



## European Exploratory Journeys to Algeria during the 18th Century

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### **Abstract:**

*During Ottoman rule, Algeria was a destination for many European travelers, who were initially sent to explore and learn about the other. However, their goals and objectives changed in line with the developments taking place in Europe on the one hand, and in Algeria on the other.*

*Because the eighteenth century was the century of travelers and researchers interested in natural history and research into Roman antiquities – encouraged and supported by academies and scientific and geographical societies – European scientific missions were launched to Algeria. Thanks to the licenses provided to them, they were able to access most regions, and their reports addressed all economic, social, and political conditions. They drew topographic maps, determined dimensions and distances, and some even identified areas suitable for a successful landing operation.*

*The aim of this study is to show the motives and goals of European journeys to Algeria during the 18th century. The research concluded that these journeys were not free of espionage; rather, they were mainly directed toward gathering accurate information with the aim of eliminating Algeria.*

**Keywords:** *European travelers, exploratory journeys, Algeria, 18th century*

## Voyages exploratoires européens en Algérie au XVIIIe siècle

### **Résumé :**

*Sous la domination ottomane, l'Algérie était une destination prisée par de nombreux voyageurs européens, initialement envoyés pour explorer et découvrir l'autre. Cependant, leurs objectifs ont évolué en fonction des développements qui se produisaient en Europe d'une part, et en Algérie d'autre part.*

*Le XVIIIe siècle étant celui des voyageurs et des chercheurs intéressés par l'histoire naturelle et l'étude des antiquités romaines, encouragés et soutenus par les académies et les sociétés scientifiques et géographiques, des missions scientifiques européennes ont été lancées en Algérie. Grâce aux autorisations qui leur ont été accordées, elles ont pu accéder à la plupart des régions et leurs rapports ont abordé toutes les conditions économiques, sociales et politiques. Elles ont dessiné des cartes topographiques, déterminé des dimensions et des distances, et certaines ont même identifié des zones propices à une opération de débarquement réussie.*

*L'objectif de cette étude est de montrer les motivations et les objectifs des voyages européens en Algérie au cours du XVIIIe siècle. La recherche a conclu que ces voyages n'étaient pas exempts d'espionnage, mais qu'ils visaient principalement à recueillir des informations précises dans le but d'éliminer l'Algérie.*

**Mots-clés :** *voyageurs européens, voyages d'exploration, Algérie, XVIIIe siècle*



## **Introduction**

Travelers of the 16th and 17th centuries undertook exploratory journeys to Algeria, either individually, as part of peace treaty delegations, or alongside monks belonging to associations for the redemption and liberation of captives, with the aim of obtaining privileges or seizing the coastal strip to protect their trade routes.

In the 18th century, the era of intellectual and scientific progress in Europe, accompanied by the spread of academies and scientific and geographical societies and the growing interest in excavating antiquities, a new idea emerged, different from its predecessors in both methods and goals. Exploratory journeys entered a new phase—namely, exploratory journeys of a scientific nature.

Since the issue of European appropriation and control over Algeria had not changed throughout the three centuries, despite the technological progress in those countries, the original desire to seize this strategically located region and destroy the powerful naval fleet that threatened European interests remained in force. Europeans at that time paved the way with scientific exploratory journeys that studied the land, people, and nature. They managed to write comprehensive reports containing the most precise details and plans. Many publications of the time referred to the necessary measures to destroy this country, and various associations were established for that purpose.

This leads us to pose the following problem: What were the motives and objectives behind sending European

travelers to Algeria during the 18th century, and what aspects were explored and what results were obtained?

To address this issue, it is necessary to point out that the purpose of sending European travelers remained the same throughout the three centuries of Ottoman rule—namely, the elimination of Algeria—despite differences in methods and circumstances.

The objective of studying European exploratory journeys during the 18th century is to show the importance of these journeys and what they produced in documenting that period, particularly the writings recorded by travelers during and after their visits. It also aims to demonstrate how these journeys contributed to the French colonial project, which ultimately resulted in the occupation of Algeria in the first third of the 19th century.

This subject will be addressed first by considering the general conditions in Algeria during that period, then by examining the general conditions in Europe, specifically the emergence of Orientalism and the establishment of scientific, geographical, and archaeological academies that propelled the journey forward in a new way. It will then turn to the biographies of the most famous European travelers who came to Algeria, discussing their scientific training, the regions they visited, as well as the works, letters, and reports they produced. We also include some tables and maps showing the most frequently visited regions. The study concludes with results.

## **1. General Conditions in Algeria during the 18th Century**

With Algeria's emergence as a prominent regional power in the Mediterranean due to flourishing maritime activity, the country became enriched by resources obtained from



naval jihad, and most of the population prospered thanks to the spoils. The population of the Regency increased, estimated at one hundred thousand inhabitants. The arrival of diverse groups (Turks, Andalusians, Moriscos, European captives...) and the contribution of each ethnicity in its field spurred development. This is evident in the reinforcement of the fleet with large, high-sided sailing ships built through Andalusian expertise, which enabled the Algerian navy to navigate the eastern Mediterranean and later posed a threat to all Mediterranean sailors (Charles-André, 1978, p. 355).

The traveler Thomas Shaw wrote about suppressing naval jihad:

"No single nation can eliminate them on its own. Rather, they must unite in a global league, and all powers must cooperate in devising a plan to destroy them. It is possible that not much time would pass—if the plans were carried out with harmony and intelligence and the attack launched simultaneously—before they would encounter weak resistance, or perhaps none at all. It is likely that the conquered peoples, no longer able to save themselves, would surrender to their fateful masters, who never felt their oppression, and they would fondly recall the unforgettable era of our righteous conquest." (Shaw, *L'Algérie un Siècle avant l'Occupation Française*, 1830, p. 215).

The desire to destroy this fierce enemy existed even before the period under study. The 16th and 17th centuries were known as the centuries of European campaigns against the Algerian Regency. The stated reason was to eliminate what they called the "nest of piracy" that undermined their trade, while the true hidden motive was purely expansionist. Because most of these campaigns ended in disastrous

failure, political and social circles continued to recall the humiliating defeat of Emperor Charles V, who after his failure chose isolation as a monk and abdicated in favor of his son.

Amid these repeated failures and the enduring trauma in the European collective imagination, travelers were dispatched for reconnaissance and exploration. The only change in the 18th century was in method and objectives. Emperor Charles V had commissioned the Italian traveler Paolo Giovio, nine years after his failed campaign of 1541, to prepare a work containing information about Algiers. Giovio provided a description of the city's coasts, military sites, walls, and houses (Saghir, 2021, p. 21).

