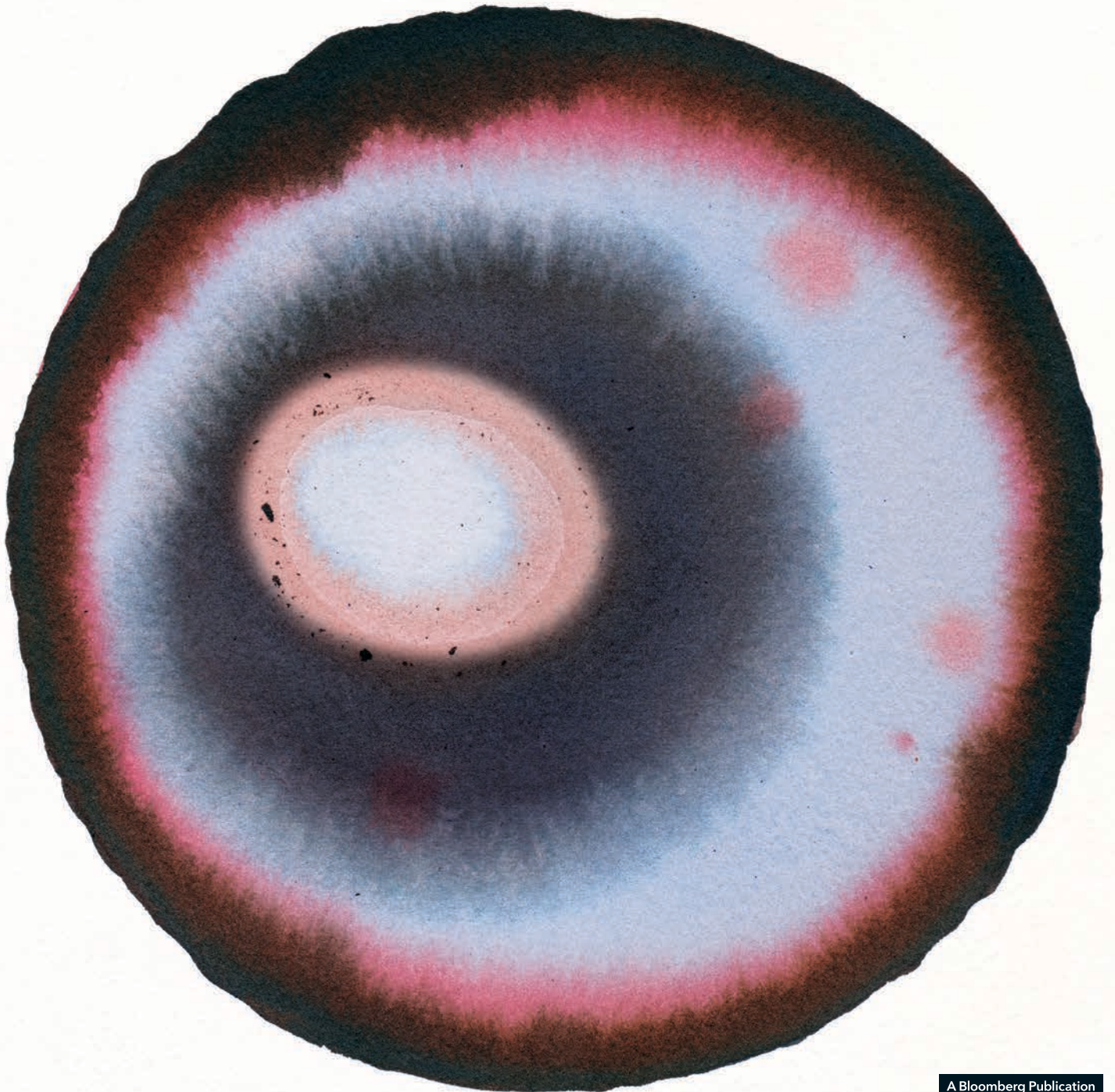


# Bloomberg Businessweek January 2025

*The Human Egg* A globe-spanning investigation into the money, opportunity and exploitation in the booming fertility industry



# PURSUIITS

## THE 25 PLACES TO GO IN 2025

→ Whether wanderlust compels you to find a spot before your fellow tourists do or you enjoy discovering a new side to the tried-and-true, these incredible destinations are calling

→ Edited by Nikki Ekstein

→ Photograph by Gabriela Herman

↑ Famara Beach in Lanzarote, one of Spain's Canary Islands

# ALGERIA OPENS UP



1

Piercing trills ring out across Algiers' Rue Didouche Mourad, and my eyes dart across the ivory Haussmann-style buildings to trace the source. The familiar ululation is a Proustian trigger: If you spend enough time in the Arab world, you know this sound—a *zaghrouta*—means a party is unfolding, and I want in.

