

1.1 Why choose Tunisia?

If you've landed on Tunisia as a possible new home, let's strip it down to the essentials. Forget glossy travel blogs with sunsets over Sidi Bou Said, you're not here for a postcard. You want to know whether this place works as a base for real life, with all the good, the bad, and the bureaucratically absurd. The short answer? Tunisia can be generous if you arrive prepared, and merciless if you don't.

Start with the economy. On paper, the engines are tourism, agriculture, textiles, and the growing IT outsourcing scene. Tourism you already know, beaches, medinas, and packaged European charters. Agriculture is less sexy but more resilient: olives, dates, and citrus are staples, and you'll taste them in every meal. Textiles once kept thousands employed, but cheap Asian imports ate away at that base, so don't build your future on it. IT outsourcing, though? That's where the country tries to reinvent itself, and if you're in tech or digital services, you'll see startups fighting hard to carve space, often with government incentives dangling in front of them. But here's the kicker: bureaucracy is a hungry monster. Incentives exist, yes, but you'll drown in stamped papers and "come back tomorrow" unless you either speak the language or hire someone local who knows which office clerk likes which brand of cigarettes.

Survival Hack: Never enter an office empty-handed. Even a stack of neatly photocopied documents in triplicate signals you've done your homework. It can shave weeks off your wait.

Tunisia is a place where inflation dances unpredictably. Prices in dinars creep up on everyday essentials, and unemployment, especially for the youth, hovers at uncomfortable levels. That's your reality check: locals are struggling to find decent jobs, so arriving with foreign income puts you in a very different league. You'll buy groceries for a fraction of what you're used to in Europe, but you'll also be reminded, every time you compare wages, how far your euro or dollar stretches here.

Avoid This: Don't come thinking you'll "make it" on a Tunisian salary unless you enjoy living tight. A typical local paycheck barely covers rent in Tunis.

Urban life in Tunis, Sousse, or coastal hubs comes with higher rent, pricier cafes, and traffic jams that make you question your life choices. Inland towns are cheaper, sometimes dramatically, but you'll trade convenience for authenticity. A two-bedroom in the capital's northern suburbs can set you back the equivalent of €500–700, while the same budget inland could land you a house with a garden. That's the divide. If you're bringing a remote job, you'll be sitting pretty; if you're relying on Tunisian wages, brace for belt-tightening.

Unspoken Rule: Locals know the real cost of living isn't measured in rent or groceries, but in connections. Who you know can get your child into a better school, your residency processed faster, or your internet repaired in days instead of months.

Work-life balance? This isn't Berlin with its strict 35-hour contracts. Expect 40 to 48 hours depending on the sector. Public holidays mix Islamic and national dates, which means you'll sometimes find yourself with an unexpected day off, or discover at 9 a.m. that every office is closed and no one thought to tell you. The pace is slower than Western Europe, and time is elastic. A two-hour lunch break isn't laziness; it's survival in the heat. Learn to adopt it rather than fight it.

Insider Tip: Friday afternoons are a ghost town in many offices. Don't plan big meetings or urgent paperwork then, you'll be talking to empty desks.

On global rankings, Tunisia sits in the grey zone. Safety is moderate. Petty crime, pickpockets, bag snatches, scams, thrives in crowded markets, but violent crime is rare. Healthcare is a coin toss: public hospitals are cheap but overcrowded, while private clinics will impress you with their speed and equipment, as long as you have cash or insurance. Education? Literacy rates are high, but the system is under strain, with overcrowded public schools and expensive international options. Corruption? It's real, but not in-your-face. Think of it more as a hidden tax: small facilitation fees that keep the machine moving.

Climate divides the country into two worlds. The north basks in Mediterranean charm, think hot summers, mild winters, and olive groves stretching to the horizon. The south is another planet: desert, sandstorms, and extremes that demand respect. You'll enjoy year-round sun, but droughts are no joke. Water rationing in summer is a recurring theme, so don't be surprised if the tap runs dry for a few hours.

Survival Hack: Always keep a couple of jerry cans of water at home. Locals do it instinctively; you'll thank them the first time the faucet goes silent mid-shower.

Connectivity is better than you'd expect, but not uniform. Airports are scattered strategically, Tunis-Carthage, Monastir, Enfidha, and Djerba. They keep the country surprisingly accessible to Europe. Trains connect the big cities, louages (shared minibuses) handle the rest, and while buses exist, you'll learn fast that the louage is Tunisia's true circulatory system. Roads are mostly fine, but once you're inside Tunis, congestion is the daily monster. A twenty-minute trip can morph into an hour without warning.

