

ETHIOPIAN HARAR - FIGHTING FOR TOURISTS



The African country Ethiopia has established a plan to attract more tourists who long to enjoy ancient cultural heritage and historical atmosphere. The government has turned its attention to the famous Harar, or the Holy City, as many Islam believers call it. The government is well aware of the fact that it is about to launch a very ambitious project; the city is not quite ready to welcome tourists yet.

The major difficulty which the local authorities need to face is the lack of water supply. A substantial amount of \$34 million is to be invested to deal with this problem. The regional government has also given a 10-year tax break to any potential investors who would establish the much needed tourist facilities. Especially high-quality accommodation is an important aspect which will attract potential tourists.

Harar is one of the truly magical cities. It lies 250 miles from the country's capital, Addis Abeba. Its nickname, 'The Holy City', comes mainly from the number of mosques and shrines which have been built here in the course of more than ten centuries. Since 2006, Harar belongs to the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

For centuries, this ancient city was an important commercial center, many vital trade routes used to lead through Harar. It is deemed to be the fourth holiest city of Islam - right after Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. There are 82 mosques here, three of which date back to the 10th century, and 102 shrines.

A must-see site is the Medhane Alem Cathedral or the sixteenth century Jamia Mosque. Another major attraction of Harar is a mansion, which was once home to the famous French symbolist poet Arthur Rimbaud. The mansion has been turned into a museum.

The tourists will certainly enjoy the traditional feeding of hyenas; this ritual originated in the 1960s and took place only once a year. Nowadays, this strange 'show' takes place on daily basis. Visitors may also stride through the wonderfully charming streets of the old town or visit the locally famous market.

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