



## Lalibela



Lalibela is the second capital of the ancient Ethiopian Empire in the north next to Axsum. It is also holy land for Ethiopia's Orthodox Christians. Today the town of Lalibela hosts 12 rock-hewn churches and all are renowned for their magnificent and unique rock-carvings. Those rock-hewn churches were founded in the 12th century by King Lalibela and are one of the world's most incredible manmade creations. As an active pilgrim site, the town is extensively visited and a source of admiration for architects and tourists alike.

Lying in the Lasta mountain Lalibela was originally called Roha and was a site of the Zagwe dynasty, of

the Agew people. The decline of the Axumite dynasty gave rise to the Zagwe dynasty and, as a result, power shifted southward from Axum. The construction of the churches took King Lalibela more than 60,000 men to finish the work. The legend says that the work was assisted by angels to finish the work in a short time. However, it is more likely that King Lalibela drew inspiration during his exile in Jerusalem, which gave him a longing to build a “new Jerusalem” in Ethiopia which is accessible for all Ethiopians.



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Lalibela is still a rather isolated place and the town has not changed much since the building of the churches. It is also interesting to visit Ashotan St. Maryam Church, which is located near the summit of an over 3,200masl mountain. It was built about 1000years ago and it is believed to be the closest to heaven and god by local people. Tourists walk or ride mule and enjoy the splendid views on their way to the rock-hewn church.



Great sites to visit in Lalibela include...

- ✓ Medhane Alem Church
- ✓ St. Maryam Church
- ✓ St. George Church
- ✓ St. Emmanuel Church
- ✓ Ashotan St. Maryam Church
- ✓ Neakutoleab Monastery