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A new decade for social changes





Desert tourism between the need for development and response to demand. The case of the city of Béni Abbés - Algeria

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Abstract. Desert tourism is a tool for economic and social development, which makes it unique, especially if it is based on effective foundations and ingredients that contribute to the national and local economy. However, promoting tourism in desert countries and regions requires policies and strategies that work hard to build infrastructure (airports, roads, railways, hotels, and provide services of all kinds), provide security, and hire experts in tourism consulting. The tourist region of the southwest of Algeria in general witnessed a significant increase in the number of international visitors and tourists during the colonial era and after independence. The city of Béni-Abbés in particular, as well as the entire province of Bechar, is famous for being great tourist destinations. However, due to the particular neglect of desert tourism in this region, the number of arrivals has decreased significantly, especially in recent periods, which has affected the general situation of tourism and attractive beavers. In order to revitalize desert tourism and address the problems that have been highlighted, immediate action is needed.

Keywords. Desert tourism; Béni-Abbés; local development; Tourist potential

I. Introduction

Tourism is one of the most important bases of economic development (Houria, 2022). The ecosystems in deserts are considered one of the hotspots and factors of natural tourism that are characterized by the elements of tourism attractions and economic components, according to the scientific literature has very little to say about desert tourism" even though tourism in desert regions is more sustainable in tourism discourse and in ecotourism in general. Today, desert regions draw intrepid travelers, and desert tourism has emerged as a new form of travel when trips are provided to a certain type of person to strange locations of special interest or activity.

Desert tourism has also shown new appreciation for the spiritual dimension of discovering dry and remote areas, the concepts of "sacred spaces", "religion of nature" or spiritual pilgrimages (Narayanan & Macbeth, 2009). As a subcategory of "Frontier tourism," which is defined as "Traveling to locations that are currently marginalized or extreme in our world or in geographical and social/cultural experiences in places without minorities," desert



tourism may be said to be a niche market. Are permanent and/or existing tourism infrastructures, including a high degree of pre-parathion and planning, authenticity, risky activities, and extraordinary experiences" (Laing & Crouch, 2011)

Many countries of the world have paid attention to this activity and worked to develop and promote it by setting general policies and strategies and providing the necessary structures for the advancement of this important sector, such as the construction of airports, roads, hotels, tourist and health resorts, restaurants, health services, security and other services necessary for the success of tourism (Bouacha, Ben Mansour, & Ajali, 2019). Therefore, to promote the tourism sector as an economic development driver that will benefit everyone (inhabitants, agencies and all actors in the tourism sector), clear strategies must be adopted according to predefined priorities (Barkat & Ghanem, 2023).

The study area's tourist planning challenges are addressed in this paper, along with the province's key characteristics and recommendations on how to successfully carry out Desert tourism plans.

Desert tourism is defined as: "tourism devoted to exploring the desert, in which oases are used as a point of departure and arrival (Tourisme)." The "desert tourism" is also as "any tourist stay in a desert location, centered on enjoying the different natural, historical, and cultural capacities of this environment, accompanied by activities linked to it such as entertainment, entertainment, and discovery." In other words, it's "a person traveling from a country to a desert region in search of trekking, reconnaissance, or discovery."

Tourism in the desert regions contributes effectively and supports the economic (Bouacha, Ben Mansour, & Ajali, 2019), social, cultural, and environmental growth of the desert regions. In order to diversify the sources of income of the national economy and reduce its dependence on oil, which attracts the revenues of incoming tourists and preserves the resources available to local tourists from emigrating abroad, it is necessary to: Provide many job opportunities for desert youth given their presence. Relying on providing services in various fields to tourists, which requires them to rely on labor intensity in various locations; it also increases the means of linking the desert regions with other regions through the development of additional lands, railways, and the addition of airlines, and it also helps to improve the infrastructure of the various desert regions.

