true nature of the jobless market. Tunisia has been a closed economy, which severely restricted foreign investment and domestic private enterprise. It was the lack of opportunity and corruption that led to the revolution that toppled the Ben Ali regime in January 2011. Tunisia has not only to address its underlying economic weaknesses and develop its future direction through reform, but also to contend with a foreign debt rating that was cut from Baa2 to Baa3 by the international credit ratings agency Moody's in January 2011. The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank announced in 2010, that they were setting up a regional initiative of up to US\$1 billion to help close the infrastructure gap in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) and help boost economic growth. The World Bank considers that the Mena region requires US\$75–100 billion per year to sustain the growth of recent years and boost economic competitiveness. However private sector investment is limited and the new initiative should address the shortfall in investment through Sharia-compliant and conventional investment. The initiative should benefit Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and Tunisia in particular.

### External trade

In 2005 the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (Gafsa) was ratified by 17 members, including Tunisia, creating an Arab economic bloc. A customs union was established whereby tariffs within Gafsa will be reduced by a percentage each year, until none remain. It is also a signatory of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership agreement, which provides for the introduction of free trade between the EU and 10 Mediterranean countries by 2012.

Despite natural resources including oil, natural gas, phosphate (of which Tunisia is the world's largest producer) and iron, foreign earnings are dominated by agriculture and tourism.

### Imports

Main imports are raw cotton, machinery and electronic equipment, vehicles and hydrocarbons.

**Main sources:** France (18.3 per cent of total in 2011), Italy (15.8 per cent), Germany (7.4 per cent).

### Exports

Main export commodities are foodstuffs, textiles, clothing and footwear, steelwork, phosphate, iron ore, manufactured and leather goods, agricultural products, chemicals and hydrocarbons.

**Main destinations:** France (30.7 per cent of total in 2011), Italy (21.6 per cent), Germany (9.1 per cent).

### Agriculture

Total agricultural land is 15.5 million hectares, of which 31 per cent are pastoral land, 17.4 per cent arable and 14.3 per cent permanent crops. Around 20 per cent of the workforce are employed in agriculture.

The government sees agriculture as a principal growth sector, however it is heavily influenced by the climate and rainfall. The principal area of cultivation is in north, along the Mediterranean coast, where ancient oil groves are still located. Major projects to augment irrigation are underway, with a new dam and reservoir supplying the north-east region and waterways being installed. In the desert south, oasis crops of dates are famous and exported throughout the region and Europe. In the central area rainfall directly affects crop production as a wet year will produce a good harvest; conversely, a dry year risks desertification.

The agricultural investment code offers tax and other financial advantages, while the Agence de Promotion des Investissements Agricoles (APIA) (Agency for the Promotion of Agricultural Investment) channels investment into agriculture. The Banque Nationale Agricole (BNA) provides medium- and long-term credit for agricultural development projects. Since all suitable land is already being farmed, government policy centres on improving yields through new farming techniques and making the most of water resources. Rural depopulation, an inequitable land tenure system, drought, soil erosion, overgrazing and low producer prices remain the major constraints to development. The country's 55 million olive trees occupy one-third of all arable land and olive oil, at over 70 per cent of production it is the most important agricultural export. Tunisia is the world's fourth, after Italy,

Spain, Greece, largest exporter. Other main products from the sector are flour, sugar, tomato paste, milk, wine and animal feed.

The recent growth in organic food has encouraged over 240 operations, which have attracted international certification accredited to the EU, producing among others, olive oil and dates.

Most seafood production is for domestic consumption and the sector is relatively undeveloped, with extensive small-scale fishing using more traditional methods.

The coastal areas around Sfax and the Kerkennah Islands, where the sea is very shallow, are well-known locally for their fishing industry. Total seafood production is typically around 80,000 tonnes, with some 20 per cent of this exported.

Catches typically include sardines, pilchards, tuna and whitefish. However, tuna fishing is diminishing as Mediterranean stocks decline.

An arid climate, a fast-growing population and animal herds have put Tunisia's already limited woodland areas at serious risk. However efforts to reverse the trend have increased forests by 0.2 per cent or 1,000 hectares.