Unspoken Rule: In traffic, horns aren't aggression, they're language. Learn the code or stay stressed forever.

Immigration policy is simple at first glance: many nationalities enter visa-free for 90 days. That's your honeymoon phase. But if you want to stay, reality sets in. Residence permits exist for workers, students, retirees, and investors, but the process is opaque and slow. Expect two to three months for approval, multiple visits to police stations, and a love affair with notarized translations. Still, it's doable, thousands of expats pull it off every year.

Avoid This: Don't overstay your 90 days thinking nobody notices. The fine seems small, but it will bite you later when you try to renew, invest, or buy property.

So, why choose Tunisia? Because it's close to Europe but feels worlds away. Because the cost of living, if you've got foreign income, lets you breathe. Because it's messy, yes, but in a human way, bureaucracy is frustrating, but the warmth of neighbors sharing couscous on a Friday night softens the blow. This is a country where contradictions are the norm: chaos at the bank in the morning, mint tea at sunset, desert silence after a week of city noise.

You don't come here to replicate the life you left behind. You come here to live fully in a place that resists predictability, challenges your patience, and rewards your curiosity. And if you accept that trade-off, Tunisia can give you more than just a cheap rental or sunny weather. It gives you perspective, the kind you only earn by surviving both the madness of a ministry office and the generosity of a family who insists you eat until you can't move.

1.2 What to Expect in Practice

Tunisia will test your patience before it tests anything else. The first thing you learn here is that time isn't measured by clocks but by queues, stamps, and the mysterious schedules of bureaucrats who seem to operate on their own calendar. Residence permits, for example, can drag on for two or three months. Not because the process is impossibly complicated, but because no one tells you that the file you thought was complete is missing a photocopy, a signature, or an extra passport photo that looks exactly like the other five you've already given. You will spend days rehearsing polite ways of asking, "When will it be ready?" and discover that the safest answer you'll ever get is "Inshallah."

Opening a bank account is quicker, one to two weeks if you've got your paperwork aligned, but even there, you'll hit small landmines. Some branches insist on seeing your residence permit first, others accept just your lease and passport. It's not written anywhere; it depends on the mood of the clerk in front of you. Utilities can be even more erratic. Water or electricity might be connected in a few days, or it might take weeks if your landlord "forgot" to clear an old bill. This is Tunisia's rhythm: nothing catastrophic, just delays that stack up and chip away at your Western sense of efficiency. Survival Hack: Always carry at least ten extra photocopies of every document, color, black-and-white, signed, unsigned. It feels paranoid until the day you pull out the exact sheet some official swears is missing, and suddenly you're the magician who solved the unsolvable.

Now let's talk about money. If you earn in euros or dollars, you'll live here like someone who jumped a few rungs up the ladder. Rent, groceries, a decent night out, all comfortably affordable. But never forget that the average Tunisian scrapes by on €400–700 a month. That gap creates its own invisible wall. While you're sipping an €8 cocktail at La Marsa, your neighbor might be working two jobs just to keep the lights on. It's easy for foreign earners to enjoy "a high comfort level," but it comes at the cost of being constantly aware of the inequality around you.

Avoid This: Don't brag about how cheap everything feels to you. It might be pocket change from your perspective, but for the person serving you, it's their weekly food budget.

Bureaucracy is its own art form here. You'll drown in Arabic and French documents, each requiring stamps, signatures, and notarizations. Expect to visit the same ministry three times because the first clerk "forgot" to mention a missing piece of paper. Learn to see it as a test of endurance, not logic. It isn't personal, everyone, including locals, suffers under the same circus. If you're smart, you'll befriend a fixer. They aren't official, but for a fee, they'll shepherd your paperwork through the labyrinth in half the time. Think of it as paying a toll, not as corruption.

Insider Tip: Notaries are the real gatekeepers. Nothing moves forward without their stamp. Build a good relationship with one early, and suddenly every "impossible" document becomes possible.

The cultural mismatch kicks in fast. Time is elastic. A meeting scheduled at ten means people might show up at half past, or not at all. Bureaucracy is opaque, which means no one feels obligated to explain why your file is delayed. Hierarchy is respected, so barking at a clerk won't get you anywhere, but a respectful tone, a handshake, and maybe a discreet facilitation fee might unlock doors you didn't even know existed. It's not corruption in the cinematic sense; it's the social oil that keeps the machinery moving.