Similarly, Marmol Carvajal, who accompanied his army to Tunis in 1535, remained in North Africa after the Spanish fleet's departure on a mission assigned to him. During his stay, he gathered important historical material and extensive information about the Regency of Algiers, especially on social structure and the cities. He also covered the Sahara, following its general conditions (Al-Sayed Sheikh, 2021, p. 113).

## **2. Orientalism and the Formation of Academies and Societies in Europe**

The 17th century was a period of crisis across intellectual, economic, social, and political life—from the economic revolution and the rise of the new colonial movement to the growing inequality between classes and the crises of wars (Al-Sabbagh, 1997, p. 203). By “crisis,” we mean an active crisis that drives development, not one implying regression, weakness, or collapse. Even modernity in its emergence was a crisis requiring resolution.



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When the 18th century arrived, the Enlightenment flowed into all elites and social groups in Europe. French replaced Latin as the international language of communication. Europe experienced a feverish drive to migrate toward distant lands in search of the strange and marvelous. It also witnessed an explosion of Western knowledge and a profound desire to connect with societies beyond the European continent.

Travel was practiced by Westerners in this era and in later colonial periods toward North African countries, revealing the true face of humans interacting with others – not merely for the sake of knowledge, but rather for greater domination and control (Boukhalifa, 2017, p. 69). Even the documented impressions of travel changed. They were no longer grounded in biblical references, but in reason and experience, becoming effectively a reinforcement of Orientalism (Boukhalifa, 2017, p. 62).

## **2.1. Orientalism:**

Since most travelers of the 18th century roamed the East in various disciplines, tasked with scientific missions to study monuments and antiquities, Orientalism paved their way. Political circles considered their expansionist ambitions to require consuls and ambassadors with a background in Orientalist studies (Amira, 2000, p. 95).

In order to expand, they had to understand what they did not know about the East and the avenues for controlling it. They studied all aspects of its social, cultural, political, economic, and geographical life. This study followed predetermined intellectual and scientific frameworks. Once they achieved military conquest and political domination –

particularly after weakness spread in the Ottoman Empire — one of the aims of Orientalist studies was to weaken spiritual resistance and instill fatigue in Muslims in order to subjugate both land and people. Because it is difficult to separate Orientalism, missionary activity, and colonialism (religion being always a driver of peoples) (Bouzfour, 2014, p. 44), many Orientalists employed their knowledge of the East in the service of their countries' political interests, sometimes openly and sometimes covertly.

Algeria held great importance for French Orientalists, as shown by the studies conducted by academics, businessmen, soldiers, journalists, military writers, and adventurers. Their focus was limited to the regions targeted for occupation and the penetration of the hearts of the peoples whose obedience they sought. Understanding the mentality made it easier to administer them within the colonial framework (Al-Fayoumi, 1993, p. 180).

## **2.2. Scientific Academies and Societies:**

At the beginning of the 18th century, a vast number of official academies and societies were established in Europe. By 1789, there were more than 70 official scientific societies. The actual emergence of scientific societies, however, was slightly earlier, in the second half of the 17th century.

"We find that it emerged in the era when Louis XIV was at the height of his power and splendor" (Hazard, 2009, p. 23).

The "Royal Society" was established in London in 1662, and the "French Academy of Sciences" in 1666 by Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Minister of Finance under King Louis XIV, who sought to bestow glory upon the king as a patron of arts and sciences, and at the same time to centralize scientific



activity in ways that served the state. This was part of the broader policy that characterized France during his reign, which lasted more than 72 years (Principe, 2014, p. 119).

While academies appeared at the dawn of the eighteenth century, many such academies were established, such as the “Scientific Academy” in Berlin in 1700, the “Imperial Academic Circle” in Saint Petersburg in 1724, and the “Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences” in 1739. Thereafter, numerous societies sprang up in Bologna, Copenhagen, Dijon, Lyon, Montpellier, and Uppsala... (Hazzar, 2009, p. 12).

Most European travelers joined these academies either as members or correspondents, such as the French traveler Peyssonnel, who was a correspondent for the Paris Academy of Sciences in 1723, then a correspondent for the Montpellier Academy, and later a founding member of a scientific society that eventually became the Marseille Academy in 1726. There was also the German traveler Habenstreit, who was appointed in June 1731 as correspondent of the German Academy of Sciences in Tübingen (Tedras, 2022, p. 139), as well as the English traveler Thomas Shaw, who was a member of the Royal Society in London, and the French traveler Desfontaines, who was a member of the Academy of Sciences in France (N. A., 1830, p. 78).

These academies and societies were interested in all sciences, and encyclopedic information about plants and animals filled the herbals. There arose a passion for everything rare and strange, and for collecting such things, which became a symbol of the collectors’ influence, wealth, networks, and interests. This interest also spread to the countries of the Islamic Maghreb. The traveler Gerhard

Rohlf, during his journey to Morocco, says: “My master insisted that I see his European equipment in the garden. We arrived at the garden, where there were precious flowers from Europe and America, and plants of fine varieties” (Gerhard, 2002, p. 85).

As for the large number of plants and animals encountered by Europeans, many travelers in the eighteenth century were dispatched for the same reason, for the passion for exploratory journeys in search of animals and plants was a distinctive feature of men of science in this century. Among them was Peyssonnel, who visited Tunisia and Algeria between 1724 and 1725 to study natural history; Desfontaines, who was assigned a scientific mission to research natural history and botany in both Tunisia and Algeria; and Abbé Poiret, who was sent by King Louis XVI (1754–1793) in 1785 to the Algerian coast to catalog its animals and plants (Le Roy, *Une Excursion à Leptis Magna en 1732* (CIL VIII, 1, 11), 1976, p. 373).

One of the advantages these scientific societies offered was their full funding of the projects presented by travelers; they even provided guarantees for them. From tracing the paths of the travelers, it became clear that the reason some journeys stopped before completion was a lack or absence of funding.

After reviewing the most important features of the 18th century—the entry of Europe into the age of scientific development and the emergence of academies and societies—the question arises: what benefit did European states derive from these funded exploratory journeys, other than what Abbé Poiret said: “Through journeys to countries that had not yet been observed, our gardens were adorned with elegant and diverse shrubs, and a collection of exotic



trees decorated our forests – trees born in foreign lands and cultivated according to our climate” (Poiret, 1789, p. VI).

