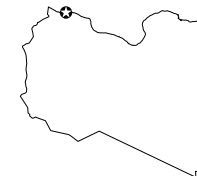


Tripoli طرابلس



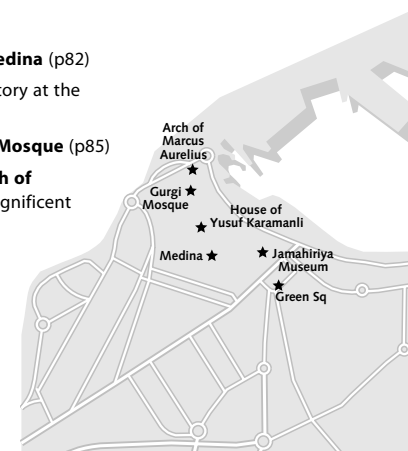
Sophisticated and strongly traditional, Libya's capital (Tarablus in Arabic) is its most alluring city. Tripoli – which once went by the historical sobriquet of the 'White Bride of the Mediterranean' and has more recently been called 'the Havana of North Africa' – is rich in historical influences and brilliantly captures that irresistible fusion of languid Mediterranean charm and clamorous Arab medina. More than anything else, this friendly city is the ideal place to catch the buzz of optimism that characterises the new Libya.

The disparate civilisations that have occupied this stretch of coast all left their mark. The Roman Arch of Marcus Aurelius tells just how many centuries the world's powers have coveted one of North Africa's best natural harbours. The Turkish mosques of the medina speak of Tripoli's historically deep connections to the wider Islamic world; the medina itself is a labyrinth of meandering souqs (markets) and stunning public buildings. The decaying Italianate façades of the city centre offer a reminder of an outside world that's never quite been able to leave Libya alone.

The Tripoli that you now see is a boom town, revelling in its oil wealth and Libya's burgeoning friendship with the West. Yet, with its face to the sea and its back to the Sahara Desert, Tripoli has always been a meeting place of travellers and a crossroads city whose fortunes ebbed and flowed with the political and economic currents of the day. The overall effect is a cosmopolitan, modern city overlaid with the fascinating signposts of history.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Lose yourself in the narrow lanes of the **medina** (p82)
- Enjoy a spectacular overview of Libyan history at the **Jamahiriya Museum** (p76)
- Admire the exquisite interior of the **Gurgi Mosque** (p85)
- Imagine Tripoli's Roman heyday at the **Arch of Marcus Aurelius** (p84) and explore the magnificent **House of Yusuf Karamanli** (p86)
- Seek out the ornate **Italianate façades** (p87) east of Green Sq
- Shop without hassle in the **souqs** (p96) of the medina
- Eat lunch in **Mat'am Obaya** (p93) in the medina and dinner at the **fish market** (p95)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: ☎ 021

■ POPULATION: 1.165 MILLION

TRIPOLI

0 1 km
0 0.5 miles

1	INFORMATION				
	Algerian Consulate-General.....	1	D4		
	Al-Hanove Libya Travel Services.....	(see 3)			
	Al-Khadra Hospital.....	2	C6		
2	Australian Embassy.....	(see 3)			
	Burj al-Fateh.....	3	B3		
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	French Embassy.....	5	C4		
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	To Planctarium (750m); Fish Market (5.5km); Barakoda Restaurant (5.5km); Al-Shatt Restaurant (5.5km); Funduq al-Safina al-Zarqa (8km); Meditja Airport (10km); Tajura (14km); Leptis Magna (120km); Benghazi (924km)				
	See Enlargement				
	See Tripoli Medina Map (p83)				
	See Central Tripoli Map (p75)				
	See Enlargement				
	To Gargaresh (2km); Buyut ash-Shabaab (Youth Hostel, 5km); British Council (7.5km); Janzur (12km); Sabratha (69km)				
	General People's Congress (Parliament)				
To Sports City (5km)					
Mechanics Workshops					
Bab Akkarah					
Maidan al-Falsteen (Palestine Sq)					
Sidi Muneer Islamic Cemetery					
Bab Bin Ghashir					
Sidi Al Marsri					
An-Nasr Forest					
To Al-Marqaz at-Tubi Hospital (1km)					
To Gharyan (84km); Nalut (275km); Ghadames (616km)					
To Tripoli Airport (17km)					
Approximate Scale Only					
Dhat al-Ahmat Car Park					

HISTORY

Tripoli was founded by the Phoenicians in around 500 BC. It became one of the four Punic settlements of significance (the others being Carthage, Sabratha and Leptis Magna). Tripoli is Libya's only ancient city to have been continuously occupied since that time.

Following the fall of Carthage in 146 BC, the city came briefly under the jurisdiction of the Nubian kingdom, before becoming a Roman protectorate. Under the Romans, who named the city Oea, Tripoli grew prosperous and, together with Sabratha and Leptis Magna (the other cities of the 'tripolis', that gave Tripoli its name), provided the Roman Empire with grain, wild animals and slaves.

After the golden age of the 2nd century AD Oea fell into decline. When the Vandals overran North Africa in the 5th century, the damage to the city was devastating. The conquest by the Byzantines in AD 533 arrested the decline, but Tripoli nonetheless spent the following centuries in a much reduced state.

The Arab invasion in the 7th century saw a new town, named Tarabulus, built among the ruins of the old. The city grew and, by the 10th century, the Arab geographer Ibn Hawkal described Tripoli as a wealthy and powerful city with a vast market and a busy port. By 1000, Tripoli had become an important centre of intercontinental trade between sub-Saharan Africa, southern Europe, Egypt and the Middle East. It was after the second Arab invasion in 1046 that the old city walls (p82) were rebuilt, using Roman remains as foundations. Roman pillars are still in evidence in parts of the medina, most notably at the Roman Column Crossroads (p89).

The Arab town flourished in the 14th and 15th centuries. In 1460 Tripoli declared itself an independent city-state. During the 16th century the city was occupied in quick succession by the Spanish and by the Knights of St John of Malta. The most visible result of their occupation is the work they carried out on Al-Saraya al-Hamra (Tripoli Castle; p81).

The Ottoman Turks occupied Tripoli from 1551. In the centuries that followed, they constructed most of the mosques, hammams (bathhouses) and souqs visible today, defined the boundaries of the old city and

THINGS THEY SAID ABOUT...TRIPOLI

And now again the story of Tripoli changes. But whatever the outcome, she will still have her limpid skies, her air like wine, and a climate where it is a sin to acknowledge an ache or a pain, old age or unhappiness.

Mabel Loomis Todd, Tripoli the Mysterious (1912)

laid out the city's winding lanes. They called the city Tarabulus al-Gharb (Tripoli of the West) to distinguish it from the Lebanese city of the same name. By the end of the 17th century, Tripoli was Libya's only city of size and had over 30,000 inhabitants.

After the Italians invaded in 1911 and conquered Libya, the city burst beyond the confines of the city walls. The Italians built colonnaded streets and numerous public buildings. After WWII many families left the old city to live in the recently vacated Italian apartments and houses. The newly empty old city, damaged by bombing during the war, fell into disrepair.

Since the 1950s, when the population was just over 100,000, Tripoli has grown tenfold.

ORIENTATION

Tripoli's most recognisable landmark is the castle, Al-Saraya al-Hamra, which sits on the eastern corner of the medina alongside the central Green Sq (Al-Sada al-Khadra or Martyrs' Sq). The medina stretches out west of Green Sq, while the towers rising beyond the medina's walls and close to the waterfront are home to hotels, airline offices, travel agencies, banks and a number of embassies. Southeast of Green Sq is one of Tripoli's main shopping districts with plenty of restaurants and a number of hotels.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Fergiani 2 Bookshop (Map p75; ☎ 3330192; fergi ani_b2@hotmail.com; Sharia Mizran; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-9pm Sat-Thu, 5-9pm Fri) Fergiani's is such an institution in Libya that it's opened a second branch with a similar selection to its sister shop around the corner and plenty of language-learning materials. The knowledgeable staff can point you in the right direction.

TRIPOLI IN...

Two Days

Spend a day exploring the **medina** (p82); see p88 for more advice. The medina has many faces. To catch a glimpse of ancient Tripoli, seek out the last remnant of Roman Tripoli, the **Arch of Marcus Aurelius** (p84). To get a sense of the medina as a Muslim city, visit the **Ahmed Pasha Karamanli Mosque** (p84), **Draghut Mosque** (p85) and **Gurgi Mosque** (p85). Tripoli's role as a centre of domestic and international intrigue is evident at the elegant and tranquil **Old British Consulate** (p85), the **Old French Consulate** (p86) and the **House of Yusuf Karamanli** (p86). Don't neglect to also spend some time smoking a nargileh at the **Magha as-Sa'a** (p95), while the medina also offers some of the best **shopping** (p96) in Libya. Punctuate your medina day with lunch at **Mat'am Obaya** (p93) or **Mat'am al-Bourai** (p93) and dinner at one of the medina's other excellent restaurants (p93).

On your second day, spend as long as you can at the outstanding **Jamahiriya Museum** (p76), and wandering amid the **Italianate façades** (p87) and **Masjed Jamal Abdel Nasser** (p87). For dinner, head for the **fish market** (p95).

Four Days

If you have four days, you could do everything in the two-day itinerary and spend a day each at the outstanding Roman ruins of **Sabratha** (p100), with a stop at **Janzur Museum** (p98) on the way, and **Leptis Magna** (p110). All are an easy day trip from the capital.

Fergiani's Bookshop (Map p75; ☎ 4444873; Sharia 1st September; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-9pm Sat-Thu, 5-9pm Fri) This terrific bookshop has an excellent selection of Arabic- and English-language books, coffee-table books, fascinating travel literature, modern studies of Libya, a smaller number of books in French and Italian and excellent postcards. This is a good place to pick up your copy of *The Green Book* (5LD; see p40).

Maktaba Dar al-Mukhtar (Map p72; Ground fl, Burj al-Fateh; ☎ 9am-2pm & 5-9pm Sat-Thu) This stationery and bookstore is one of the few places in Libya to stock a few international newspapers and magazines (including the *International Herald Tribune*, *Financial Times* and *Newsweek*).

Tripolitania Bookshop (Map p83; Sciarra G Mahmud) The friendly Mukhtar runs this eclectic shop of bric-a-brac and second-hand books, but he juggles it with other projects and hence it can be a challenge to find the shop open. When you find him, Mukhtar has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the medina and is a loquacious host.

Cultural Centres

British Council (☎ 4843164; www.britishcouncil.org/libya; Sharia Casablanca, Hay el-Wihda el-Arabia, Siyahia; ☎ 9am-4pm Sun-Thu) Newly opened in Libya, it's around 8km west of the city centre, signposted north off the road to Janzur. It organises language courses and a small range of cultural events.

Emergency

Emergency Hospital (Map p72; ☎ 121; Second Ring Rd)

Internet Access

Cybercafés are springing up all over Tripoli and connections are reasonably fast. As usual in Libya, look for the Internet Explorer icon on the window to find them. Most also allow internet-connected phone calls (for more information see p226).

Bakka Net (Map p75; cnr Sharias Mizran & Haity; per hr 1LD; ☎ 8.30am-midnight Sat-Thu, 6pm-midnight Fri) One of Libya's better and longer-standing internet cafés.

Internet café (Map p75; per hr 1LD; ☎ 9am-midnight Sat-Thu, 5pm-midnight Fri) At Funduq al-Soraya, off Sharia Omar al-Mukhtar.

Internet café (Map p75; per hr 1LD; ☎ 9am-midnight Sat-Thu, 5pm-midnight Fri) Off Sharia 1st September.

Jawazzat

You're unlikely to need to visit the **jawazzat** (passport office; Map p72; ☎ 3334657; Maidan Falisteen or Palestine Sq) in person as visa registrations and extensions should be handled by your tour company. In case you do, it's the five-storey concrete block behind the Sidi Mune-dir Islamic Cemetery.

