

Hurghada

Queen of Arab Tourism, 2015

With its mild weather, sunshine almost all the year round, its sprawling beaches, sunshine and exquisite coral reefs, the Red Sea city of Hurghada is indeed one of the most outstanding tourist cities in Egypt and the world and a major tourist hub for Thousands of domestic and foreign tourists. Its natural islands make up a virgin environment for a variety of rare flora and fauna, offering a perfect setting for enjoying recreational sports such as land hunting and fishing. Major attractions nearby the city include Souma Bay, Makadi Bay and Sahl Hasheesh. The city shops offer a variety of souvenirs, including artifacts, copper cups and Pharoanic paintings.

The city's economy is mainly based on tourism and complementary activities, which are also the major means of livelihood for the population.

Tourists spend their time in the city by day swimming, basking in the sun on the Red Sea beach or snorkeling. At night, they enjoy their time at night clubs, especially in El-Gouna.

The city was founded in the early 20th century. Until a few years ago, it was a small fishing village but since the 1980s has been continually enlarged by Egyptian and foreign investors to become the leading coastal resort on the Red Sea. Holiday villages and hotels provide aquatic sport facilities for sailboarders, yachtsmen, scuba divers and snorkelers. Hurghada is known for its water sports activities, nightlife and warm weather. Daily temperature hovers round 30 °C (86 °F) most of the year. Numerous Europeans spend their Christmas and New Year holidays in the city, mainly Germans, Russians and Italians.

Hurghada stretches for about 36 km along the seashore and it does not reach far into the surrounding desert. Hurghada is divided into three parts:

- Downtown (El Dahhar) is the old part;
- Saqqala is the city center.
- El Mamsha (the Walkway) is the modern part.

Saqqala is the relatively modest hotel quar-





ter. Dahhar is where the town's largest bazaar, the post office and the long-distance bus station are situated.

The city is served by the Hurghada International Airport with scheduled passenger traffic connecting to Cairo and directly with several cities in Europe. The airport has undergone renovations to accommodate rising traffic.

Tourism

Although a town in its own right Hurghada's current major industry is foreign and domestic tourism, owing to its dramatic landscape, year-round dry and temperate climate and long stretches of natural beaches. Its waters are clear and calm for most of the year and have become popular for various water sports, particularly recreational scuba diving and snorkeling.

Dive sites around Abu Ramada Island, Giftun Kebir and Giftun Soraya are popular. Tourists also visit shipwrecks such as El-Mina or the Rosalie Moller.

Hurghada has a subtropical-desert climate (Köppen climate classification: BWh), with mild-warm winters and hot to very hot summers. Temperatures in the period December–January–February are warm, while November, March and April are comfortably warm. May and October are hot and the period from June to September is very hot. The average annual temperature of the sea is 24 °C (75 °F), ranging from 21 °C (70 °F) in February and March to 28 °C (82 °F) in August.

Hurghada: The best Arab tourist destination. 2015:

Due to its unparalleled tourist advantages,

Hurghada was granted the prize of the Best Arab Tourist Destination, 2015 in a poll conducted by the Arab Tourist Media Center. Due to its clear distinction, in terms of tourist infrastructure and projects and availability of services needed by tourists, the city was selected for this prize from among nominated 15 tourist destinations. After fierce competition in the final stage of the competition that started in November 2014, the city won the prize. It is worthy of note that Dubai won this prize in 2012, followed by Sharja in 2013 and Salala in 2014.

Natural landmarks and resorts:

Hurghada houses a variety of natural, environmental landmarks sites as well as several Islamic and Coptic sites.

Natural landmarks:

Souma Bay:

A tourist resort lying 6 km away from the northern edge of Hurghada. The resort covers an area of 13 million m². and contains a variety of hotels, villas and sporting, therapeutic and recreational facilities with an urban planning and architectural design that integrate with the nature of the surrounding area with a European touch. Hotels include Palm Royale Soma Bay, La Residence des Cascades, Robinson Club, Sheraton (Kempinski) and Caribbean World Resort Soma Bay. There is a golf course. The resort won the Ministry of Tourism's certificate of merit for its role in enriching Egypt's tourist sector. The recognition was given on the sidelines of the International Tourism Day under the slogan "One billion tourists: One billion job opportunities".



Makadi Bay

The Tourist Resort is located 35 km south of Hurghada. With its year-round shining sun and vast beach of white sand, Makadi Bay is a perfect resort for vacationing, especially sea voyages as it contains a select group of luxury hotels, rest-houses and restaurants that offer top-level services, including Asian, French and Italian dishes.

Coral Reef:

This diving site contains dense coral reef jungles and a variety of fishes, including rare hammer shark, jack fish, tuna, and barracuda. Reefs in this area make up two coral towers that decorate the water surface. The wadi (valley) between both towers is about 16 m-deep, making it a favorite site for both amateur and seasoned divers.

Abu Ramada:

It is called the aquarium. This site is distinct for its relatively shallow and much flat waters. The site abounds in wonderful aquatic life, including jack fish, barracuda, and coral reef shark small tuna.

