

AFRICA · HISTORY · DESERT · ARCHITECTURE · OFF THE BEATEN PATH



Libya

Leptis Magna and Sabratha rank among the finest Roman cities anywhere in the Mediterranean, often with barely another visitor in sight. Inland, the whitewashed old town of Ghadames and the rock art of the Tadrart Acacus reveal centuries of Saharan life. Check the FCDO travel advice very closely before considering any trip.

**The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of Libya.**

Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice. FCDO advice last updated 21 July 2026.

 CAPITAL Tripoli	 CURRENCY Libyan dinar (LYD) £1 ≈ LYD 8.55	 LANGUAGE Arabic, Tamazight	 BEST TIME Mar–May, Oct–Nov
 DAILY BUDGET £70–£260 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type C, F, L 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 7h 30m via Istanbul, Tunis or Malta ~£500–£850 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+2 standard time

Libya divides into three historic regions. Tripolitania in the north-west holds Tripoli's walled medina and the two great Roman cities of Sabratha and Leptis Magna, both day trips from the capital. Cyrenaica in the east has the Greek city of Cyrene and the coastal ruins of Apollonia below the forested Jebel Akhdar. The Fezzan in the south-west is pure Sahara: the oasis of Ghadames, the Ubari sand sea with its palm-fringed lakes, and the rock art of the Acacus. Trips are usually built around a licensed local tour operator, who arranges drivers, permits and routes.

Check the FCDO travel advice before anything else; it also determines whether your travel insurance is valid. Those who do go find almost no other tourists, so you may share Leptis Magna's theatre with a handful of local families, and a hospitable, conservative society. Costs are set mostly by tour operators, since independent travel is rarely practical. Alcohol is banned, checkpoints are frequent and distances are vast: Ghadames is around 600 km from Tripoli by road. It suits experienced travellers fascinated by antiquity and the desert, and happy to accept a fixed itinerary in return for empty ruins.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

HISTORY

Leptis Magna

One of the best-preserved Roman cities anywhere, lavishly enlarged by Septimius Severus, who was born here. Walk the colonnaded Severan forum and basilica, the Hadrianic baths, the market and the theatre overlooking the sea, often with the site nearly to yourself.
- 2

HISTORY

Sabratha

A Phoenician trading post turned Roman city on the shore west of Tripoli, famous for its theatre, whose three-storey columned stage backdrop has been reconstructed, plus temples, baths and fine mosaics in the site museum.

3

ARCHITECTURE

Ghadames old town

The 'pearl of the desert', close to the Algerian and Tunisian borders: a UNESCO-listed oasis town of whitewashed mud-brick houses linked by shaded, covered alleys, with rooftop terraces that were once the women's domain and dunes on its edge.

4

HISTORY

Cyrene

Founded by Greek settlers from Thera around 631 BC, Cyrene spreads across a green escarpment of the Jebel Akhdar, with a Temple of Zeus larger than the Parthenon, the Sanctuary of Apollo and a vast necropolis.

5

NATURE

Tadrart Acacus

Sandstone mountains near Ghat, close to the Algerian border, sculpted into arches and canyons and decorated with thousands of rock paintings and engravings of giraffes, cattle and people, spanning some 12,000 years.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Tripoli

≈ 1.2 million people

Libya's capital mixes a walled medina, the second-century Arch of Marcus Aurelius and the Red Castle fortress with seafront cafés; it is the usual base for Sabratha and Leptis Magna.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Benghazi

≈ 800,000 people

Libya's second city and the gateway to Cyrenaica, with a rebuilt waterfront and busy souks; most visitors use it as a base for Cyrene, Apollonia and the Jebel Akhdar.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Misrata

≈ 400,000 people

A busy commercial port between Tripoli and Sirte with few sights of its own; it matters to travellers mainly for its airport, which has international connections.

Libya has not held a census since 2006, so city populations are rough estimates.