The fundamental reason appears in the traveler’s own definition of botany in the introduction to his book *Course of Botany – Explanation of the Principal Systems*, where he states: “This science bases its research on the study of all phenomena relating to plants, from knowledge of the parts of the plant, their development and reproduction, to the description of the climate and soil that suit them, then to the identification of minerals to know the nature of the land where they were born, and finally to the study of their relation to the economy, especially their impact on animal economy” (Poiret, 1789, p. VII). We may now conclude that journeys undertaken to explore plants were in fact explorations of the land and the natural environment of the country being studied.

### **2.3. Geographical Societies**

After the scientific societies concerned with natural history, another type of society emerged, called “Geographical Societies.” Or rather, the scientific societies were what encouraged Europeans to establish them. Once the natural treasures of the countries visited by travelers had been recognized, geographical exploration became important in the pursuit of greater knowledge. These societies received financial support from members of the middle class and from governments to finance their research and missions (Issa Ali, 2000, p. 104). Among them were the Geographical Society of London in 1788, the Geographical Society of Paris in 1821, the Berlin Society in 1822, the Geographical Society of London in 1830, and later

many others until the number of European societies reached one hundred (Hussein, 2016, p. 3). As for the activity that characterized these societies, it was the immediate publication of all reports in the journals they created. They seized upon the reports of exploratory travelers and rushed to publish them in specialized journals, such as the *Revue Géographique Parisienne*, which began appearing in 1821 and aimed to focus on Roman remains and inscriptions in order to link North Africa (especially Algeria) with Latin Europe (Rahmouni, 2015, p. 49).

#### **2.4. Excavation and Collection of Antiquities**

The humanist tendency concerned with antiquity and its material heritage—on the basis that Greco-Roman civilization was the origin of Western civilization—had a major impact on the emergence of archaeology, whose true beginnings were in the eighteenth century, thanks to travelers who visited many Eastern countries. Peyssonnel, in one of his letters to Abbé Bignon (1662–1743), wrote that his journey would be an ample mixture of natural history—exploring species of plants, animals, diseases...—and that he would try to include many observations on ancient and modern geography, and would search for strange manuscripts, inscriptions, medals, and statues (Payre Monique, 2000, p. 317).

Daniel Nordman (1919–1992), echoing the previous statement of the traveler in his letter, says: “We will see Peyssonnel as an archaeologist, not a botanist... the Roman model had already triumphed” (Payre Monique, 2000, p. 317). Perhaps Nordman’s reference stemmed from the fact that in that period, interest in heritage made other kinds of writings less important. We can also see this in the remark of



De la Malle (1777-1857), parallel to the above: “We do not know whether Laugier de Tassy traveled to North Africa. In any case, there is no need to pay attention to his purely historical book, which contains no geographical or archaeological information” (Peyssonnel & Desfontaines, 1838, p. x).

The European interest that increased at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the antiquities left by Rome and Byzantium in North Africa compelled travelers and envoys to search for antiquities. Their good knowledge of classical languages encouraged them to focus on ancient civilizations. Peyssonnel, for instance, was a physician and not specialized in archaeology, yet in his journey he copied nearly a hundred inscriptions and spoke of the Roman foundation of the city of Algiers: “Some believe that Algiers is the same as Julia Caesarea, built by Juba II in recognition of Julius Caesar’s services. But this opinion is unlikely, for Algiers has no ancient monuments proving its antiquity” (Peyssonnel, 2022, p. 166).

The traveler Paradis came fifty years later to confirm the same view: “There is nothing to indicate that the city of Algiers is ancient. It is probable that it was built by the Moors, for we find vast remains and large building stones used by the Algerians in constructing their fortifications” (De Paradis, *Algiers during the Eighteenth Century*, 2022, p. 11).

### **3. European Travelers to Algeria during the 18th Century**

#### **3.1. Thomas Shaw:**

A scholar, geographer, and priest, born in Kendal (Kindle), England in 1692. Like other scholars of that period,

Shaw was interested in natural history. He served as head of the Faculty of Medicine at Oxford, then as a member of the church clergy, and was affiliated with the religious corps of British commercial missions and institutions. He was appointed chaplain at the British Consulate in Algiers on behalf of a trading agency from 1720 to 1732 (Derrai, 2018, pp. 452–453). On some of his journeys, he accompanied the German traveler Habenstreit and took from him many texts (Le Roy, *Une Excursion à Leptis Magna en 1732*, 1976, p. 373).

He became acquainted with Algerian lands from Tlemcen in the west to El Kala in the east, and carefully and accurately recorded his observations, leaving us with an enjoyable and useful description. His knowledge of Arabic and Berber aided him in his mission. He also drew some of his information from al-Wazzan, as he mentioned in his writings (Belali, 2016, p. 165).

Despite the shortcomings of Shaw's work, the summary published for him in Oxford contains geographical and physical notes on the kingdoms of Algiers and Tunis, as well as on Syria and Egypt, with maps and illustrations. The French invasion of Algeria would revive this text, and indeed the work was published in a new translation in 1830 under the title *Aperçu Historique Statistique et Topographique sur l'État d'Alger* (Morizot, 2011, p. 159). He produced a map of Algeria which MacCarthy commented on. Another translation was published under the title *L'Algérie un siècle avant l'Occupation Française (ou siècle) Témoignage de Shaw Religieux Anglais*, in which he defined the borders of the Regency of Algiers, especially its eastern ones (Kachroud, *Beylik al-Sharq: A Natural and Agricultural Study through the Travelers Peyssonnel, Desfontaines, and Dr. Thomas Shaw*, 2017, pp. 51–52).



He divided his book into a series of chapters titled according to their content. In the first chapter he dealt with the topography of the Regency of Algiers, its climate, soil, and production (Shaw, *L'Algérie un Siècle avant l'Occupation Française*, 1830, pp. 7-24). The second chapter was devoted to animals (Shaw, 1830, pp. 24-45). The third studied sciences, crafts, customs, and traditions (Shaw, 1830, pp. 46-85). The fourth addressed the government of Algiers, the Dey, the Agha of the militia, and officers (Shaw, 1830, pp. 85-124). The fifth described its strength, composition, salaries, camps, and methods of fighting. The remaining five chapters presented a geographical description of Algeria's provinces as follows: Mascara and Tlemcen, Algiers, Titri, Constantine, and the Zab (Shaw, 1830, pp. 124-226).

