

# THE RED SEA

## *Charms & Attractions*

Over 2,000 km of coral reef extend along the red sea coast most of which are 5000 – 7000 years old giving the sea a depth and contour unlike any other around the world. Some of the corals form incredibly beautiful platforms that stretch out for kilometers offering the whole spectrum of colors for divers and snorkelers to enjoy. The offshore reefs are considered some of the finest in the world. The Red Sea water is warm and calm. There are the dangerous cylinders, like the renown Blue hole in Dahab, where in the middle of the reef there is a deep blue hole that offers a challenge for divers that like to take risks. The marine life offers incredible diversity that would satisfy all, from snorkelers and recreational divers to professional marine biologists.

In addition to the extraordinary reefs the plethora of sea creatures is awe inspiring. There are more than 1,200 types of fish recorded in the red sea 10% of which can't be found anywhere else. This gives the red sea an underwater uniqueness and a multifariousness that pulls divers and snorkelers from all over the world. From angel fish to Spanish dancers to turtles to hammer head sharks the red sea gives a variety for all to witness and enjoy. Ras Mohammed, SS Thistlegorm (shipwreck), Elphinstone, The Brothers, Dolphin Reef and Rocky Island are some of the famous diving

sites where one can enjoy a breath taking experience. The colors are bright and plentiful and the amount of sea creatures in one area is amazing, not mentioning just looking at the reefs is impressive, one doesn't know how to take in everything at once. A person can snorkel and dive in the same area many times and still see different things each time which is why it's known that once a person comes and experiences the red sea it becomes addictive.

Not only is the sea addictive but the beautiful sandy beaches and the all year round relatively temperate weather. Beach types extend in range from sandy beaches to rocky ones where swim shoes are a must and which could become fun for a change. Nothing compares to bare feet in the smooth warm sand that is soothing for the feet. For families the beaches of the red sea are ideal for children to play. The sand grains are fine and children walk easily and their sand castles stand more firmly. The weather most of the year is perfect for swimming so people can come almost at any time and it's never too cold and usually not too hot for the family to spend the whole day at the beach. Even if it is hot, since there isn't much humidity the heat is quite bearable. As for the divers and snorkelers any time of year the weather is fine, especially after getting out of the salty water and

having the famous black tea with extra sugar that is offered on every boat in the red sea after any dive or snorkel.

What adds more to such attractiveness and actually is a source of attraction in its own right is what you cannot ignore whenever you think of the Red Sea: Sinai. The Red Sea having Sinai between its two forks offers diverse types of tourism. A land holy to the followers of Abrahamic Religions, its rich Quranic and biblical history along with sites including Mount Sinai (Jabal Musa), where it is believed God has spoken to Prophet Moses, and Saint Katherine Monastery, the oldest inhabited monastery on earth, among other sites, offers a unique religious and historical type of tourism, whereas the Red Sea offers beach, sports, recreational and safari tourism.



The natural resources of the region promoted by Egypt's strategic location besides heavy development in major infrastructures and accommodation and transportation facilities carried out by the state and the private sector during the past two decades have stimulated outbound and inbound tourism. International airports have either been built or its facilities have been upgraded. Road networks connecting its major and small coastal cities and resorts have been constructed. Main centers of the Red Sea region, such as Sharm El Sheikh and Hurghada among others, now enjoy decent medical and financial services. Pharmacies, bazaars, restaurants, and shopping centers complement the touristic superstructure.

Some of the main centers and well known coastal towns include El Gouna, Hurghada, Safaga, Marsa Alam, on the western shore of the Red Sea, and Sharm-El-Sheikh, Dahab, and Taba on the Egyptian side of Sinai. The amount and array of hotels and resorts is staggering from the tent based camping hotels that offer cheap, original and close to nature experience to the seven star luxurious hotels that offer everything that can add to the comfort of their guests and make their stay an absolute pleasure. Hyatt Regency, Accor, Marriott, Le Méridien, Four Seasons, Hilton and Ritz-Carlton are all companies that are already present.

The flourishing tourism industry has stimulated demand in other economic sectors in the region. The growing services in the coastal cities along the Red Sea spurred outbound and

local interest in the real estate market. People from different nationalities who work in the tourism sector now live in cities like Hurghada and Sharm El Sheikh. The region has become a source of attraction to Egyptians from all over Egypt seeking a more fortunate life. Even well off Caierenes who had previously found it inconvenient to live anywhere other than Cairo now think of the Red Sea as quite promising, especially that communities of high social standard has started to form there. Moreover, the state has encouraged foreign investment in real estate by reducing the legal limitations on foreign acquisition of land, a thing that will promote the cosmopolitan growth of the Red Sea region.



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