When to go to Libya

Best time: **Mar–May, Oct–Nov.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

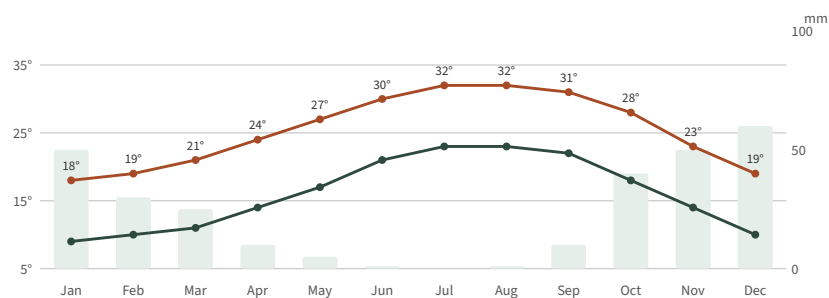
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Tripoli

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jan, Dec	Ghat Festival Around New Year the desert town of Ghat, gateway to the Acacus, hosts Tuareg music, poetry, camel races and crafts beneath its old mud-brick quarter.
Oct	Ghadames Festival Each autumn the old town of Ghadames comes alive for several days with Tuareg and Ghadamsi music, dancing, crafts, camel races and traditional dress.

How much does Libya cost?

SHOESTRING £70 per person / day ≈ LYD 599 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £140 per person / day ≈ LYD 1,198 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £260 per person / day ≈ LYD 2,224 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Bazin Libya's national dish: a smooth dome of barley-flour dough set in a spicy tomato and lamb stew with potatoes and boiled eggs, eaten by hand from a shared platter.	Shorba Libiya The spicy tomato soup that breaks the fast in Ramadan, made with lamb, chickpeas, tiny orzo-like pasta and plenty of dried mint.	Mbakbaka A one-pot dish of pasta cooked directly in a thick, spicy tomato sauce with lamb or chicken, a legacy of the Italian colonial era.
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Getting around

There are no passenger railways, so travel is by road or air. Libyan Airlines, Afriqiyah and private carriers such as Libyan Wings and Berniq link Tripoli's Mitiga airport with Benghazi, Misrata and Sebha. Shared taxis and buses run between coastal cities, but most visitors travel with a licensed tour operator whose driver handles checkpoints and permits. Desert trips to the Acacus need a 4x4 and an experienced crew.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE C F L 230V — bring a UK-to-C/F/L adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Telephone: 1415 (ambulance, fire, police) Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +218	TIME ZONE UTC+2 (standard time)
TAP WATER Not safe — drink bottled or treated water	DRIVING On the right
TIPPING Not traditionally expected, but 5–10% in restaurants used to foreigners is welcome, and drivers and guides expect a tip at the end of a tour.	

ETIQUETTE

Dress conservatively, covering shoulders and knees, and women more fully in rural areas and mosques. Alcohol is illegal, and never photograph checkpoints, soldiers or government buildings.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Mitiga International Airport (MJI), Tripoli; Benina International Airport (BEN), Benghazi; Misrata International Airport (MRA), Misrata

Visas & entry for Libya

Shown for a British passport.

Check the entry requirements

If you choose to travel to Libya against FCDO advice, ensure you have the right visa or you may be refused entry. Contact the Libyan Embassy in London for further information on the visa you require. You may require a specific type of visa depending on the nature of your trip.

A Libyan visa issued overseas may not be recognised in some areas or at certain ports of entry, due to the current political situation.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

- Hepatitis A
- Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

- Hepatitis B
- Measles
- Polio
- Rabies
- Tuberculosis
- Typhoid

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Libya

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 23 Oct 2026	Liberation Day
Thu 24 Dec 2026	Independence Day
Wed 17 Feb 2027	Anniversary of the February 17 Revolution
Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Wed 10 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)

Thu 11 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Sat 15 May 2027	Day of Arafah (date may shift)
Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Mon 17 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Tue 18 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Sun 6 Jun 2027	Islamic New Year Day (date may shift)
Sat 14 Aug 2027	National Environmental Sanitation Day · Prophet's Birthday (date may shift)
Thu 16 Sep 2027	Martyrs' Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Arabic

ENGLISH	ARABIC	SAY IT
Hello	السلام عليكم	<i>as-sah-LAH-moo ah-LAY-kum</i>
Thank you	شكراً	<i>SHOOK-ran</i>
Please	من فضلك	<i>min FAD-lak</i>
Excuse me	لو سمحت	<i>law sa-MAHT</i>
How much is this?	بكم هذا؟	<i>BI-kam HAA-dha</i>

Know before you go

- Check the FCDO travel advice first and keep checking until you travel: it changes, and it determines whether ordinary travel insurance will cover you.
- Bring all the cash you need in euros or US dollars: foreign cards are rarely accepted and ATMs seldom work for visitors, so exchange money through your tour operator or a bank.
- Never photograph checkpoints, soldiers, oil facilities or government buildings, and carry copies of your passport and permits for the frequent roadside checks.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.