



Cruise to the Dahlak Islands

ERITREA

Photo by I. Fornasiero



9 days

December 2024 to April 2025

English speaking guide



The 'unforgettable' of the trip:

- **Asmara**, a UNESCO heritage site, with its elegant Art Deco and Futurist architecture
- **The 'Italians' road** from Asmara to Massawa, a difference in altitude of 2,300 metres in 115 kilometres
- **The Dahlak Islands archipelago**, crystal-clear waters, colourful fish and Afar fishermen
- The old **port of Massawa**, with its decadent Ottoman and Italian buildings



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+223 76723946 - www.kanaga-at.com

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Day 1:

Outward flight/Asmara

Flight to Asmara. Arrive late in the evening, meet with Kanaga Africa Tours staff who will arrange transfer to the Crystal Hotel or similar. Overnight stay in a double room with bathroom.

Day 2:

Asmara/Ghinda/Massawa

Breakfast at the hotel and morning dedicated to visiting ASMARA, the 'little Rome', declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2017 thanks to the extraordinary mixture of architectural styles that embellish its urban fabric, harmoniously combining 20th-century avant-garde and daring construction techniques of Italian rationalist urbanism, reinterpreted in a local key.

We begin our city tour by admiring the architecture of the Cinema Roma, the elegant Bar Zilli and what is undoubtedly the symbol of the city: the Fiat Tagliero headquarters, a service station conceived in the futuristic shape of an aeroplane with long wings not structurally supported by pillars. Wings that defy gravity and the passage of time and celebrate the cutting-edge technology achieved by Italian designers almost a century ago.

Afterwards, we will head to the *Medebar*, the old Caravanserai, now transformed into a lively recycling market, where old sheet metal and rusty antiques are given new life. And while the men disassemble, bend, assemble and weld in a concert of metallic notes and puffs of steam, we will also observe the work of the women, intent on grinding chilli peppers for the preparation of *berberé*, the characteristic spice that characterises the tasty Eritrean cuisine.

We arrive at Harnet Avenue (formerly 'Corso Italia'), the main artery of the city, along which are concentrated the most interesting examples of Italian Art Deco and Futurist architecture. From an artistic and constructive point of view, Asmara encompasses all the styles of the early 20th century: Cubism, Futurism, Neoclassicism, Rationalism and Expressionism, declined in a pleasant alternation of public and private buildings, which recall the memory of a past that seems to have crystallised in the 1930s.

We visit the renowned Cinema Impero, which has not undergone any structural changes in 80 years and still entertains Asmaris with occasional film screenings and sporting events.



Welcome to Eritrea!



Fiat Tagliero



Italian Artdeco villa



Berberé processing at the Medebar



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Day 2:

We will enter the Catholic Cathedral consecrated to the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary, in the neo-Gothic-Lombard style, over which a very tall bell tower dominates the city, and finally, we will stop to look at the Opera House, whose construction dates back to 1920, and the Albergo Italia, built in 1899.

In the afternoon, we depart for the coast, following a spectacular road built by the Italians in 1935-36, which in 115 km covers a difference in altitude of 2,300 metres, including daring ups and downs and scenic viewpoints where the gaze sweeps from steep rocky slopes to gentle slopes and wide valleys sloping down to the fiery plains of the Red Sea.

On the exciting descent, we will encounter groups of hamadryad baboons, pause in GHINDA for a *bunna* (coffee), a *shai* (tea) or a papaya juice, and visit the old building of the Locanda Buon Respiro, which still bears the inscription 'Tabacchi e Telefono' on its façade. Finally, we stop in DOGALI, to pay homage to the monument of the Italian fallen in the Ras Alula ambush (to whom the Piazza dei Cinquecento in Rome is dedicated), and to take a closer look at the three-arched bridge dedicated to General Menabrea over the Dongollo river, on whose pediment the inscription in Piedmontese dialect 'Ca custa lon ca custa' (cost what it costs), probably referring to the seizure of Assab Bay in 1869, is still clearly visible.

Arrival in MASSAWA, the fascinating 'pearl of the Red Sea', which for centuries was one of the most important ports in the region and, in later times, the scene of painful wars that undermined its splendour, without however succeeding in dimming its timeless charm. And today, the outlines of the elegant buildings of Arab, Turkish, Portuguese, Egyptian and Italian influence draw the contours of a city that retains melancholic memories of its glorious past.

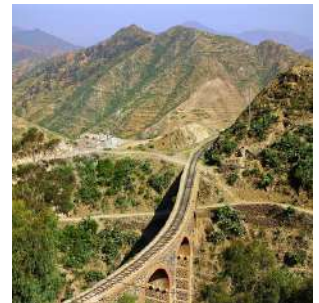
Accommodation at the Dahlak Hotel or similar and overnight in double rooms with services.