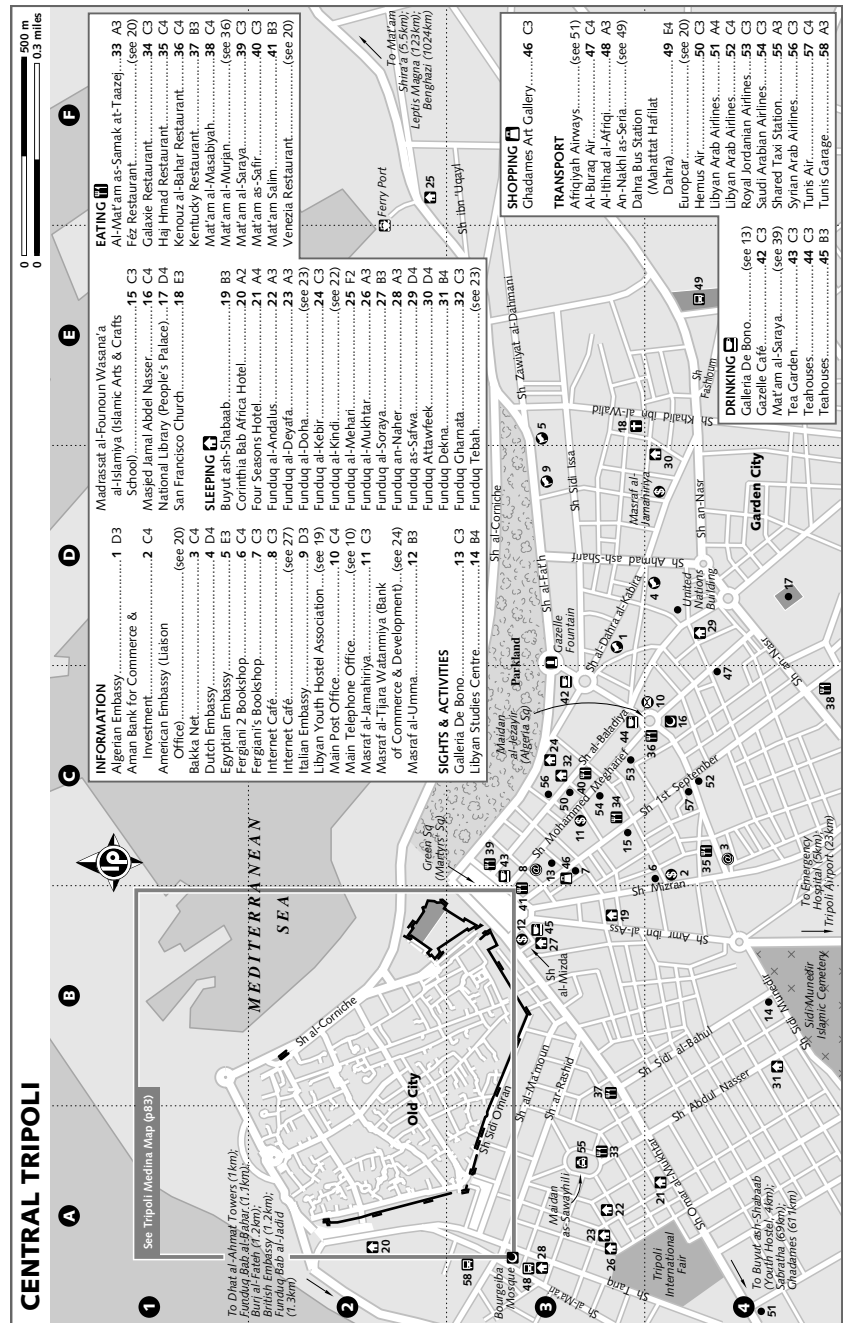
Laundry

There are dry-cleaning laundries throughout Tripoli, although most are in the residential districts away from the centre of town; ask your tour company for the nearest one or get your clothes cleaned in the hotel. Hotels generally charge 2LD for a

EATING	
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Haj Hmad Restaurant.....	35 C4
Kenouzi al-Bahar Restaurant.....	36 C4
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Mat'am al-Masabiyah.....	38 C4
Mat'am al-Murjan.....	(see 36)
Mat'am al-Sarayya.....	39 C3
Mat'am as-Safir.....	40 C3
Mat'am Salim.....	41 B3
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Four Seasons Hotel.....	21 A4
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Funduq al-Deyrafé.....	23 A3
Funduq al-Doha.....	(see 23)
Funduq al-Kebir.....	24 C3
Funduq al-Kindi.....	(see 22)
Funduq al-Mehari.....	25 F2
Funduq al-Mukhtar.....	26 A3
Funduq al-Soraya.....	27 B3
Funduq an-Naher.....	28 A3
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Funduq Atlawweek.....	30 D4
Funduq Derna.....	31 B4
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Aman Bank for Commerce & Investment.....	2 C4
American Embassy (Liaison Office).....	(see 20)
Bakka Net.....	3 C4
Dutch Embassy.....	4 D4
Egyptian Embassy.....	5 E3
Fergiani's Bookshop.....	6 C4
Fergiani's Bookshop.....	7 C3
Internet Café.....	8 C3
Italian Embassy.....	(see 27)
Libyan Youth Hostel Association.....	9 D3
Main Post Office.....	10 C4
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Masrat al-Jamahiriya.....	11 C3
Masrat al-Tijara Wa'atamiya (Bank of Commerce & Development).....	(see 24)
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Al-Hittah al-Afriqi.....	47 C4
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Doha Bus Station.....	(see 20)
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Hemus Air.....	50 C4
Libyan Arab Airlines.....	51 C4
Royal Jordanian Airlines.....	52 C4
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Masjed Jamal Abdel Nasser.....	16 C4
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San Francisco Church.....	18 E3
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Buyut ash-Shabaab.....	19 B3
Corinthia Bab Africa Hotel.....	20 A2
Four Seasons Hotel.....	21 A4
Funduq al-Andalus.....	22 A3
Funduq al-Deyrafé.....	23 A3
Funduq al-Doha.....	(see 23)
Funduq al-Kebir.....	24 C3
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TRANSPORT	
Al-Buraq Air.....	(see 51)
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Derna Bus Station.....	(see 20)
Doha Bus Station.....	(see 20)
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Eurostar.....	(see 20)
Hemus Air.....	50 C4
Libyan Arab Airlines.....	51 C4
Royal Jordanian Airlines.....	52 C4
Saudi Arabian Airlines.....	53 C4
Shared Taxi Station.....	55 A3
Syrian Arab Airlines.....	56 C4
Tune Air.....	57 C4
Tunis Garage.....	58 A3

CENTRAL TRIPOLI



shirt, while other laundries charge around 1LD per item.

Medical Services

The best idea is to get a recommendation from your tour company or embassy.

Al-Khadra Hospital (Map p72; ☎ 4900752; Sharia al-Hadba)

Al-Marqez at-Tubi (Medical Centre; ☎ 4263701/15; Sharia Jamia) This is the best hospital, near Al-Fatah University. Rebuilt in the late 1990s, it's relatively new.

Emergency Hospital (Map p72; ☎ 121; Second Ring Rd)

Money

The most easily accessible *masraf* (banks) are in the streets between Green Sq and Maidan al-Jezayir (Algeria Sq). Masraf al-Umma and Masraf al-Jamahiriya have the most branches around town.

Aman Bank for Commerce & Investment (Map p75; Sharia Mizran) Has a MasterCard-enabled ATM, with another at the airport.

Masraf al-Tijara Watanmiya (Bank of Commerce & Development) Sharia al-Fat'h (Map p75; lobby, Funduq al-Kebir, Sharia al-Fat'h); Dhat al-Ahmat Tower 1 (Map p72; Ground fl, Dhat al-Ahmat Tower 1) You can obtain cash advances on your Visa card at all the branches mentioned. Also has branches (and/or ATMs) in the arrivals hall of the airport, on the and the 1st floor of the Burj al-Fateh (Map p72).

A small black market operates in the medina's Souq al-Mushir and Souq al-Turk, especially in many jewellery shops, although rates are generally identical to the banks. See p222 for more details on exchanging money.

Post

Main post office (Map p75; Maidan al-Jezayir; ☎ 8am-10.30pm Sat-Thu) Has a reasonably efficient poste restante service.

Telephone & Fax

Main telephone office (Map p75; Maidan al-Jezayir; ☎ 8am-midnight) Inside the main hall there's a useful fax restante service (fax 3331199; 1LD), which is signed as 'Flash Fax'.

Toilets

There are no public toilets in Tripoli, but you're never too far from a restaurant or mosque, where they're usually happy to point you in the right direction in the event of an emergency; ask for 'al-hammam' or 'mirhad'.

THINGS THEY SAID ABOUT...TRIPOLI TRAFFIC

Tripolitans seem to think that traffic lights are just festive bits of colored glass strewn randomly along the road, and they rebel against their tightly regulated lives by ignoring all driving rules, blithely heading into opposing traffic on the far side of a two-way road, turning abruptly across five lanes of streaming cars.

Andrew Solomon, New Yorker (2006)

Travel Agencies

There are dozens of travel agencies around Tripoli that sell domestic and international airline tickets.

Al-Hanove Libya Travel Services (Map p72; ☎ 3351099; alhanovelibya@myway.com; Ground fl, Burj al-Fateh; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-9pm Sat-Thu) This is the most professional travel agency that we found.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Tripoli is an extremely safe city with a negligible crime rate. One area where you may want to be careful of pickpockets is the Sharia al-Rashid area, southwest of Green Sq, but even here the risk is small.

The greatest danger is crossing the street as local drivers drive at high speed and will press the accelerator before they check for pedestrians. Roads where you should exercise particular caution include the one circling Green Sq, Sharia Omar al-Mukhtar and anywhere along Sharia al-Corniche. Avoid sudden and unpredictable movements and, especially around Green Sq, work your way across one lane at a time. If in doubt, ask a local to help out.

Another frustration is that all the street signs, with the exception of some in the medina, are written in Arabic.

SIGHTS Jamahiriya Museum

Tripoli's **Jamahiriya Museum** (Map p83; ☎ 333 0292; Green Sq; admission 3LD, camera/video 5/10LD, compulsory guide 50LD; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun) houses one of the finest collections of classical art in the Mediterranean. Built in consultation with Unesco at enormous cost, it's

extremely well designed and the 47 galleries provide a comprehensive overview of all periods of Libyan history, from the Neolithic period right up to the present day.

If your time is limited, you may want to restrict yourself to the ground floor, which is undoubtedly the most impressive of the five levels. Also of considerable interest are the Islamic rooms (Gallery 20) on the 2nd floor as well as those devoted to Libyan resistance (31) and Libya's revolutionary rule (32-37). To take in the whole museum, you'll need a minimum of two hours.

Guides are compulsory. Most of the exhibits are labelled only in Arabic, although there are informative general descriptions in English of the relevant period of history in each room. Camera and other bags must be left in the cloak room so consider leaving any valuables at your hotel or on your tour bus.

GROUND FLOOR (GALLERIES 1-9)

Entrance Hall (Gallery 1)

This gallery provides a stunning overview of the museum's contents. On the right as

you enter is an elegant statue of Venus, which was stolen during the colonial era, but finally repatriated to Libya in November 2000. On the wall behind the statue are mosaics from the 2nd century AD showing scenes of gladiatorial contests in the Leptis amphitheatre (p116). On an adjacent wall is an attractive mural of Tripoli's ancient medina (p82) and harbour – take note of how the water once came to the gates of the castle. Opposite the statue, on the left as you enter, are an imposing stone mausoleum and some tablets from Ghirza (p121), a Roman-era Libyan community that drew strongly on Roman architectural influence.

The second half of the gallery is overseen by an enormous map of Libya on which buttons (sometimes) light up prehistoric sites; areas of Punic, Greek and Roman dominance; trade and caravan routes; the Islamic conquest; and modern-day museums and archaeological sites.

Just before leaving the gallery, it's impossible to miss the funky green VW Beetle used by Colonel Qaddafi around the time of the 1969 revolution.

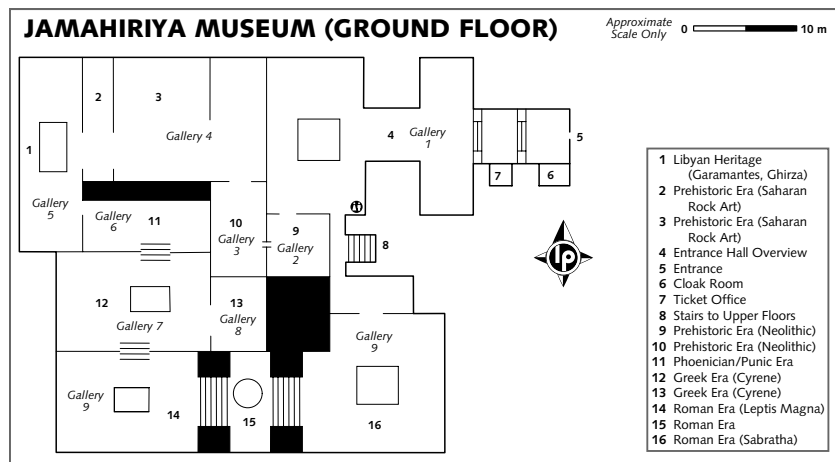
CITY OF CHANGE – A PERSONAL REFLECTION *Anthony Ham*

On my first visit in early 2001, Tripoli was like Damascus in the 1990s – resolutely retro, caught in a time-warp of old American cars, questionable fashion choices, patchy communications and a hint of mutual suspicion as a hangover from the not-too-distant past. My Libyan hosts were warm and friendly, but it took a while before I escaped the feeling that by watching CNN I was doing something vaguely illicit, and who's to say whether the middle-aged men slumped in the armchairs of hotel lobbies at 3am weren't there to keep an eye on me. Depressing government hotels were all the rage, not to mention the only choice in town, and there was the ever-present fear that you would return to your hotel to find your bags in the lobby because a government delegation had taken over your room without notice.

How times have changed.