### **3.2. The Traveler's Route:**

I could not determine the itinerary with precision due to the lack of sequence in mentioning places. Moreover, whenever he wished to compare one city with another, he would recall his presence in the previously mentioned region, making it difficult to follow the journey. Therefore, I listed the places as they appeared: Cherchell - Tipaza - Tebessa - Miliana - Mitidja - Algiers - Djurdjura - Blida - Mazouna - Zouaoua - Bousaada - Beni Mzab - Ouargla - Oued Righ - Constantine - Oran - Arzew - El Kala - Bone - Jijel - Setif - Tolga - Zribet El Oued - Berriche - Aurès Mountains. (See Map 01 - Researcher)

#### **1. Jean André Peyssonnel:**

Born in Marseille in 1694, he pursued his primary studies in his hometown, then completed them in Paris, where he was supported by a family friend, Count Marsigli (1658-

1730) (Saghir, 2021, p. 69). He studied medicine and was interested in natural history. After graduating from the University of Provence in 1718, he continued his research in botany. In 1723, he became correspondent of the Academy of Sciences in Paris, then correspondent of the Montpellier Academy (Saidouni & Saidouni, *Research on Constantine and Historical Studies (The Memory of the City of Algiers through Historical Texts)*, 2016, p. 165).

By royal order, he visited Algeria from January 11, 1725 to October 1, 1725 (Jean André, 2003, p. 2), thanks to the intervention of State Councilor and Royal Librarian, Father Bignon. His journey aimed at studying natural history and correcting errors in the map of the country drawn by geographer Guillaume Delisle (1675–1726) (Jean André, 2003, pp. 58, 89, 90).

During his journey in Algeria, Peyssonnel studied the nature of coral and discovered through analysis that it had an animal nature. However, he could not convince scientific circles until much later. Du Lamal, in the introduction to his book, wrote: “We owe to Peyssonnel the discovery of the animal nature of coral.” He also researched the plague that claimed his father’s life during the outbreak in Marseille between 1720–1722 (Peyssonnel, J., 1987, p. 12).

He authored a book about his journey containing many important scientific observations in addition to his understanding of Algeria’s political system, titled *Histoire d’un Voyage sur les Côtes en Barbarie*. He visited several areas between eastern and central Algeria, and his journey lasted eight months (Ezzine, 2012, p. 192). His journey took the form of letters sent to Father Bignon, but they were not published until eight years after the French conquest of Algeria, in 1838 in Paris, by Du Lamal, who published them



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in the first volume of his book *Peyssonnel et Desfontaines, Voyage aux Royaumes de Tunis et d'Alger* (Saidouni, *Algerian Papers*, 2008, p. 98).

His journey included fourteen letters, perhaps more, since many were lost. Du Lamal attributed this loss to Pierre Chirac, who was responsible for the king's gardens and personal physician, saying: "His negligent administration caused not only the loss of the young traveler's scientific observations, but also of the plants and seeds he may have sent" (Peyssonnel, J., 1987, p. XIX).

The eleventh letter was devoted to Algeria, describing the route between the Beylik of Constantine and El Kala, discussing plants, animals, paths, towns, and villages. The twelfth describes his journey to Annaba and to Algiers, recording everything he saw. He then shifts to talking about Algiers, presenting its history, government, the election of the Dey and his duties, officials such as the Khaznaji, Bayt al-Malji, the judge, the mufti, the mezouar, and the military strength, both land and naval. In discussing the land army, he listed ranks, duties, privileges, and punishments. He also mentioned the city's location, fortifications, gates, port, mosques, springs, prisons, and barracks. He concluded the journey with two letters about his departure from Algiers back to Collo and Annaba (Jean André, 2003, pp. 5-142).

Among his sources, Peyssonnel relied on Luigi de Tassy's *History of the Kingdom of Algiers*, and he followed the same method of refuting the prejudices promoted by the Catholic Church (Ait Haboush, 2012, p. 119).

On his return to Marseille, he joined some friends in founding a scientific society which later became the Marseille Academy in 1726. He was later appointed royal

herbalist physician in Guadeloupe, settled there, and married in 1727 (Jean André, 2003, p. 8). He undertook no other voyages except one to Europe in 1756 (Ezzine, 2012, p. 193).

### **3.2. The Traveler's Route and Means of Travel:**

He visited eastern and central regions of the Regency of Algiers, according to his letters to Father Bignon. His means of transport, as inferred from his descriptions, were horses in the caravan, small boats to cross rivers, and walking on foot (see Map 02 - Table 01 - Researcher).

### **3.3. René Louiche Desfontaines:**

A French physician and botanist, born on February 14, 1750, in Tremblay, in the Ille-et-Vilaine region. He studied medicine and specialized in botany (Saidouni & Saidouni, *Research on Constantine and Historical Studies (The Memory of the City of Algiers through Historical Texts)*, 2016, p. 179).

In 1781, he obtained a doctorate in medicine from the Faculty of Reims, and a year later another doctorate in Paris. He was appointed member of the Academy of Sciences of France with the support of Louis Guillaume Lemonnier (1717-1799), professor of botany in the King's Garden. Like other naturalists, he joined academies, scientific bodies, and research centers specialized in botany and archaeology (N.A., 1830, p. 78).

He was assigned a scientific mission in natural history and botany in Tunisia and Algeria at Lemonnier's proposal. He visited Algeria on April 4, 1783, but left a few months later due to climate conditions and deteriorating health (Imam, n.d., p. 54).

He returned on July 1, 1785, choosing to visit eastern and central regions of the Regency. He focused on plants,



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flowers, unspoiled nature, fertile lands, and agriculture, and identified 1,520 plant species, 300 of which were previously unknown. He took back a significant herbarium preserved at the Natural History Museum in Paris, which he used for his book (Kachroud, 2017, pp. 51–52).

Desfontaines received administrative and practical facilities for his mission and guarantees from Du Cersy. He also presented his plan to the Academy of Sciences, obtained approval and funding, and stated: “I will be able to enter the interior lands and travel through the kingdoms of Tunis and Algiers, from the borders of Tripoli to the Moroccan frontier.” Du Lamal, in his introduction, marveled at the privileges: “Can we obtain the same facilities to travel inside Africa as those granted to the travelers of the past century?” (Peyssonnel, J.-A., 1938, p. vii).

In 1783, Desfontaines initiated the “Crossing the Barbary States Project” to make observations on geography, archaeology, architecture, and especially natural history. He spoke about this in the preface to his book *Fragment d'un Voyage dans les Régences de Tunis et d'Alger*. His journey was printed several times, describing many regions and villages of Algeria, particularly in the west such as Tlemcen, Mascara, and their surroundings, noting inhabitants, rulers, lifestyle, and social aspects (Belamri, 2018, p. 112).

