

SAHARA OASIS TOWNS



Street in a Sahara Oasis Town.

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BISKRA, in Algeria, nearly 200 miles back from the edge of the Mediterranean, is a typical oasis town of the near Sahara. Around it are clustered other oases, the group making up Ziban. There, only a short distance from the Europeanized coast, the traveler may breathe the life of the great desert that stretches to south and east for many hundreds of miles.

The oasis of Biskra is six miles long, possesses 170,000 date palms, beside tamarind, fig, and orange trees, and likewise possesses what is claimed to be the most perfect climate in the world from November till May. Its genial temperature, clear sky and luxuriant vegetation are indisputable charms, and its dry atmosphere makes it particularly curative for pulmonary diseases. Sometimes seventeen or eighteen months pass without a shower, and yet there is a never-failing supply of delicious cold water from natural wells throughout the whole oasis.

There are five villages in this island of the sand-sea, and the outlying oases of Filiah and Geddeba also belong to Biskra. The Arab villages and the villages of the negroes are built of sun-dried mud, with doors and flat roofs of palmwood. Among the ruins of old Biskra, where before the new fort was constructed the French fortified the old Kasbah existing at their arrival, are a heap of Roman blocks and columns, which are all that remains of the Roman outpost of Ad Piscinam. The French village is clustered around Fort Saint Germain, named for a gallant officer killed during the Zaatcha insurrection of 1810, and which is capable of sheltering the whole civil population.

There is a pretty public garden, where feathery pepper trees make a pleasant shade, a church, a mosque, streets of shops, a handsome casino and officers' club, and three good hotels, of which the principal one, the Royal hotel, is said to be the best in Algeria. It is certainly a delightful surprise to find in the Sahara a hotel with every appointment of elegance and comfort.

Market Place Fascinating.

A visit to the market place during the morning is one of the sights of the town and oriental in every tone. Squatting groups of bronze-legged Bedouins, in brown and white camel-hair burnouses, are selling cous-cous, dried peppers and, of course, dates. Bunches of fresh grass and green barley and thistles are heaped in one corner of the inclosure, Moorish slippers here and a pile of red fezzes there, and souvenirs for the tourist not lacking. For a few francs one may purchase a set of graceful gazelle horns, and curious knives and Arabian guns tempt the collector. An elon negress is selling oranges, an Arab boy in a red fez, and not much else, carries a basket of purple fruit in green leaves, while elons, burnouses, turbans, and yakmabs, purple, blue, deep red, and spotless white all crushed together, make kaleidoscopic color in the whitewashed square. Bags of henna leaves, for staining the nails in Arab fashion, send forth their pungent odor, and the aroma of coffee and cigarettes fills the air. A Kabyle girl in red gown, tattooed blue as to her forehead and cheeks, stained yellow as to her finger tips, passes, cigarette in mouth, her bangles and anklets clinking as she goes.

Outside a Moorish cafe a row of Moors, clean in their white burnouses, are solemnly crouched, two of them playing a grave game of chess but the rest do nothing to perfection, without a trace of boredom or a gesture of impatience, a state of dreamy delight achieved apparently by habit of mind, a realization of Arabian Keyf. Two merry cantinieres go briskly along, and behind them glide two Sisters of Charity. Occasionally a tall figure in white burnouse and dark blue or pale-gray cape, with crimson fez and gold-embroidered jacket, passes, and the dark eyes and white teeth flash down in friendly glance. Occasionally, too, there is a suspicion of genuine

of those whiffed on the air, as one of these oriental gilded youths walks by, and one is reminded of what an Arabian courier once said: "In my country, if a man have perfume on his clothes, it makes scandal!"

Street of the Ouled-Nails.

There is a mysterious charm in the quiet night as one goes "almudug" in the street of the Ouled-Nails. The stars are intensely bright overhead, and the briskness, purity, and sweetness of the air, beggar description. Passing into the street of the Ouled-Nails is a sudden transition to much life, color and noise, the street itself full of Arabs, young and old, while on matting outside nearly every door sit the Ouled-Nail girls, drinking coffee, smoking cigarettes, and chattering what is presumably Biskran slang at any halting passers-by.

The Ouled-Nails, sometimes called Almees, are girls from an oasis at some distance from Biskra, and of mixed Arabian and negro blood. They are more remarkable for their singularity of costume and grace of dancing than for the rigidity of their morals. Their faces are daubed with tar and saffron to accentuate the color of the African sun; tattooing in blue is quite in vogue, and their hair, mixed with wool and stiffened with grease and tar, hangs in ebon loops about the face. They wear loose gowns of bright cotton, and gold and silver coin, coral, and flagree in barbaric abundance, sometimes twenty pounds of silver being carried in the shape of bangles, anklets, chains, and massive girdles. One sits in a brightly lighted, low, white building and sips Arabian coffee while some of the girls dance their peculiar desert dances.

If Biskra is the political and social center of the Ziban, and the Ziban is the group of prosperous oases, villages extending from the foot of the Aures mountains to the Chott-Melghir, the religious capital is Sidi-Okba. Sidi-Okba is an oasis distant twenty kilometers from Biskra, and is named for that old warrior who, at the head of a small body of Arab cavalry, went forth to conquer Africa in the sixtieth year of the Hedjra. When he had extended his conquest from Egypt to Tangier, he spurred his horse into the Atlantic, declaring that only such a barrier could prevent him from forcing every nation beyond it who knew not God to worship Him only or die. In a revolt of the Berbers he was killed, A. D. 641, and when the Arabs had reconquered the Ziban their leaders was buried in the oasis which bears his name.

Going to Sidi-Okba.

