

**« Where the Earth meets the Universe »  
International Workshop and Expert Meeting  
La Palma, November 2009**

# **The Onk Jmel (Tunisian Desert) Dark Sky:**

**From « Star War » movie  
to Star observation**

**Pr. Mohamed Hedi Ben Ismail  
General Director - Tunis Science City**

## Tunisian desert ensures for visitors a unique moment of evasion

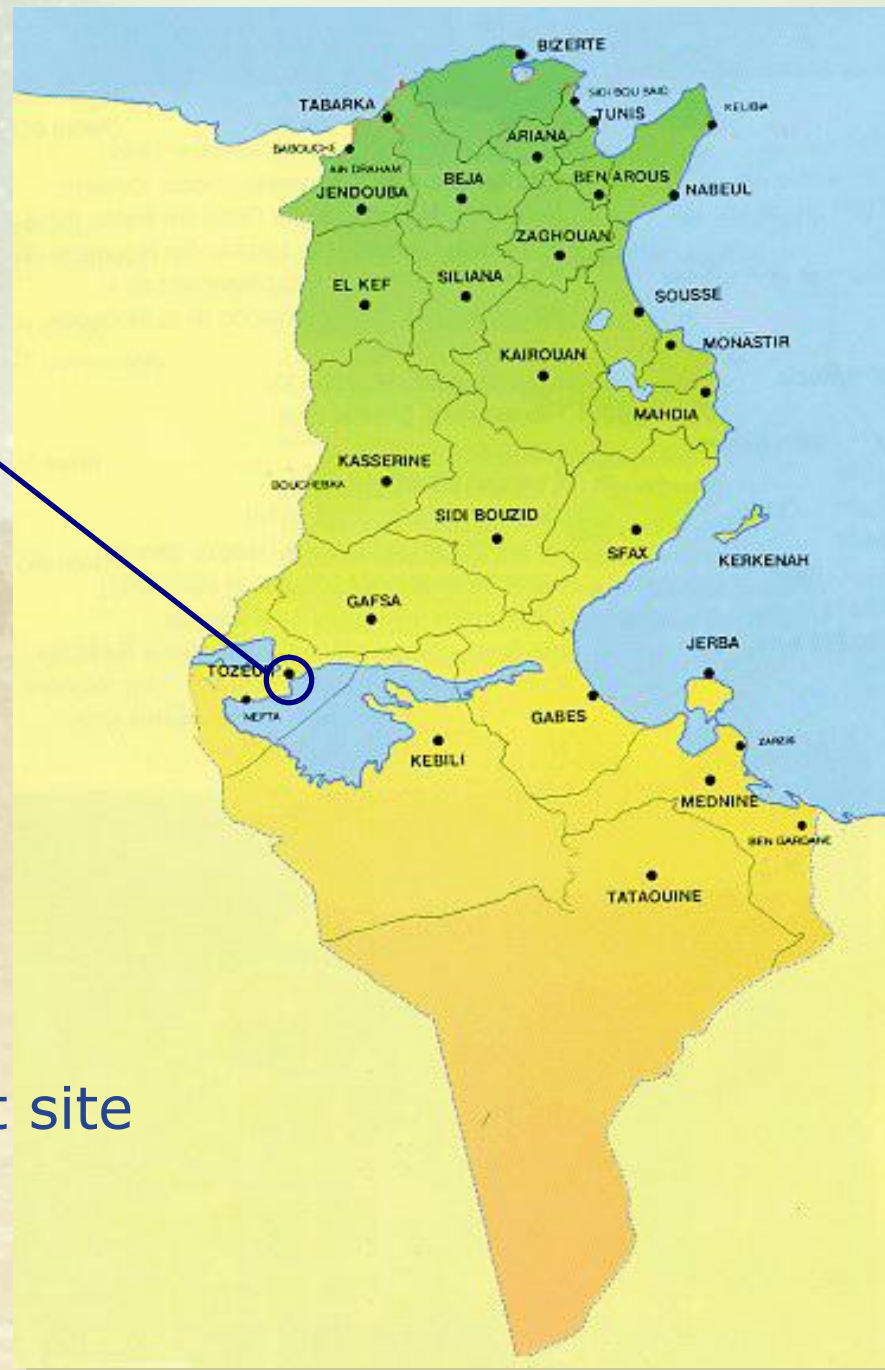


The sight of sea of dunes traversed  
by swaying camel caravans



**Onk Jmel**

**Onk Jmel:**  
an exceptional tourist site





**Approaching Onk Jmel area**



**The Onk Jmel literally the “neck of a camel” is located at the deep South of Tunisia, by the South West**

**A Camel neck figure carved by desertic erosion**







**Onk Jmel: a lunar landscape**

A very famous site  
where "the star war"  
movie was shot in 1997.







