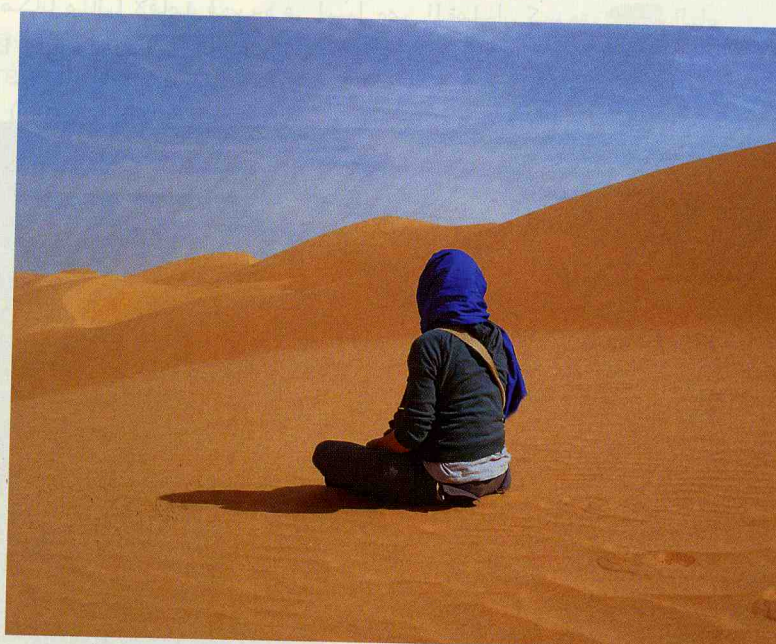
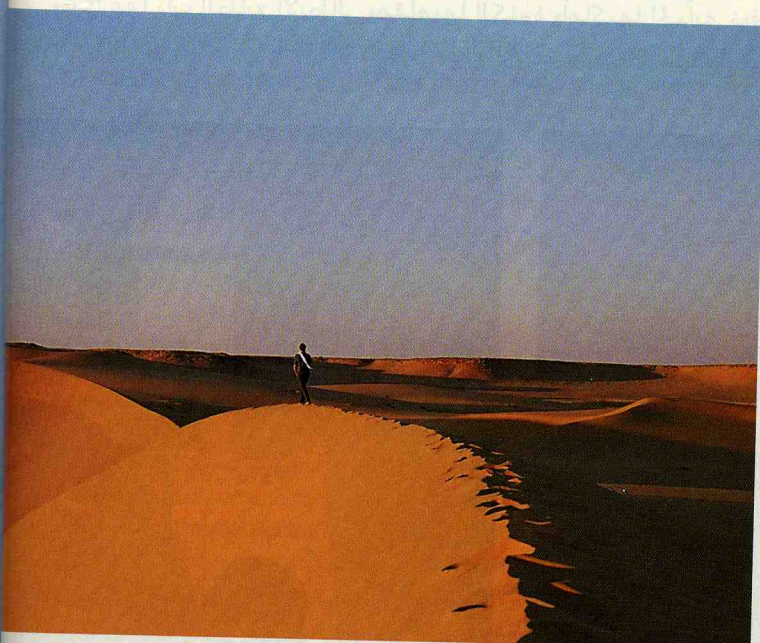


Libya

An Educational Destination

London - Karen Dabrowska

Weekend breaks for Londoners in Libya? This is not a desert mirage but one of the dreams Amelia Stewart of Simoon Travel is determined to turn into reality before long. Tripoli is just a three-hour flight from Heathrow. With its souks, squares, Italianate streets and huge choice of cafes, shops and places of interest it is the perfect base for a short sojourn in Libya. The total solar eclipse of March 2006 is expected to put Libya on the international tourist map.



Amelia is soon to lead 11 boys and two teachers from Eton for a nine day Saharan adventure. She also plans to develop Libya as a destination for educational tours for students of classics and history of art and will be making presentations to schools which are becoming more ambitious in their choice of destinations for class trips.

After decades of isolation Libya, one of the best-kept secrets of the travel world, is opening up to reveal an unspoiled destination of wonderful diversity. Gone is the country's image of a pariah state.

Isolated lakes, ruined castles, the magnificence of the Sahara, nights under a canopy of stars, Berber and Tuareg culture, bread cooked under the warm sand, prehistoric rock art and Tripoli Museum with its impressive collection of artifacts from all

periods of Libya's rich history, are waiting to be discovered.

The towering ubari sand dunes are one of Libya's most spectacular sites. After an exhilarating drive through the sand sea lunch is served on the palm fringed shores on one of the lakes hidden amongst the dunes. At Umm Al Maa the Tuareg grind shrimps into a paste and bake them in small cakes which dry in the sun.

Leptis Magna is a magnificent Roman site which, in its heyday, benefited from the patronage of the founder of the African dynasty of Roman emperors Septimus Severus (b. 146). It is still a place of immense splendor: the sands that swept over the site in early modern times prevented pillaging and preserved its glories.

There are incredible outdoor galleries of

prehistoric rock art painted in hidden cracks and caves inhabited by the earliest Libyan tribes over 12,000 years ago. Depicting scenes of life prior to the desertification of the Sahara when the land was a well-watered savannah teeming with wildlife, these paintings and carvings are beautifully artistic. Although the Tuareg have known about this art for centuries the frescoes did not receive serious academic attention until the 1950s when the Italian explorer Professor Fabrizio Mori located upwards of 1300 sites in the Acacus alone. ■

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