The oak forests of the country's north provide timber and cork.

### Industry and manufacturing

The industrial sector is based primarily on processing domestic raw materials, notably phosphates and agricultural commodities, and textiles, including clothing and leather products. An industrial restructuring programme launched in the mid-1990s has seen high levels of public investment in upgrading businesses' competitiveness in preparation for the liberalisation of markets and European competition. The present strategy is to target specific types of products where relatively cheap labour, proximity to Europe and government incentives can combine to give Tunisia a price and quality advantage over other exporters. The programme has been particularly successful among small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Industrial production increased by 4.2 per cent in 2004 and accounted for 27.8 per cent of GDP, of which manufacturing was 17.7, recording growth at 4.6 per cent.

### Tourism

Tourist numbers slumped from 4.5 million in 2010 to 2.5 million in 2011 as the Tunisian revolution that sparked other uprisings, later known as the Arab Spring, frightened off many visitors. The tourism authorities have launched major campaigns, not only to bring back previous visitors but also to diversify and target other markets, such as Turkey, Russia and China.

There are eight sites included on Unesco's World Heritage List, many of which belong to Tunisia's classical history and the many fine monuments from earlier civilisations. The Ichkeul lake and wetlands (in the Ichkeul National Park) are a major stopover point for hundreds of thousands of migrating birds. There are traditional habitats of the Matmata of carved stone rooms in a mountainous region (as seen in the Hollywood blockbuster *Star Wars*) and the Bedouin encampments in the south, in the Sahara Desert. While most visitors choose to enjoy the sun and leisure in some of the latest beach resort developments.

Travel and tourism contributed an average 18.7 per cent of GDP over 2007–10, dropping to 14.2 per cent in 2011; it is predicted to grow to 14.4 per cent in 2012. The industry provided employment to 16.9 per cent of the workforce (537,875 jobs) in the period, falling to 12.8 per cent in 2011 (415,500 jobs). The infrastructure is comprehensive with ferries from Europe, a number of motorways and a rail service that runs from the capital to other major towns.

### Mining

The mining sector contributes 3 per cent of GDP and employs 4 per cent of the working population. Tunisia is the world's fifth-largest source of phosphates although the quality of the rock mined is poor. Extraction (largely in Metlaoui and Gafsa) is geared increasingly towards local phosphate processing rather than exporting it in a raw state. Other important minerals mined include iron ore, salt, fluor spar, barytes, lead, zinc, potash and uranium. Foreign investment is being sought by the government for the mining industry.

### Hydrocarbons

Total oil reserves stood at 400 million barrels in 2011, with production at 78,000 barrels per day (bpd). Most of the country's oil deposits are located offshore in the Gulf of Gabés.

There is one refinery at Bizerte, with a small capacity of 34,000bpd. The state-owned Societe Tunisienne des Industries de Raffinage (STIR) is overseeing plans for a new 120,000bpd joint Tunisian-Libyan oil refinery, sited in the east at La Skhira.

To replace declining oil reserves, the government is promoting the natural gas sector; local production typically meets 80 per cent of domestic demand. In May 2012 the new government resumed negotiations concerning investment by Qatar Petroleum in the expansion of the existing Skhira oil refinery, in the south-east of Tunisia. The D3 billion (US\$4.6 billion) project should begin work by the end of

2012 and when completed 2014–15 will produce 250,000bpd.

Proved natural gas reserves were 56.6 billion cubic metres in 2011, with production of 2 billion cubic metres. There is a network of pipelines transporting natural gas from fields offshore and in the south-west as well as a number of planned international natural gas pipelines transiting Tunisia from Algeria and Libya, to supply natural gas to Europe via the Transmed pipeline to Italy.

Tunisia does not produce coal but imports around 112,000 tonnes per annum of coke.

### Energy

Total installed generating capacity was 3.3GW in 2007. The state-owned electricity and gas company, Société Tunisienne de l'Electricité et du Gaz (STEG) no longer has a monopoly on power generation, although the company retains its monopoly on distribution. Demand for electricity is growing by 7 per cent per annum; around 95 per cent of homes have access to electricity. The government intends to add around 300MW of generating capacity every 2–3 years.