Tripoli's streets are now awash with the latest-model SUVs, every second Tripolitan has a mobile phone attached to their ear, shops sell the latest fashions and a well-run new private hotel seems to open every week. What's more, Libyans, who are as warm and friendly as ever, enjoy the fact that they no longer have to explain how, contrary to the scaremongering of the 1980s, Libya is one of the safest destinations in the Middle East. Nor do they feel the same need to carry out their conversations in hushed tones lest that middle-aged man in the armchair overhear. Satellite TV channels broadcasting out of Baghdad, Beirut and Abu Dhabi have also brought Libyans up to speed, meaning that they're savvy about world events, not to mention the latest technology.

But the greatest change I have seen is that Libya – and Tripoli in particular – is now a country of optimists. No longer burdened by the depredations of the sanctions years and the uncertainties deriving from Libya's international isolation, the people of Tripoli especially sense that they are living in a time of opportunity – to make money, to join in the benefits of a sanctions-free existence and to meet on equal terms with the people of the world – that the city hasn't seen in decades.



The Prehistoric Era (Galleries 2–4)

Gallery 2 contains some 300,000-year-old hand-axes and the glass cabinet in the centre of the room contains a fossilised tree found in the Libyan Sahara, while there are also examples of rock art and pottery dating from 8000 to 5000 BC.

Gallery 3 shows ceramics cast in the time before wheels were used in pottery. They date from between 6000 BC and 1750 BC.

Gallery 4 is devoted to rock art and shows you what you're missing if you don't make it to the Jebel Acacus (p198). Most of the paintings and carvings are superb reproductions of the originals, which remain on the remote mountain walls of the Sahara. Those on display span most of the known periods of Saharan rock art (see p200). In the central display cabinet is a well-preserved child's skeleton, which was 5400 years old when it was found in Wadi Tashinat (p200) in 1958.

Libyan Heritage (Gallery 5)

This room showcases Libyan contributions to civilisation not subsumed into Roman, Greek or Punic history. The room is dominated, not surprisingly, by the relics of the Garamantes empire (p30). The centrepiece of the gallery is a royal Garamantian tomb with a stone offering tablet outside the entrance. On the right wall as you enter are displays of pottery found in the tombs, along with other objects showing the largely commercial nature of Garamantes relations

with the outside world. There are also artefacts from Zinchecra, the forerunner to Garama (p189) as the Garamantian capital.

The south wall contains a number of tomb and temple reliefs from Slonta (p140). There are also more examples of the stonework of Ghirza, including a wonderful, simple relief carving of a camel and oxen ploughing the earth.

Phoenician (Gallery 6)

As the Phoenician (Punic) cities disappeared under subsequent Roman and Greek settlements, this relatively small gallery is one of the few surviving collections of Libyan-Punic artefacts; for more information see p29. Those on display include a water pitcher, a representation of a Punic priest from the 2nd century BC, two stone lions from the ancient city of Oea (Tripoli), tablets of the Punic language and the ancient symbol for Tarnit (the wife of the god, Baal).

Greek (Galleries 7 & 8)

The central display features a model of Cyrene's Temple of Zeus (p146) as well as the agora (p144), as they appeared in the 2nd century AD. On the north wall are a number of particularly fine decorative pottery pieces (3rd- to 6th-centuries BC), which were not for practical use, but rather sold as souvenirs for pilgrims and tourists outside the Temple of Zeus; tourism is clearly an ancient pursuit. Also in **Gallery 7** are imposing statues of Dionysius and Fortuna.

The tiny **Gallery 8** off the main room contains a captivating statue of the Three Graces from Cyrene; these comrades of Aphrodite were famous for their beauty and the statues reflect this superbly. On the left as you enter is a faceless Persephone. Facing her is a martial statue of Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom.

Roman (Gallery 9)

This large gallery, which consists of three parts, is the finest in the entire museum. The first room is devoted to Leptis Magna (p110). The row of statues on the right is superb, with those of Artemis and Venus at the right-hand end particularly well crafted. The large mosaic adorning the wall that faces **Gallery 7** is a magnificent example of a Roman Four Seasons mosaic with its pastoral scenes. The model representation of Leptis in the central glass case gives an idea of the city's former grandeur. There is a suitably imperious Tiberius in the maroon alcove to the left as you move through the gallery. Above the low ceiling over the stairs is an inauguration tablet from the Leptis amphitheatre with inscriptions in both Latin and Punic – a reminder that Leptis was quite a multicultural city.

In the small transitional room between the two main rooms, the floor is covered with a beautiful mosaic from Roman Oea. The scenes and portrait in the centre of the mosaic are surrounded by a much larger area of geometric designs on which people sat on cushions, leaving the centre free to be admired. On the left are marble busts of the Roman emperors Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus with their wives. The display cabinets contain glassware used commonly in the 1st century AD for ash and bone after cremation.

The final (eastern) section of **Gallery 9** is devoted to Sabratha (p100). There are many highlights in this room, including pillars and squat column bases with carved stone-relief scenes, breathtaking mosaics around the walls (including some comprised of exquisitely small tiles) and one marble statue (among many) of a beautiful woman washing her cascading curls. There's also a model of Sabratha in the centre of the room. This is a room in which to quietly sit and take it all in. As you leave the room, note the mosaic of Medusa heads above the exit.

1ST FLOOR (GALLERIES 10–14)

The 1st floor marks the transition from the Roman period to the Byzantine and then Islamic eras.

Gallery 10 is a continuation of exhibitions from the Roman period; most of the items date from the 1st to 3rd centuries AD. There's an excellent row of statues depicting, among others, Victoria and Apollo. Note also the particularly fine small marble statues of two children. In the glass display cabinets are a collection of delicate bronze items, miniature pottery amphorae and oil lamps. The second half of the gallery, up a few steps, contains some mildly interesting coins and oil lamps; see if you can find the small dice, which suggest that there was more to the lives of the ancients than sculpting.

Gallery 11 is dedicated to the Arch of Septimius Severus (p111) at Leptis, including some original panels and a forbidding bust (2nd century AD) of the man himself, which was found in the Leptis theatre (p115).

Galleries 12 and 13 cover the Byzantine period and contain a motley array of glass bottles, photos of mosaics, stone grave covers, an unfinished coffin and some impressive stone windows. The latter provide a good example of how a church's exterior must have looked in the 5th to 6th centuries AD.

2ND FLOOR (GALLERIES 15–30)

These galleries contain some fine examples of Islamic architecture and folklore exhibits. The best, in **Gallery 15**, is a vernacular arch, made of mortar and sun-dried brick, its palm roof and stonework highlighting a simplicity of design and construction. Note also the massive green Quran.

Gallery 16 has model displays of sandstone tombs from Ajdabiya (p131) and Medinat Sultan (p122), as well as a map of the world as it was known in 1349.

Gallery 19 is also worth visiting for its excellent model of Al-Saraya al-Hamra (p81), wonderful old map of Oea and a painting of the interior of the Ahmed Pasha Karamanli Mosque (p84) with its pleasing blue tile-work and sombre dark ceiling. Other good exhibits include an evocative old wooden door, a reconstructed interior of a Ghadames house (see p168) and a Tripolitanian bedroom; this latter room, with its ornate inlaid chair, carpets, cushions and sombre

wall hangings, was reserved for the bride and groom on their wedding night.

Gallery 20 is filled with a diverse range of artefacts, with lovely samovars, silver jewellery and a huge incense container being the stand-out features. Off the main room, on either side of the entrance, are two small rooms, one devoted to a Turkish-era Libyan kitchen, the other to weaving. The corridor leading to the next room is home to a glass cabinet that showcases traditional Libyan costumes. The mannequins represent, from left to right, a woman from Benghazi, a man from eastern Libya, a Tuareg woman, a Tripoli man, three people in everyday central-Libyan wear, a shepherd, the blue and black robes of Murzuq, a Tuareg, an unknown woman and another Tuareg.

Galleries 21 to 27 are mediocre. Gallery 21 is devoted to the Tuareg, with photos on the walls and glass cases containing Tuareg leather items and spears. Gallery 23 has items from southern Libya (basketwork for use in the kitchen, a thatched hut, medicines and more Tuareg leatherwork), while Gallery 26 contains an oil press used until recently in the Jebel Nafusa, other elements of olive-oil production and a stone relief from Ghirza showing a farming scene. The agricultural theme is continued in Gallery 27, which includes displays of farming implements and techniques. Beekeeping enthusiasts and devotees of the virtues of palm trees also haven't been forgotten.

The folklore exhibitions (**Galleries 28–30**) are also patchy, and some of the rooms were almost empty when we visited. Among the dusty exhibits are items used in circumcision rites, some informative posters on Libyan folklore and a few musical instruments.

3RD FLOOR

Libyan Resistance (Gallery 31)

The years of resistance to Italian rule make for sobering viewing, although the exhibits are quite understated: weaponry and the personal belongings of the prominent writer and resistance figure Suleiman al-Baruni (the photo was taken in 1912, a year before he led an ill-fated rebellion in the Jebel Nafusa) and Omar al-Mukhtar (see *The Lion of the Desert*, p37). There's a copy of the famous photo of Omar al-Mukhtar being led to trial, shortly before

his execution, in 1931. There is also a chart documenting the massive exile of Libyan prisoners-of-war in Italy.

Revolutionary Libya (Galleries 32–37)

If you're a connoisseur of images of Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, you'll kick yourself if you miss these galleries. After refreshing your memory as to the noble aims of the English translation of the Declaration of the Establishment of the Authority of the People in 1977, you'll find photos of shouting youths, women soldiers and a child wearing a Colonel Qaddafi T-shirt (**Gallery 34**).

Gallery 35 depicts Colonel Qaddafi the statesman, the revolutionary leader, the munificent leader of his people. The first panel of photos on your right as you enter includes a 1966 photo of the decidedly self-conscious colonel walking along a London street (second row from the top), one of the first photos taken of Qaddafi after the revolution (next row down), and photos of where he grew up (top row). Other definite highlights include the departure of some very sour-looking British troops in the early 1970s (third panel on the right) and a collection of photos of Colonel Qaddafi smiling with world leaders.

Gallery 36 lauds Libya's oil industry and the Libyan contribution to modern technology, and **Gallery 37** is given over to a long corridor containing the people's written adorations to Colonel Qaddafi – very entertaining if you can read Arabic.

Natural History (Galleries 38–47)

It's galling to find that the least interesting galleries in the museum contain some of the best English-language labels. **Gallery 38** is all rocks and geology, **Gallery 39** showcases animal fossils, while **Gallery 40** is home to stuffed desert animals, including the waddan (a large, goatlike deer; see p63). **Gallery 41** has a strong whiff of the macabre – camel embryos in glass jars and deformed animals. The stuffed animals in the central glass case include a fennec fox, small desert mice and a wolf. The remaining galleries contain insects and butterflies (**Gallery 42**), some birds and their migratory patterns, although most of them seem to bypass Libya (**Galleries 43–44**), fish and the huge skeleton of a sperm whale (**Galleries 45–46**) and Libyan plants (**Gallery 47**).

Al-Saraya al-Hamra (Tripoli Castle)

Al-Saraya al-Hamra (Map p83; ☎ 3333042; Green Sq), known as Tripoli Castle or Red Castle, was closed for renovations when we visited, but it should be a fascinating window on the past when it reopens. The castle represented the seat of power in Tripolitania until the 20th century and has evolved over the centuries into a citadel containing a labyrinth of courtyards, alleyways and houses. The total area of the castle is about 13,000 sq metres, including the area surrounded by high defensive walls now given over to the museum. It will have the same entry fees and opening times as the museum when it re-opens its doors.

HISTORY

Excavations have revealed that the castle was built on the site of the Roman castrum (Roman fortified camp; a public bath from the 2nd century AD has been excavated

on the site), but the fortress proper was probably not built before the Arab invasion of AD 644. Under the Spaniards and the Knights of St John of Malta in the 16th century, the defences were built up with the addition of defensive towers in the south-west and southeast of the citadel. The Turks occupied the castle in 1551. After extensive works were carried out, the governors used it as their official residence. Under the Karamanlis (1711–1835) harems and a large *salaamlik* (reception room), in which official visitors were received, was built. Much of the castle's existing interior dates to this period. The castle was also quite self-contained, with a mint, courthouse, shops, jails and mills. After the Italian conquest the governor used the castle as offices and parts were turned into a museum. Most of the buildings inside the castle are now used by the Department of Antiquities.

CASTLE OF INTRIGUE

The genteel decay of Al-Saraya al-Hamra hides the fact that it has been the scene of much intrigue and violence. When the Ottoman armies of Süleyman the Magnificent, Sultan of Turkey, launched a final assault in 1551 to drive the Christians from Tripoli, the newly reinforced bastions stood up to the fire. However, the defenders of the Knights of St John of Malta proved less resilient – an act of treachery from one of the soldiers, who provided information to the enemy pinpointing the weakest spot in the defences, meant the walls were duly breached. When the governor emerged waving a flag of truce he was unceremoniously clapped in irons, stripped and cast into slavery.

A succession of Turkish *bey*s (leaders) were to meet a similar fate. Suleiman Bey withstood a punitive mission from the Ottoman sultan, only to be tricked out of the castle, taken on board one of the sultan's fleet and promptly crucified on the poop deck. The janissaries plotted to overthrow his successor, Sharif Pasha, whereupon he barricaded himself in the castle. He too was tricked out of the castle and cut to pieces by those lying in wait for him.