Desert tourism focuses on several basic elements that make it a distinctive tourism, of which we mention. (Gharaibeh, 2012).

- Historical monuments and palaces
- Natural areas
- Astronomical location
- Geological and topographical construction
- Religious places
- Archaeological sites
- Biodiversity

II. Methodology

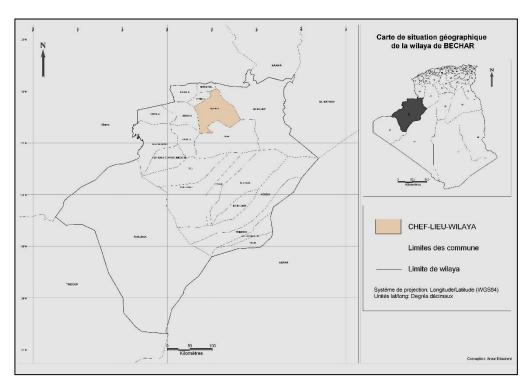
City of Bechar is 780 meters above sea level and is in the Algerian state at longitude - 2.216670 and latitude 31.616670. She is founded in 1905 AD and served as a French military





base to guard the Moroccan-Algerian border. The population of the city of Bechar was approximately 131,010 in 1998 AD and approximately 165,241 in 2008 AD. It uses the local zone time (CEST).

The city of Bechar is characterized by its picturesque landscapes that approach the Moroccan border, and its lands consist mainly of rocky plateaus covered with sandstone. On the southeast side of it is adorned with wonderful natural landscapes such as multiple dunes and sections of the Grand Erg Occidental in addition to Al-Saraj. The northern part of it forms part of Wadi Saoura, which embraces the oasis of Béni-Abbés called Beni Amman. On the far south side of the area known as Wadi Masoud, the lands of the city of Bechar are adorned with its historical orchards on a total area of approximately 320 km. On the western side, she has many valleys that form Combined a picturesque landscape called a sabkha (Directorate of tourism, 2008).



Map 1: Location of the Study Area City of Bechar **Source:** (The master plan for preparation and reconstruction, 2013)

It is located in the southwest of Algeria, at a distance of about 1000 km from the capital, Algiers. It is considered the western gateway to the Algerian desert. It is bordered to the north by the Kingdom of Morocco, to the east by the state of Naama and El-Baid, to the west by Tindouf, and to the south by Adrar.

The Bechar province's topography is composed of the following features:

Mountains: occasionally tall and treeless, such as Mount Antar, 1953 m; Mount Grouz, 1835 m; and Mount Bashar, 1206 m.

The valleys: From north to south, the state's six major valleys—Wadi al-Namous, Wadi Zuzfana, Wadi Bechar, Wadi Qir, Wadi al-Saura, and Wadi al-Dora—cut through its land.

Plains: The primary plains include Zuzfana, Qir, and Al-Sawra, which are depressions created by water as a result of their flow.



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Hamada / **Al-Raq**: The two most significant stones are Hamada Kir and Hamada Dora, which are scattered around a vast flat region

The climate is distinguished by extreme heat in the summer and cold in the winter, with less than 100 mm of precipitation annually. 10

Many residents travel to the area in the summer to escape the heat and clean sand because to the region's healthy climate, which is pure and devoid of any environmental contamination.

The Algerian Sahara is a very large area made up of many natural habitats with great tourism potential, reinforced by an ancient civilization that provides it all the benefits of a topnotch tourist destination.

If the tourist attractions that this area hides are properly utilized to make it into a true pole of attraction for national and international tourism, Saharan tourism may be a significant economic asset. In areas where the potential for other activities in other sectors to expand is limited for this form of tourism, it can also help to create jobs. We have decided to highlight the city of Bechar, which is located in the Algerian Sahara.

Analysis and discussion

By classifying typical Saharan landscapes including mountains, wadis, valleys, regs, and ergs into five unique morphological components, the wilaya of Béchar's area may be divided into five separate geographic regions.