### Financial markets

#### Stock exchange

Bourse de Tunis (Tunis Stock Exchange)

### Banking and insurance

Tunisia aims to become the regional financial centre and is keen to build on its status as an economy with investment grade status. However, the banking sector is overcrowded, plagued by bad debts and dominated by the public sector.

The government is determined to rationalise the sector and the government has engaged in a modernisation programme, including privatisation and mergers in a process of consolidation in the sector. The capital base of many banks has improved with the injection of government funds into state-owned banks and the restructuring of non-performing loans.

By June 2010, the Kuwaiti-owned Burgan Bank had completed the purchase of Tunis International Bank from the United Gulf Bank as part of its regional expansion strategy. The US\$725 million purchase will allow the Burgan Bank access to other North African markets, to offer specifically investment banking and asset management.

#### Central bank

Banque Centrale de Tunisie

#### Main financial centre

Tunis

### Time

GMT plus one hour

### Geography

Tunisia is in North Africa, between Algeria to its west and Libya to its south-east. The north and eastern borders are a long, 1,148km Mediterranean coastline. It has two islands off its eastern coast, the larger of which, Ile de Jerba, is connected to the mainland by a 6km causeway, and is the location of Tunisia largest international airport. The other is the island chain of the Iles des Kerkennah.

The mainland has three distinct regions from the fertile north where most of the agricultural crops are grown, and where the Atlas mountains run down to the sea. The middle section is semi-arid desert that is wholly dependent on rainfall for its agricultural produce; the Sahara Desert occupies the southern region, and is largely unproductive. There are no major rivers, irrigation is supplied through rainwater dams and bore-holes.

### Hemisphere

Northern

### Climate

The northern coastal area has a Mediterranean climate with warm, rainy winters (December–March) and hot summers. The southern and inland area is hot and arid. Temperatures in Tunis range from 6–14 degrees Celsius (C) in January to 21–33 degrees C in August. The wettest month is January and the driest is July.

### Dress codes

Formal attire should be worn for business meetings. Women should wear clothes that cover most of the body, including shoulders and legs. In the countryside, western dress and customs are rare and dress should be modest.

### Entry requirements

#### Passports

Required by all, and must be valid for at least six months beyond date of visit.

#### Visa

Required by all; some exceptions, for visits up to three months, include citizens of US, EU, certain Arab, and many Commonwealth countries. A full list of exceptions can be found at [www.tunisia.or.jp/](http://www.tunisia.or.jp/) (see under visas). Business travellers from these countries may visit as a tourist without further reference. Those visitors, both business and tourist, not included on the list should contact the nearest Tunisian consulate for information and visa application form at least three weeks before departure.

#### Currency advice/regulations

Local currency may not be imported or exported; there are no restrictions on the import of foreign currency. However, the re-export of foreign cash is limited to the amount imported, and the re-conversion of dinars into foreign exchange may not

exceed 30 per cent of any foreign currency converted during the visit, or D100, whichever is the greater. Therefore all currency forms should be retained.

Traveller's cheques are widely accepted, and preferably made up of sterling, euros or US dollars.

### Customs

Personal items are duty-free and gifts to the value of D100 are allowed.

Antiques require an exit permit.

### Prohibited imports

Firearms (except for hunting), explosives, narcotics, immoral or obscene publications, walkie-talkies and material deemed subversive.

### Health (for visitors)

#### Mandatory precautions

Yellow fever vaccination certificate required if arriving from an infected area.

#### Advisable precautions

Immunisation is recommended against diphtheria, hepatitis, polio, tetanus and typhoid. Rabies is present. Water precautions should be taken outside main towns: boil tap water or drink mineral water and wash fresh foods carefully.

### Hotels

Classified into five categories; a government hotel tax is added to the bill. Hotel and restaurant staff expect 10 per cent tip.

### Credit cards

Major credit and charge cards are widely accepted. ATMs are common in town centres.