Ramadan Bey, who succeeded him, was persuaded to hand over power by a cunning corsair named Mohammed Saqizli. The wily Saqizli contrived to marry Miryam bint-Fawz, wife of a tribal leader, by poisoning her husband and then inviting her to come to the castle for the marriage. Bringing her wealth with her, she arrived at the castle only to be turned over to the executioner as soon as the wedding ceremony had taken place. Poetic justice prevailed: Mohammed Saqizli died at the hands of his Christian doctor who dispatched him with a poisoned apple.

From then until the Karamanlis seized power in 1711, a bewildering number of rulers came and went. One died from plague, several were killed and the rest were deposed and exiled; only one managed to die of old age.

In 1790 the three Karamanli sons of the governor, or pasha, met in the Governor's study. The youngest of the three, the ambitious Crown Prince Yusuf Karamanli, called the meeting supposedly in order to defuse simmering tensions over succession. He also asked their mother to be present as witness. The meeting progressed well, with the brothers reaching an apparent reconciliation. The Crown Prince asked them to swear their agreement on the Quran and called his servant to bring the holy book. What the servant brought, in accordance with the plan, was not the Quran but a box concealing a pistol, which he drew and shot dead his two brothers. He later succeeded his father and ruled Libya from 1795 to 1832.

EXPLORING THE CASTLE

Just after entering the castle, look for the attractive tilework on the left. A ramp leads into the heart of the castle, before which, off to the left, are the remains of a small residence with residual pillars and a well. After ascending the ramp, turn left to visit the cells of the grim prison. Up a small set of stairs, again to the left, is the old Governor's Quarters, which successive Turkish governors used as a study. It was here in 1790 that a grisly act of fratricide took place (see Castle of Intrigue, p81).

A door leads off the small courtyard of the Governor's quarters to the Spanish courtyard, which was laid out during the brief occupation by the Spanish in the 16th century. Around the courtyard, which is delightful in spring when strewn with flowers, are a number of stone lions. Stairs descend into a much larger, open courtyard with a lovely fountain as well as some pretty tilework around the perimeter. The exit leads off to the southeast and onto the eastern limb of Souq al-Mushir. The imposing arched stone gateway, which was the original entrance to the castle, but is no longer in use, is on the way back to Green Sq from the souq.

Medina

Tripoli's medina may not rival the architectural magnificence of the old cities of Morocco, but this is Tripoli at its best and most atmospheric. The medina is where the Libya of old survives – its leisurely pace of doing business, its rhythms unchanged in centuries, its soul least changed by the passage of time. In parts, the medina is ramshackle and in dire need of repair. In others, the tentative signs of rejuvenation

are rising from the rubble and bringing life to the otherwise quiet lanes. It's a place of markets on show to the world, of private homes and courtyards hidden behind ornate wooden doors, of mosques where the muezzin stands at the door to call the faithful to prayer.

For a unique aerial perspective over the medina, consider riding the elevator to the 26th floor of the **Corinthia Bab Africa Hotel** (p91). One of the best guides to the old city is the delightful Dr Mustafa Turjman from the Department of Antiquities (in Al-Saraya al-Hamra; ask your tour company to track him down).

HISTORY

The first fortified wall around the medina was built in the 4th century, while further ramparts and reinforcements were added by subsequent occupiers to safeguard the city from sea-borne attack. The layout of the city follows the blueprint of the old Arab city. Although much modified, its design has changed little and it was not until the 19th century that Tripoli spread beyond the medina's walls.

Most of the mosques, public buildings and houses date from the Turkish period, although many of the exterior walls of houses within the medina also show a strong European influence, with wrought-iron balconies and wooden shutters. During the Italian occupation and the bombing of the city in WWII, the walls and some of the buildings sustained heavy damage.

The original construction materials consisted of earth and lime, covered with whitewash and decorated with colourful ceramics, although these were used sparingly. Marble was imported from Malta for use

THINGS THEY SAID ABOUT...THE MEDINA

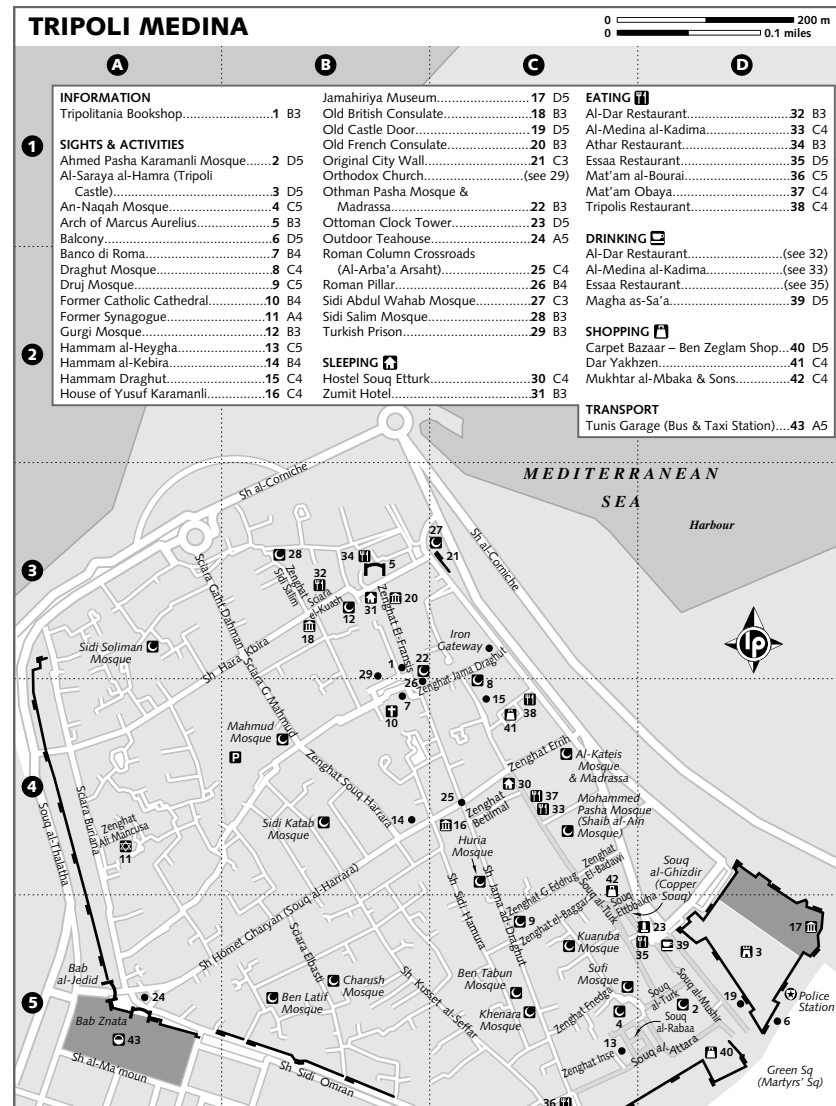
The whole of the town appears in a semi-circle, some time before reaching the harbour's mouth. The extreme whiteness of square flat buildings covered with lime, which in this climate encounters the sun's fiercest rays, is very striking. The baths form clusters of cupolas very large, to the number of eight or ten crowded together in different parts of the town. The mosques have in general a small plantation of Indian figs and date trees growing close to them, which, at a distance, appearing to be so many rich gardens in different parts of the town, give the whole city, in the eyes of an European, an aspect truly novel and pleasing.

From the correspondence of Richard Tully, Narrative of a Ten-year Residence at Tripoli in Africa (1783)

in the homes of the wealthy. You'll also see the occasional Roman column at important intersections, which is typical of the gradual accretion of influences that have come to mark the medina down through the centuries.

Traditionally, the houses of the medina were built around an open internal court-

yard. The most striking feature from the outside are the doors, atop most of which small arches of intricate metalwork with geometric and floral motifs radiate out from the centre, although some are in a parlous state. Although primarily ornamental they also served a practical purpose, allowing air and light into the interior without



TOP FIVE RESTORED MEDINA BUILDINGS

Apart from the medina's mosques, which have long been kept in a fine state of preservation, our pick of the most beautifully preserved or restored buildings in the medina is:

- **House of Yusuf Karamanli** (p86)
- **Old British Consulate** (p85)
- **Zumit Hotel** (p90)
- **Old French Consulate** (p86)
- **Banco di Roma** (p88)

compromising the privacy of the inhabitants. There was often similar decoration on the banisters of internal staircases. In addition to providing some much-needed shade in summer, the roofs that cover some of the thoroughfares also serve to reinforce the walls of the adjoining houses.

Most of the 38 mosques in the old city, which once had adjoining hammams and madrassas (Quranic schools), have roofs with small cupolas supported by numerous pillars in the main sanctuary. Many also contain the tombs of their founders or the person to whom the mosque was dedicated. The minarets alternate between the rectangular North African style and octagonal ones built in the Ottoman style. The largest market in Tripoli's medina has always been Souq al-Turk, but there have also always been many souqs throughout the eastern corner of the medina. The old city also contained synagogues (now converted into mosques) and churches.

Restoration began in the early 1990s and, while still proceeding, many of the buildings remain under threat. Sadly, Unesco has decided that its priorities lie elsewhere, which means that the cost of restoring the old buildings of the medina depends either on the government's political will or, in the case of privately owned houses, on the means of private citizens. The situation is slowly improving, although not all restoration work is faithful to the original. For the best examples of recently restored buildings, see above.

According to the last estimate, about 3500 people still live in the medina, but 65,000 work within its walls.

ARCH OF MARCUS AURELIUS

This last remnant of the ancient Roman city of Oea was completed in AD 163–64. The Arch of Marcus Aurelius (Map p83) stood at the crossroads of the two great Roman roads of the city – the *cardo maximus* (running north to south) and *decumanus* (east to west). It therefore stood at the city's most important junction as well as providing an entrance to the city from the harbour. The fact that Oea had a triumphal arch (Lepitis had five, while Sabratha had none) was a reflection of Oea's importance in the Roman Tripolis. The façades of the pillars facing to and away from the port contain niches that once hosted statues of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, above which are weather-worn portraits in relief. Look also for the carvings of Apollo and Minerva, the mythical protectors of Oea in ancient times. On the raised level to the right, behind the arch, are the remains of the pediment of the Temple of Taki (the Roman god of fortune), which dates from AD 183–85. On the tablets are the figures of Apollo, Taki and Minerva. At night, the arch is illuminated to magical effect, bringing alive the detail of the bas-reliefs.

Mussolini reportedly tried to tear down the neighbouring Sidi Abdul Wahab Mosque and section of the city walls as it appealed to his sense of grandeur that the Roman Arch of Marcus Aurelius could be seen from the port. It was only through the efforts of a brave Italian archaeologist, Salvatore Aurigemma, that the buildings were saved.

One reason the arch is all that survived of ancient Oea is that an ancient prophecy foretold terrible punishments for anyone who removed a stone.

AHMED PASHA KARAMANLI MOSQUE

The richly decorated Karamanli Mosque (Map p83) was opened in the 1730s and is still the largest mosque in the medina. Note its fine octagonal minaret built in the Ottoman style, while the five doorways leading into the prayer hall have some superbly crafted floral decorations carved into the wood; these are thought to symbolise growth and progress. The prayer hall is covered by almost 30 domes and the floral theme is continued in the colourful ceilings of the balconies, which surround the prayer

hall on three sides. These are considered some of the finest examples of woodwork in Libya. Experts believe that the carvings, colours and use of arches suggest a high degree of Moroccan and Andalucian influence. The tombs of Ahmed Pasha and his family are in one of the rooms off the prayer hall.

GURGI MOSQUE

The Gurgi Mosque (Map p83), just west of the Arch of Marcus Aurelius, was built in the 19th century and was the last mosque built in Tripoli under the Turks. Although quite small, its interior is the most beautiful in the city. The main prayer hall contains imported marble pillars from Italy, ceramic tilework from Tunisia and intricate stone carvings from Morocco. The large, covered platform was reserved for VIPs. The mihrab (niche facing Mecca) and the domes above the main room are adorned with extremely beautiful stone lattice carvings, again with floral motifs; there are 16 domes but the one above the mihrab is particularly fine. The tomb of Mustapha Gurgi (a Tripoli naval captain) and his family are in an ante chamber at the back.

OTHTMAN PASHA MOSQUE & MADRASSA

Immediately east of the Banco di Roma, this mosque and madrassa (Map p83) was built by Othman Pasha, who ruled Libya for 25 years, and is one of the oldest Turkish sites in Tripoli. It's set around a delightful courtyard with marble pillars from Carrara in Italy and topped with local limestone. The portico is surrounded by wooden doors underneath stone arches, and immediately left after coming in the main entrance is the stone ablutions fountain with arabesque

decorations. Out the back are the tombs of the mosque's builders as well as a small garden. The Roman-era pool was used for washing the boards on which verses of the Quran were written. It's a tranquil place with unusual cupolas on the domes, and it's renowned for, unusually, having three domes, one each for the graveyard, mosque and main entrance. The school has been in use for over 350 years.

