



Axum



Axum, Ethiopia's most ancient city, and capital of one of the most glorious empires of the past, boasts of an extremely rich culture of civilization symbolized by the remaining sites and treasures. The Axumite Empire was one of the four great empires of the world and flourished 3000 years ago. It had great control over trade routes of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean; an economically, politically, and socially stable state covering from Saudi Arabia to Central and Southern Africa. Christianity, coin mintage, a special language

and a special alphabet describes Axsum's early civilization. Moreover, magnificent obelisks, the graves of King Kaleb and Gebre Meskel and the Legendary Bath of the Queen Sheba show the richness of the empire at the time. In the 16th century, Cathedral of St. Mary of Zion was built in the compound of an earlier 4th century church, and is the holiest church in Ethiopia. It is said that the original Ark of the Covenant is rest in its sanctuary. The churches and monasteries of Axsum are richly endowed with icons, and some of the historical crowns of ancient Emperors.



About 100km east from Axum, over 120 rock-hewn churches were built from 4th to 15th century – Rock-Hewn Churches of Tigray. Most of them are visited around the Gera-Alta chained mountains. Others are found in eastern and southern Tigray. Abreha-We-Atsbeha, which was hewn in the 4th century is famous for its beautiful fresco paintings.

Great sites to visit in and around Axum include...

- ✔ Obelisk (UNESCO World Heritage)
- ✔ Old Church of St. Mary of Zion – It is said that the original Ark of the Covenant is rest in its sanctuary
- ✔ King Kaleb's Palace – ancient underground tombs
- ✔ St. Abba Pentaleon Monastery
- ✔ Queen of Sheba's Palace
- ✔ Rock-Hewn Churches of Tigray – about 120 rock-hewn churches

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