

## An immersive mobility experience in Tunis for Rennes 2 Students Learning Arabic (<https://international.univ-rennes2.fr/article/immersive-mobility-experience-tunis-rennes-2-students-learning-arabic>)



From May 15 - 26, 2023, a group of Rennes 2 University students were delighted to be a part of an exceptional experience which combines the study of Arabic and immersion in Tunisian culture. The students took part in a short-term immersive mobility experience in Tunis at the Institute for Modern Languages, the IBLV, for the second year in a row. Through this program, the students who are all beginning-level Arabic language-learners, were able to choose between a 5 or 10-day training program at the Institute. During their stay, they spent the mornings in intensive Arabic classes, where they acquired listening, comprehension, written and oral expression skills, while the afternoons were spent visiting local historical and cultural sights and interacting with the population of Tunisia's capital and largest city.



Rennes 2 students by the sea

As a university with a proven commitment to linguistic and cultural studies (offering students a choice of 19 different modern languages from which to choose), students are encouraged to participate in these types of short-term linguistic and cultural mobility programs when possible. Not only is it a great way to motivate them to continue within the field of language studies and other related fields, but it also provides important intercultural training that they may use in the rest of their academic journeys and throughout their careers.

33 of the participating students followed the courses as part of their academic training with the LANSAD Department (which provides language training for specialists of other disciplines), and 9 students from the Arabic Studies Department took part. The cost of the course was covered by Rennes 2 University, and the students were accompanied by Chokri Mimouni, Director of the Arabic Studies program and co-organizer of the mobility program, along with Coordinator and teaching colleague Muriel Le Bloa (both teachers of Arabic at Rennes 2).

As explained by Chokri Mimouni: *"It's an intensive Arabic-language course that allows students to immerse themselves in a real-life linguistic environment, with a different pedagogy to that adopted at Rennes 2, and with benchmarks other than Rennes 2, in order to assimilate, improve and develop their language skills"*. Muriel Le Bloa further elaborated: *"The course is very effective, as the students are constantly immersed in the Arabic language, both in the classroom, where the teachers use only Arabic, and in their daily lives during visits to the city of Tunis and the surrounding area. I've noticed that they come back to France with a lovely Tunisian accent"*.



Rennes 2 students with their diplomas and IBLV teacher Mr. Fadhel Souissi

The Tunis mobility program is the result of a specific agreement signed between the Arab Studies Department and the IBLV Institute. This agreement mirrors the framework agreement between Rennes 2 and al-Manar University, to which IBLV belongs. The Director of IBLV, Mrs. Hanène Turki, provides the Rennes 2 participants with a group of teachers who supervise the visiting students throughout the course.



IBLV Director Ms. Hanène Turki (in red), with her teaching staff and Rennes 2 Director of Arab Studies Mr. Chokri Mimouni

The benefit of this partnership, as described by Choukri Mimouni is that: *“in addition to learning the language, the students really enjoy discovering the history, culture, habits and customs of this small, thousand-year-old country rich in history. The choice of Tunisia reflects the country's strategic position within the Arab world, not to mention its close ties with France. It has also reinforced our partnership with the University of Tunis and opened up new avenues of cooperation, with projects under the Erasmus+ program for third countries.”*



Rennes 2 Director C. Mimouni with IBLV teacher and pedagogical coordinator Ms. Salwa Eleuch (left) and teacher Ms. Ayda Youssfi (right)