Unspoken Rule: Never raise your voice in a government office. The moment you lose your cool, you lose your file. Politeness is the only currency that always works.

Hidden costs creep in everywhere. Notary fees, translation charges, deposits that mysteriously grow larger at the last minute, and the classic "tips" slipped under the table. Think of it as Tunisia's unofficial tax system. It's frustrating, yes, but if you budget for it, you'll find it's rarely ruinous, just persistent. The real danger is ignoring it, then being shocked when your relocation costs balloon by 20%.

Integration is a slow burn. If you speak French, you'll cut through layers of formality much faster. But to go beyond the polite smiles and actually be invited into homes, you'll need Arabic, specifically Tunisian Arabic, not the textbook version. Without it, your social life risks staying stuck in the expat bubble, limited to embassy parties and Facebook groups. In Tunis or the coastal hubs, you'll find plenty of fellow foreigners to lean on. Inland, it's different. There, you'll be the curiosity, the outsider who needs to prove they're not just passing through.

Survival Hack: Learn ten phrases in Tunisian Arabic before you land. Not “textbook” greetings, but real expressions like “Y’atik essaha” (thank you for your effort). It’s a password that earns respect faster than any French sentence ever will.

Patience becomes your primary currency. Nothing works on the first try. The bank might ask for an “extra” document that doesn’t exist in your home country. The utility company may insist your landlord accompany you, even if you’ve got the lease. The ministry may change its requirements between your first and second visit. It’s infuriating, but it’s also the reality everyone plays by

Avoid This: Don’t try to “fix” the system. Locals have been surviving it for decades; your clever reform ideas won’t charm anyone behind the counter.

If you can accept this rhythm, Tunisia becomes easier to navigate. You’ll stop expecting efficiency and start measuring progress differently: Did you get one signature today? Then you won. Did you make a new local contact who promises to “help next time”? Then you leveled up. That’s how you survive here, not by fighting the system, but by learning to dance with it.

And that’s the paradox: the very chaos that drives you mad is also what gives life here its texture. The delays force you into conversations at cafés you’d otherwise ignore. The endless paperwork teaches you humility. The language barrier pushes you into learning words you didn’t think you’d ever need. Integration takes time, but when it happens, when someone in your neighborhood greets you not as “the foreigner” but as “our friend”, it feels earned. Tunisia doesn’t hand out belonging for free. It makes you work for it. And that, strangely, is part of its charm.

1.3 Quick Cultural Overview

If you want to understand Tunisia beyond the tourist photos, you need to grasp its cultural DNA. The country isn't just a backdrop of ruins and beaches, it's stitched together by values that run deeper than any policy or law. First on that list: family. Family isn't a weekend visit or a polite phone call here; it's the gravitational pull around which everything else orbits. Every decision, from where someone lives to who they trust, is filtered through family ties. If you're lucky enough to be invited into that circle, you'll find yourself treated less like a guest and more like a responsibility. It's not hospitality for show, it's an obligation, almost sacred.

Hospitality isn't optional here. It's a reflex. Walk into a Tunisian home, and within minutes you'll be handed tea, bread, or maybe an entire meal you didn't plan for. The refusal game is tricky: saying "no, thank you" is considered rude, so prepare to eat more than you wanted. This generosity can feel overwhelming at first, but it's also the key to integration. Accept the offer, show gratitude, and suddenly doors open where bureaucracy closes them.

Unspoken Rule: Never walk into a Tunisian home empty-handed. Even a small box of sweets or a bag of fruit signals respect. It's less about the gift itself and more about showing you understand the code.

Communication is another layer you'll need to decode. Don't expect blunt answers or German-style directness. Tunisians often circle around the point, softening refusals or using polite evasions instead of saying "no." French and Arabic flow together in daily conversation, you might hear a sentence start in one language and end in another. This mix isn't sloppiness; it's cultural agility. As an expat, dipping into Arabic even for a greeting while switching back to French for the meat of the conversation shows you respect both worlds.

Insider Tip: When someone says "Inshallah" ("if God wills it"), take it as a polite hedge, not a binding promise. It might mean "yes," "no," or "ask me again later." Learn to read the tone, it's an art form.

