



International field workshop MATS 2008

Microbial mats and mat-related sedimentary structures in siliciclastic environment

*Record of interaction between microbial communities, climatic and
sedimentary settings in southern Tunisian sabkhas and tidal flats.
Implications for ancient siliciclastic systems.*

FIRST CIRCULAR

Zarzis, Tunisia
14.-19. October 2008

www.ucam.ac.ma/mats2008



Conveners :

El Hafid **Bouougri** (Cadi Ayyad University, Morocco), Gisela **Gerdes** (Research center Terramare, Germany), Hubertus **Porada** (Georg-August Universität Göttingen, Germany), Joachim **Reitner** (Georg-August Universität Göttingen, Germany)

Purpose

The field workshop **MATS 2008** will be held in SE Tunisia and is organized under the auspices of the Partnership project I/78 706 between FSSM (Morocco) and GZG (Germany), funded by VW-Foundation. This event is also a contribution to the International Year of Planet Earth (IYPE).

The aim of this field workshop is to introduce the participants in an actualistic approach to sedimentary structures in relation to cohesive microbial mats which thrive particularly well in the southern Tunisian intertidal to supratidal zones and sabkhas. The field workshop will focus on i) recognition and diversity of structures produced by microbial mats in siliciclastic peritidal environments; ii) classification of structures and processes involved in their genesis; iii) discussion on significance and implications for ancient siliciclastic systems and exploration of early life on Earth and life traces in the Universe.

The Tunisian example provides opportunities to explore the components of one of the oldest ecosystems and evidence of life on Earth. In the vicinity of Zarzis, a bunch of localities are selected for detailed observations. The observed structural complexity of surface features provides important insights into the environmental circumstances of genesis of sedimentary structures in Archean and Proterozoic siliciclastic sediments, contoured by microbial mats which have been the most abundant biological counterparts to physical processes in old shallow marine and coastal environments.

The participation to this event is open to all geo- and bio-scientists interested in "microbial mat ecosystems". Priority will be given to those working in close topics. Up to 8 places will be allowed to postgraduate students and IAS student members, preferably working on geobiology and geomicrobiology fields.

Duration:

The workshop will take place from 14. to 19. October 2008 and will start and end at Zarzis. Each participant should arrange for his own travel to and from Djerba airport and should check for visa requirements. The conveners will inform on possibilities to arrange for transfer from Djerba airport to Zarzis.

Accommodation, transport and meals:

Accommodation in 4* hotel/club (full-board), sandwiches and bottled water provided for lunches in the field, transport with minibuses or cars.

Fees:

Total fees per person: **670€**. The fees include registration, field guide book, transport during the excursion, 6 days of accommodation (double room), meals, closure dinner and social program. **Payment will be requested once your place has been confirmed. No final registration will be confirmed until payment is received.** Further details and instructions for payment will be available on the website. Please check regularly for updates. For fees of accompanying persons (i.e not participating in the workshop), please contact El Hafid Bouougri <bouougri@ucam.ac.ma>.

Travel grants:

Limited funding will be available for travel grants of post-graduate students.

Student members of IAS may apply for IAS grants. For details and instructions on how to apply for grants, please visit the IAS website (<http://www.iasnet.org/>)

Postgraduate students (not IAS members) planning to apply for a travel grant should arrange with his/her supervisor (Departmental Chairperson, Laboratory Head, etc.) to send separately a letter to the MATS2008 Secretariat Office.

This letter must arrive at latest by **15 February 2008** and should include the supervisor's assessment of:

- the applicant's qualifications
- how the applicant's attendance at the workshop will benefit his/her research
- the possibilities of the applicant receiving support from his/her home institution or country

The conveners will try to provide travel grants and to support attendance of the workshop for a limited number of the applicants.

Limitation of the participants:

The number of participants is limited to 30. Depending on funds and travel grants, up to 8 places will be allowed to post-graduate students preferably working on geobiology, geomicrobiology or astrobiology fields.

Calendar (provisional program)

14 October 2008:

- Arrival of excursion members at Djerba airport and transfer to Zarzis.
- Registration at hotel/club.

15 to 18 October 2008:

- Excursions and visits to various localities of sabkhas and tidal flats.
- Evening lectures on special topics related to microbial mat ecosystems.

Proposed topics:

- Overview of modern microbial mat ecosystems in siliciclastic environments
- Occurrence of mat-related structures in the siliciclastic rock record.
- Mat-related structures in ancient rocks and modern ecosystems: implications for research on fossil life in the Universe.
- Developments in investigation methods of the early biosphere and biosignatures in rocks: implications for astrobiology sciences.

19 October 2008 :

- Round table: Discussion and summary,
- Social program (visit to Djerba Island),
- Closure dinner.

20 October 2008:

- Departure from Djerba airport.

Deadlines:

Preliminary subscription: **15 February 2008.**

Travel grants application (IAS and no IAS students): **15 February 2008.**

Results for travel grants: **16 February 2008**

Payment of fees: **31 March 2008.**

Contact:

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[**www.ucam.ac.ma/mats2008**](http://www.ucam.ac.ma/mats2008)

