

For tours departing beyond 2008, itineraries may be subject to change. This will be confirmed by the publication of the 2009 brochure (issued in Oct 08).

2008
Tour Dossier

EXPLORE!
WORLDWIDE

ERITREA Dossier Ref. ER

Eritrean Highlights

Amended 23 Oct 2008. Valid from 23 Oct 2008 to 31 Dec 2008
Since first issue this dossier has been updated with amendments to the following sections: visa, meal plan, personal expenses, foreign exchange

JOINING TOUR ABROAD

9 days/8 nights Land Only
Asmara to Asmara

Join Asmara on Saturday (day 1)

End Asmara on Sunday (day 9)

Clients booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the joining point in Asmara. Please refer to separate 'Joining Instructions' for name and address of hotel and time of rendezvous with tour leader.

GROUP TRAVEL FROM LONDON

9 days/8 nights Tour including
Connecting Group Flights
London-Asmara-London

Depart Saturday from London Heathrow Airport to join tour in Asmara the following day (day 2 of Land Only itinerary).

Return Sunday from Asmara (day 9 of Land Only itinerary) to arrive London Heathrow the same day.

Passengers with non-group flights booked through Explore should refer to their individual confirmation invoice for flight details. Transfers to and from the airport are not included unless purchased in addition to the tour package.

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Among the many highlights featured on this tour, we particularly mention:

- * **ASMARA** Eritrea's Art Deco capital city.
- * **KEREN** Thriving market town.
- * **DEBRE SINA** 6th Century monastery.
- * **MASSAWA** Relaxing by the Red Sea.
- * **NEFASIT** Ride on Eritrea's famous Italian-era steam train.

Eritrea is one of Africa's most enigmatic countries, for so long isolated from the outside world. This short tour opens up Eritrea's treasures for you, from the bustling markets and Art Deco architecture of its capital to the shores of the Red Sea, where Africa and Arabia meet. Beginning in the Eritrean capital of Asmara we tour the delightful streets of this fascinating city,

visiting its markets and churches and marvelling at a city lost in the architectural styles of the 1930s. To the north of the capital we visit the camel markets of Keren and the 6th century monastery of Debre Sina. After returning to the capital we take a ride on Eritrea's famous Italian-era steam train through the mountains, before taking the stunning drive through the highlands to the Red Sea port of Massawa. A mix of Arabic, Turkish and European influences, Massawa's streets give us plenty of scope for exploring and with a free day to enjoy the welcoming waters of the Red Sea. This comprehensive journey gives us a little taste of the best of Eritrea.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

Be Prepared: While our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day route printed below, a degree of flexibility is built into the itinerary. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested. Please note that in Adi Keyh especially, electricity supply is erratic and is unlikely in any event to be available between 10pm and 6am.

Accommodation and Included Meals: please find the key to our accommodation ratings overleaf, and note that included meals are indicated in the itinerary below and are shown on the day they are provided (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner).

Day 1. Saturday. Join tour Asmara

Day 2. Free morning in Asmara; afternoon orientation tour of city; drive to Keren

The morning will be free to relax, then this afternoon we will take a tour of Eritrea's impressive capital. Considered by many to be one of the safest cities in Africa, Asmara is an interesting mix of Italian colonial and African and its streets positively overflow with spectacular buildings, covering a multitude of architectural styles, from Neoclassical and Art Deco, to Futurist. After our orientation tour we drive north to the lovely market town of Keren, situated in the shadow of the Sahel Mountains. **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Day 3. In Keren; visit markets and town

Strategically located, Keren has always been an important trading centre and grew with the arrival of the Italian railway. Today it is still popular and its markets are amongst some of the best in the country. We will visit the bustle and noise of the camel market today, a sight not to be missed. We also visit the town's war cemeteries. The scene of heavy fighting between the British and Italians during the Second World War, the town has a number of graveyards dedicated to the fallen. One of Keren's more interesting sites is the wonderfully named Madonna of the Baobab.

CO₂ Offsets Included

The biggest environmental impact of your holiday with Explore is the CO₂ generated by your flights. As a responsible tour operator, we have included in our tour prices the costs of offsetting CO₂ emissions from all international and domestic flights forming part of the tour. Our chosen offset partner is Climate Care. If you are making independent flight arrangements to join one of our tours, we urge you to take responsibility for your CO₂ emissions by offsetting through Climate Care, or a similar offsetting scheme.