DRAGHUT MOSQUE

This 16th-century mosque (Map p83), opposite the Othman Pasha Mosque and Madrassa, bears the name of an infamous corsair admiral and governor of Tripoli. Its elegant pillars and arches (there are 15 in the main prayer hall alone with many more in adjoining rooms) are quite stunning. Things to look out for include the green-and-white calligraphic and arabesque relief inscriptions used sparingly against a white background.

OLD BRITISH CONSULATE

The **Old British Consulate** (Map p83; Sharia Hara Kbira; admission 2LD, camera/video 2/5LD; ☎ 9am–5pm Sat–Thu) building, west of the Gurgi Mosque on Sharia Hara Kbira, was first constructed in 1744 as a residence for Ahmed Pasha (the founder of the Karamanli dynasty) during the final phase of his reign (r 1711–45). From the second half of the 18th century until 1940, it was the office of the British consul. In addition to diplomatic representation, the consul's representatives used their position to launch expeditions into the Sahara with an eye on lucrative trade routes. On a plaque outside the entrance, this history is, not without some justification, viewed with unconcealed anger. It claims that 'the so-called European geographical and explorative scientific expeditions to Africa, which were in essence and as a matter of fact intended to be colonial ones to occupy and colonise vital and strategic parts of Africa, embarked from this same building'. The consulate also provided a place of refuge for the expatriate community during various invasions and was the unofficial centre of the diplomatic community in Tripoli.

The entrance is through a large wooden door under an archway that leads to a large courtyard paved with marble. The courtyard is surrounded on all sides by a beautiful two-storey building with elegant

ENTERING MEDINA MOSQUES

None of the mosques in Tripoli's medina have official opening hours, but the custodians of the keys are never far away. A gentle knock on the door should elicit some response if you're prepared to be patient. If no-one appears, ask a nearby shopkeeper, who will invariably know where the *miftah* (key) is. Avoid visiting during prayer time, especially Friday prayers around noon. Entry is free, but a tip for the caretaker is appreciated.

A VERY BRITISH CONSUL

Tripoli in the 19th century was, according to one historian, an 'odd mixture of refinement and corruption'. On the one hand it was the home port of pirates who terrorised Mediterranean shipping with impunity. At the same time, Tripoli was seen as the gateway to the African interior by European powers jostling for position in the coming 'Scramble for Africa'. In the early part of the century, the flag of the USA and no less than eight European countries fluttered over the consulates of the old city.

This was an age when the European powers conspired, sometimes together, more often against each other as they sought to become the first to lay claim to much of Africa. It was a role ideally suited to the larger-than-life Colonel Hanmer Warrington, who served as British Consul from 1814 until 1846. No ordinary diplomat, Colonel Warrington has been described as 'in so many ways the incarnation of John Bull', a maverick who loved the intrigue of outmanoeuvring his fellow consuls and one with a decidedly chequered past. Prior to his consular career, he reportedly served time in a debtors' prison in Gibraltar, while his wife Jane was said to have been the illegitimate daughter of King George IV. On at least two occasions, Colonel Warrington broke off diplomatic relations with the Karamanli rulers without the approval of his London masters.

He was, however, tolerated by his superiors, albeit reluctantly at times, because there was no fiercer defender of British interests. In 1825 he boasted to one newly arrived traveller 'of being able to do anything and everything in Tripoli'. In particular, he was a fervent supporter of British-sponsored expeditions charged with the task of finding the riches of sub-Saharan Africa. In that sense, the plaque that you now see outside the Old British Consulate (p85) is essentially correct.

Colonel Warrington's support was so strong in the case of Major Alexander Gordon Laing (the first European to reach Timbuktu in August 1826, Laing was killed soon after he set out for home) that he engineered Laing's marriage to his daughter Emma. Such was Warrington's colourful reputation that rumours persist that he saw the marriage as a means of avoiding a calamitous union between Emma and the son of the French consul.

After Laing's death, Warrington became obsessed with suspicions that the French consul and his agents had conspired to destroy Laing's last letters (which would have confirmed that he was the first to reach Timbuktu rather than the Frenchman Rene Caillié). He even suggested that the French may have had a hand in Laing's death. The resulting bitter quarrel between Warrington and the French lasted for years, in the process paralysing Yusuf Karamanli to the extent that some historians believe Warrington's refusal to let the matter rest precipitated the end in 1832 of the 124-year Karamanli reign. Whatever the truth of such speculation, the consul's increasingly unpredictable behaviour certainly spelled the end for Warrington, who retired a broken man after having lost the support of London.

The best account of the life and career of Colonel Warrington and Tripoli in the first half of the 19th century is in *The Race for Timbuktu*, by Frank T Kryza.

Moorish archways fronting the wide verandas, behind which are the rooms that once included consular offices as well as kitchens, servants' quarters and bedrooms. It has a wonderful air of tranquillity. The building now houses a general scientific library.

OLD FRENCH CONSULATE

The **Old French Consulate** (Map p83; Zenghat el-Fransis; admission 2LD, camera/video 2/5LD; ☎ 9am-5pm Sat-Thu), not far south of the Arch of Marcus Aurelius, dates from 1630 and is arrayed around a two-storey tiled courtyard with delightful arches, coloured windows and

woodwork. Note in particular the crescent and a Star of David carved into the wooden doors above the staircase. The former consular offices, also on the 1st floor, have been restored and are a study in colonial elegance. The other rooms are given over to a library and an exhibition space for the Hassan al-Fageh House of Arts. If you ask the caretaker, he may let you climb to the roof from where there are good views.

HOUSE OF YUSUF KARAMANLI

Just south of the Roman Column Crossroads, the **House of Yusuf Karamanli** (Map p83;

Hosn al-Harem or Dar al-Karamanli; Sharia Homet Gharyan; admission 2LD, camera/video 2/5LD; ☎ 9am-5pm Sat-Thu) dates from the beginning of the 19th century and was the private residence of Tripoli's former ruler. Although this represents an extravagant example, it provides a window on the world of private houses that once hid behind the medina's high walls. The courtyard, with a fountain in the centre, is one of the loveliest in the medina and is surrounded by balconies. The house has been converted into a museum and on the ground floor is a restored traditional bedroom, displays of traditional clothing, a sitting room and the kitchen. On the 1st floor, once home to the private living quarters, there are weapons, period furniture and the beautiful 'dome's hall' – a traditional sitting room with lavish tilework, an exquisite wooden ceiling and inlaid furniture from the time of Yusuf Karamanli. Off this hall is a reconstruction of a bridegroom's room and a room given over to musical instruments from where a window looks down on Sharia Homet Gharyan. Helpfully, most of the rooms have English and Italian explanations at the door.

Green Square (Martyrs' Square)

Scour an old, pre-revolution map of Tripoli and you're likely to find yourself a little disoriented. That's because Green Sq (Al-Sada al-Khadra; Map p75) – the hub of central Tripoli where the medina meets the traffic-filled streets of modern Tripoli – was only carved out after the 1969 revolution. Until then, the square was about half of its current size and its northeastern boundary was the waterfront – in the 1970s, around 500m of land was reclaimed to ease chronic traffic congestion. In its early days, Green Sq was primarily for mass rallies in support of the revolution, and while it still serves this purpose, it more often serves as a car park or fairground during public holidays. Floodlit by night, always busy by day and just as often known as Martyrs' Sq, you're likely to pass through here time and again.

East of Green Square

The white **Italianate façades** that front onto the eastern side of Green Sq continue for many a city block and it's worth wandering these streets to admire the peeling white-wash, period balconies and finely rendered façades that are so distinctive of Tripoli.

The elegant **Galleria De Bono** (Map p75), off Sharia 1st September, is a particularly fine example. Some might say that buildings like these are the only positive thing that Italy's fascist rules bequeathed to the country.

That's certainly a view shared by the scholars at the **Libyan Studies Centre** (Map p75; ☎ 4446988; libyanjihad@hotmail.com; ☎ by appointment). Dedicated to cataloguing the repression suffered by Libyans during Italian colonial rule, the centre has an impressive collection of 10,000 tapes of oral history and over 100,000 photographs. There's also a library and reading room, including thousands of books in English. It's off Sharia Sidi Munedir.

Madrasat al-Founoun Wasana'a al-Islamiya (Map p75; Islamic Arts & Crafts School; Sharia 1st September; ☎ 10am-6pm Sat-Thu) is worth visiting for two reasons. The first is that the beautifully arched façade conceals a delightful, expansive two-tiered courtyard, which is rich in history. Originally built as a school during the Ottoman period, it was transformed into a prison from 1911 until 1942 by the Italians, who gathered Libyan deportees here before exiling them; many never returned, as suggested by the moving sculpture near the courtyard's western end. The tree opposite the entrance dates back to 1917. The other reason for visiting is that this is once again a school, where young Libyans are taught the traditional crafts of leatherwork, woodwork and pottery among other skills. If you're discreet, teachers and students alike usually don't mind if you watch them work.

If you haven't been in Tripoli for a few years, you'll be astounded by the transformation around Maidan al-Jezayir where the austere, neo-Romanesque **former Catholic cathedral** has been transformed into the supremely elegant **Masjed Jamal Abdel Nasser** (Map p75; Jamal Abdel Nasser Mosque; Maidan al-Jezayir). The conversion from church to mosque actually took place on 29 November 1970 in the days after the revolution, but the architectural work was not completed until 2003. Much of the former structure has been retained, but the use of marble and sandstone is exquisite. Non-Muslims aren't allowed inside, but the exterior is its most impressive element, especially if viewed from the teahouse surrounded by Italianate marble across the square.

HAMMAMS

There are at least three hammams (bath-houses) in the old city. Charges are 1LD for a steam bath, 2LD for a massage and 5LD for the full-scrubbing works.

Hammam al-Heygha (Map p83; Trigh al-Heygha; ☎ women 8am-3pm Mon, Thu, Sat & Sun, men 8am-3pm Tue, Wed & Fri)

Hammam al-Kebira (Map p83; Sharia Homet Gharyan; ☎ women 8am-3pm Mon-Wed, men 8am-3pm Thu-Sun)

Hammam Draghut (Map p83; Souq al-Turk; ☎ women 8am-3pm Mon-Wed, men 8am-3pm Thu-Sun)

Immediately east of the cathedral, the continuation of Sharia Mohammed Megharief leads to the domed **National Library** (Map p75), which is very photogenic just before sunset. Built in the 1930s, it was the Royal Palace under the monarchy and the People's Palace immediately after the revolution.

San Francisco Church (Map p75; ☎ 3331863; ☎ for mass) was built in the 1930s and offers services primarily for Libya's expat community. The sanctuary is quite simple, with a towering mural behind the altar. On the walls around the 1st-floor balcony are murals of the Twelve Stations of the Cross. Mass is conducted in English, French and Italian and mass times are usually posted on the door. It's off Sharia Khalid ibn al-Walid.

Tripoli's **planetarium** (☎ 3400201; per person 2LD), east along the waterfront off Sharia al-Corniche, would be a great place to study the stars over Libya before you head south into the star-gazing paradise of the Sahara, were it not for one thing: all presentations are in Arabic only. The 40-minute showings are by reservation only so if you're part of a group, they may let your guide interpret.

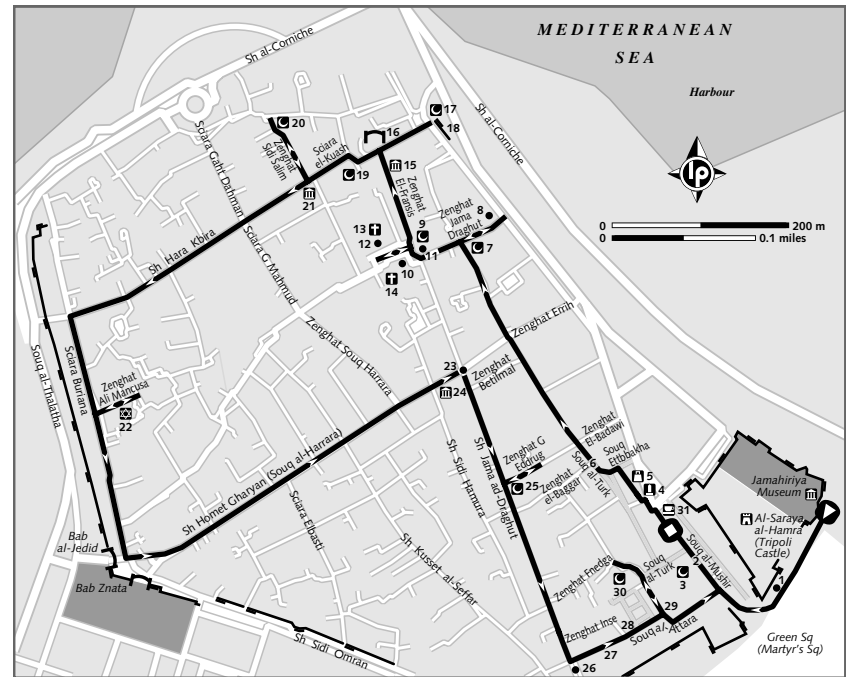
WALKING TOUR

Begin outside the entrance to the Jamahiriya Museum and walk southwest along the perimeter of Green Sq, past the small **balcony (1)** high on the castle's external wall – it was from here that Mussolini addressed the crowds in 1937 not long after pronouncing himself 'Protector of Islam'. The second street off the square to your right leads beneath the stone archway, which was

once the main gate into the old city, into **Souq al-Mushir (2)**, with its mix of jewellery, handicraft and luggage stores. At the far end, past the **Ahmed Pasha Karamanli Mosque (3)**; p84) on your left, is the 19th-century **Ottoman clock tower (4)**. Behind the clock tower is **Souq al-Ghizdir (5)**; p96) where copper artisans patiently hammer out their wares.