Space shuttles from the star war movie's scenery





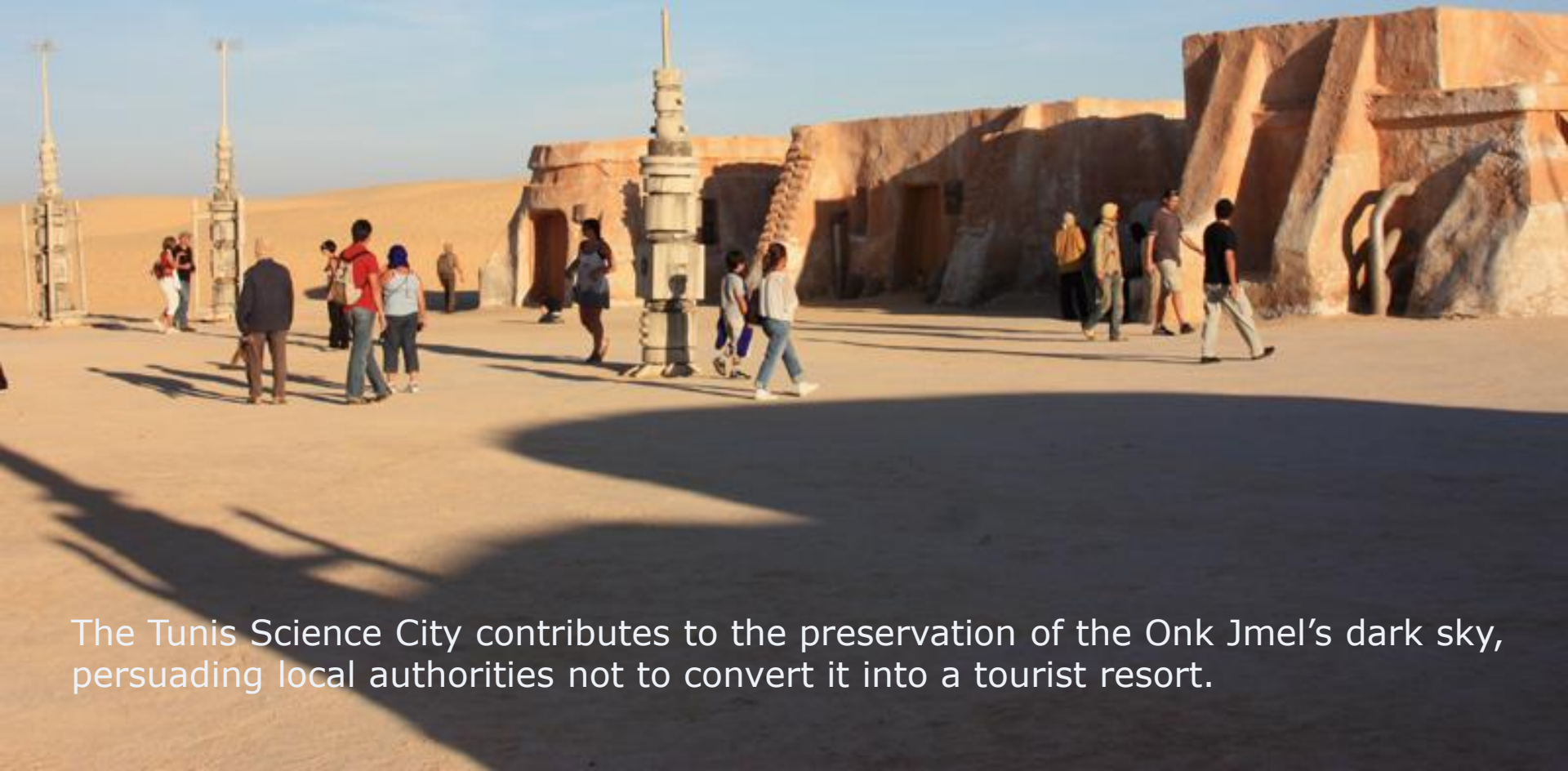
**Rolling down sand dunes**

# Onk Jmel: dark sky

an appropriate Star observation site

The Onk Jmel site offers a quite dark sky  
appropriate for the observation of stars

## From a tourist site to « Starlight Reserve »



The Tunis Science City contributes to the preservation of the Onk Jmel's dark sky, persuading local authorities not to convert it into a tourist resort.

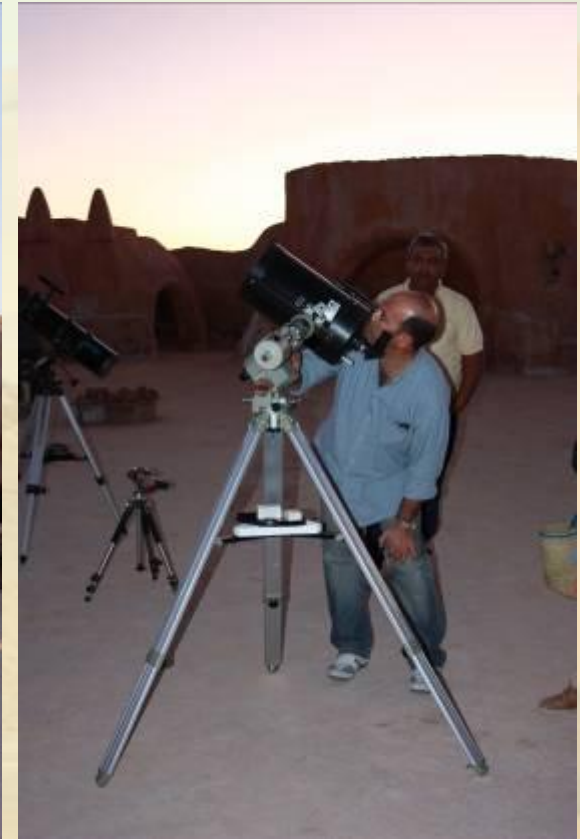
From a tourist site  
to « Starlight Reserve »





A surrealistic scenery  
inviting to an evasion into  
the cosmos.