A group of djebels, the most significant of which are Dj Antar (1953 m), Dj Grouz (1,835 m), and Dj Béchar, make form a mountain range (1206 m).

Six major wadis (Oued Namous, Oued Zouzfana, Oued Béchar, Oued Guir, Oued Saoura, and Oued Daoura) cross the wilaya from north to south.

6.4. The valleys:

These are depressions created by significant rivers; the Zouzfana and Guiret de la Saoura are the two largest ones.

6.5. The Regs (Hamada):

They represent beautiful dune massifs that can reach up to 300m in height, Grand Erg Occidental, Erg Erraoui, Erg El Atchane, and Erg Iguidi are the names of the current ergs. Due to the extensive regions of palm groves (Oasis) that cover the wilaya's land, the wilaya also possesses a highly noticeable floristic richness.

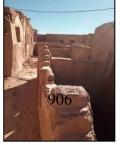
The following are some examples of the wilaya of Bechar's somewhat strong cultural potential:

6.6. Monuments and historic locations

6.6.1. The Ksours:

Such as the historic Ksar of Beni-Abbes, which is hidden deep inside the palm grove and has its own traditions and offers some tourist attraction; The Hidous is a common folklore that distinguishes the Ksours of the North (Boukais, Mougheul, and Lahmar), which are located north of the city of Béchar. The Ksours of Taghitet of Kenadsa are regarded as living historical centers, along with other Ksours (Bechar, Béni Ounif, Tabelbala, Igli, Kerzaz, Tamtert, and Ouata). The Ksar of Bouka is still standing and is distinguished by its source of warm water in the winter and the mausoleum of Sid El Hadj, the village's patron saint.







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Figure 1: Ksours of the city of Bechar

Source: the tourism development plan of the state of Bechar 2023

6.6.2. Giant graves:

In Tabelbala, there are seven still-fresh tombs that measure between 7 and 8 meters long and are renowned for their enigmatic nature.



Figure 2: Giant graves in the city of Bechar

Source: the tourism development plan of the state of Bechar 2023

6.7. Old Forts:

In the wilaya, there are rock carvings in the caverns of Igli and a church in Beni Abbes; Bechar, Béni Ounif, Kenadsa, Taghit, Igli, and El Ouataet Kerzaz;

6.8. Religious monuments:

The monument sites, including the wilaya of Bechar Has Mausoleums, 105 mosques, and four Zaouas, offer distinctive units for both locals and tourists to the area.





Figure 3: Religious monuments in the city of Bechar

Source: the tourism development plan of the state of Bechar 2023

6.9. Craftsmanship:

The local and national tourist systems heavily rely on handicrafts. The majority of the communes in the city engage in this activity, but it is not well-publicized.



Figure 4: Craftsmanship in the city of Bechar **Source**: the tourism development plan of the state of Bechar 2023

city	Tourist qualifications	Distance from the state seat		
Bechar	The Oasis – the old palace – Wakdah Palace – a museum – the tourist expansion area – hotels	1		
Lahmar	Old palace - palm oases - traditional industry	30 km		
Boukais	Two ancient palaces - an ancient mosque - palm oases - a water barrier. Cave - Mausoleum of Sidi El Hadj Ali - Traditional craftsmanship	50 km		
Moughel	Moughel An old palace with an antique mosque. It is located in the north of the state of Bashar. It is distinguished by its agricultural character - palm oases - caves			
Ancient palaces - rock carvings - Saoura hotel - Borj Taghit hostel - traditional industry center - palm oases - sand dunes - tourist camp - youth hostel - tourist expansion area - cave - corner of Sidi Abdel Malek - old fort - traditional therapy - sand skating - The sport of flying gliders.		95 km		