At the end of the copper souq, turn left into a covered lane that leads onto the main **Souq al-Turk (6)**, which runs almost the length of the medina. Built during the Ottoman period, it was once covered by a roof. Continue until the souq ends at the **Draghut Mosque (7)**; p85). After a short detour to the right to check out the magnificent **iron gateway (8)**, return southwest, pass the **Othman Pasha Mosque and Madrasa (9)**; p85) on your right until you reach the recently restored former **Banco di Roma (10)**. It was built in 1870 as part of an attempt by the Italians to cement their commercial links in Libya. Opposite the Banco di Roma to the east is a small **Roman pillar (11)** built into the wall. Just around the corner to the southwest is the **Turkish Prison (12)**, which was used for detaining Christian prisoners. It was built in 1664 during the reign of Othman Pasha al-Saqizli, a former janissary credited with being the first ruler to unite Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. Behind its walls is a small **Orthodox church (13)** that still services Tripoli's Orthodox community. Almost opposite the prison is the imposing **former Catholic Cathedral (14)**.

In the northern corner of the square, a narrow lane leads past the **Old French Consulate (15)**; p86) to the **Arch of Marcus Aurelius (16)**; p84). Closer to the waterfront, a further 150m away, is the attractive **Sidi Abdul Wahab Mosque (17)** and one of the last surviving remnants of the **original city wall (18)**. Immediately behind the arch is the **Gurgi Mosque (19)**; p85). Running along the northwestern wall of the mosque is Sharia Hara Kbira (also signposted as Sciarra El-Kuash), which follows the path of the old Roman decumanus. The first street leading up the hill to your right is Zenghat Sidi Salim, which leads to the pristine, whitewashed **Sidi Salim Mosque (20)**; there are some lovely doorways as you climb towards the mosque. Return back down the hill, and turn right. The **Old British Consulate (21)**; p85) is a few metres away on your right.



WALK FACTS

Start Jamahiriya Museum
End Magha al-Sa'a
Duration 2–3 hours
Distance about 3km

Continue southwest until the road ends at the medina wall and then turn left. After about 100m, turn left again onto the small Zenghat Ali Mancusa. The building on your right with boarded-up windows is a shell of a **former synagogue (22)**; high above the main northeastern door are some rare Hebrew inscriptions. Return to the main road and continue until it ends at Bab al-Jedid and an open area with an outdoor teahouse and (sometimes) an open-air market. Take Sharia Homet Gharyan (also signed as Souq al-Harrara) heading northeast. Along this thoroughfare, the medina begins its transition from the quiet residential streets to the busier markets and this is one of the areas in desperate need of renovation. In the lanes leading off either side are some fine doorways.

Soon enough, you'll reach the **Roman Column Crossroads** (Al-Arba'a Arsah; 23), where four Roman-era columns have been used to curious effect. The **House of Yusuf Karamanli (24)**; p86) is located here. The road leading southeast passes the **Druj Mosque (25)**, which has an attractive doorway on the northern side, while the street running off to the northeast (Zenghat G Eddrug) is lined with pastel doors, shutters and occasional balconies of wrought-iron. About 150m further southeast along Sharia Jama ad-Draghut you pass under seven white arches, just before which on the right are three ornate doorways, one with a tiled arch.

Approximately 50m beyond the arches is a busy crossroads. From the crossroads, some of the old city's most attractive **Italianate façades (26)** make a rare appearance in the medina to the south. Take the walkway leading to the northeast that takes you into **Souq al-Attara (27)**. This is one of the liveliest thoroughfares of the medina with an **impromptu souq (28)** home to a crowded mix of shops and temporary stalls set up by traders without a licence; these stalls

evaporate quickly as soon as a policeman is spotted. Off the northeastern side of this branch of the Souq al-Attara is the covered **Souq al-Rabaa** (29; p96). At the western end of the impromptu souq, a left turn leads to **An-Naqah Mosque (30)**, which is said to be 1200 years old, but most of which dates from the 17th century. The exterior and much of the interior is simple and largely unadorned, but the main prayer hall does have lovely white arches supporting the low roof.

Returning to the southwest, Souq al-Attara winds back into Souq al-Mushir, where you should turn left towards the clock tower and the traditional teahouse of **Magha as-Sa'a** (31; p95). Nursing a *shay* (tea) and nargileh (water pipe), you've reached the perfect place to rest those weary legs.

TRIPOLI FOR CHILDREN

There are few-child-specific sights or activities in Tripoli, although the **medina** (p82) is a labyrinth for those with imagination.

Other than that, the definite highlight is the surprisingly good **Tripoli Zoo** (Hadikat al-Haywan; Map p72; Sharia Abu Salim; adult/child 0.5/0.25LD; ☎ 9am-5pm), which you'll find south of the city centre in the 200-hectare An-Nasr Forest. Most of the enclosures are spacious and reasonably well kept and include elephants, lions, tigers, reptiles, monkeys, gazelle and waddan, among others. We're not quite sure what the Persian cats are doing there, but as our guide pointed out, they're exotic for Libyans. The landscaped grounds come alive on Fridays when you'll struggle to find picnic space amid the Libyan families – a great time for your kids to make new friends. There are a few snack stalls scattered around the grounds.

Another possibility are the ornately decorated **horse-drawn carriages** that do circuits of Tripoli from their base in Green Sq.

SLEEPING

It used to be that we listed every (usually government-owned) hotel in Tripoli for no reason other than that there weren't that many places from which to choose. But Tripoli is now a boom town and your choice of accommodation is getting better, almost literally by the day. The old government hotels often occupy the best locations, but the rooms are far better at the private places springing up all over town.

All prices include a private bathroom and breakfast unless otherwise stated.

Medina

Hostel Souq Etturk (Map p83; ☎ 3339773; Souq al-Turk; dm with shared bathroom 5LD) We mention this place for no reason other than that it's one of only two places to stay in the medina. Rooms are downright basic and you'll always feel that the staff wish they were asleep or somewhere else. Tour companies steer clear of this place and it's really only worth arguing with them if you dream of waking up in the medina and can't afford the Zumit Hotel.

Zumit Hotel (Map p83; ☎ 3342915; www.zumithotel.com; d/ste 150/200LD; ☎) At last a traditionally styled hotel in Tripoli's medina and it was definitely worth the wait. The rooms are arrayed around a charming, two-storey tiled courtyard and the 10 rooms and four suites are brimming with character – vaulted ceilings, elevated traditional Libyan beds and artefacts from across the country. The buffet breakfast is served in the courtyard while there's also a traditional restaurant with cushions on the floor and a coffeehouse. The location, with the Arch of Marcus Aurelius right outside the front door, is the best in all of Tripoli.

West of Green Square

Apart from the private midrange hotels south of the medina, there are two longer-standing hotels by the water (which require a taxi into town) and the Corinthia Bab Africa Hotel, the showpiece hotel of the new Libya.

BUDGET

Funduq Bab al-Jadid (Map p72; ☎ 3350670; fax 3350670; Sharia al-Corniche; s/d 25/35LD; ☎) With a good seafont location and decent rooms, this is one of the best budget choices in town. Its problem is that it's a popular place with both tourists and local businessmen and maintenance standards aren't what they could be; some bathrooms are ageing fast. Be aware also that a basic breakfast is included in the price, but the more extensive buffet costs an additional 5LD.

MIDRANGE

The small grid of streets between Tripoli International Fair and Maidan as-Sawayhili is

where Tripoli's private-hotel revolution is taking place. The hotels have high-standard rooms, reasonable prices and, although the streets are a tad ramshackle, the location is good as you're just a 10-minute walk from Green Sq and the medina.

Funduq Tebah (Map p75; ☎ 3333575; www.tebah-ly.com; Sharia al-Raza; s/d/tr/ste 40/50/70/100LD; ☎) Slightly cheaper than Funduq al-Andalus (below), this place is a comfortable option and some rooms at the back have distant views of the Mediterranean. If we have one criticism, and now we are getting picky, the brown carpet makes the rooms look older than they are, but it is a good package overall.

Funduq al-Doha (Map p75; ☎ 4449373; fax 334-0653; Sharia al-Raza; s/d/tw/tr 40/50/60/70LD; ☎) One of the newest (and friendliest) kids on the block, Funduq al-Doha promises a warm welcome and the whole place sparkles, although you really want a room at the front as most of those at the back have no windows. Even some at the front could do with more natural light, but that's our only problem with the place.

Funduq an-Naher (Map p75; ☎ 4446896; naher.hotel@yahoo.com; Sharia Tariq; s 35-60LD, d 60-75LD; ☎) On the fringes of the down-at-heel Sharia al-Rashid district, Funduq an-Naher has rooms that vary in size but they're all pleasant and quieter than the area suggests. The larger ones with balcony are semiluxurious and come with minibar, phone and satellite TV.

Funduq al-Deyafa (Map p75; ☎ 4448182; diafatip@hotmail.com; Sharia al-Raza; s/d/tr 40/60/70LD; ☎) Another good choice in the area that gets good reports from travellers, Funduq al-Deyafa has decent rooms and the bathrooms have bathtubs. If you've seen every hotel room in Tripoli, like we have, you'll realise how rare that is.

Funduq al-Andalus (Map p75; ☎ 3343777; www.andalushotel.com; Sharia al-Kindi; s/d/ste 50/60/100LD; ☎) Of the new private hotels in this area, Funduq al-Andalus is our favourite. It has all the necessary bells and whistles – satellite TV, air-conditioning, minibar – but the decoration is more stylish than most and there's plenty of natural light in most rooms. Service is also attentive and breakfasts quite good.

Funduq al-Mukhtar (Map p75; ☎ 4444536; fax 3333479; Sharia al-Raza; s/d/tr/ste 60/80/110/150LD; ☎)

We slept in this hotel on the first night it opened and have to say that we were impressed. The rooms are extremely comfortable and the bathrooms contain hairdryers and a nice basket of goodies, which probably justifies the fact that this hotel is slightly more expensive than others in the area.

Funduq al-Kindi (Map p75; ☎ 4448123; info@alkendihotel.com; Sharia al-Kindi; s/d/tr 70/85/150LD; ☎) This place just about merits its elevated prices – the quality of the rooms and service is much the same as the others around here, but its rooms are more stylish and there's a little more space to open your suitcase.

Funduq Bab al-Bahar (Map p72; ☎ 3350676; fax 3350711; Sharia al-Corniche; s/d from 75/90LD; ☎) Seen in the light of the Corinthia's emergence (below), the Bab al-Bahar is anything but the five stars it claims to be. The rooms are fine if a little run-down and most afford good views over the town or Mediterranean. The service is, however, woeful and prices unreasonably high for what you get. That notwithstanding, it's a favourite of tour groups and you may end up staying here whether you want to or not.

TOP END

Four Seasons Hotel (Map p75; ☎ 3332151; www.fourseasons.com.ly; Sharia Omar al-Mukhtar; s/d/ste from 90/110/140LD; ☎) Although nothing to do with the international chain of the same name, this new hotel comes highly recommended for its large, comfortable rooms, internet connections in each room for those with laptops (the suites have PCs) and very friendly service. The decoration is over-the-top modern Libyan style but at least it has a certain kitsch character of its own.

Corinthia Bab Africa Hotel (Map p75; ☎ 3351990; www.corinthiahotels.com; Souq al-Thalatha; s/d €315/330, ste €465-1500; ☎) A towering temple of glass and elegance, this is Libya's classiest hotel. The rooms are enormous and luxurious, the restaurants of the highest order and the service everything you'd expect for the price. The hotel has a business centre, conference facilities, two swimming pools, a gymnasium, an exclusive spa and plans for wi-fi internet connection in every room. Credit cards are also accepted. All of which adds up to Libya's premier address. Rates quoted here are the rack rates, so check the website for special offers and watch the rates fall.

East of Green Square

The streets that run southeast from Green Sq contain a number of hotels that are worth considering, although some are at least a 15-minute walk from the medina.

BUDGET

Buyut ash-Shabaab (Youth Hostel; Map p75; ☎/fax 3330118; 69 Sharia Amr ibn al-Ass; dm with shared bathroom 5LD) Tripoli's central youth hostel is a stone's throw from Green Sq and, although it's pretty basic, these are the cheapest habitable beds in the centre of town. The shared bathrooms are fine and there's a cheap restaurant on the 2nd floor where it serves up simple spaghetti dishes for 1.5LD. Women may not feel comfortable here unless staying as part of a group. This is also the headquarters of the Libyan Youth Hostel Association (p212).