Sure enough, a quartet of musicians spills out from a salon onto the sidewalk, followed by a chorus of women swathed in jewel-toned velvet jackets called *karakous*. The singing escalates with high-pitched abandon as a bride emerges and slips into a white SUV. As passersby surge into the street, I get sucked into the fray, clapping along as the locals pulse their hips to the beat of the *darbuka* drums. Then, just as spontaneously as the celebration erupted, it ends.

I've long been obsessed with Algerian music, from the infectious cult hits of *Rai* (Algerian folk) king Khaled to contemporary hip-hop bangers by Soolking, so it's fitting that this interlude is my

introduction to the largest country in Africa. I'm on the first day of a guided tour by British adventure outfitter Wild Frontiers, which helps me peel back the layers of this Mediterranean mille-feuille, with its alluring strata of Roman ruins, whitewashed mosques and Ottoman palaces, not to mention a treasure trove of immaculate neoclassical, belle époque and art deco buildings left over from 132 years of French occupation.

Algeria certainly has its international stars: French soccer legend Zinedine Zidane, musicians DJ Snake and Cheb Mami, Yves Saint Laurent and Albert Camus were all born here or can trace family back. But if you don't know much about the place at all, that may be by design. Algeria retreated inward after two especially difficult chapters in its history: A brutal eight-year revolution ended French rule in 1962, and a bloody civil war between the military and Islamist groups condemned the 1990s to history as the country's Black Decade. Now Algeria is stable—and has until recently resisted globalization in part as an effort to preserve its once-threatened identity. "Our

→ As insular as it is beautiful, Africa's largest nation is now welcoming visitors to its uncrowded wonders

→ By Sarah Khan

■ WILL BOWEN



← The oasis town of Taghit stands before the Grand Erg Occidental sand dunes in western Algeria

festivals, our culture is for ourselves,” novelist Hamza Koudri tells me at Dojo, a gallery and community space in Algiers’ Birkhadem district. “That won’t last forever if tourist culture comes.”

I start in the elegant capital of Algiers, where the stately French-built National Museum of Fine Arts stands in the shadow of the swooping spire of the Martyrs Memorial, honoring the 1.5 million Algerians killed in the war of independence. In the historic casbah, which slinks down a steep slope toward the Bay of Algiers, there are neither tour groups nor beckoning salespeople. When I settle into a rooftop divan at the restaurant Dar El Baraka with a bowl of rechta (delicate wisps of pasta served with chicken, hard-boiled egg and cinnamon-laden gravy), I’m joined by a lively group of locals and a stray turtle meandering underfoot.

Although the country rewards its visitors with spellbinding scenes at every turn, it wasn’t easy to get here. Only seven countries (largely neighbors) have visa-free access, making it one of the most closed-off nations in the world. Tourism represents only 2% of Algeria’s

gross domestic product—25% is oil—with most of its 3 million annual visitors coming to see family.

Recently, those statistics have started to change. In 2023 the government introduced a visa-on-arrival program as the first step toward building a meaningful tourism economy that aims to welcome 12 million annual visitors by 2030. With even Saudi Arabia pivoting from oil toward tourism, Algeria must compete with its neighbors, Morocco and Tunisia, for international visitors or risk falling behind.

For now, the visa on arrival is only an option for travelers planning to spend 70% of their time exploring the desert vistas in the south. For everyone else, Algeria’s visa process remains Byzantine, requiring thick sheafs of paperwork and some dumb luck. What’s more, foreigners are required to travel with tour operators and must be accompanied by a constant retinue of police escorts—for bureaucratic reasons rather than any real safety concerns. Hip shops selling pricey ceramics and stylish silk caftans fail to accept credit cards, and outside of

the simple but sufficiently comfortable hotels, Wi-Fi is hard to come by.