He visited Tunisia on August 16, 1783, staying until April 1785, then moved to Algeria. Upon his return in April 1786, he submitted a report to the Academy, and was appointed chair of botany at the Botanical Garden, replacing Lemonnier.

Desfontaines published his observations in 1798. His journey, however, was only published seven years after his

death by French geographer Dureau de Lamal in 1838, who combined it with Peyssonnel's journey in one book, seeing Desfontaines' work as complementing Peyssonnel's in ethnography (Carret, 2016, p. 22). His journey received multiple editions, the latest in 2016 (Saidouni & Saidouni, 2016, p. 179).

### **3.4. The Traveler's Route and Means of Travel:**

His first journey was to Algiers on April 4, 1783, during which he traveled through central and most western Algerian towns. On his second visit, July 1, 1785, he toured Algiers and nearby regions, then moved to some eastern areas. The dates of his arrival and departure were drawn only from his descriptions and may not be entirely accurate. He often mentioned only that he stayed a day or two or three before leaving. As for transportation, he referred to it occasionally, sometimes directly, within his descriptions (see Map 03 - Table 02 - Researcher).

### **3.5. Jean Louis Marie Poiret:**

A French monk, botanist, and explorer, born in Saint-Quentin in 1757. He devoted himself to natural history and travel. Most sources state that he abandoned his clerical orientation for natural history, which is not accurate. The traveler himself said that when he was returning from El Kala and visiting some Arabs in Bone with Ali Bey, they believed him to be the chaplain of Bastion Fort due to his clothing (Poiret, 1789, p. 7).

King Louis XVI sent him to the North African coast to survey the animals and plants of these regions. His journey lasted from May 1785 until November 1786, during which he studied natural history, observed the customs and religion



of Arabs and Bedouins, and produced a valuable work on eastern Algeria. He met Desfontaines during his travels and worked with him for two weeks (Poiret, 1789, p. 2).

Poiret published his work *Voyage de Barbarie* in Paris in 1789. It was a collection of letters addressed to his friend, physician Forestier, concerning the religion and customs of the Moors and Bedouin Arabs, and also served as an introduction to the natural history of this country (Ibrahimi, 1972, pp. 237-238).

Captain Ernest Carette (1808-1889) mentions that most of those who read what Poiret wrote notice the vast difference between him and Defontaine. His observations are full of childish exaggerations, as well as a mixture of naive emotions and approaches marred by amplification (Carette, 2016, p. 22). He also added religious prolixity to his work. Moreover, although Poiret had abandoned priesthood and loved exploration, he remained constantly cautious despite the protection and recommendations offered to him by his hosts. In fact, what was said is somewhat true regarding the religious tone of his writing. However, the claim that his observations are full of exaggerations is inaccurate, as we have read his letters and found their style exquisite and enjoyable, so the descriptions mentioned are not surprising.

### **3.6. The itinerary of the traveler:**

He visited most of the eastern province, including El Kala, Bône (Annaba), and Constantine, whereas Tlemcen, Oran, and Algiers were likely visited either through Morocco before his arrival in Algeria, or he only mentioned them before writing the letters, which is unlikely. This aligns with the narrative when he was describing some beautiful

regions: *"I only give some general ideas about the beautiful regions before beginning to describe the regions of the land of the Berbers"* (Poiret, 1789, p. 34) (see Map 04 - Table 03 - Researcher).

He visited El Kala on May 12, 1785, coming from Tunisia, where he wrote his first letter, while the remaining letters were undated.

### **3.7. Jean Michel Venture de Paradis:**

An orientalist and French traveler, born on May 8, 1739, in Marseille. Before reaching the age of thirteen, he obtained a scholarship to study in Paris, where he learned Turkish and Arabic in addition to Latin at the School of Oriental Languages. He began his professional life in Constantinople at the Translation Bureau, then held several positions in Sidon, Cairo, and Morocco, and was later appointed as delegated consul in Tunis (1780–1786) (De Paradis, *Algeria during the 18th Century*, 2022, p. 7).

He played a role in shaping the future of French Orientalism and was proficient in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, being considered one of the best French experts on North Africa and the Levant at the end of the 18th century (Raynal, 1983, p. 330).

De Paradis was sent to Algeria in 1788 to succeed in negotiations concerning commercial matters, where he stayed for two years and used his spare time to pursue research on the Berber language. This resulted in his writing of a book on its grammar and vocabulary (Al-Abed, 2007, p. 112): *"I composed a complete dictionary full of sentences that will serve as support for grammatical and linguistic rules, and it will benefit scholars who wish to learn the language, should the government desire to print this work"* (Moak, 2004, p. 329).



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There is a discrepancy regarding De Paradis' presence in Algeria between what many historians dated and what he himself stated. While historians mention that he stayed in Algeria for two years (1788–1790), in his book *Algeria during the 18th Century* on page 17, he wrote: “A French frigate on October 28, 1780, docked at the port and was caught in a storm; in 1784 he mentioned a Dutch frigate that met the same fate, and the same happened with other ships in 1787.” We are inclined to interpret this in two possible ways: either he was merely recounting incidents of ships in the port based on prior knowledge, or he was actually present, and the dating of his stay as recorded elsewhere is inconsistent.

In 1798, during Bonaparte's campaign in Egypt, De Paradis was summoned to join as interpreter and adviser on Eastern affairs. He was in fact the one who addressed the Egyptian public on behalf of Napoleon and drafted his proclamations in Arabic, playing a key role in rallying many Arab tribes around them (De Paradis, *Algeria during the 18th Century*, 2022, p. 8). However, he died of dysentery during the French army's siege of Acre in 1799, a loss that had grave consequences for Napoleon's adventures, as they lost a man of profound knowledge of the Orient (Lewis, 1998, p. 23).

De Paradis left behind many translations of Arabic works and numerous writings, some of which were published, while others remain preserved at the National Library in Paris (Raynal, 1983, p. 329). He also authored his book *Algeria in the 18th Century* divided into five volumes, in which he discussed Algeria (its geography, neighborhoods, commerce, barracks, council, and relations) (Amirawi, *Relations of the Eastern Algerian Beylik with Tunisia at the End of*

*the Ottoman Era and the Beginning of the French Occupation*, 2002, p. 11).

