

Northern Red Sea Region: Museum within a Museum (part I)

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Eritrea is endowed with a countless natural, cultural and historical wealth. Of all the regions, the Northern Red Sea Region represents the country's all sorts of endowments. One could learn all this by just visiting to the Museum of the Northern Red sea Region.

In this museum, there are countless items that represent the natural assets of the Red sea in general and its uniqueness and geological developments in particular. Besides, one could see varied items that represent the livelihood of most of the ethnic groups who inhabit in this region as well as their recent and ancient history.

This region holds representations of histories of the earliest humans that date back millions of years, evolutionary developments of varied creatures, the introduction of Christianity and Islam to the region more than 1,000 years ago. History of hundreds of years of colonization and attempts of invasion, varied phases of last century's colonization, the final struggle against colonizers which gave birth to independence and much more are represented in the Museum.

The Northern Red Sea region stretches from Gelalo sub-zone in the south to the northern end of Eritrea that is from the eastern escarpments to Dahlak islands. This geographical area covers deserts, volcanic rocks, coastal



areas and a number of islands, green escarpments, besides part of highland areas as well as

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sand plains.

In this region rainy season continues for almost the entire year. However, it also comprises places in which the annual rainfall range is very low. Inhabitants of this region earn their living through farming, trading, fishing and tending heard. The livelihood of most of the inhabitants of this region is closely associated with the coastal areas or with the nature of the geographical area around them.

Starting from one meter below sea level of the area around Massawa and the islands up to the tip of Mount Bizen (Bizen Monastery) 2000 meters high above the sea level, this region covers a wide range of climatic conditions that are characterized by two extremes of very arid and a whole year wet weather.

Tigre, Tigrigna, Saho, Afar and Rashya dwell in this region in great number. Due to its geological structure, the Northern Red Sea region was from ancient times an international gateway from and to different areas of entire Red Sea region. Besides being a home to many ethnic groups and a rich in cultural diversity, the Northern Red Sea region unveils a very amazing historic chapter from the onset of the evolutionary development of modern human that could be traced back to some millions of years as is depicted on the archeological finds of Buya, up to the history of the people who used to dwell around Zula archipelago through developing skills of fishing and swimming practices as well as utilizing floating vehicles some 100, 000 years ago.

The Museum of Northern Red Sea region vividly depicts all the aforementioned natural, cultural and historical relics, welcomes a visitor with the three boats standing high right at the gate. These boats also symbolize the recent history of the struggle for independence. During the war to liberate Massawa these boats fought against giant warships of the Ethiopian colonial rule.

The Northern Red Sea region is generally a natural museum, but if not all of its natural, cultural and historical endowments are not represented in their entirety, the opening of a regional museum in 2000, during the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Operation Fenkil, have partially represented the region with the displays that are carefully preserved to date.