



# Djibouti

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## Why Go?

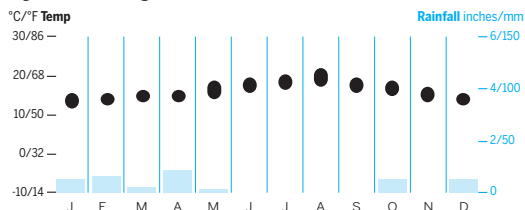
This tiny speck of a country packs a big punch. What it lacks in size, it more than makes up for in beauty, especially if you're a fan of geological oddities. Few countries in the world, with the possible exception of Iceland, offer such weird landscapes – think salt lakes, extinct volcanoes, sunken plains, limestone chimneys belching out puffs of steam, basaltic plateaus and majestic canyons. Outdoor adventure comes in many forms with superb hiking, diving and kite-surfing – not to mention snorkelling alongside whale sharks in the Gulf of Tadjoura.

Barring Djibouti City, the country is refreshingly devoid of large-scale development. It's all about ecotourism, with some great sustainable stays in the hinterland that provide a fascinating glimpse into the life of nomadic tribes.

Travelling independently around Djibouti may not come cheap, but despite the high cost of living, you'll surely leave this little corner of Africa with new experiences and wonderful memories.

## When to Go

### Djibouti City



## Best of Culture

- » European Quarter, Djibouti City (p300)
- » Abourma Rock Art Site (p310)
- » Bankoualé (p310)
- » Obock (p312)

## Best of Nature

- » Forêt du Day (p310)
- » Lac Abbé (p309)
- » Lac Assal (p309)
- » Grand Barra (p309)

**May–Sep** Some like it hot...some like it hot.

**Oct & Feb–Apr** Shoulder seasons are not a bad time to visit. Calm waters for diving.

**Nov–Jan** Coolest months; perfect for outdoor activities. Whale sharks make annual visit.

## AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Djibouti Franc (DFr)
- » **Language** Somali, Afar, French
- » **Money** ATMs in Djibouti City (most Visa only); credit cards not widely accepted for payment.
- » **Visas** Single-entry tourist visas obtainable at the airport for most Western nationals; see p317.

## Fast Facts

- » **Area** 23,000 sq km
- » **Capital** Djibouti City
- » **Country Code** 253
- » **Emergency** 119
- » **Population** 906,000

## Exchange Rates

<b>Australia</b>	A\$1	DFr184
<b>Canada</b>	C\$1	DFr176
<b>Euro zone</b>	€1	DFr233
<b>Japan</b>	¥100	DFr194
<b>New Zealand</b>	NZ\$1	DFr146
<b>UK</b>	UK£1	DFr277
<b>USA</b>	US\$1	DFr174

For current exchange rates see [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com).

## Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room**  
DFr7000-10,000
- » **Two-course dinner**  
DFr3000
- » **Day trip to Lac Assal**  
DFr17,000
- » **Whale-shark-spotting excursion** DFr14,000

## Entering Djibouti

Most visitors fly into Djibouti's only international airport, which is located near Djibouti City. There are regular flights to/from Sana'a (Yemen), Hargeisa (Somaliland), Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Istanbul (Turkey), Nairobi (Kenya) and Paris. The border with Eritrea is closed; land borders with Ethiopia (Galafi and Gelille) and Somaliland (Loyaada) are open.

## ITINERARIES

### Three Days

First, shed a tear that you only have three days to explore this incredible country. Base yourself in Djibouti City and contact a tour operator to arrange a trip to Lac Abbé and Lac Assal. Make sure you spend a night at Lac Abbé to enjoy the fabulous sunset and sunrise.

### Ten Days

A more realistic timeframe, which allows you to take in the above activities plus a couple of days chilling out on scenic Moucha Island or Plage des Sables Blancs. Then devote at least two days to the Goda Mountains. A hike to the Abourma rock art site could even be on the cards. Afterwards check out Tadjoura and Obock. Back in the capital, sample the country's finest food and take a tour to Decan, a small wildlife refuge. Be sure to take a whale-shark-spotting tour or a diving (or snorkelling) trip to the Gulf of Tadjoura. Spend your last night in the bars and clubs.

Alternatively, if you're a hiking fiend, you could save a week for a trek along an ancient salt route.

## Safe Travel

Djibouti is one of the safest destinations in Africa, partly because of the large Western military presence. Serious crime or hostility aimed specifically at travellers is very rare, and there's no more to worry about here than in most other countries. Apart from the odd street hustler in the centre, Djibouti City is very safe as far as Africa's capitals go. Take care in the crowded areas and markets, as pickpockets may operate there, and avoid walking on your own in the Quartier 1, immediately south of Les Caisnes market. The risk of theft and pickpocketing diminishes considerably outside the capital.

Note that Djibouti's security services are sensitive and active. Remain polite and calm if questioned by police officers.