### Public holidays (national)

#### Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 20 Mar (Independence Day), 21 Mar (Youth Day), 9 Apr (Martyrs' Day), 1 May (Labour Day), 25 Jul (Republic Day), 13 Aug (Women's Day), 7 Nov (New Era Day/Accession of President Ben Ali).

Many businesses close during July/August.

#### Variable dates

Eid al Adha (*Tabaski*, two days), Islamic New Year, Birth of the Prophet, Eid al Fitr (*Korit *, two days).

#### Islamic year 1434 (15 Nov 2012–05

Nov 2013): The Islamic year contains 354 or 355 days, with the result that Muslim feasts advance by 10–12 days against the Gregorian calendar. Dates of feasts vary according to the sighting of the new moon, so cannot be forecast exactly.

### Working hours

The weekly day of rest is Sunday, not Friday as is usual in the Muslim world. Tunis is virtually closed down during August.

### Banking

Mon–Fri (summer): 0730–1130;

Mon–Thu (winter): 0800–1100 and

1400–1615, Fri (winter): 0800–1100 and 1300–1600.

### Business

Mon–Sat (summer): 0830–1300; Mon–Fri (winter): 0830–1300, 1500–1745.

### Government

Mon–Sat (summer): 0830–1300; Mon–Fri (winter): 0830–1300, 1500–1745. Government offices' opening hours may vary by half an hour.

### Shops

Mon–Sat (summer): 0800–1200 and

1600–1900; Mon–Sat (winter):

0900–1300 and 1500–1900.

### Telecommunications

#### Mobile/cell phones

There are 900 GSM services available, with coverage throughout the inhabited part of the country.

### Electricity supply

220V AC, with round two-pin plugs.

### Social customs/useful tips

The legacy of French rule is considerable in the towns and a rather formal attitude to courtesy prevails. Senior government or company officials should be addressed as *Monsieur* and government ministers as *Monsieur le Ministre*. It is customary to shake hands on meeting and taking leave. Business cards are exchanged after introduction.

Personal relationships are important in business, and time is usually spent in light conversation, over tea or coffee, before embarking on business matters. Regular visits and personal contact are vital in order to establish a relationship of confidence with agents and customers in Tunisia.

Hospitality is important. It is appropriate to present a small gift in appreciation of hospitality.

Islam affects society at every level. A statute passed in the first year of independence enforced equality of the sexes.

Nevertheless, gatherings of men and women are usually separate, the sexes are separated in mosques, and only men may enter a cemetery to attend a funeral.

Alcohol is freely available in towns, although less common in rural areas. Strict Muslims will not drink alcohol, but many Tunisian men do, and it is acceptable for non-Muslim visitors to do so. The minimum drinking age is 21 years.

Mint tea or fresh lemon or orange juice are typical non-alcoholic drinks. It is polite to accept a drink when offered.

During Ramadan visitors are advised not to eat, drink or smoke in public during daylight hours.

### Getting there

#### Air

**National airline:** Tunisair.

**International airport/s:** The two largest are Tunis-Carthage (TUN), 8km from the city, with flights by national airlines; travel

time to the city is 15–30 minutes and Monastir (MIR) 9km from the city, accepting charter flights. Facilities in both include duty-free shopping, bank, restaurant and car hire.

Smaller airports for regional flights include Djerba-Zarzis (DJE), 9km from Houmek Souk; Sfax-el Maou (SFA), 7km west of city; Tozeur-Nefta (TOE), 10km from city; Tabarka (TBJ), 8km from city. All have duty-free shops and bus and taxi services.

Construction of a new international airport in Enfidha, 75km from Tunis, began in March 2005.

**Airport tax:** None

#### Surface

**Road:** Access is possible by road from Algeria and Libya.

**Rail:** Access by rail from Algeria.

**Water:** Passenger traffic comes mostly to Tunis-La Goulette. Regular passenger ferry services operate between Tunis and France, Italy and Malta.

**Main port/s:** Tunis-La Goulette, Sfax, Bizerte, Gabes, Sousse and Zarzis; of which Tunis-Goulette and Sfax are the largest.