### **3.8. The regions he visited and means of transport:**

We did not mention the dates of the traveler's presence in the regions, because he never dated his presence in any place, only mentioning distances, as if leaving them as a guide for anyone wishing to visit the Regency. For example, he said:

“The journey from Bône to Algiers takes 10 days, and there are faster trips not exceeding 7 days, and others lasting only 4 days if you choose the plains... Constantine is two days' journey to the west... and from Zouaoua to Algiers is two days' march, with two possible routes, though the sea route is the shortest” (De Paradis, *Algeria during the 18th Century*, 2022, p. 57). (See Map 05).

### **3.9. Johan Ernest Hebenstreit:**

A German physician and botanist, born January 15, 1702, in Neustadt an der Orla in Saxony. He studied medicine in his youth at the University of Jena and later settled in Leipzig. He obtained employment thanks to a recommendation from botanist Albert Ravenes, where he worked for a wealthy merchant tasked with caring for rare plants. This allowed him to continue his studies and earn a qualification to practice medicine. He obtained his doctorate in 1729, and in June 1731 he was appointed to the German Academy of Sciences in Tübingen (Saghir, 2021, p. 80).

He was dispatched by the Polish king and Elector of Saxony, Augustus II, to lead a research team to North Africa (Algeria, Tunisia, Tripoli) with the aim of studying plants and the nature of those societies in order to enrich the royal



collection with African rarities. The instructions given to Hebenstreit were to send reports regularly (Le Roy, *Une Excursion à Leptis Magna en 1732*, 1976, p. 373).

The expedition departed from Dresden on October 23, 1731, heading to Marseille, which it reached in November, and then embarked for Algiers on January 24, 1732 (Saghir, 2021, p. 76). Upon arrival, he met the Dey, Abdi Pasha, and informed him of his mission concerning scientific research on rare plants and animals. The Dey replied that his country was open to them and that they could rely on his protection (Sbouï, 2019, p. 253).

Dr. Shaw accompanied him on some of his journeys. Hebenstreit wrote in his letter dated June 1732:

“I left some of my companions in Algiers so that they could take notes in my absence and safeguard your belongings... I met Dr. Shaw, chaplain of the English consulate, who also obtained a travel permit”  
(Hebenstreit, 2008, p. 54).

Hebenstreit's interest focused on the customs and traditions of the Algerian people and their social, cultural, and religious conditions. He also paid attention to Roman ruins, which were of great concern to many travelers of different specialties, who sought to examine and understand their origins, long before archaeological missions in the late 19th century undertook systematic excavations (Saidouni, *Exploratory Journeys – An Intellectual and Civilizational Approach (European Journeys in Algeria as a Model)*, 2016, p. 68).

Hebenstreit largely succeeded in his exploratory mission and even managed to gain the trust of the rulers of North Africa (Algeria, Tunisia, Tripoli). He conducted himself wisely during his stay, but circumstances did not favor him,

as hostility against European presence rose following the Spanish occupation of Oran and Mers el-Kebir in 1732. This forced him to restrict his movements and end his mission quickly (Hebenstreit, 2008, pp. 12-13) (see Map 06 - Table 05 - Researcher).

His journey took the form of letters sent to his patron Augustus II, informing him of what he saw, learned, or found remarkable during his visit to Algeria. His journey comprised four literary letters of historical and descriptive character regarding the societies, their religious and political realities. The first letter described the social conditions of the city of Algiers and recounted major events, especially the circumstances surrounding the Spaniards' attempt to recapture Oran and Mers el-Kebir after their expulsion in 1708.

The second letter contained reports of his tour in some towns, while the third described his observations and his journey from Algiers to Tunisia via Constantine and El Kala. The fourth contained notes during his travel from Tunisia to Tripoli in October 1732 (Amirawi, *Algeria in the Literature of Travel and Captivity during the Ottoman Period (Tidna's Memoirs as a Model)*, 2003, p. 9).

His project did not reach completion due to the death of King Augustus II, who had entrusted him with the mission. He returned in 1733 and later enjoyed the patronage of the new king, Augustus III (1693-1763), who appointed him professor of medicine in Leipzig. This enabled him to write several works, including this travel account, though it was not published due to his death while serving as a physician in the Seven Years' War (Hebenstreit, 2008, p. 14). He died on December 5, 1757.



His writings were published twenty years after his death. The first to publish them was archaeologist Gustav Bernoulli (Patrice Brun) (1750–1878) in Latin in Berlin in 1780, under the title *List of Roman Antiquities Discovered in North Africa*. It was later republished within his abridged travel collection *Sammlung kleiner Reisen*. It was translated into French in 1830 by the travel enthusiast Officer Eyris (Saidouni & Saidouni, *Research on Constantine and Historical Studies – The Memory of Algiers through Historical Texts*, 2016, p. 154). (See Map 06 – Table 05 – Researcher).

## **Conclusion**

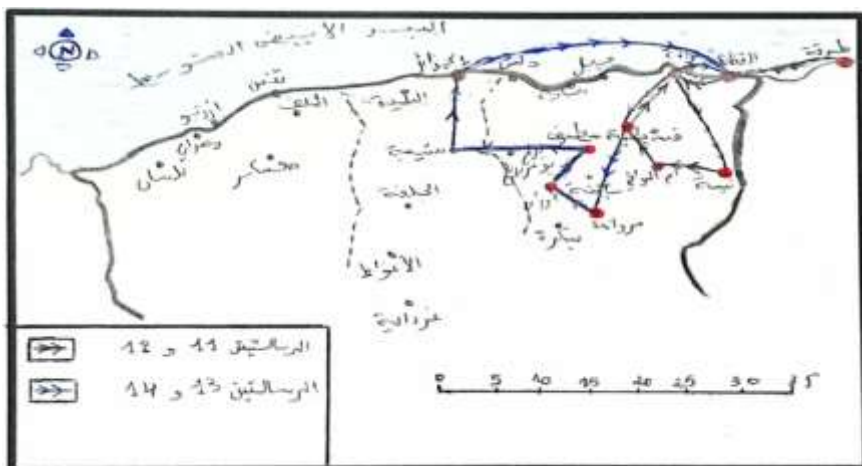
From the above, we conclude:

- Whoever traces the history of Algeria since its association with Ottoman history will realize that its system of governance carried within it the seeds of weakness and decline from the outset. The Moriscos who fled Spanish persecution and the Inquisition, with Spain's continued pursuit of them, led to the occupation of many coastal regions of the Regency. Likewise, the Jewish community that arrived with the Andalusian Muslims, numbering about thirty thousand, settled in many Algerian cities, monopolized the economy, and controlled trade exchanges between the rulers and European states. These dealings eventually led to involving the Algerian government in the so-called Fan Incident.
- The scientific and technological progress that swept through Europe, the rise of academies and

geographical and archaeological societies, and the dispatch of travelers, physicians, scientists, and geographers, provided European knowledge with more precise information about Algeria. This is evident in the writings and reports of travelers, which contained encyclopedic data that directly contributed in subsequent periods to the planning of the conquest of Algiers.