Gender norms are a paradox. Tunisia is patriarchal in many ways: traditional roles still shape family life, men are expected to be providers, and you'll see more men in cafés than women. Yet compared to the rest of the region, women's rights here are far more advanced.

Women can drive, work, divorce, inherit, and walk alone in public without the same scrutiny you'd find elsewhere in North Africa. Don't mistake that for full equality, harassment still happens, and glass ceilings exist, but the balance is evolving, and many Tunisians take pride in that difference.

Avoid This: Don't assume Tunisia is "like Saudi" or "like Morocco." Locals hate lazy comparisons. Tunisia's legal and social trajectory has been unique, and people want it recognized.

The divide between urban and rural Tunisia is sharp. In Tunis, La Marsa, or Sousse, you'll find cosmopolitan families fluent in French, sipping espresso, scrolling TikTok, and working in startups. Head inland, and the tone changes. Rural communities are more conservative, slower to embrace outsiders, and more anchored in tradition. That's not a warning to stay away, rural Tunisia is rich with authenticity, but it demands more humility from you. A sleeveless dress that raises no eyebrows in Carthage might cause whispers in Kasserine.

Survival Hack: Keep a "dual wardrobe." City clothes for Tunis or Djerba, modest outfits for the countryside. It saves you from uncomfortable stares and helps you move between worlds without friction.

Cultural markers punctuate the rhythm of life. Ramadan is the big one. For a month, life slows down during the day and explodes with energy after sunset. Shops shift hours, offices cut workdays short, and the whole country feels suspended. Eid follows, a massive celebration where entire families gather, new clothes are worn, and sheep are sacrificed. Independence Day on March 20 pulls the nation together in patriotic pride, while football divides and unites with equal passion. The café culture is where all of this merges. Cafés aren't just about coffee; they're the unofficial parliament of daily life. Men gather to smoke, debate politics, or simply watch the street. Increasingly, women join too, especially in urban centers, but the café remains a male-dominated institution.

Unspoken Rule: If you're a foreign woman, don't panic if you're the only one in a local café. Some neighborhoods are more conservative, yes, but in most cities, curiosity will outweigh judgment. Still, choose your café wisely.

Football deserves its own mention. It isn't just a sport; it's religion in motion. Supporting Esperance or Club Africain in Tunis, or Etoile du Sahel in Sousse, is part of local identity. If you want to bond with strangers instantly, ask them about last week's match. Just don't pick the wrong team in the wrong café unless you enjoy heated debates.

Insider Tip: In Tunis, wearing a team's jersey in the wrong part of town is like walking into a London pub shouting for the opposing side. Harmless most of the time, but you'll get an earful.

Underneath it all is solidarity. Neighbors watch each other's kids, cousins lend money, communities rally around weddings and funerals. It can feel suffocating, everyone knows everyone's business, but it also means you're rarely left alone in a crisis. That sense of collective life is what keeps Tunisia resilient despite its economic struggles. For an expat, learning how to plug into that network is the difference between floating on the surface and actually belonging.

Avoid This: Don't romanticize it. Community solidarity is beautiful, but it also comes with obligations. If you're "in," you'll be expected to show up, contribute, and sometimes say yes when you'd rather say no.

At the heart of it, Tunisia's culture is a mix of contradictions. It's a place where you'll be offered a plate of couscous by strangers but might struggle for months to get your residence permit. Where women push boundaries in universities while rural families cling tightly to tradition. Where conversation dances between Arabic, French, and hand gestures, all while you're learning to decode the silences as much as the words. It's a system of unwritten codes, and the sooner you accept that, the smoother your life here becomes.

1.4 Political Environment & Freedoms

If you're planning to settle in Tunisia, you need to accept that politics here isn't background noise, it seeps into daily life. On paper, the system is a republic. In practice, it's a strong presidency running the show, with a parliament that feels more like a supporting actor than a protagonist. The balance of power swings heavily toward whoever sits in Carthage Palace. Political turbulence isn't a rare occurrence; it's the default state. Constitutions are rewritten, governments reshuffled, and alliances break apart overnight. If you're the kind of person who needs predictable institutions, Tunisia will unsettle you. If you thrive in places where improvisation is survival, you'll find it fascinating.