Buyut ash-Shabaab (Youth Hostel; ☎ 4776694, 4474755; dm with shared bathroom 5LD) This well-run hostel is off Sharia Gargaresh, 5km south of the town centre in the lively district of Gargaresh. It's marginally better than its more central counterpart, although it's a long way from Tripoli's sights.

Funduq al-Soraya (Map p75; ☎ 3339110; fax 3330821; s/d 20/30LD; ☎) One of the closest hotels to Green Sq, Funduq al-Soraya has simple, drab but comfortable rooms. The location, off Sharia Omar al-Mukhtar, is as central as you'll find, staff are friendly and there's an internet café next to the lobby (see p74).

MIDRANGE

Funduq Gharnata (Map p75; ☎ 3336128; fax 3336054; Sharia al-Baladiya; s with shared bathroom 25LD, s/d with private bathroom 40/45LD; ☎) This place stands out for its location, just a few blocks east of Green Sq, making it one of the most convenient places to sleep in town. The rooms are unspectacular, although they're tidy and reasonable value for money.

Funduq Attawfeek (Map p75; ☎ 4447253; attawfeek_hotel@yahoo.com; Sharia Qusban; s/d/ste 55/65/85LD; ☎) Although this friendly hotel is a brisk 15-minute walk from Green Sq and the medina, it's one of the best midrange hotels in town. Set in a quiet residential street across from San Francisco Church, it has spacious if simple rooms with balconies (some overlook the church), a laundry service, ADSL internet access in every room

and a good buffet breakfast. It also accepts Visa card and was adding 30 more rooms when we visited.

Funduq Dekna (Map p75; ☎ 4444403; fax 4443698; info@deknahotel.com; Sharia Abdul Nasser; s/d/ste from 65/75/175LD; ☎) Another new place that doesn't see as many tourists as it deserves, Funduq Dekna has large, bright rooms which are worth every dinar. Service is friendly once the staff warm up, internet connection in every room is free and you're a 10-minute walk from the medina.

TOP END

Funduq al-Safina al-Zarqa (☎ 3511164; fax 3511163; Sharia al-Corniche; s 75-80LD, d 100LD, ste with/without sea view 200/180LD) OK, so it's quite a long way (8km) east of town, but the Blue Boat Hotel is a popular place with large rooms and a good restaurant. We don't really see what the fuss is about when there are now plenty of high-quality places closer to the centre, but travellers we spoke to were happy with their stay here.

Funduq al-Kebir (Map p75; ☎ 3606781; fax 4445959; Sharia al-Fat'h; s/d with sea view 90/100LD, with city view 80/100LD; ☎) Once one of Tripoli's top hotels, Funduq al-Kebir is still probably the best value of the old government hotels. The rooms are very comfortable if unspectacular and the views from the top floors can be superb. Impersonal service, an airport-style X-ray machine at the door and serious-looking government types say it all about the atmosphere, but it does have a business centre, ATM machine for Visa cards and quite a few restaurants. As one reader said, don't get too excited about breakfast here.

Funduq Winzrik (Map p72; ☎ 3403570; info@winzrikhotel.com; Sharia ash-Shatt; d 95-100LD, ste 160LD; ☎) This place is excellent if you're in town on business, although we're not sure that the addition of computers in each room (internet access costs 5LD per 24 hours) justified a doubling of its prices since we were last here. The rooms are large and very well appointed and there's also a small business centre.

Funduq al-Mehari (Map p75; ☎ 3334091/6; fax 4449502; Sharia al-Fat'h; d 150LD) Rooms at what was once Tripoli's most prestigious hotel come with most of the luxury bells and whistles and it gets good reviews from travellers. It certainly does have a touch of class that's

lacking in other government hotels and there are great views from the upper floors.

Funduq as-Safwa (Map p75; ☎ 3334592; www.safwahotel.com; Sharia al-Baladiya; ste from 100LD) This suites-only hotel is in a quiet street away from the traffic noise of downtown Tripoli and its large, semiluxurious rooms are extremely comfortable. It doesn't get too many tourists here, which may be reason enough to consider it. There's a very good restaurant downstairs.

EATING

Tripoli is the best place to eat in Libya and the opening of new restaurants in the medina means that you usually get plenty of atmosphere to go with your meal. East of Green Sq, the setting is more modern but the food equally good.

There are also loads of fast-food restaurants and snack bars all over Tripoli. Apart from price, the advantage of these places is that they are invariably open in the afternoon when most other restaurants are closed. (The hours are from 11am to 11pm.) Standard fare is *shwarma* (grilled chicken kebab; 1LD to 2LD), hamburgers (1LD to 1.5LD) and pizzas (1/5LD for small/large).

To round off your meal or simply for a snack, it's hard to go past Tripoli's wonderful patisseries. There are plenty in the streets southeast of Green Sq, especially along Sharia Mizran where there's a cluster that are marked on the Central Tripoli map. Most are open 11am to 8pm Saturday to Thursday and 2pm to 8pm Friday.

Medina

oMat'am Obaya (Map p83; ☎ mobile 0925010736; Souq al-Turk 114; mains from 5LD; ☎ lunch Sat-Thu) This is the sort of place that Lonely Planet authors hesitate to include in a book for fear that they can't get a table next time they visit. It's small with no pretensions to luxury, but there's no finer seafood in Libya and all of it is home-cooked by the amiable Mohammed Obaya, who represents all that is good about old-style Libyan warmth and hospitality. It's usually packed with tourists until around 2pm when Libyans start to muscle in for their share. The stuffed calamari (5LD) is Mohammed's own creation, not to mention the tastiest restaurant dish you'll find in Libya. The *shola* or *faruj*

fish with sauce and couscous are not far behind. Expect to pay no more than 10LD for one of these main dishes, the octopus salad and a drink. Exceptional.

Mat'am al-Bourai (Map p83; ☎ mobile 0927166560; Sharia Jama ad-Draghut; meals from 10LD; ☎ lunch Sat-Thu) Above one of the liveliest thoroughfares in the medina, this bright and busy restaurant has basic décor, but excellent food. Mat'am al-Bourai's speciality is the delicious *rishda* (noodles with chickpeas and onions) and, for the more adventurous, *osban* (sheep's stomach filled with liver, kidney and other meat, rice and herbs, and steamed or boiled in a sauce), which is a Libyan favourite.

Athar Restaurant (Map p83; ☎ 4447001; starters around 3LD, mains mostly 10-15LD; ☎ lunch & dinner) Eat here at least once while you're in Tripoli. More than that, make it an evening meal so that you can sit at an outside table right next to the illuminated Roman-era Arch of Marcus Aurelius. Now that you're seated, order *algarra* (see p66) with lamb (13LD) or seafood (20LD): cooked in a high-temperature oven with mint, basil, tomato and green peppers, it's a delicious traditional dish; soon enough, they'll be bringing a ceramic amphora, and breaking it open in front of you with a hammer. Another good order is *ozhe mergaz* (Libyan sausages; 10.5LD). It also does good salads, soups, couscous, *tajeen* (a lightly spiced dish of meat or fish cooked in a ceramic pot with a tomato-and-paprika-based sauce), mixed grills and fresh fish. Both Visa and MasterCard are accepted.

Essaa Restaurant (Map p83; ☎ mobile 0912190683; meals 15-18LD; ☎ lunch & dinner Sat-Thu, dinner Fri) There's much to like about this place with its mix of traditional and modern décor, live traditional music in the evenings and the views over the Maidan al-Sa'a from some tables. The food is fairly standard Libyan restaurant fare with the usual Libyan soup, salad, fish or meat dishes and green tea. There's also a small coffeehouse downstairs.

Al-Dar Restaurant (Map p83; ☎ 3338364; meals 20LD; ☎ 11am-midnight) Another fine converted old medina building, this topnotch restaurant has loads of atmosphere from the agreeable sound of running water to cosy, individually styled rooms and good service. The roof terrace is lovely in the evening

with views over the neighbouring Gurgi Mosque and Arch of Marcus Aurelius.

Tripolis Restaurant (Map p83; ☎ 0925580817; meals 15LD) Tasteful decorations, good food and uninterrupted views over Tripoli harbour make for a great dining experience on the fringes of the medina, off Souq al-Turk. Like many of the other new restaurants in the old town, the food is less inventive than enjoyable (ie you'll eat couscous or rice with soup and salad but they do it well), but we've no hesitation in recommending it for its ambience.

Al-Medina al-Kadima (Map p83; ☎ mobile 0926 889395; Souq al-Turk; meals 15LD; ☎ 8.30am-11pm Sat-Thu) Although better known as a teahouse (opposite), this nicely restored medina restaurant also serves good dishes of beans, fish couscous and seafood macaroni.

West of Green Square

The hotel boom in the area south of the medina and around Maidan as-Sawayhili is yet to be matched by a concomitant increase in the number of traveller-friendly restaurants.

Kentucky Restaurant (Map p75; Sharia Omar al-Mukhtar; meals 5LD) If you're after just a quick bite, this bright and popular place serves up dinner boxes that include three pieces of 'Kentucky' fried chicken, coleslaw, fries, two buns and a drink. It's great value, although the Colonel (Sanders, not Qaddafi) must be turning in his grave.

Al-Mat'am as-Samak at-Tazej (Map p75; ☎ 4443683; Sharia al-Kameet; meals from 8LD) This place is great value, and the huge and varied servings are presented in the squeaky-clean dining room by the ever-obliging waiters. It's something of a haven from the clamour outside, close as it is to Maidan as-Sawayhili, which is either dodgy or pleasantly seedy, depending on your perspective; we prefer the latter. It also does snacks downstairs.

Corinthia Bab Africa Hotel (Map p75; ☎ 3351990; Souq al-Thalatha) The four restaurants of Libya's top hotel are outstanding with the Venezia Restaurant (meals 20LD to 40LD) on the mezzanine floor serving Italian food and the top-floor Féz Restaurant (meals 25LD to 50LD) offering up exquisite Moroccan dishes in beautiful surroundings and with sweeping views over Tripoli. There are also two buffet restaurants in the glass atrium down the stairs from the lobby.

East of Green Square

RESTAURANTS

Haj Hmad Restaurant (Map p75; Sharia Haity; meals from 8LD; ☎ lunch & dinner) Haj Hmad is a great place to enjoy traditional Libyan dishes heavy on integral organs, feet and heads. But there are plenty of non-offal dishes (including fish and beans) to choose from for the squeamish and it is popular with locals, which is always a good sign.

Galaxie Restaurant (Map p75; ☎ 4448764; Sharia 1st September; meals 14-18LD; ☎ lunch & dinner) One of the best restaurants in this area, Galaxie is tastefully decorated and does the usual dishes with a touch more imagination than similar places elsewhere. The *algarra* is excellent but needs to be ordered three hours in advance. *Shwarma* and sandwiches are available downstairs.

Mat'am as-Safir (Map p75; ☎ 4447064; Sharia al-Baladiya; meals from 15LD; ☎ lunch & dinner Sat-Thu, dinner Fri) Tucked away behind Funduq al-Kebir, this place is popular with middle-class Libyans. The dining room is a cut above most modern restaurants and is reminiscent of an ancient hammam; the atmosphere is particularly agreeable in the evenings. Service is warm and welcoming and don't neglect to try the *tajeen*.

Kenouz al-Bahar Restaurant (Map p75; ☎ 3334321; Maidan al-Jezayir; meals 15-25LD) We like this place, which is directly opposite the main post office, for its friendly service and fine cooking. The *tajeen* is especially good, but it's best known for its fish dishes, which come with some subtle Tunisian touches.

Mat'am al-Murjan (Map p75; ☎ 3336507; Maidan al-Jezayir; meals 20-25LD) Next door to Kenouz, the Mat'am al-Murjan has similarly pleasant décor, attentive service and tasty food. You can choose from up to 20 self-service salads (the salad buffet costs 7LD), a mixed plate of shrimps, fish and calamari (from 25LD) or a range of local and North African fish dishes.

Mat'am al-Masabiyah (Map p75; ☎ 3337815; Sharia al-Fateh; meals 15-25LD; ☎ lunch & dinner Sat-Thu, dinner Fri) Particularly popular with well-to-do locals on Wednesday night, the service and food here are good and the food is tasty. The mixed grill is a highlight and for drinks you can choose from the *masabiyah jamaica* (a cocktail of 7-Up, Mirinda and Coke; see p67) or *carcedy*, a strong Sudanese drink made from leaves and served hot

(2LD). It also does pastas of varying quality and for dessert, don't miss the *mihallabia* (rice with milk).

Mat'am al-Saraya (Map p75; ☎ 3334433; Green Sq; ☎ noon-1am) Beloved by the Corinthia set and well-to-do Libyans, this upmarket coffeehouse and restaurant serves high-quality food. The upstairs restaurant has a range of set menus (30LD to 40LD) with an emphasis on Lebanese cuisine, while you can also order lamb/seafood *mbakbaké* (lamb or seafood Libyan pasta; 35/23LD for two) off the menu. The downstairs area is for snacks, including pizza, hamburgers and sandwiches (5LD to 20LD), as well as an enticing range of desserts. The outdoor garden is a popular place to pass the evening with a nargileh.