### Getting about

#### National transport

**Air:** Tuninter operates regular domestic services linking Tunis with Djerba, Monastir, Tozeur and Sfax. The air taxi company, Tunisavia, operates executive flights, from Tunis, throughout the country.

**Road:** The road network extends for around 19,000km, of which main national roads account for 10,800km. About 57 per cent of the network is paved. There is a 143km motorway between Tunis and Sousse.

**Buses:** Extensive long-distance services connect all major towns and cities.

**Taxis:** Long distance taxis (*louages*) operate between all main towns; these are considered the fastest method of road transport.

**Rail:** A 2,200km network links the main towns. There are two classes, some with air-conditioned, first-class accommodation. It is recommended purchasing a ticket in advance; those purchased onboard may be charged at a much higher price. It is an advantage to book in advance especially for air-conditioned trains.

**Water:** There are regular ferries from Sfax-Iles Kerkenna and Djerba island.

#### City transport

In 2004 work started on a major new bridge linking the Rades and La Goulette suburbs of Tunis, which is scheduled to be finished in 2007. Its capacity, estimated at 3,000 vehicles a day, will greatly increase traffic between northern and southern suburbs of the capital city.

**Taxis:** Taxis are available in all main towns and are fairly easy to obtain. *Louage* taxis have fares shared by several passengers. Taxis are metered, a surcharge is added at night.

**Buses, trams & metro:** The Société Nationale de Transports operates local buses with extensive services operating in all main towns.

The SMLT light-rail metro that runs four lines through Tunis has a focal point for all at Place de la République and connects to national and suburban lines.

#### **Car hire**

Cars are easy to hire at airports and hotels but are expensive and the condition of the cars vary. Roads are being improved but local driving is erratic. International driving permit required if national driving licence doesn't include a photograph. Traffic drives on the right; speed limits are 110kph on major highways and 50kph in towns. Permission must be obtained to drive in Saharan areas.

### **BUSINESS DIRECTORY**

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

#### **Telephone area codes**

The international direct dialling (IDD) code for Tunisia is +216 followed by subscriber's number.

#### **Chambers of Commerce**

American-Tunisian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 10 Avenue Mosbah Jarbou, Rue 7116, El Manar 3, 2092 Tunis (tel: 7188-9780; fax: 7188-9880; e-mail: tacc@tacc.org.tn).

British-Tunisian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 23 Rue de Jérusalem, 1002 Tunis (tel: 7180-2284; fax: 7180-1535; e-mail: tbcci@gnet.tn).

Cap Bon Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie, 3 Rue de Fel, Cité Néapolis, PO Box 113, 8000 Nabeul (tel: 7228-7260; fax: 7228-7417; e-mail: cci.capbon@planet.tn).

Central Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie, Rue Chédly Khaznadar, 4000 Sousse (7322-5044; fax: 7322-4227; e-mail: ccis.sousse@planet.tn).

French-Tunisian Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie, 39 Rue 8301, 1002 Tunis (tel: 7184-4310; fax: 7184-5962; e-mail: cfci@planet.tn).

North-Eastern Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie, 46 Rue Ibn Khaldoun, 7000 Bizerte (tel: 7243-1044; fax: 7243-2379; e-mail: ccine.biz@gnet.tn).

North-Western Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie, Hedi Chaker Street, 9000 Beja (tel: 7845-6261; fax: 7845-5789; e-mail: ccino.beja@gnet.tn).

Sfar Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie, 10 Rue Tahar Sfar, PO Box 794, 3018 Sfax (tel: 7429-6120; fax: 7429-6121; e-mail: ccis@planet.tn).

South-Eastern Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie, 202 Avenue Farhat Hached, 6000 Gabes (tel: 7527-4900; fax: 7527-4688; e-mail: csise@gnet.tn).

South-Western Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie, Rue des Roses, PO Box 46, 2100 Gafsa (tel: 7622-6650; fax: 7622-4150; e-mail: cciso@planet.tn).

Tunis Chambre de Commerce, 1 Rue des Entrepreneurs, 1000 Tunis (tel: 7135-0300; fax: 7135-4744; e-mail: ccitunis@planet.tn).