- The nature of the journeys in this period was scientific. The apparent reason was purely exploratory and scientific, while the hidden reason, which became clear especially in journeys dispatched in the last twenty years of the period, was to verify and establish the idea of seizing the Regency, owing to the treasures of natural wealth discovered in Algeria, which were strongly believed to be of Roman origin and thus must be reclaimed.
- With the dawn of the 19th century and changing international circumstances, French envoys arrived in reconnaissance journeys with a clearly diplomatic and espionage character from the start (intelligence and preparation for expansionist colonial projects). For this reason, they were officers, engineers, geographers, and orientalist, relying on the advances in modern geography and the knowledge drawn from earlier travels, firmly believing that the information provided by journeys was the very essence of acquiring colonies with ease.





**Map 02: The Route of the Traveler - the Researcher**

Route	Arrival	Departure	Means of Transport
From Tabarka to El Kala	10 January	12 January	By sea, since the land route was unsafe due to tribal uprisings
El Kala	12 January	21 January	Horses + a wooden raft to cross the Boubias River; the horses swam across
Bône (Annaba)	22 January	26 January	Boat to cross the Boujemaa River + horses for the plain of Bône
Tebessa	28 January	29 January	Horses



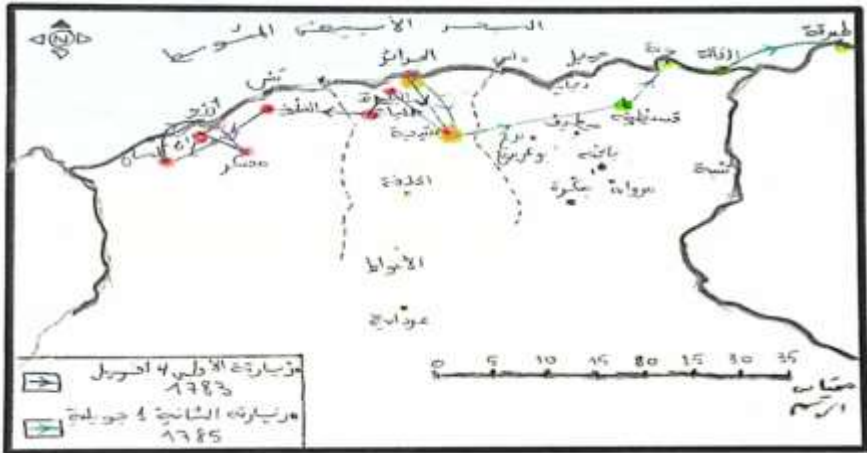
Route	Arrival	Departure	Means of Transport
Aïn El-Bordj (Oum El Bouaghi)	30 January	31 January	Horses
Constantine	2 February	6 February	Horses
Bône (Annaba)	10 February	11 February	Horses + small boat to reach the port of Bône
El Kala	11 February	24 May (spent the entire winter there)	Wine-transport vessel
Bône (Annaba)	25 May	6 June	Horses
Constantine	10 June	13 June	Horses + boat
Merouana	13 June	14 June	Horses via a mountain path
Aurès Mountains	22 June	27 June	Horses
Sétif	14 July	17 July	Horses with a caravan
Zemoura	18 July	23 July	Horses + walking (no means of transport) to climb the rugged, steep mountains
Algiers	23 July	10 September	Horses + walking

Route	Arrival	Departure	Means of Transport
El Kala	10 September 1725	Departed by ship to Marseille	

**Table 01: The Regions Visited by the Traveler and the Means of Transport - the Researcher**

- **The Traveler Desfontaines:**

The map represents an illustrative depiction of the cities the traveler visited across Algerian towns, based on his book *Journey to the Regencies of Tunis and Algiers*, published in French (pp. 718–969).





### Map 03: The Route of the Traveler – the Researcher

Region	Arrival	Departure	Means of Transport
Algiers	4 April	4 May	Riding mules
Mitidja	5 May	6 May	Riding mules + walking
Blida	6 May	8 May	Boat to cross the river + riding mules + walking
Miliana	8 May	10 May	Riding mules + walking
Chlef	10 May	12 May	Small boat + riding donkeys + walking
Tlemcen	12 May	24 May	Donkeys + walking and crossing the wadi
Arzew	25 May	27 May	Boarding a ship, inspecting the port, then passing through to reach the vast plain of Habra
Mascara	27 May	4 June	Walking + riding mules, reaching the Moroccan border
South of Oran	5 June	30 July	Riding mules
Departure from Algeria due to climatic			

Region	Arrival	Departure	Means of Transport
conditions and his health			
Algiers	1 July 1785	18 September	By ship + riding mules across the hills and around the river + walking to the camp
Mitidja	18 September	21 September	Walking + climbing the Atlas + passing into the Djurdjura Mountains
Constantine	21 September	24 September	Riding horses through the Seybouse River + walking
Bône (Annaba)	26 September	28 September	Riding horses in the mountainous highlands + walking
El Kala	30 September	5 October	Small boat → then on to Tabarka, from where he departed the city

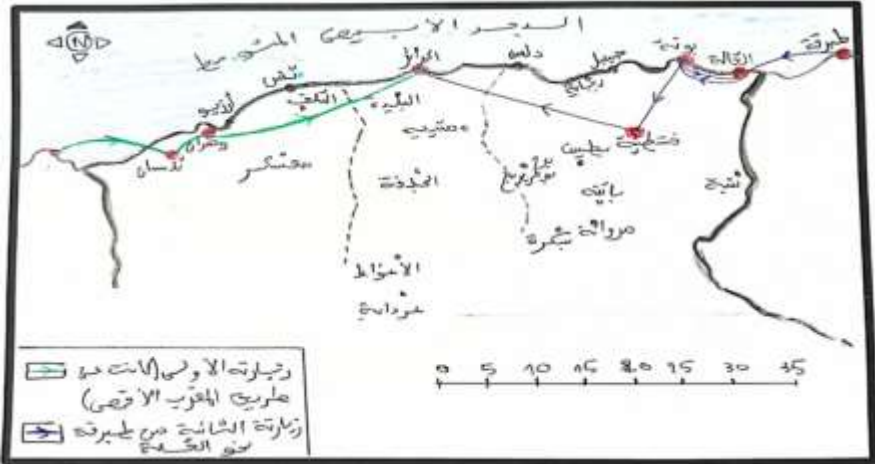
**Table 02: The Route of the Traveler and the Means of Transport - the Researcher**



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**a. The Route of the Traveler Bouray:**

An illustrative map of the cities and regions visited by the traveler, derived from his French-language work *Journey in the Land of the Berbers* (pp. 33–368).