But here, on a leafy, tourist-free boulevard in the center of the capital, watching women cross the street carrying spindly baguettes and vendors doling out mdhajib flatbreads under colorful frescoed ceilings—with the sounds of French, Arabic and Berber swirling together into the local Dziryra dialect—I start to understand a new definition of luxury. It isn’t shaped by opulent resorts and eye-watering price tags but by accessing a rare window into a culture that’s traditionally been cloistered away. During my week in the country, I see more cats than foreigners.

After checking out from Algiers’ Hotel El Aurassi—a tall, white building with a blocky silhouette and a vast pool deck—we take a van eastward, passing the sprawl of the third largest mosque in the world and winding through eucalyptus-covered hills before arriving at Djémila. Once the thriving Roman colony of Cuicul, the site is now a dizzying assortment of astonishingly preserved Roman ruins. Anywhere else in the world, a cache of antiquities at this scale would be a tangle of barriers and walkways and plaques designed to usher hordes of tourists and protect relics, but these are all but deserted save for a group of teenage boys sharing a cigarette.

That night I stay in Constantine, a city of a half-million people where seven bridges hang across the wide gorges of the Rhumel River like elaborate, sky-high tightwires. There, I stumble onto spontaneous guitar jam sessions and come away with a dozen new Raï and poplike *chaabi* tracks for my Spotify playlist. And in the Sahara, my hair lashes in the wind against my face as I slice ribbons through the dunes in an exhilarating ride on a four-wheeler. Sure, there are fewer working seat belts compared with my dune-bashing experiences in Dubai and Oman, but my trepidation only adds to the exhilaration.

Among my six fellow travelers with Wild Frontiers, past passport stamps →

For flight and hotel prices for each destination, personalized for you with data from Kayak, visit [bloombergo.com/where-to-go](https://bloombergo.com/where-to-go)

← include Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Mali and Sudan. “I like to go to places before there’s a Starbucks there,” quips Karen Johnson-Gale, a retiree from Colorado.

I see where she’s coming from. Visiting a country like Algeria now, before it’s fully primed for the spotlight, is a rare privilege. It comes with its frustrations: Airports are a maddening obstacle course of redundant passport and luggage

screenings and late-night domestic flights, for instance. But it also lets visitors witness a vibrant culture lived with practically zero interest in the Western gaze, and where panoramas such as the palm-studded Saharan oases near Timimoun are utterly unblemished by tour buses and influencers with billowing dresses. With its maze of marble columns, 40,000 *zellige* tiles and whimsical frescoes of Mecca and Medina, Constantine’s alluring palace of Ahmed Bey is as worthy of camera-toting tourist throngs as the mosaic-covered Bahia Palace in Marrakech. But I get to see it in almost complete privacy.

“I think Algeria is having its moment,” says Marc Leaderman, product and operations director of Wild Frontiers, noting that the company has seen a 75% increase in bookings here from 49 in 2023 to 86 in 2024. “There’s a lot of talk of overtourism, and people are looking for destinations that offer them an antidote to that.”

It’s unlikely that Algeria’s extraordinary vast landscapes will change meaningfully, even if more people come to see them. But the real endangered travel experience may lie in quieter moments spent watching quotidian life unfold as it has for generations. It’s these fleeting scenes that I found stirred me most.

Take one of the more harrowing travel days I’ve had in recent memory, a consequence of a missed flight that sent me hopscotching across the country’s vast desert interior on my way back to Algiers. As soon as my reassigned flight finally hit altitude and the seat belt sign went off, a man rose at the front of the plane and, in a booming voice, spontaneously led the entire plane full of passengers in a rousing *dua* (prayer). As he made throaty entreaties to Allah to keep us safe and bless our journey, I joined the passengers chorusing along with passionate “*ameens*.” **B**



↑ The Martyrs Memorial in Algiers



→ Located in the northeast, Constantine is known as the city of suspended bridges

MEMORIAL: DUKAS/UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP/GETTY IMAGES. BRIDGE: ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES. MUSEUM: SANEYED HASSAN/GETTY IMAGES