



POSTCARD FROM SOUSSE, TUNISIA

WORDS BY VICKY SMITH

Like many Tunisian coastal resorts, Sousse is renowned as a package-holiday hotspot – but I'm not here to lounge in a hotel, and I've found plenty to explore.

Sousse became a major port after the Islamic conquests of Northwest Africa, and its UNESCO-listed medina dates to the ninth century. Highlights reach from the city walls and kasbah, which now hosts an archaeological museum crammed with Roman mosaics, to religious landmarks such as the Great Mosque, and a maze of souk stalls selling everything from woven baskets to painted ceramics.

Other sights include Museum Dar Essid, a 19th-century aristocratic home, where I begin my visit. The interiors are palatial: Andalusian tiles offset embroidered fabrics in deep jewelled hues, while Rococo-style mirrors reflect heavy chandeliers and antique objects d'art. Later, I climb up to the terrace for a view across the city; the jumble of concrete roofs isn't the prettiest but I can see the



ribat (Islamic fort) and its distinctive tower, with the twinkling Med beyond.

Surprisingly, my favourite attraction is just outside the medina. Coming to the end of a modest street, I come across a house like no other: an explosion of bright colours and intricate mosaics. This is Dar Am Taieb, the residence of late artist Taieb Ben Hadj

Get off the busiest streets for a glimpse of local life in the medina, where children play amid whitewashed houses and cats doze on the cobbles



DAR AM TAIEB



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Ahmed, who – in a passion project spanning several decades – transformed his villa into a living artwork. Repurposing junk and everyday items was a key focus for Ahmed and touring the house with his daughter, I find it full of sculptures made from recycled objects. It's truly weird and wonderful.

I explore much of Tunisia beyond Sousse, too. My top trip? Takrouna, a crumbling hilltop village with domed Berber dwellings and legendary sunsets, which I visit with a guide from offbeat tour company WildyNess.

Suffice to say, this Tunisian seaside city packs a very big punch indeed. ♥

Feeling peckish? Try a *brik*, a hot fried pastry typically filled with egg, tuna and herbs. Delicious!