#### **Banking**

Alubaf International Bank – Tunis, PO Box 51, Rue 8007 Montplaisir, 1002 Tunis (tel: 7178-3500 fax: 7179-3905, 7178-4343).

Amen Bank, Avenue Mohamed V, 1002 Tunis (tel: 7134-0511; fax: 7134-9909).

Banque Arabe Tuniso-Libyenne de Développement et de Commerce Extérieur, PO Box 102, 25 Avenue Kheireddine Pacha, 1002 Tunis (tel: 7178-1500; fax: 7178-2818).

Banque du Sud, 95 Avenue de la Liberté, 1002 Tunis (tel: 7184-9400, 7179-2400; fax: 7178-2663).

Banque Internationale Arabe de Tunisie SA, PO Box 520, 70-72 Avenue Habib Bourguiba, 1080 Tunis Cedex (tel: 7134-0722/0733, 7125-2655, ; fax: 7134-0680, 7134-7648).

Banque Nationale Agricole, Rue Hedi Noura, 1001 Tunis (tel: 7183-1000/1200; fax: 7183-5388, 7183-2807).

Société Tunisienne de Banque SA, Rue Hedi Noura, 1001 Tunis (tel: 7134-0477, 7125-8000; fax: 7134-0009, 7134-8400, 7134-0446).

Tunis International Bank, PO Box 81, 18 Avenue des Etats Unis D'Amérique, 1002 Tunis (tel: 7178-2411; fax: 7178-9970).

#### **Central bank**

Banque Centrale de Tunisie, 25 Rue Hédi Noura, PO Box 777, 1080 Tunis (tel: 7134-0588; fax: 7134-0615; e-mail: boc@bct.gov.tn).

#### **Stock exchange**

Bourse de Tunis (Tunis Stock Exchange), www.bvmt.com.tn

#### **Travel information**

Tunisair, Customer Service Unit, Boulevard du 7 Novembre 1987, 2035

L'Ariana, Tunis (tel: 7083-7000 ext: 2572/2510; fax: 7083-6839; reservations tel: 7194-1285; email: resaonline@tunisair.com.tn; internet: www.tunisair.com).

Tunisian Airports Office, Ministère des Technologies de la Communication et du Transport, Direction Générale de l'Aviation Civile, 13 Rue 8006 Montplaisir, 1002 Tunis (tel: 7179-4424; fax: 7179-4227).

Tunisavia, Boulevard de l'Environnement 2035, Aéroport Tunis-Carthage, Tunis (tel: 7128-0555, 7128-0521; email: siege@tunisavia.com.tn; internet: www.tunisavia.com.tn).

#### **National tourist organisation offices**

Tunisian National Tourism Office (ONTT), 1 Ave Mohamed V, 1001Tunis (tel: 7134-1077; fax: 7135-0997; email: info@tourismstunisia.com; internet: www.tourismstunisia.com).

#### **Ministries**

Ministry of Agriculture, 30 rue Alain Savary, 1002 Tunis Belvedere (tel: 7128-7133).

Ministry of Communication Technologies, Cabinet de Monsieur le Ministre, 3 bis, rue d'Angleterre, 1000 Tunis.

Ministry of Communications, Belvedere du 9 Avril 1938, 1030 Tunis (tel: 7133-6409; fax: 7135-4628).

Ministry of Economic Development, Direction Générale de la Privatisation, Place Ali Zouaoui, 1000 Tunis (tel: 7135-4467; fax: 7135-0975).

Ministry of Defence, 1008 Montfleury, Tunis (tel: 7156-0244).

Ministry of Education, Boulevard Bab Bnat, Tunis (tel: 71263850; fax: 7156-9307).

Ministry of Equipment and Housing, Av H Cherita –Cité Jardin, 1002 Tunis (tel: 7168-1802).

Ministry of Higher Education, 28 rue de Sousse, 1030 Tunis (tel: 7178-2947).

Ministry of Public Health, Bab Saadoun, Tunis (tel: 7126-0727).

Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, 21 rue de Lybie – Lafayette, 1002 Tunis (tel: 7178-2432).