The judiciary is another headache. In theory, courts should guarantee fairness. In reality, corruption is a stubborn disease. Cases drag on for months, sometimes years, not because of complexity but because files get "lost," judges get "delayed," or lawyers know exactly how to stretch time until one side gives up. If you find yourself in a legal tangle here, anything from a property dispute to a labor conflict, don't expect quick resolutions. Locals know that court is often the last resort, not the first. Mediation, personal networks, or quiet settlements do more work than official rulings.

Unspoken Rule: If someone tells you, "We'll see what the judge says," they're stalling. The real negotiation is happening in private.

Civil liberties are a mixed bag. Yes, you can speak your mind more freely than in some neighboring countries. No, that doesn't mean you're safe to say anything. Criticizing religion, the presidency, or the military online can earn you more than angry comments, it can bring you into the police's orbit. Protests are frequent, especially around economic issues, and the state usually tolerates them. But tolerance has limits. Tear gas and baton charges aren't unheard of. As an expat, you're not the target, but if you wander into the wrong square at the wrong time, you'll quickly regret it.

Avoid This: Never participate in protests. Watching from the sidelines is risky enough. Joining in is a direct ticket to trouble, deportation at best, legal problems at worst.

Media is a battlefield of contradictions. On one hand, you've got independent outlets digging into scandals, producing sharp journalism, and pushing boundaries. On the other, state channels and government-aligned papers churn out predictable propaganda.

The line between the two blurs depending on the topic. Sensitive issues, corruption at the highest levels, military affairs, religion, are carefully managed, either through outright censorship or by making journalists' lives so complicated that self-censorship becomes the norm. As a reader, you'll learn to triangulate: cross-check local reports, talk to Tunisians, and then compare with international outlets to see the full picture.

Insider Tip: Radio is king here. If you want to know what people really think, tune in to popular call-in shows on Mosaique FM or Shems FM. You'll hear the raw mix of frustration, humor, and cynicism that no newspaper captures.

Anti-corruption frameworks exist, and they look great on paper. Agencies, commissions, and campaigns pop up regularly. The problem is enforcement. Small-time bribes get cracked down on occasionally, but high-level scandals? They usually fade into the fog of "ongoing investigations." Tunisians joke that the country is always "fighting corruption," yet no one ever seems to be convicted. As an expat, this means you'll see two realities: on the ground, the small "facilitation fees" that grease bureaucracy, and on the news, grand speeches about reform. Don't confuse one with the other.

Survival Hack: If you want paperwork to move faster, don't ask, "Can I pay a bribe?" Instead, ask, "Is there a quicker option?" Locals know the code. If there is one, someone will quietly let you know.

Political turbulence also affects the business environment. One month, a sector is promoted with tax breaks and incentives; the next, new regulations appear out of nowhere. Expats who succeed here are the ones who build flexibility into their plans, not those who rely on laws staying stable. If you're an investor, always have a local partner who can sense political winds long before you do.

Unspoken Rule: Never discuss politics casually with strangers. Tunisians themselves tread carefully. What sounds like an innocent conversation in a café can quickly turn tense if someone thinks you're mocking their reality.

The irony of living in Tunisia is that freedoms exist, just not evenly. In urban areas, you'll hear open criticism of the government, even jokes about corruption. In rural towns, people are quieter, more cautious, less willing to risk standing out. Social media adds another layer. You'll see Tunisians vent online, but everyone knows the red lines: religion, the president, and the army. Cross those, and doors can slam shut quickly.

Avoid This: Don't assume your foreign passport is a shield. If you insult religion or the presidency publicly, you're fair game for police attention, and embassies can only do so much.

So how does this all affect you as an expat? You won't be chased down for your opinions, but you'll live in a society where politics is an unstable current, always shifting beneath your feet. Your strategy should be to stay informed, stay polite, and stay out of the spotlight. Respect the unspoken codes, listen more than you talk, and remember: Tunisia's politics aren't just headlines. They shape the queues you stand in, the delays you face, and the freedoms you quietly enjoy, or learn not to take for granted.

1.5 Social Fractures & Tensions

Tunisia looks compact on a map, but living here you realize the country is split by invisible fault lines that shape everything from politics to daily conversation. The first and most obvious one is regional inequality. The wealth, infrastructure, and opportunities cling tightly to the coast, Tunis, Sousse, Hammamet, Sfax, Djerba, while the interior feels like another country entirely. Drive a few hours inland and you'll see the shift: fewer jobs, crumbling roads, schools with fewer resources, and a sense of abandonment that fuels resentment. For coastal Tunisians, the capital is the pulse of the nation. For those in Kasserine or Gafsa, it's a distant machine that eats their taxes and returns little. As an expat, you're likely to settle on the coast where life is easier. But don't forget that the anger simmering inland isn't just statistics, it bursts into protests, blockades, and the kind of tension you won't see on glossy expat forums.