El abadla	Old palaces - distinguished by their agricultural character - Dhayet Tayour area (a station for migratory birds to cross throughout the year, especially during rainy days) - the site of the engraved rocks in the Jurf Al-Sakhar area in Al-Mobaidaa - traditional craftsmanship - the touristic Al-Mufred area.	91 km
Areg ferradj	A farming village characterized by its agricultural character, it has an area for tourism expansion - a small dam - traditional industry.	101 km
Beni ounif An antique palace - an archaeological site - the corner of Sidi Slimane Bousamaha - the palm oasis in Fendi - the tourist expansion area - the old fort - the hotel - the traditional industry		110 km
Kenadssa The old palace - two ancint mosques - the corner of Sidi Mohamed Ben Bouziane - ancient manuscripts - a museum - palm trees - sand - a water dam - a traditional craft		20 km
Mridja	A farmer's village - the tourist expansion area - Jurf al- Turbah Dam - an old fort	80 km

Table 1: Tourism potential of the city of Bechar Source: (Directorate of tourism, 2008)

7. Organizations working in the field of tourism, institutions and accommodation

Hotel

16 hotels with a capacity of 1320 beds spread over 650 rooms which is the capacity for good accommodation.

7.1. Organizations engaged in tourism, institutions

There are eight offices and six active travel and tourism agencies in Bechar. The statute $n^{\circ}99\text{-}06$ of April 4, 1999, which lays out the regulations governing the functioning of the travel agency, gave rise to them. These tasks include giving tourists a variety of services, the most crucial of which are transportation for tourists, hotel and flight bookings, welcoming and accompanying visitors, automobile rentals, translation services, and tourist guides (Republic of Algeria Official Journal Fascicule No24, 2014).

N°	hotel	capacity	number of rooms	class
01	antar	172	99	03 stars
02	taghit	97	58	03 stars
03	Al-Reem	240	120	03 stars
04	Al-Nakhil	56	28	not classified
05	Al-Arabi	64	32	not classified
06	Desert	55	27	not classified
07	Hamza	102	42	not classified
08	Al-madina	54	27	not classified
09	Aljazira	110	39	not classified
10	Beni Ounif	29	11	not classified

11	Al-Arq Al-Kabir	40	20	not classified
12	Al-Hanaa	70	35	not classified
13	Al-Jazeera	49	19	not classified
14	Wakdah	122	65	not classified
15	Tagit Tower	20	10	01 stars
16	Taghit Camp	-	05	not classified

Table 2: hotels potential in city of Bechar Source: (Directorate of tourism, 2008)

7.2. Tourist and travel agencies:

It has 08 tourist agencies, but it is very late in this aspect compared to other states in the south, as its activity does not go beyond selling air transport tickets and organizing umrah travels. As for the rest of the activities of this type of dealers, we say it is almost non-existent.

7.3. Offices and associations:

It has 06 offices, the local tourism office of Bechar, Al-Qanadsa, Taghit, Yaqli, Bani Abbas, Al-Wata, in addition to more than 20 tourism associations, whose role lies in participating in demonstrations and holidays, religious and national, In addition to contributing to the revitalization of the tourist movement and educating the community the local

8. Prospects for the development of the tourism sector in the city of Bechar

The master plan for the development of tourism in the state of Bechar identified six areas for tourism expansion distributed among the various tourist areas in the state. Each tourism priority area contains at least one tourism expansion area. On this basis, several projects have been programmed at the level of the state of Bechar, 28 tourism projects, of which 15 obtained the initial approval of the plans by the Ministry for the year 2017.

