

TRAVEL ALGERIA

The building of the now extinct Disco Maghreb label is a shrine for Raï fans

Oran is the new black

Algeria's second city is unique for its sights, coastline and fusion flavours with Berber, Arab and European influences. Pack your swimmers and comfortable shoes and make the most of 48 hours in this West Coast Mediterranean hub, taking in the shops, the sounds and the sea



Start your day with a freshly squeezed orange juice, a good café au lait (*kahwa halib*) and a croissant, either on the terrace of the Four Points hotel – while gazing out across the magnificent sea and inhaling the fresh Mediterranean air – or, if you prefer it strong and to the point, and dirt cheap, at the counter of any café.

First stop is the **Musée National Ahmed Zabana**, named after the independence hero. There's a floor dedicated to Algerian independence, 20th-century Algerian artists including modernist Azouaou Mammeri, mosaics, ancient sculptures and French Orientalist paintings.

In total contrast, plunge into the hustle and bustle of nearby **Marché Medina Jedida**, where jewellery, clothing, food and bric-à-brac are traded. It's the perfect place to try the local chick pea snack, *karantika*. Take a stroll above the seafront before hitting **Les Arcades** in the centre of town – a shopping area with boutiques, the large El-Maghreb

cinema and plenty of florists. Pick up some Algerian pastries from **L'Algéroise** – perhaps some *griwech*, a sweet local pastry with honey, the dry biscuit *torno* or *ghoriba* shortbread. Raï fans will definitely want to pay homage at the **Disco Maghreb** building; the legendary label and record store has now closed down but you can grab some Cheb Khaled, Cheb Hasni and Raina Raï from stores in Les Arcades.

Drive along the coast past Aïn El Turck, where the scent of lavender flavours the air

For a moment of calm, sip a mint tea at the majestic **Royal Hotel**, where you can even find a spa downstairs to get the blood flowing during the colder months.

Refreshed, head into the old town, **Sidi El-Houari**, where you can visit the 18th-century Pasha's Mosque, and Place du 1er Novembre with the colonial Théâtre Régional, the Porte de la Citadelle, Château Neuf fort and the ruins of the Palais du Bey.

At seafood restaurant **Le Corsaire**, dive into the catch of the day or their famous paella, a reminder of the Spanish influences on the region. End the day by climbing up to Santa Cruz, to the chapel built in the 16th-century during the Spanish colonisation. Here you can marvel at the town and sea from above.

Next day, with your new playlist on the go, drive along the coastline past the beach town of **Aïn El Turck**, where the scent of lavender flavours the air, to **Madagh beach**. Swim or dance on the sand, then explore the neighbouring hills with their very cute wild donkeys.

Back at Aïn El Turck, enjoy a drink on the terrace of **Eden Palace**, a hotel perched on the sea, then head back to town to **La Comète** for a kitsch 80s vibe restaurant offering fish soup, tender lamb, seafood and the local tippale.

To end the night, pop up to the **Ciel D'Oran** on the roof of the Sheraton for a nightcap while watching the city shimmer. Or, if you're game, hit **Cabaret Murdjajo** to listen to live Raï music and dance the night away. ●

Ruby Boukabou