This ancient tree is believed to denote the spot from which fertility springs and the shrine inside it was built in the late 19th century by the Sisters of Charity. It is also usually possible to pay a visit to the local deaf school. **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Day 4. Drive to Asmara via Debre Sina monastery

Heading back to Asmara today we take 4WDs to visit the Debre Sina monastery, one of the only monasteries in the country that permits both men and women to visit. After a short walk we arrive at the dramatically situated 6th century monastery, where we hope to see the inner part, hewn directly from the rock as well as the troglodyte dwellings of the nuns and priests. Orthodox Christianity still plays a major role in the country and has existed in the region for almost 1700 years. Afterwards we return to Asmara to enjoy an evening in Eritrea's capital and perhaps join the locals in experiencing its famed cafe culture! **2 nights hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Day 5. In Asmara; train ride to/from Nefasit

Today we take one of East Africa's most memorable journeys down through the mountains on Eritrea's famous steam train. The train has been recently restored and still runs on the original Italian railway line, built in the early 20th century along a precipitous route which even today is still viewed as an impressive feat of engineering. **(Included meals: B).**

Day 6. Drive to Massawa via Segheneyti

Today we will travel south before heading east to the coast; a stunning journey of steep mountain roads and terraced hillsides. We will have the opportunity to see the plain of Deghera also known as the Valley of the Sycamores for the magnificent Sycamore Figs that march across the plain. For centuries, the trees have been used as a meeting place for village elders and community debates and advisory sessions from the elders still take place. We will also aim to pay a visit to the Textile School in Segheneyti before heading to Massawa on the coast. Massawa has always had an important connection with Arabia, just across the Red Sea, and for that reason the town itself retains a distinctly Arab feel to it. The port has been a centre of trade for centuries, with Arabs, Egyptians, Turks and European powers all at one time fighting for possession of its natural deep harbour. On arrival we will check into our hotel and then take a tour of the city this afternoon. Massawa actually sits on two islands and its architecture has been much influenced by its colonising invaders.

Earth Matters

- Our tours in Eritrea usually include the following:-
 - a visit to the Deaf School in Keren, a project that started in 1955 and as an essential institution in the country today, has over 500 children on its waiting list.
 - a visit to the textile school in Segheneyti - run by the Copuchimi Sisters of Mother Rubato. Founded in 1964, this school teaches widows of the war how to make high quality textiles and therefore earn an income.
- For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/>

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There are examples of Ottoman, Egyptian and Italian architecture throughout and, whilst Ethiopian bombing during the recent conflicts for independence destroyed much of the town, it still retains a distinctive air of the exotic. **2 nights hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Day 7. In Massawa

Today is left free for you to explore more of this interesting port. You may wish to continue where we left off yesterday and wander the narrow lanes, discovering new treasures amongst the mosques and merchant houses, villas and palaces of Massawa and Taulud Islands. Or there is the option to visit the nearby Gurgussum beach and/ or learn more about Eritrea's history at the local museum. **(Included meals: B).**

Day 8. Drive to Asmara; afternoon free

This morning we leave the coast and head back up to Asmara via Filfil. Back in Asmara we have a final afternoon to enjoy a last look at Eritrea's bustling capital, perhaps to do some last minute shopping in the markets, or stroll once more through the diverse architecture of this most absorbing of cities. **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Day 9. Sunday. Tour ends Asmara (Included meals: B).

PERSONAL EXPENSES

You'll need some extra money to cover meals not included in the tour price, other sightseeing, airport taxes \$20 payable on departure, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Foreign Exchange

Local Currency: Nakfa (Nfa).

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US dollars are the best currency to exchange.

We recommend a mixture of cash and Travellers cheques, but be sure to have sufficient cash.

Where to Exchange: Banks and exchange bureaux. Remember to take your passport to exchange money – even cash. Please note that you will need to declare **all** currency on arrival and departure in Eritrea. Accordingly, please ensure you keep all exchange receipts.

ATM Availability: There are no ATMs in Eritrea. **Credit Card Acceptance:** Limited to larger hotels. Be aware that some places charge up to 7% commission, so check first.

Travellers Cheques: Banks, hotels and exchange offices.

Up-to-date information re: global exchange rates can be obtained at <https://www.currency-express.com/explore/>

Local Payment

Payable in **Nakfa** to your Explore tour leader on arrival in Asmara. Please note that due to a change in local legislation this may differ from previous documentation. Your tour leader will be able to show you where your US Dollar can be changed into Eritrean Nakfa.

