



Somaliland

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Best of Culture

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Best of Nature

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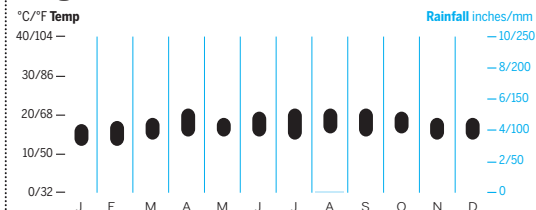
Why Go?

For seasoned travellers in search of a totally unusual travel experience, Somaliland is a must. Where else in the world can you visit a country that doesn't officially exist? While the rest of Somalia has been a no-go zone for travellers for two decades, the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland has restored law and order within its boundaries. Here the safety of Westerners is taken very seriously and foreigners are welcome.

Somaliland offers plenty of unexpected and wonderful surprises. Admire some exceptional rock paintings, feel the pulse of the fast-growing capital, walk along deserted beaches, visit bustling market towns, be awed by stunning landscapes, and blaze a trail of your own in the far east and west of the country – wherever you go, you'll feel like a pioneer. More than anything, though, it is the Somali people who make a visit to the country so memorable, with their legendary sense of hospitality.

When to Go

Hargeisa



Apr-Sep Rainy months make travel tough. July/August is very hot along the coast.

Oct & Nov Comfortable temperatures make the shoulder season good for travelling.

Dec-Mar Best weather: very few rains and cool temperatures.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Somaliland shilling (SISH); US dollars (US\$)
- » **Language** Somali
- » **Money** Bring cash (US dollars). One ATM in Hargeisa (not working at time of writing); credit cards generally not accepted.
- » **Visas** Single-entry tourist visas; see p337.
- » **Mobile phones** Local SIM cards (and top-up credits) OK in unlocked GSM-compatible phones. Other phones must be set to roaming.

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 637,657 sq km
- » **Capital** Hargeisa
- » **Country Code** 25222
- » **Population** 3.5 million

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	US\$1.04
Canada	C\$1	US\$0.99
Euro	€1	US\$1.36
Zone		
Japan	¥100	US\$1.10
New Zealand	NZ\$1	US\$0.84
UK	UK£1	US\$1.58

US\$1 = SISH6500

For current exchange rates see www.xe.com.

Set Your Budget

- » Budget hotel room: US\$10
- » Local-style meal: US\$2
- » 4WD hire per day: US\$150
- » Police escort per day: US\$20

Entering Somaliland

Somaliland has one primary international airport in Hargeisa, while Berbera receives some flights from nearby countries. At the time of writing, Hargeisa airport was closed for renovation and expansion, and all Hargeisa-bound flights were diverted to Berbera, with a free bus connection provided to Hargeisa. There are regular flights to/from Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Djibouti City (Djibouti), Dubai (UAE), Mogadishu (Somalia) and Nairobi (Kenya). Land borders with Ethiopia (Tog Wajaale) and Djibouti (Loyaada) are open.

ITINERARIES

Three Days

Arriving in Hargeisa, spend your first day getting oriented and soaking up the atmosphere. On your second day visit the livestock market early in the morning and take an overnight trip via Las Geel – Somaliland's touristic *pièce de résistance* – to the port of Berbera. Wander the streets of Berbera's character-filled old town, check out Baathala beach and end the day feasting on fresh fish. Day three should see you returning to the capital.

Ten Days

Having enjoyed Hargeisa, Las Geel and Berbera at a more relaxed pace, go where few are bold enough to attempt and book a trip to the Sanaag province. Devote at least four days to Erigavo, Daallo Forest and Maydh. Alternatively, you could explore the far west of the country and arrange a 4WD trip to the historic port of Zeila, taking in the rock art sites of Dhagax Khoure and Dhagax Marodi, Borama and the Gariyad Plains before reaching the coast – from Hargeisa, this is a five-day expedition (return).

Safe Travel

Somaliland was safe at the time of writing, and our on-the-ground research included Hargeisa, Las Geel, Berbera, Borama, Zeila, Tog Wajaale, Sheekh, Burao, Erigavo and Maydh. However, despite what officials claim, there is an element of uncertainty regarding the security situation. The Somalilanders have established law and order in their separatist territory, but as long as their unruly brothers from Puntland and Southern Somalia don't settle for peace, there will be an element of risk – borders are not terrorist-proof. Prospective travellers should carefully monitor the situation before setting off. In late January 2013, after French troops liberated Saharan cities in northern Mali from fundamentalist rebels, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) issued an advice against all travel to Somaliland.

Although security has improved in previously high-risk areas such as the Sanaag province, check the situation locally before heading there. Travel in the Sool region is currently unsafe due to conflict in Puntland, which claims this province.