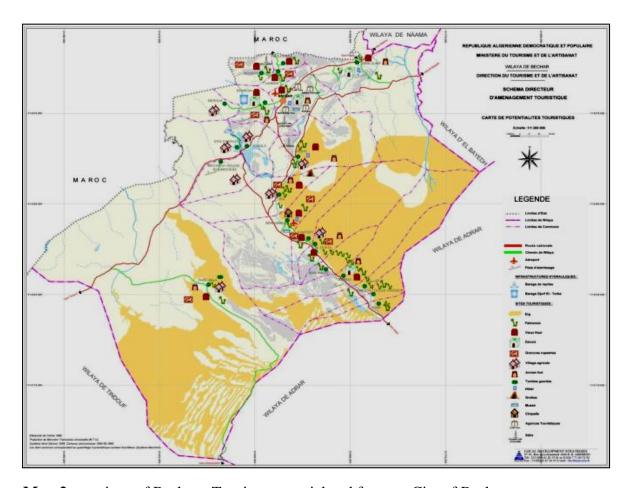
The completion of traditional industry centers that will help artisans to display and promote their products has also been approved. In addition, we note at this stage the focus on applying what was stated in the directive plan for tourism preparation through tourism promotion projects and the opening of roads, paths and tourist paths that It will give an overview of the area and facilitate navigation.

province	Investment projects in progress			
	Nbr of projects	Capacity In beds	Planned jobs	Estimated Costs in 10 ⁶ DA
Béchar	7	661	275	557,8

Table 3: Investment projects in progress in city of Bechar

Source: (Directorate of tourism, 2008)





Map 2: province of Bechar - Tourism potential and features City of Bechar **Source:** (SDAT of bechar phase 1, 2013) + data of the Ministry of Tourism 2013

9. Tourist potential in the city of beni abbess

Béni-Abbés is a sprawling piece of land on the golden sands. It is a tourist area located 245 km south of Bechar. It is rich in tourism elements that combine history, art and nature. Béni-Abbés occupies a prominent historical and touristic place in national and international circles, without forgetting the hospitality and generosity of its inhabitants. In the following, we will review the most important tourism potentials that the study area enjoys, to be used in any tourism planning initiatives aimed at the growth of the city of Béni-Abbés.

9.1. Historical potential:

9.1.1. The Ksours

The Ksour of the commune of Béni-Abbés are built of mud bricks, located on the left bank of Oued Saoura. These Ksours are characterized by narrow and partially covered alleys. The existing Ksour in the commune of Béni-Abbés are:

The old Ksar:	
The old Ksar has been uninhabited since 1957,	
located in the northern part of the Oued Saoura	
valley, south of the city currently, it is located	
in the middle of the palm grove, the creator	

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Imam Mohamed Ibn Abdeslam chose this place according to the climatic conditions in order to create a micro climate on the one hand and on the other hand to protect itself from invasions (end of 16 century



Ksar Ourouroute:

Is located 70km from the north of the city of Béni-Abbés, at the foot of the western erg, it was built and inhabited by a Berber population, the designation of the Berber word "Ouarouroute" means "the green place" (Fig. 16).



Ksar Ksaiba:

An old palace of Béni-Abbés dating from the year 1885



Figure 5: Ksours Béni Abbés **Source:** Auther 2022

9.1.2. Rock carvings and paintings:

It is a language made up of images of men, animals and signs that the ancient population left behind and which faithfully recall a collective geological history of this site



Figure 6: rock carvings **Source:** Wikipedia 2023



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9.2. Natural Tourist Potential:

9.2.1. The oases of Béni-Abbés

Béni-Abbés is surrounded by many oases and agricultural environs, including - the oases of Warrout - the oases of Sidra - the oases of Zuqilma - the oases of Al-Karaa - the oases of Ain Saqia - the oases of Hamama - the surroundings of Al-Juwefa - the oases of Hammouche - the oases of Baba Hayda - the late environs located between the municipalities of Bani Abbas and Tamtret. The most important of which is the palm forest in Beni Abbas, which extends in the form of a giant scorpion on two intersecting sides, a natural puzzle that fascinates tourists.



Figure 7: L'oasis de Béni Abbés. **Source :** Auther 2022

9.2.2. Oued Saoura:

When it rains in the area, it gave us a fantastic sight rare to find, with an oasis stretching along its valley like the shape of a scorpion.