Al-Fanadeer:

Narrow and quiet reefs, accessible from al-Gouna. It is ideal practicing for both deep diving and amateur diving. The eastern part of al-Fanadeer is the preference for divers as it is protected by thin arcade of coral reefs that abound in a variety of fish, including pipe-fish, stone-fish, and sea scorpion fish, hammer fish, frog-fish, tuna, and jack fish.

Sahl Hasheesh resort

Run by the Egyptian Tourist Resort Com-

pany, this resort covers an area of 32 million m². and contains 1530 hotel rooms, 679 residential units with more 6,000 rooms and 6,000 units expected to be completed in future. The resort also contains an open-air theater, where musical concerts by top singers are performed and attended by thousands of fans.

Sand dunes

A centerpiece of art created in March 1997 on an area of about 55,000 m². in el-Gouna desert, consisting of 89 sand dunes and 89 dual low-lying spiraling pits of varying sizes with a 30m. diameter lake.

Magaweesh resort

It is located 7.5 km south of Hurghada, Magaweesh island is known for its fine sand beaches and quiet virgin waters. Covering an area of 850,000 m², Magaweesh tourist village is the oldest in Hurghada and offers several tourist and recreational activities such as diving, surfing and horse-riding.

El-Giftun

It is located 11 km away from Hurghada with an area of more than 16 km², El-Giftun is the most thriving tourist site in Hurghada and a major site for deep and surface diving. It is also a principal source of income for Red Sea natural reserves and the only reserve, where tourists are allowed access. It contains distinct eco-systems, diverse plant and a high variety of coral reefs. It is habitat for large numbers of rare sea animals and birds liable to extinction. On the northern and southern areas, turtles, especially eagle-eyed, nestle.

Abu-Minqar Island

This island dates back to the pre-historic Eocene era or at least 33 million years. The island is characteristic for its thick rocks and rare geological formations. The island takes its name, which means in Arabic "peck-shaped", from its general form. as its eastern edge is sand headland extending into the sea, almost similar to a bird's peck. Although the island is relatively small in size, it is one of the most ecologically significant islands in north Red Sea due to abundance of coral reefs there. Many parts of the island are used for diving, swimming and fishing. In addition, the island serves as a rest area for several species of mi-

gratory birds such as sea-gulls and herons. The island, which lies within Elba North nature reserve that comprises also Mount Elba, 3 km east of Hurghada. The island is the richest in mangroves and other dense saline plants that cover about one quarter of its size of 30 hectares. In some parts, each hectare has at least 400 full-grown trees, with some rising more than 5 m.

Shadwan Island

It is known also as Shaker Island, Shadwan has a coral reef island that abounds in many kinds of fish, including white and grey-fin reef sharks and eagle-pecked turtles, in addition to groups of fine dolphins.

Wadi al-Hammamat (valley of baths)

It is located 35 km from Hurghada. It is the bed of an ancient dried river, which is now a winding road running across the Eastern Desert. It was used as a trade route in medieval times. Remains of these times can be still seen in the quarries on the north side of the road and ruins of laborers' cottages. On the south side, there still remain hundreds of hieroglyphics panels, indicative of the missions sent by Pharaohs.

The Aquarium: Marine Life Station

The National Institute of Museum Marine Life (The Grand Aquarium) was built in 1927 and officially inaugurated the next year.

The Institute is one of the oldest institutes specialized in oceanology in the Middle East. North Hurghada was selected as the seat of the Institute due to its detachment from urban areas and abundance of coral reefs and model marine environment. The museum contains several collections of embalmed fish from the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, including mermaids, dolphins, sharks and turtles. It also contains glass aquaria for live fish. The institute houses 12 research laboratories for oceanology specializations, in addition to a research boat named after the renowned Egyptian - international oceanologist Hamed Gohar. The Institute's library is the oldest specialized in marine environment and fisheries in the Middle East and contains treasures of references and science maps of high value. The institute is dedicated to solving problems of surrounding marine environment. It also provides envi-



ronmental impact reports for tourist projects implemented on the Red Sea shore and settles disputes over marine environment problems arising between the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Authority and tourist facility owners. In 2015, the museum was renovated.

Islamic landmarks

The Sea-port Mosque

Built on an area of 7000 m², this mosque was inaugurated in January 2013. It is the largest mosque in the Red Sea governorate and has a unique design that makes a tourist destination worthy of visit.

Coptic landmarks

Anba Antonius Monastery

This monastery was named after Archbishop Antonius, who lived in the 14th Century AD and is considered by Egyptian Copts as the first monk in the world and father of all monks. It contains a collection of the rarest and most exquisite Coptic murals as well as a large library containing 143 manuscripts and hundreds of books in many branches of knowledge.

Urban development

Hurghada has undergone a major scheme of urban development. Main themes of such development include the conservation of historical heritage of the old city during the process of upgrading and renovation. Soft landscaping is to be made by a specialized company. All building fronts are to be painted in a uniform color. The city hinterland is to be incorporated into current urban mass, thus ensuring proper urban zoning, sustainable development and preservation of the tourist nature of the city of Hurghada.