#### **Other useful addresses**

Agence de Promotion de L'Industrie, 63 rue de Syrie, 1002 Tunis-Belvédère (tel: 7179-2144; fax: 7178-2482).

Agricultural Investment Promotion Agency, 62 rue Alain Savary, 1003 Tunis Khadra, Tunis (tel: 7128-8400, 7128-8091; fax: 7178-2353).

American Embassy, Zone Nord-Est des Berges du Lac, Nord de Tunis, 2045, La

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Goulette, Tunisia (tel: 7110-7000; fax: 7196-2115).

American Express, c/o Carthage Tours, 59 avenue Habib Bourguiba, 1001 Tunis (tel: 7125-4304; fax: 7135-2740).

Arab League, avenue Khéreddine Pacha, Tunis.

British Embassy, 5 Place de la Victoire, 1000 Tunis (tel: 7124-5100, 7124-5324, 7134-1444; fax: 7135-1487; email: britishemb@planet.tn; internet: www.british-emb.intl.tn).

Central Post Office, rue Charles de Gaulle, Tunis.

CEPEX (agency for promotion of Tunisian exports), 28 rue v Gandhi, 1001 Tunis (tel: 7135-0043, 7135-0801; fax: 7135-3683; email: cepexedpuc@attmail.com).

Entreprise Tunisienne D'Activités Pétrolières, 27 avenue Khéreddine Pacha, 1002 Tunis (tel: 7178-2288).

Export Promotion Centre, 28 rue Ghandi, 1001 Tunis (tel: 7135-0344; fax: 7135-3683).

Industrial Land Agency, 2 rue Badii Ezzamen, Cité Mahrajéne, 1002

Tunis-Belvédère, El Menza I (tel: 7179-7360, 7180-0616; fax: 7178-2303).

Institut National de Statistique, 27 rue de Liban, Tunis (tel: 7128-2500).

Maghreb Permanent Consultative Committee, 14 rue Yahia ibn Omar, Mutuelleville, Tunis.

National Sanitation Office, 32 rue Hedi Nouira, Tunis (tel: 7170-4000).

National Water Distribution Company, 67 rue Jawarhel ehru, Montfleury (tel: 7149-3700; fax: 7139-0561).

Office du Commerce de Tunisie, avenue Mohammed V, 1002 Tunis (tel: 7128-8673, 7128-8864, 7168-2903; fax: 7178-8974, 7178-4974).

Prime Ministry, Privatisation General Directorate, 4 Rue ibn Nadim Montplaisir, 1002 Tunis (tel: 7128-2467; fax: 7128-1675).

Tunisian Chemical Group, 5-7 rue Khar-toum, 1002 Tunis (tel: 7178-4488).

Tunisian Electricity and Gas Company, 38 rue Kemal Ataturk, Tunis (tel: 7134-1311; fax: 7134-9981).

Tunisian Embassy (USA), 1515 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington DC

20005, USA (tel: (+1-202) 862-1850; fax: (+1-202) 862-1858).

Tunisian External Communication Agency, 2 rue d'Algérie, 1001 Tunis (tel: 7165-1999, 7135-0202; fax: 7134-1902).

Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat, 32 rue Charles de Gaulle, Tunis (tel: 7124-3711).

**National news agency:** Tunisian News Agency (TAP) (in Arabic, French and English)

(tel: 7187-0657; fax: 7188-8999; email: desk.national@email.ati.tn; internet: www.tap.info.tn).

### Internet sites

Information on Tunisia: [www.tunisiaonline.com](http://www.tunisiaonline.com)

[www.investintunisia.tn](http://www.investintunisia.tn)

[www.tunisie.com](http://www.tunisie.com)

Africa Business Network: [www.ifc.org/abn](http://www.ifc.org/abn)

AllAfrica.com: <http://allafrica.com>

African Development Bank: [www.afdb.org](http://www.afdb.org)

Mbendi AfroPaedia (information on companies, countries, industries and stock exchanges in Africa): <http://mbendi.co.za>

Radio Tunisia: [www.radiotunis.com](http://www.radiotunis.com)