EXPLORE ACCOMMODATION RATINGS :

The following key is intended as a guide to the type of accommodation listed for each night stop. We stress that standards may vary and reserve the right to make changes as necessary without warning.

Hotels / Pensions / Lodges

H+ : Usually twin bedded rooms, normally with private facilities. Local grading 2/3/4 star.

H : Usually twin bedded rooms, sometimes 3-4 bedded rooms may have to be used. Normally with shared facilities. Local grading 1/2/3 star.

Meal Plan

Local Food and Drink: 8 breakfasts are included on this trip; please be prepared to pay for all other meals. Approximate meal costs are given below:

	UK	Eritrea
Tea/Coffee	£1.20	US\$0.40
Soft Drink	0.80	1.50
Bottle of Beer	2.50	1.50
Bottle of Water	0.80	1.50
Bottle of Wine	10.00	45.00
(south African wine)		
2 Course Meal*	10.00	12.00
3 Course Meal**	18.00	15.00

* Cheap local fare in a small cafe or restaurant.

**Typical food in a simple, reasonably comfortable mid-range restaurant.

Tipping

Local Staff: Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly you should allow approx. US\$15 for gratuities for local staff.

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your tour leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Seasonal Climate

Seasonal temperatures change little in Eritrea, but the best time to travel is March to April and September to October, when generally rainfall is lowest and temperatures can range from 18°C in Asmara, up to the high 30s in Massawa. June to August sees the rain arrive in the highlands and western lowlands, whilst the eastern lowlands are at their hottest.

Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Visa Requirements

A single entry visa is required by all nationalities. Visas must be obtained before departure. You must hold a return/onward ticket, a passport valid for at least six months with a double blank page for the visa. Visas are available through the embassy or through Explore's recommended visa service, Travcour www.travcour.com. All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, hepatitis A, tetanus, typhoid, polio and diphtheria. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Yellow fever certificate only required if arriving from an infected area.

Special Note: Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Booking a Single Room

All of our tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. On this particular tour we are pleased to be able to offer customers the option of pre-booking a guaranteed single room for each night of the tour.

Electric Supply and Plugs

For comprehensive information regarding voltages and plug types in use in the countries visited, follow the relevant link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all bookings. You must take your policy document with you on tour as your tour leader will ask to see this at the start of the trip. Your documentation must state in writing that you are the named policyholder and that the cover is valid for your period of travel. Your policy document must also indicate that you have medical expenses and emergency repatriation cover and a 24-hour contact telephone number for your Insurance Company must be shown on your documentation in case of emergency. If you are unable to provide all this information at the start of the trip your tour leader will ask you to purchase an Explore Policy. If you have purchased Explore Insurance you should carry the Master Certificate leaflet with you, which outlines the conditions of the policy together with a copy of your Confirmation Invoice, which is your proof of purchase of insurance.

Know Before You Go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs, including advice re: the legality of and local attitudes towards same-sex relationships. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

A complete list of clothing and personal gear is contained in Explore's **'General Information Booklet'**, available only after a booking has been accepted. Here we make a few specific recommendations with regard to your tour.

Luggage: One main piece of luggage and a daysac. Total allowance: **20kgs/44lbs**. Remember – you are expected to carry your own luggage, so don't overload yourself.

Clothing: Pack essentially for **'All Tours'** plus **'Hot Conditions'**. Daytime temperatures are mainly warm and comfortable, but evenings in the highlands can be cool. We recommend a thick sweater or warm fleece and lightweight wind/waterproof clothing. Take a sun hat.

Footwear: Comfortable shoes, trainers or sandals for relaxing/travelling.

Equipment: Bring a torch, sunhat/sunscreen, a towel and insect repellent. Take supplies of photographic film with you, as supplies available locally are unreliable.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Area: 124,320 sq km.

Population: 4,400,000.

Language: Arabic & Tigrinya (official), Tigre, Afar and English.

Religion: Muslim (50%), Christian (50%).

Local Time: GMT +3.

Electric Supply & Plugs: 230V 50HZ, two pin round plugs.

Recommended Maps: ITMB Publishing: 1:9,000,000.

Recommended Books: Bradt Guide to Eritrea, Lonely Planet Guide to Ethiopia & Eritrea, Roy Pateman: Even the Stones are Burning, Richard Sherman: Eritrea: The Unfinished Revolution. I Didn't Do It For You: How the World Used and Abused a Small African Nation, Michela Wrong.

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