**Map 04: The Route of the Traveler – the Researcher**

Route	Means of Transport
From Tabarka to El Kala	By sea, since the land route was unsafe due to poor internal conditions and bad health circumstances
El Kala	Stayed there for a long period, moving on foot between Bedouin tents
Bône (Annaba)	Horses for the plain of Bône + walking between Bedouin tents
El Kala	Returned due to the hot weather and deterioration of his health
Bône (Annaba)	Walking between tents + small boat to reach the port of Bône

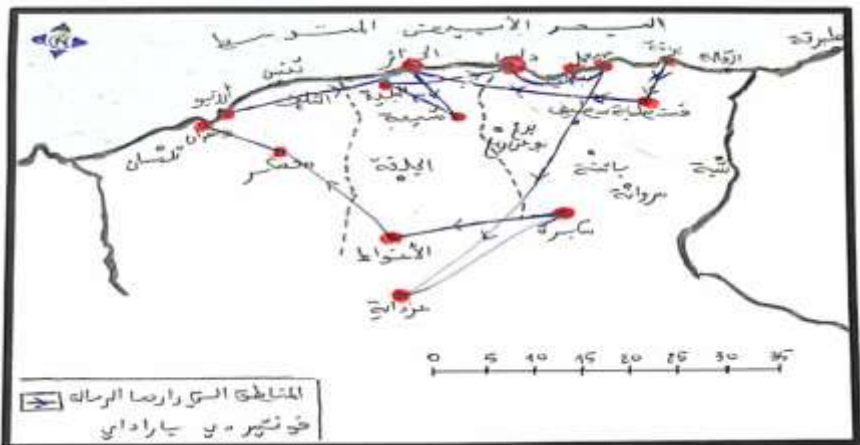
Route	Means of Transport
Constantine	Walking through nature to identify crops and wilderness + boat to cross the river
Algiers	Horses + walking on foot

As for his visit to the western regions, it is clear that he had visited them before arriving at El Kala. This indicates that he visited Algeria in two stages: first, through Morocco, where he toured Tlemcen, Oran, and Mascara before returning to France; then, he visited again through Tunisia via the port of Tabarka.

**Table 03: The Regions Visited by the Traveler and the Means of Transport - the Researcher**

- **The Traveler Venture de Paradis:**

The map represents the regions visited by the traveler, based on his book *Algeria in the Eighteenth Century* (pp. 7-184). The source makes it clear that the traveler visited most regions of Algeria.





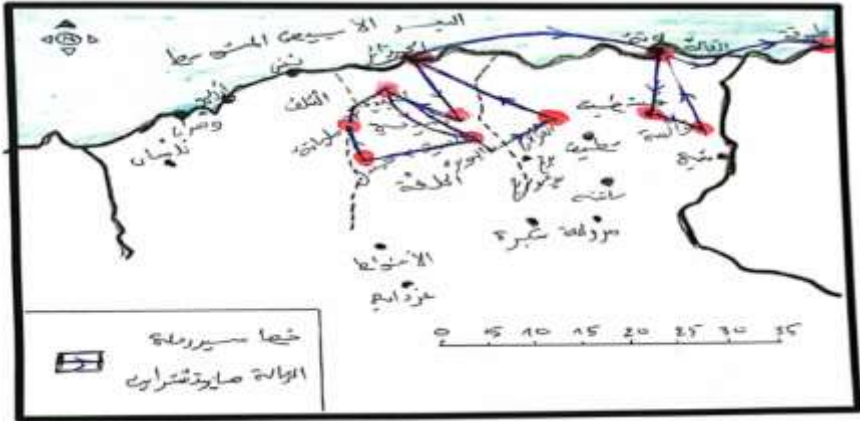
### Map 05: The Route of the Traveler – the Researcher

Route	Means of Transport
Bône (Annaba)	Sea route + horses
Constantine	Horses + walking
Algiers	Horses
Arzew	Horses
Oran	Horses
Mitidja	Boat across the Harrach River + horses
Blida	Horses
Dellys	Boat from the port of Dellys
Felissa and Zouaoua	Donkeys + walking
Jijel	Horses
Beni Mzab	Horses
Biskra	Horses + walking
Laghouat	Walking + horses
Mascara	Horses

**Table 04: The Regions Visited by the Traveler and the Means of Transport – the Researcher**

- **The Route of the Traveler Hopfenstrait (Hebenstreit):**

The map illustrates the regions visited by the traveler, based on his book translated by historian Nacereddine Saadouni, *The Journey of the German Scholar J. A. Hebenstreit to Algeria, Tunisia, and Tripoli (1145 AH – 1732 AD)*.



**Map 06: The Route of the Traveler - the Researcher**

Route	Arrival	Departure	Means of Transport
Algiers	16 February	23 April	Arrival by ship, then walking to the Dey's residence
Mitidja	23 April	23 April	Horses with the <i>mahalla</i> (military convoy)
Blida	23 April	26 April	Arrival with the <i>mahalla</i> + walking and climbing rugged mountains
Mouzaïa	27 April	29 April	Horses + carrying luggage on mules
Miliana	30 April	01 May	Horses
Djendel tribe	02 May	03 May	Horses + walking
Ouamri tribe	04 May	05 May	Horses with the <i>mahalla</i>
Médéa	05 May	14 May	Horses + walking and



Route	Arrival	Departure	Means of Transport
			mountain climbing
Bouira	15 May	16 May	Horses + walking
Sour El Ghozlane	16 May	25 May	Horses
Algiers	06 June	12 June	Sailing on an English ship towards Bône
Bône (Annaba)	12 June	12 June	Sailing on a ship + horses for travel across plains
Constantine	02 July	12 July	Travel with a small caravan + sailing in a boat
Guelma	13 July	14 July	Horses
Bône (Annaba)	14 July	15 July	Small boat (named Tangier)
El Kala	15 July	21 July	Towards Tabarka - arrival in Tabarka by a rowing boat

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