

Natural and cultural assets

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At the junction of Africa, the Middle East and the Indian Ocean, the Republic of Djibouti covers an area of 23200 km² and has 372 km of coastline.

The warmth of its people, its strategic location in the Horn of Africa, on the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, as well as the richness and variety of its natural and cultural assets are important factors that could make tourism an engine of socio-economic development.

The Republic of Djibouti is one of the most fascinating regions of the African continent. It offers travellers captivating landscapes, spectacular scenery, along with superb beaches unspoiled sea, amazing cultural diversity, and a population that lends a new meaning to the concept of hospitality.

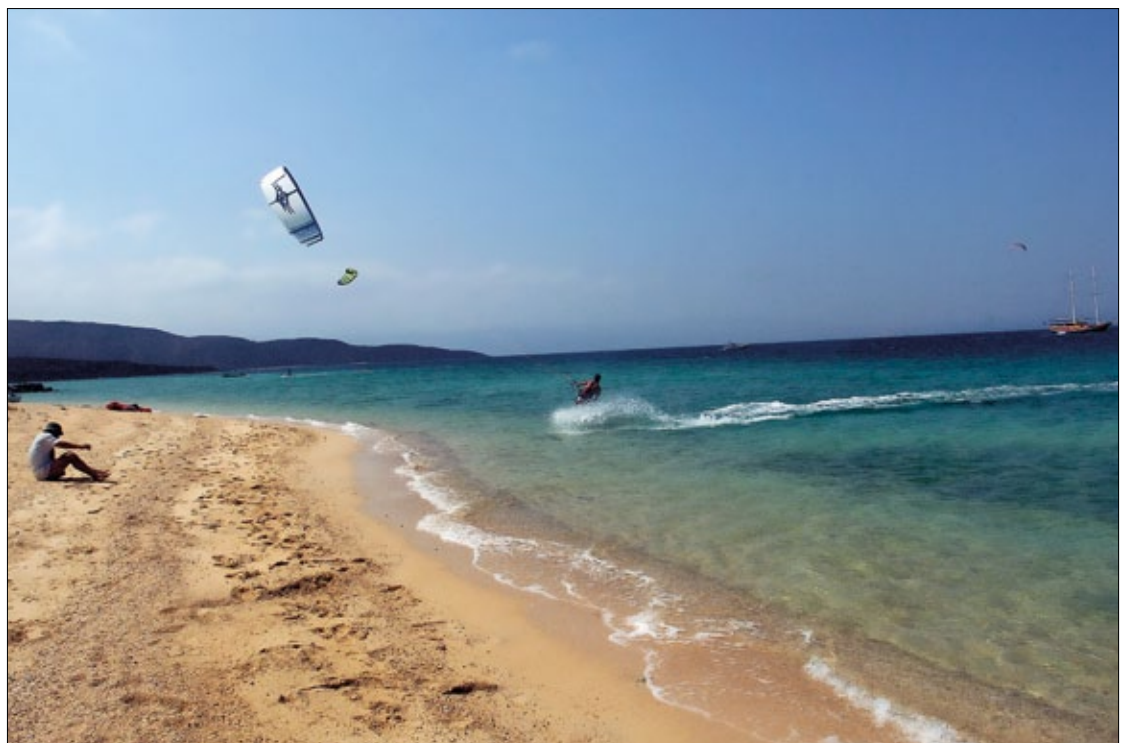
Scuba diving, adventure tourism, sport fishing, sailing, kite surfing, bird watching, trekking into the interior to discover a nomadic world, are just a few of the multitude of activities that this young democratic nation offers the visitor.

Discovering Djibouti means getting to know exotic landscapes and a magnificent coastline that provides an

experience of exhilaration and freedom.

Immerse yourself in eerie lunar landscapes such as the other-worldly Lac Abbé or the vast salt lake, Lac Assal. Or visit the verdant slopes of the Goda Mountains, which rise like a green surprise in the northwest of this otherwise sun-bleached land. Djibouti is also a great place for a few days' strenuous activity, with hiking, diving, snorkelling with whale sharks and even windsurfing on wheels (readily available. For such a tiny speck of land, there's a startling variety of adventure options. But if you need to recharge the batteries, you could simply laze on a pale-sand beach in the Gulf of Tadjoura. With its palm trees, whitewashed houses and numerous mosques, it has an Arabian feel to it. There's little to do here besides stroll around and soak up the atmosphere, but it's a great place to spend a few hours. Seven kilometres east of Tadjoura, Plage des Sables Blancs is tranquillity incarnate and a lovely place to sun yourself, with a good string of white sand.

Djibouti City is evolving at a fast pace, and there's a palpable sense of change in the air. Thanks to its geostrategic importance and its busy port, Djibouti



The Red Sea coast of Djibouti comprises a range of beautiful beaches

City has been transformed from a sleepy capital to a thriving place. In recent years, increasing waves of foreign investment have sparked a number of building projects. Yet under its veneer of urban bustle, the city remains a down-to-earth place, with jarring cultural and social combinations. Traditionally robed Afar tribesmen, stalwart GIs, sensuous Somali ladies and frazzled businessmen with the latest mobile phones stuck to their ear all jostle side by side.

Djibouti City boasts good infrastructure, including hotels, bars, clubs and restaurants. It's also the obvious place to organise forays into the fantastic hinterland, or boat excursions. The vast Place Mahmoud Harbi (Place Rimbaud) is dominated by the minaret of the great Hamoudi mosque, Djibouti City's most iconic building. Eastward, the chaotic Quartier 1 is a criss-cross of alleyways where stalls and shops are lined cheek by jowl. Spreading along Blvd de Bender are the stalls of Les Caisses market. Crammed with every type of souvenir from woodcarvings to clothing, it's a colourful place for soaking up the atmosphere.


All of this makes Djibouti a unique location, but perhaps its biggest attraction lies elsewhere, on a seabed that is lined with colourful reefs populated by a huge range of marine animals. Diving enthusiasts consider the seabed of Djibouti as one of the finest in the world.

Djibouti's waters are home to Whale Sharks, which between mid-October and February pass close to the coastline, when plankton 'blooms' develop in Goubet al Kharab (the Devil's Cauldron). The Whale Sharks

feed on the surface of the water, and are happy to allow humans to swim among them.

Tourism development strategy

The tourism development strategy of Djibouti integrates forward-looking values and affirms the Government's commitment to sustainable development. This is why the National Tourism Office (ONTD) advocates the adoption of a quality approach and the development of a skilled workforce to ensure the Djibouti tourism industry can match its ambitions to stand out among the best, and to make the country an international tourist destination.

Djibouti's tourism has a promising future, and, with the development of the economic hub of Doraleh, it should attract an increasing number of business as well as leisure tourists. Government measures to facilitate access to credit will serve to ease the expansion of accommodation capacity. The funds earmarked for economic development will grant loans at preferential rates to Djiboutians wishing to develop tourism projects. A programme of training set up by the ONTD will upgrade the skills of Djiboutians working in the sector and ensure that local operators offer quality products. As well as its marketing and promotional activities, ONTD has also initiated a campaign to sensitise the local population to the benefits of tourism, emphasising sustainability and protection of the environment, public/private partnerships, quality improvement, and technical assistance and training for the industry. 

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Left: Djibouti's lunar landscape featured in the film *Planet of the Apes*

Right: Swimming with whale sharks is a unique experience