Insider Tip: If you're traveling inland, avoid making casual comments about how "beautifully quiet" it feels. Locals there don't romanticize the silence; for them, it often means unemployment and neglect.

Minorities add another fracture. The Amazigh (Berber) culture is still alive, particularly in villages like Chenini and Douiret or on the island of Djerba. But it lives in the margins, rarely given space in the national narrative. You'll see their crafts, their troglodyte homes, and their languages woven into tourism brochures, but politically and socially, they're still pushed to the sidelines. Religious minorities exist too, small Christian and Jewish communities, especially in Tunis and Djerba, but they're tiny and mostly tolerated as long as they don't push visibility too far. Tunisia presents itself as secular compared to the region, and it is, but minority status always comes with caution.

Unspoken Rule: Don't assume that because someone speaks French or dresses modern, they've shed traditional or religious identities. Identity here is layered, and often proudly so.

Urbanization is another fracture line. Tunis and the coastal cities have grown fast, often too fast for infrastructure to keep up. Overcrowding is a polite way to describe it. Traffic that makes you question your sanity, apartment blocks sprouting up without urban planning, and services stretched thin.

Expats sometimes confuse this density with vibrancy, the souks packed with life, the street cafés overflowing, but locals will tell you it feels more like suffocation. The overcrowding also feeds resentment: “Why does everything go to Tunis while the south is ignored?” It’s not just political rhetoric; it’s a daily lived inequality.

Avoid This: Don’t joke about Tunis being “the only place that matters.” That kind of comment will get you silence, or worse, a sharp reminder that Tunisia is more than its capital.

Religion and politics are officially separated, Islam is the state religion, but the legal system is secular. Yet in practice, religion is everywhere. It shapes work rhythms (shorter Fridays, Ramadan hours), social norms (from dress codes to dating), and even political debates where invoking Islam can shut down an argument fast. Expats often arrive thinking, “It’s more liberal than the rest of the region,” and they’re right, but only up to a point. Eating publicly during Ramadan, mocking religion, or acting oblivious to Islamic holidays will brand you as disrespectful instantly. The lesson is simple: even in a secular legal framework, religion quietly structures the tempo of life.

Survival Hack: Keep a small calendar of Islamic holidays in your phone. It’ll save you from showing up at a closed office or planning a trip on a day when the whole country slows down.

The collective memory of 2011, the Arab Spring, still runs deep. Tunisians are proud of having lit the fuse that spread across the region, but the revolution is also an open wound. Ask ten Tunisians what it achieved and you’ll get ten different answers: freedom, chaos, unfinished business, betrayal. It remains politically charged. For some, it’s the birth of hope; for others, it’s the reason today’s economy feels unstable. Either way, it’s not a neutral subject. If you raise it in conversation, tread carefully. What you consider curiosity might be taken as provocation.

Unspoken Rule: If someone brings up the revolution, let them lead. Don’t rush in with your analysis or foreign comparisons, Tunisians lived it, and they own the story.

Social fractures here aren’t abstract theories. They show up in everyday encounters. A taxi driver from the interior might rant about “the elites of Tunis.” A young graduate may speak three languages but can’t find a job because they don’t have the right connections. A neighbor might invite you to an Amazigh village and then quietly admit that their culture is fading because the state prefers Arab identity. These aren’t isolated gripes; they’re threads in the national fabric. As an expat, you’re not here to solve them, but ignoring them makes you blind to the undercurrents shaping your daily environment.

Avoid This: Don't parrot the "Tunisia is so modern and secular" cliché. It erases the struggles and tensions people live with every day.

What you can expect is contradiction. Tunisia is both proud of its diversity and shy about admitting its inequalities. It's proud of the revolution but exhausted by its aftermath. It's religious yet secular, modern yet conservative, urban yet rural. And it's these tensions, not the beaches or the food, that will most affect how you live here. Because you'll feel them in your conversations, in your neighbors' moods, and in the news that keeps looping back to the same themes: inequality, identity, religion, and the long shadow of 2011.