9.2.3. The Great Western Erg:

The highest dunes in Algeria are at Béni-Abbés, with an altitude varying between 400 and 600 m, during the rainy days these are teeming with toddlers, who exist in wet weather, and adults also attend to dominate the view. panoramic view of the whole village and admire the sunset, sand SKI enthusiasts, under the magical effect of the golden dunes stretching as far as the eye can see, can undertake their number.

9.2.4. The Hamada:

It is a vast rocky slab slightly inclined towards the south; it is at an average altitude of 600 meters at the extension of "ERRAG" on which rests the western erg on the other side of the SAOURA valley.

9.2.5. Mount Ougarta:

it is a set of DJBELS oriented northwest, with an average altitude varying between 600 and 900m, vigorous on the slope, dissected by the Saoura wadi and partly leveled.

9.3. Cultural Tourism Potential

9.3.1. The C.N.R.Z.A:

Considered as cultural and scientific tourist potential, the National Center for Research on Arid Zones represents the only research station in Béni Abbés and houses a museum (collection of local ethnography, prehistoric geology and zoology), a zoological garden, a garden botany and a biology research laboratory.

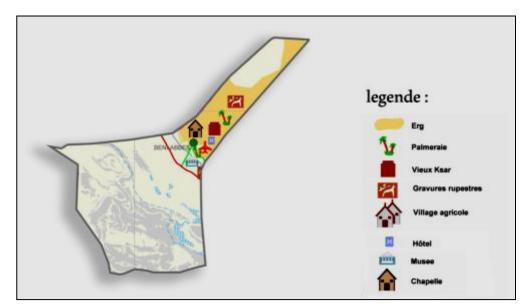
9.3.2. Craftsmanship:

The Béni-Abbes region is known for its traditions and crafts, especially upholstering and pottery. The main products are made from palm and camel skins, sheepskin and clay.

9.3.3. Béni Abbès Museum:

The museum features fossils, desert wildlife, and traditional arts and crafts such carpets, wall hangings, pottery ware, jewelry, and woodcarvings. The Saharan Research Center supports the museum, which features a wide variety of dates on display. One of the principal crops of Algerian oasis towns and villages is dates.





Map 3: Tourist potential of Béni-Abbés. **Source**: (SDAT of bechar phase 1, 2013)

10. Tourism Expansion Zone

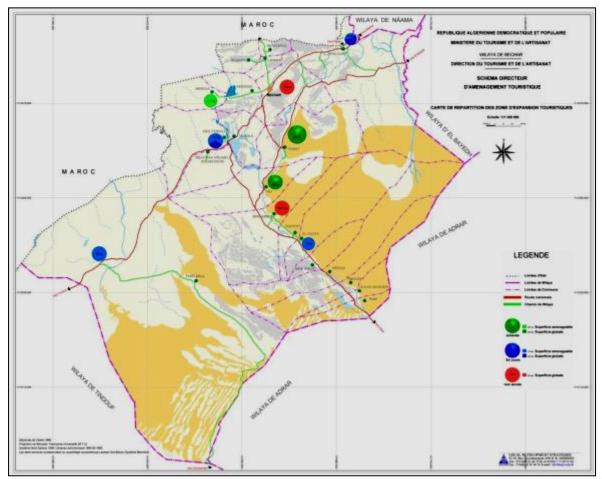
The case of Béni-Abbés in no way escapes all this reform because being located in the wilaya of Béchar, it is therefore part of the Tourist Pole of Excellence (POT) South West which falls within the framework of revitalization of tourism, territory and Algerian and particularly Saharan cultural heritage. It includes one of the Z.E.T. from this pole.