An Astronomer from Tunis Science City  
adjusting a telescope



The astronomy activities are open both to Tunisians and tourists. The scientific mediators are helping them enrich their scientific knowledge and not spend idle holidays.

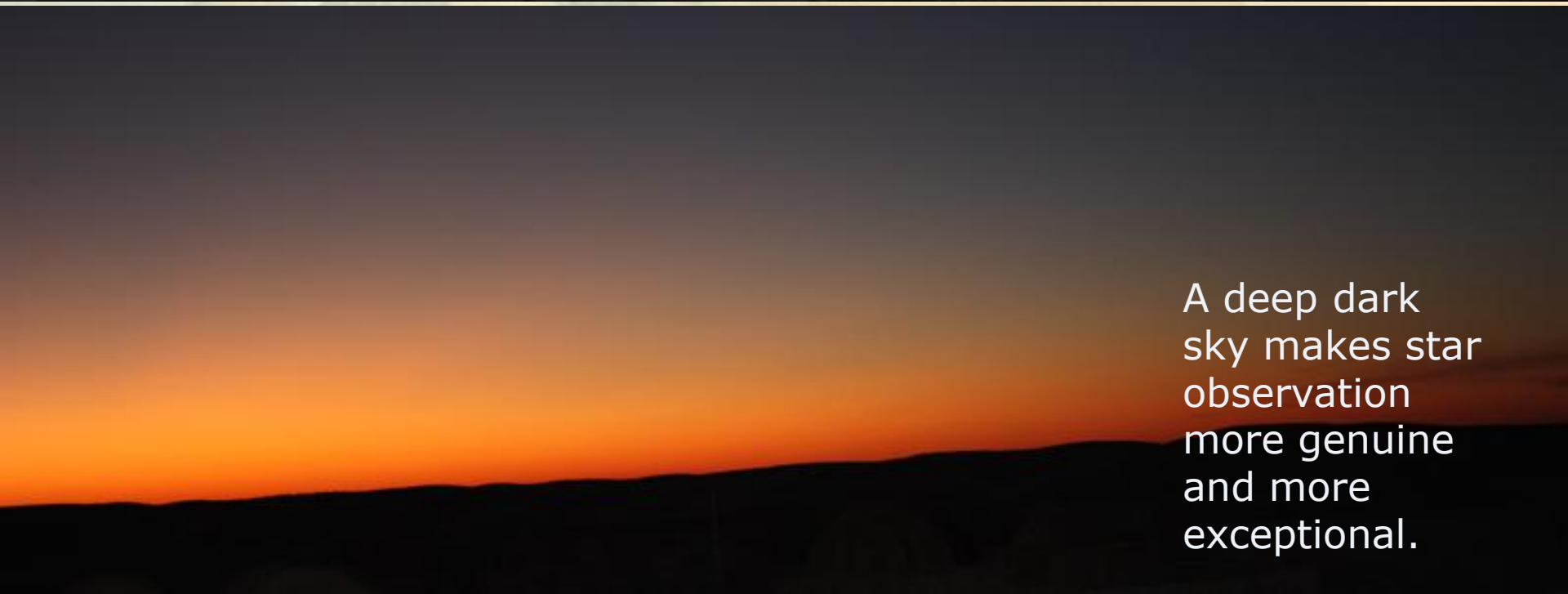




**Discovering stars through a telescope**

To help the lay-public get a better grasp of celestial phenomena, the Tunis Science City's mediators organize astronomy evenings out of the Tunis Science City's walls, even in the remotest areas of Tunisia.






A deep dark  
sky makes star  
observation  
more genuine  
and more  
exceptional.



**Sunset over Onk Jmel**

## Dark sky on Onk Jmel site

A photograph showing the dark silhouette of a city skyline against a twilight sky. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a warm orange glow near the horizon. Several tall, thin towers and structures are visible, including two prominent ones with horizontal cross-arms. The foreground is mostly in shadow, with some dark shapes on the left and right sides.

Expeditions to Onk Jmel have been planned yearly by the Tunis Science City's scientific team in a collaboration with tour operators and travel agencies.

The first astronomy expedition to Onk Jmel was on 16 October 2008. It was an astronomy evening for the benefit of a tourist group. It consisted of an exposé on the history of astronomy, and an observation of the moon and some stars through telescopes.



Scientific mediators explaining the position of stars and constellations.



An astronomy expedition to Onk Jmel, on 16 and 17 March, 2009, was for the benefit of a tourist group.





The content consisted of an exposé on the International Year of Astronomy and an observation of the sky, the **moon** and Venus through telescopes and by naked eyes.





**Thank you**