



## Tunisia 1 : The desert



**Directed by Chantal BAUMANN**

*French version*  
*English Version*

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A documentary of 52'

Digital Betacam 16/9

The Tunisian part of the Oriental Grand Erg, runs along the border between Algeria and Tunisia. It is about 400 km long, 140km wide, and stretches from Nefta to Ghadames. In the Tunisian part, the width of the "grand erg" is maintained thanks to the compact mass of the patchwork of dunes.

Mirage or reality? That is the question that comes to mind when you first glimpse the town of Tozeur in the distance.

But as you get closer, you realise that this oasis, with its forest of lush palm trees, is 100 percent real. In Roman times Tozeur was a hotbed of trade and exchange.

Over the centuries the town has succeeded in maintaining this stream of commerce. Another of its strong points is that Tozeur is the foremost area for date production.

The Palmeraie is fed by 200 water sources. This sand-coloured town has a very unique architectural style.

Tamerza is probably the most beautiful of the mountain oases.

Destroyed and abandoned in 1969 after a believed record of 22 days, the old village is a heap of ruins, which seem to fade away into the desolate mountain scenery.

A little way down from the ruins, a very dry stream (oued) completes the picture. The only building which continues to be used in Tamerza is the marabout, whose stark white dome stands out amongst the crumbling walls.

On the road between Tozeur and Douze, the desert becomes the sky. The horizon disappears into infinity.

The road continues along a raised path, which divides the murky waters of an immense salt-water lake, the Chott El Jerid. In summer, this whole bowl becomes a great expanse of salt. The ground is blinding white.

Amongst the cracks of the dry earth mirages are common, because the constant evaporation combines with the sunlight to create deceptively real images. Imaginary rocks tremble on the horizon, false oases and caravans seem to move before your eyes.