DENOMINATION	COMMUNE	DAIRA	DELIMITATION ET SUPERFICIE
		+	Au nord-nord-ouest: la limite nord-nord-ouest de l'Hôtel « Grand Erg » et le prolongement de cette limite dans la palmeraie, sur une longueur de 350 m à partir de la piste qui passe en bas du talus au sud-oues de l'Hôtel.
Béni Abbès	Béni Abbès	Béni Abbès	A l'est et nord-est: la ligne fictive en arc de cercle qui partant du carrefour de Trois Chemins situé devan l'entrée de l'Hôtel « Grand Erg », englobe la Maisor des Soeurs Blanches, quelques habitations rurales e une partie de la palmeraie (elle mesure 1200 m).
			Au sud-sud-est : la ligne fictive parallèle à la limite nord-nord-ouest qui passe à 850 m de celle-ci et qu mesure 750 m.
			A l'ouest-sud-ouest : la ligne fictive parallèle à li piste qui passe en contre-bas de l'Hôtel « Grand Erg » une distance de 350 m de celle-ci et qui mesure 850 m
- 1		2.5	Superficie: 72 ha.

Figure 26: Announcing the Z.E.T. of Beni-Abbes. **Source**: (Decree No. 88-232 declaring tourist expansion zones)



Because of its tourist assets (Saharan landscape, rock carvings, intangible heritage, etc.), the South West Tourist Pole of Excellence (POT) will have cultural tourism as its main vocation. In order to encourage a better knowledge of local cultures, a tourist network of Ksour can be organized as well as a network of museums around differentiated themes. It is not a question of multiplying the large museums that are not very profitable, but rather of having on each remarkable site an exhibition hall on a Saharan theme.



Map 4: Map of Distribution of Tourist Expansion Zones

Source: (SDAT of bechar phase 1, 2013)

11. Problems that prevent putting city Béni-Abbés on the tourist map:

Despite all the potentials that the city of Béni-Abbés abounds, which qualify it as a tourist attraction, the number of arrivals to it is not commensurate with its tourism potential, and this is evident through the numbers of tourists entering the state and the number of arrivals, which is not completely commensurate with the potentials and tourism components in it, which raises The concern of the residents of the state and the local authorities about the lack of economic returns that tourism accrues to the state. The volume of tourism investments directed to the state is considered one of the main problems that impede tourism development in the state, in addition to the following:

11.1. The financial problem:

It is the main problem that the majority of investors suffer from, due to the high costs of tourism investment due to the change in laws and executive decrees regulating the hotel sector



by the public authorities. With the advent of Law No. 1999-01 of January 06, 1999, which defines the rules related to hospitality, as this law aims to protect and promote the hotel sector, and to improve the quality of hotel services, and Executive Decree No. 46-2000 of March 01, 2000 that defines hotel establishments and sets Its organization and functioning, as well as the methods of its exploitation, all these laws and executive decrees have made it difficult for ordinary investors to invest in the hotel sector.

11.2. Tourist real estate problems:

Within the framework of the work of the city committee to determine the site as well as to promote investment, several investors objected to the plots of land that were granted to them, as they were accused of submitting their requests for lands outside the areas of tourism expansion.

11.3. The general climate:

The climate, which means the surroundings or the general atmosphere that prevails in the city and that makes the tourist feel comfortable, the most important of which are:

- -Absence of green spaces and a forestation in general.
- -The presence of neighborhoods is not satisfactory.
- -Absence of training in the tourism sector makes it difficult to find a qualified workforce.

11.4. Lack of media:

Despite the efforts made by the local radio station in preparing programs and reports on the region, it remains insufficient for what the area of Béni-Abbés and its environs abound in.

Conclusion

Béni-Abbés is one city among others in the Algerian Sahara, which alone encompasses all the contradictions that have already been mentioned. Although its population includes a motivated and artistic youth, it does not have the means to exploit their talent. And since this talent is not shared with the other, and the delegated wilaya of Béni-Abbés does not yet have the necessary equipment to welcome an outside public, its cultural heritage remains closed in on itself and does not manage to assert itself on the scene of national, North African or even international tourism.

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