The Empire Cinema in Asmara



Catholic Cathedral



The railway in the plateau



Baboon Hamadriad



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Days 3-6:

Massawa/Dahlak Islands

Breakfast at the hotel and departure for the five-day excursion aboard a speedboat to the DAHLAK ISLANDS, an archipelago of over 200 islands in the heart of the Red Sea, an unspoilt natural paradise characterised by splendid deserted beaches surrounded by calm turquoise waters that are pleasantly warm all year round, ideal for snorkelling and diving to discover the coral reef and its colourful tropical fish.

An exceptional ecosystem that satisfies the interest of sea lovers and bird enthusiasts, as these islands are home to colonies of migratory birds that stop here to feed and rest.

We will visit four islands* with different characteristics and attractions, such as the coral sandbank entirely surrounded by the Madote reef and the volcanic island of Dissei, the extreme offshoot of the Dancalia region, which, with a series of reliefs and inlets that make mooring easy, is one of the few inhabited islands in the archipelago. There lives a small community of Afar fishermen, whose women welcome us by setting up an improvised bazaar of bracelets and shell necklaces on the beach.

On none of the islands are there any fixed facilities, so having the privilege of appreciating this pristine nature will require a good spirit of adaptation, with nights in igloo tents and camp toilets (small chemical toilet and rationed shower water).

Breakfasts, lunches and dinners at the camp prepared by our cook, overnight stays in double igloo tents under millions of stars and lulled by the sound of the sea.

**The choice of islands will be made on the spot by the boat captain, depending on the weather conditions (wind, sea...), the availability of permits, and the characteristics of the group.*

Day 7:

Dahlak Islands/Massawa

Breakfast at the camp and return to the mainland at MASSAWA. Accommodation at Dahlak Hotel or similar. In the afternoon we visit the ruins of the Imperial Palace built by the Turks in the 16th century, and later the summer residence of Haile Selassie. We will stroll through the alleyways of the old city, half destroyed by a violent earthquake in 1921 and rebuilt in record time by Italian architects who respected the original style of the collapsed buildings.



White Madote Beach



Dissei



Afar fishing village



Beautifully coloured backdrops



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Day 7:

We will walk through the maze of narrow streets of its ancient heart, the arcades and the former Via Roma, which penetrates as far as the old covered bazaar, with the merchants' houses with their lopsided wooden terraces and the elegant mashrabiyya, Moorish-style balconies whose arabesque inlays provide shade and ventilation to the most elegant buildings. We finally arrive at the Hotel Savoia and the impressive ruined Bank of Italy building dating back to 1920, perhaps the structure that has paid the price most of all for the ferocity of the armed conflict. Overnight stay in a hotel.



Turkish Imperial Palace



In the streets of Massawa

Day 8:

Massawa/Asmara

Breakfast at the hotel. Departure towards the plateau to return to ASMARA. In the afternoon, we will complete our tour of 'little Rome' and head to the market, where we can find souvenirs such as jebena (coffee jugs), straw baskets, leather goods, and to the small coffee roasters, where we can buy the fine local coffee. Some rooms in day use at the Hotel Crystal or similar. Transfer to the airport in time for your return flight, end of services.



Massawa

Day 9:

Asmara (ASM)/Return flight

Arrival at the destination airport.



At the market in Asmara



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**Individual participation fee in double room/tent
(min. 7, max 16 pax)**

Base 2 pax: 4,790€/pax

Base 4 pax: 4,490€/pax

Base 6 pax: 4,190€/pax

Base 8/10 pax: 4,090€/pax

Base 12/16 pax: 3,990€/pax

Supplements:

- Enrollment fee: **free!**
- Single room/tent: **110 €**
- Pre-visa service: **70 €/passport**
- Scuba diving: **on request**
- Asmara/Keren pre-extension: **on request**

The fee includes:

- English-speaking local guide;
- Tourist permits for scheduled sites*;
- Visits and excursions as per itinerary*;
- All transfers by 4x4 or minibus depending on the size of the group, including drivers, diesel and tolls;
- All transfers by speedboat to the Dahlak Islands, including crew, diesel and permits;
- Meals as specified in the itinerary;
- 7 overnight stays with breakfast as mentioned in the itinerary (3 in hotels, 4 in igloo tents);
- Camp equipment (tents, cooker...) for the nights in Dahlak;
- Day use in Asmara (1 room per 4 pax).

The fee does not include:

- The visa for Eritrea (incoming 70 USD if you pre-visit with us);
- Cancellation/health/baggage insurance;
- Air flights;
- Drinks and mineral water;
- Meals not included in the itinerary;
- Tipping and photographic tips;
- Expenses of a personal nature;
- Everything mentioned in 'supplements';
- Anything not expressly mentioned in 'the fee includes'.

**As tourist permits are granted arbitrarily by the Eritrean Ministry of Tourism, we reserve the right to replace some scheduled visits with others if these are not issued at the time of the actual execution of the trip.*

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A few pictures from our last cruise to Dahlak...



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