Fish market (5.5km east of the port along the road to Tajura) For a totally different eating experience, head to this ramshackle fish market. Choose the fish or other seafood that you want, buy it and then take it to one of the recently renovated restaurants where they'll grill it for you for a small fee (around 1.5LD). The most pleasant places to eat are **Barakoda Restaurant** (☎ 0913206971) or **Al-Shatt Restaurant** (☎ 0913771544), both of which do great salads. For a wonderfully filling and tasty meal, expect to pay 10LD to 15LD. It's wildly popular with Libyans, travellers and expats and you may have to wait for a table if you arrive late. If you're going there under your own steam, ask the taxi driver for the 'Marsa' or 'Al-Hufra' area; it's opposite the turn-off to Sharia 11 June.

QUICK EATS

The area sprawling east of Green Sq is awash with restaurants and snack bars that serve *shwarma*, hamburgers and pizzas.

Mat'am Salim (Map p75; Green Sq; hamburgers from 1.5LD, pizza 3.5-15LD; ☎ noon-midnight Sat-Thu, 6pm-midnight Fri) Undoubtedly the pick of the snack bars that proliferate in the area, Mat'am Salim is bright, stylish and friendly with outdoor tables that are perfect for both people- and traffic-watching on Green Sq. It also has a restaurant upstairs.

DRINKING

The chaste pastime of tea-drinking is for many Tripolitans the only form of nighttime entertainment and there are tea gardens and teahouses across the city that

usually stay open until late. Many are men-only, but there are nonetheless plenty of places where women will feel comfortable.

Magha as-Sa'a (Clock Tower; Map p83; ☎ 0925-032510; Maydan al-Sa'a; ☎ 7am-2am) Opposite the Ottoman clock tower in the medina is Tripoli's outstanding traditional teahouse. You can sit outside, but make sure you check out the ground-floor room with its eclectic and distinctly musical themes – an old electric guitar, an archaic juke-box and gramophone. There are good views over the square from upstairs. Not surprisingly, this place has become a favourite of tour groups, but enough locals also turn up for it to feel authentic. The staff claims never to close but we didn't turn up at 4am to confirm.

Al-Medina al-Kadima (Map p83; ☎ mobile 0926889395; Souq al-Turk; meals 15LD; ☎ 8.30am-11pm Sat-Thu) In the heart of the medina, you can't miss this traditionally decorated teahouse with loads of North African knick-knacks and a mixed crowd of tourists and locals. The only drawback is that you'll need to go elsewhere if you've set your heart on smoking a nargileh. It also serves food upstairs (opposite).

Mat'am al-Saraya (Map p75; ☎ 3334433; Green Sq; ☎ noon-1am) This upmarket restaurant (above) is classy inside, but especially popular for its outdoor tables on warm evenings where the air is thick with smoke.

Other places which are good for tea or a nargileh include Essaa Restaurant (p93) and Al-Dar Restaurant (p93); the latter's roof terrace is the place to be on a balmy Tripoli night.

Most of the above places attract a largely tourist crowd, but there are outdoor tea gardens scattered around town that are filled with families and groups of local men passing the night until midnight (or 2am on Thursday nights). At such places, a nargileh costs 1LD and tea 0.50LD. The better ones are the **Gazelle Café** (Map p75; Sharia al-Fat'h), next to a 1920s-era fountain; the open area next to where Sharia al-Baladiya meets Green Sq; the tables under the arches on Maidan al-Jezayir; and the elegant Galleria De Bono (Map p75), off Sharia 1st September. Hidden away in Sharia al-Mizda, just off Green Sq, the teahouses are like a small slice of Cairo, although women may feel uncomfortable here.

ENTERTAINMENT

You didn't come to Tripoli for the night-life, which is just as well because there is none. Bring a good book. Linger over your evening meal. Catch up on emails in an internet café. Other than that, a night out in Tripoli consists of nursing a *shay* and nargileh in an outdoor tea garden (see p95). Even the Arabic-only cinemas (ILLD) show only Egyptian, Indian or Western blockbusters interspersed with an ongoing love affair with Jackie Chan.

SHOPPING

Tripoli is the best place to shop in Libya, and just about everything that you may want to buy in the country (for advice, see p224) can be found here. The most atmospheric places to shop are in the souqs of the medina (see Tripoli's Souqs, below).

Medina

There's a reasonably good range of handicrafts (carpets, traditional clothing, jewellery) in the lanes running off to your left as you enter from Green Sq, as well as a smattering of places around the midway point of Souq al-Turk and next to the House of Yusuf Karamanli (p86). If you want a Colonel Qaddafi watch (10LD to 25LD), ask your guide, who should be able to track one down either in the medina or along Sharia al-Rashid.

Carpet Bazaar – Ben Zeglam Shop (Map p83; ☎ 0913212660; Souq al-Attara; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-8.30pm Sat-Thu) This is one shop that stands out in terms of quality, price and range for Libyan (mostly Berber) items, such as pot-

tery, Tuareg jewellery, knives and boxes, flat-weave kilim cushions and larger rugs. The owner, Ahmeda Zeglam, is a delight and epitomises the old-style civility that characterises so many Libyan shopkeepers.

Mukhtar al-Mbaka & Sons (Map p83; ☎ 3331057; Souq al-Turk 12-16; ☎ 9am-8pm) At the northwestern end of the Copper Souq, you'll find traditional Libyan silver items on offer from Mukhtar himself, who can explain the history of each piece.

Dar Yakhzen (Map p83; Souq al-Turk; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-8.30pm Sat-Thu) A particularly tranquil place to shop is this restored and whitewashed interior courtyard a few doors southeast of Hammam Draghut. There are handicraft stores and some traditional architectural features to contemplate while you browse.

Nearby to the carpet bazaar, behind the clock tower, the Souq al-Ghizdir (Map p83; Copper Souq) is a great place to see and hear the artisans at work in their almost medieval forges, and there are plenty of items for sale. Their specialities include *jammour* (crescents) that will one day adorn the tops of minarets; until that time many lie here against the lane's walls.

Near the southeastern end of Souq al-Turk, Souq al-Rabaa has vaulted ceilings and a range of local clothing such as *galabiyas* (men's robes), including ones ideal for that three-year-old back home.

West of Green Square

The basic rule for the markets along Sharia al-Rashid is that if it isn't nailed down then it's probably for sale. Items on offer range from caged animals to cheap cigarettes, Ju-

ventus shirts to *galabiyas*. Around the chaotic Tunis Garage (Map p83) at the western end are spare parts for cars, televisions, and African folk medicines sold by colourfully attired women from sub-Saharan Africa. It's worth wandering around here at least once, particularly in the evening when it can throng with people, although keep a close eye on your valuables. If you absolutely must have that Mohammed Hassan or Umm Kolthum cassette, there are shops along Sharia al-Rashid.

East of Green Square

Ghadames Art Gallery (Map p75; ☎ 3336666; 50/52 Sharia 1st September; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-9pm Sat-Thu) Not far from Green Sq, the Ghadames Art Gallery is run by the engaging Mustafa Gayim and his friendly son, Musab. They sell old paintings and sketches of Tripoli and Libya by around 50 local artists, including some lovely acrylics, as well as old photos of Tripoli.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Tripoli airport is a 1970s-era building on a grand scale and despite minor makeovers has never really lost the feeling of a large warehouse. When you arrive, don't be put off by the bewildering slogans that proclaim 'Partners, not wage workers' and 'In need, freedom is latent'. Somewhat more helpfully, the arrivals hall has a bank where you can change money and ATMs for Masraf al-Tijara Watanmiya (Bank of Commerce & Development; for Visa) and Aman Bank for Commerce & Investment (for MasterCard).

For arriving passengers, there are usually taxis waiting outside in the event that your tour representative hasn't turned up.

Libyan Arab Airlines (Map p75; Sharia Haity ☎ 333-1143; Sharia 1st September ☎ 3616738) and **Al-Buraq Air** (Map p75; ☎ 4444811; www.buraqair.com; Sharia Mohammed Megharief) both fly from Tripoli International Airport, although Al-Buraq's international flights leave from Metiga Airport, 10km east of Tripoli.

Bus

Long-distances buses for most cities around Libya and further afield depart from Tunis Garage (Map p83) at the western end of Sharia al-Rashid.

The two main bus companies are **Al-Itihad al-Afriqi** (United Africa Bus Company; Map p75; ☎ 3342532; Sharia al-Ma'ari), which operates from the Tunis Garage perimeter, and **An-Nakhl as-Seria** (Fast Transport Company; Map p75; ☎ 3333678), which runs from the Dahra Bus Station (Mahattat Hafilat Dahra; Map p75). Sample routes include Benghazi (15LD to 23LD, twice daily, 12 hours), Sebha (15LD to 23LD, one daily, 12 hours) and Ghadames (10LD to 18LD, one daily, eight hours).

Shared Taxi & Micro

Most long-distance shared taxis and micros (minibuses) leave from Tunis Garage (Map p83) at the western end of Sharia al-Rashid. For destinations closer to Tripoli, shared taxis leave from the other stations along Sharia al-Rashid, near Maidan as-Sawayhili.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Tripoli International Airport is around 25km south of the city. A private taxi costs 10LD, but if you're leaving after midnight, the driver will ask for more. A private taxi to Metiga Airport similarly costs 10LD.

TRIPOLI'S SOUQS

If you've travelled elsewhere in North Africa or the Middle East, you'll understand why the souqs of Tripoli's medina are like no others. There's no hard-sell, no expectation of payment if you get lost and ask someone for directions, no dragging you by the arm into shops to look 'just for the pleasure of your eyes'. People are genuinely helpful, like to chat and, in some places, shopkeepers almost seem embarrassed that you feel the need to pay for your purchase. We even heard stories, and have experienced ourselves, shopkeepers telling you to take your carpet or jewellery back to your hotel and bring the money later if you don't have enough cash on you.

There's one other thing about the souqs in the medina. Apart from the tourist-oriented shops in the medina's southeastern corner, most of the shops are aimed at locals. That's why, especially along the main Souq al-Turk, there's very little activity except between noon and 4pm from Saturday to Thursday. Most of the shopkeepers along this thoroughfare are gold merchants who sell by the kilo to locals as they shop for weddings or investments. You're welcome to enter the shops, but, refreshingly, you're not their main market.

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS FROM TRIPOLI

destination	airline	one way/return (LD)	frequency
Benghazi	Libyan Arab Airlines	37.50/75	3-4 daily
	Al-Buraq Air	45.50/91	5 daily
*Ghat	Libyan Arab Airlines	51/102	2 weekly
Lebreq (near Al-Bayda)	Libyan Arab Airlines	47/94	3 weekly
Sebha	Libyan Arab Airlines	37.50/75	1 daily
*Tobruk	Libyan Arab Airlines	51/102	

* Services to Ghat and Tobruk were suspended at the time of writing.

Car & Motorcycle

Tripoli has a difficult system of one-way streets in the area west of the medina – directions for the main streets are marked on the map.

Private Taxi

Black-and-white private taxis are everywhere in Tripoli and a trip usually costs 2LD, although it may be up to 5LD for outlying suburbs.

AROUND TRIPOLI

JANZUR

جنزور

☎ 021

The small town of Janzur, 13km west of Tripoli, is in danger of being swallowed up by Tripoli's relentless sprawl. Janzur is best suited as a brief stop en route to Sabratha as there are a couple of noteworthy historical sights.

The town's main attraction is the 200-year-old **Sidi Amoura Mosque**, which has been freshly whitewashed and has a tranquil arched courtyard and, unusually for Libya, a square-sided minaret. Much of the mosque will soon be cast into shadow by a newer mosque being built alongside.

Janzur Museum (admission 3LD; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) contains a motley collection of bone-shards, pottery amphorae and oil lamps from the cemeteries that once dotted the re-

gion; most date from the 1st or 2nd centuries AD and are labelled in English. The real highlight, however, and worth the visit on its own, is the Byzantine tomb in the basement, one of 18 such underground tombs found in the area in 1958. Climb inside for some extraordinary frescoes, including one that takes the form of a river from earthly life to the afterlife.

Janzur is something of a summer resort and has a decent beach. Tastefully designed **Qaryat Janzur as-Siyahe** (Janzur Tourist Village; ☎ 4890421; s/d 25/35LD, villas 50LD) is one of Libya's better tourist complexes, but you'll have to book up to three months in advance to get a room in summer.

TAJURA

تاجوراء

The small town of Tajura, 14km east of the capital, is a summer resort for Tripoli residents who don't want to stray too far from home. The settlement goes back to medieval times, and it was a refuge for the elites of Tripoli who fled during the brief Spanish occupation in the 16th century. Its main attraction is the large **Murad Agha Mosque**, which dates from the middle of the 16th century. It is very plain from the outside and features a large square minaret. Inside it has a large arcaded prayer hall with 48 columns, which were brought from Leptis Magna.

Elsewhere in Tajura is **Hammam Tajura**, a natural spring that has been turned into a health spa.