The track across the desert to Sidi-Okba is practical for carriages. Most of the turbaned drivers gallop their three horses harnessed abreast over the hummocks of sand and tufts of sage-brush till the passengers beg for slower pace. Soon after leaving Biskra the road crosses a stony tract a quarter of a mile broad, with a deep stream in the center, the Oued-Biskra, and emerges on the desert. The tiny oasis of Beliah is passed on the right, the dome of a marabout's tomb shining among its trees. The long, low-lying line of the palms of Sidi-Okba is in the distance; the Aures mountains rise in golden and rose glory, the deep clefts in their side blue and mysterious.

Groups of Bedouin tents are passed at intervals, and the scarlet ring, the copper pan, the fire, and its group are dashes of bright color in the yellow-browns of earth and camp, enfolded always with the dazzling blue of the sky. Herds of camels feed on the dry sage-brush of the plain, and the baby camels trot by their mothers in coltish fashion.

Five other oases are passed, Chetnah, Drob, Sidi-Khabit, Seriana, and Garia, and at length one approaches the mud wall which surrounds the sacred oasis. Four thousand Arabs live in this village, and the mud houses are thickly packed, the streets narrow and indescribably dirty, with rivulets of muddy water running down the center. The tiny shops are open to the street, in eastern fashion, and behind their wares the cross-legged merchants sit in stolid indifference

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Some Man-Made Seas

If the Boulder dam of the Colorado river is ever completed as designed it will have a capacity of 20,000,000 acre-feet of water. Some of the other great constructions of this character created storage as follows: Gatun dam, 4,410,000; Assouan dam, 1,865,000; Elephant Butte dam, 2,338,000; and Almaraz dam, 1,318,000.

Or a Hippo

Bettie—Could you tell me what nonsense is, uncle?
Uncle—No.

Bettie—Well, it's an elephant hanging ever a cliff with its tail tied to a daisy.—Boston Post.

Virtue requires exercise.



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Next time a coated tongue, fetid breath, or acrid skin gives evidence of sour stomach—try Phillips Milk of Magnesia!

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PHILLIPS Milk of Magnesia

Pilot Flies 250,000 Miles

Paul Witte, an air pilot of the German commercial air service, recently completed a total distance of 400,000 kilometers, which is equal to nearly ten times around the world, in scheduled air service. On his arrival at the Hamburg airdrome he was given an official welcome during which he was presented a gold scarf pin and many floral gifts.

No Car, No Go

He—Do you ever walk in your sleep?
She—No! but any time you see me walking you'll know I am unconscious.

—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Trees Grow in Swamp Without Visible Soil

Huge trees growing without any visible means of support are a striking feature of the great Zapata swamp of southern Cuba. This swamp, nearly 1,800 square miles in extent, includes an area of limestone that is filled with holes and covered with a variety of tropical trees. Silk-cotton trees four feet in diameter, big mahoganies, and many other kinds are found growing on this limestone area, where not so much as a single spoon of soil could be gathered from an acre. The trees make their start in small pockets and holes in the limestone, where collections of leaves and slight accumulations of disintegrated rock furnish them with cover for growth. The roots stray about over the surface of the rock in search of food, finally plunging through holes to find sustenance in soil hidden deeply in the cavernous recesses of the coral stone.

'Airmen's Echo Test

Even when the ground is obscured by thick fog, a series of explosions like a machine gun's rat-a-tat-tat within a plane's undercarriage tells an airman his exact height, in a new device to be installed on French aircraft.

The echo from the ground is picked up by electric sound detectors which gauge the craft's altitude, and the device is said to give accurate measurement to within one foot from the ground.

Different Destinations

Great Aunt Ann had been ill for a long time and having one of her "bad spells." She remarked that she "was soon going to die, wasn't going to be here long." Little four-year-old Gene hearing this remark, asked her where she was going. She replied she was "going to heaven." Gene said: "I'm not. I'm going to Sillesville." His parents had been planning to make a trip to Sillesville.

Useless

"You are just like the letter B."
"How come?"
"You are always in debt when they ain't no need of it."—Ladies Home Journal.

Candidates, Attention

First Politician—He took his defeat very easily, didn't he? I wonder what he did with all his placards?
Second Politician—Told me he used them in papering his garage.

Drugs Excite the Kidneys, Drink Water

Take Salts at First Sign of Bladder Irritation or Backache

The American men and women must guard constantly against kidney trouble because we often eat too much rich food. Our blood is filled with acids which the kidneys strive to filter out; they weaken from overwork, become sluggish, the eliminative ripples clog and the result is kidney trouble, bladder weakness and a general decline in health.

When your kidneys feel like lumps of lead; your back hurts or the urine is cloudy, full of sediment, or you are obliged to seek relief two or three times during the night; if you suffer with sick headache, or dizzy, nervous spells, acid stomach, or if you have rheumatism when the weather is bad, begin drinking lots of good soft water and get from your pharmacist about four ounces of Jad Salts. Take a tablespoonful in a glass of water before breakfast for a few days and your kidneys may then act fine.

This famous salt is made from the acid of grapes and lemon juice, combined with lithia, and has been used for years to help flush and stimulate clogged kidneys, to neutralize the acids in the system so they no longer are a source of irritation, thus often relieving bladder disorders.

Jad Salts is inexpensive, cannot injure, makes a delightful effervescent lithia-water drink and belongs in every home, because nobody can make a mistake by having a good kidney flushing any time.

Last Resort

Homebody—So you must catch the 11:40 train west? Is it important?
Holmes—It's vital. My doctor says I must have my regular sleep, and a berth on that train is the only lodging I can find for tonight.

Is It Love?

Mable—Do you think Clarice really likes Bobby?
Alice—She doesn't know yet. She's going to that famous Vienna psychiatrist to find out.

A green grocer is one who trusts the family that has just moved into the neighborhood.

Rejected!

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