

Asmara geographic locations

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According to Eritrean Tigrinya oral traditional history, there were four clans living in the Asmara area on the Kebessa Plateau: the Gheza Gurtom, the Gheza Shelele, the Gheza Serenser and Gheza Asmae. These villages were frequently attacked by clans from the lowlands, until the women of each clan decided that to preserve peace the four clans must unite. The men accepted, hence the name "Arbate Asmera". Arbate Asmera literally means, in the Tigrinya language, "the four (feminine plural) made them unite".

The first mention of Asmara comes from a Latin itinerary during the reign of Emperor Dawit I (1382-1411).

Asmara, a small village in the nineteenth century, started to grow quickly when it was occupied by Italy in 1889. Governor Ferdinando Martini made it the capital city of Italian Eritrea in 1897.

In the early 20th century, the Eritrean Railway was built to the coast, passing through the town of Ghinda, under the direction of Carlo Cavanna. In both 1913 and 1915 the city suffered only slight damage in large earthquakes.

A large Italian community developed the city. According to the 1939 census, Asmara had a population of 98,000, of whom 53,000 were Italian. Only 75,000 Italians lived in all of Eritrea, thus making the capital city by far their largest centre. (Compare this to the Italian colonization of Libya, where the settler population, albeit larger, was more dispersed.)

The Kingdom of Italy invested in the industrial development of Asmara (and surrounding areas of Eritrea), but the beginning of World War II brought this to a halt.

UNESCO made Asmara a World Heritage Site in July 2017, saying "It is an exceptional example of early modernist urbanism at the beginning of the 20th century and its application in an African context".

Asmara has a cool semi-arid climate (BSk) according to the Köppen climate classification. It has year-round moderately warm weather, with recorded temperatures ranging between a minimum of -4.5°C or 23.9°F and a maximum of 31.0°C or 87.8°F. It has an average humidity of 51% and an UV-index of 6. Holdridge life zones system of bioclimatic classification put Asmara in or near the subtropical thorn woodland biome. Rainfall patterns differ from month to month with highest precipitation in July and August, and lower precipitation in other months.

The city is home to the Eritrean National Museum. The city is often the starting point of the Tour of Eritrea

cycling competition.

The city shows off most early 20th-century architectural styles. Some buildings are neo-Romanesque, such as the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, some villas are built in a late Victorian style. Art Deco influences are found throughout the city. Essences of Cubism can be found on the Africa Pension Building, and on a small collection of buildings. The Fiat Tagliero Building shows almost the height of futurism, just as it was coming into big fashion in Italy.

Asmara is known to be an exceptionally modern city, not only because of its architecture, but Asmara also had more traffic lights than Rome did when the city was being built. The city incorporates many features of a planned city.

Asmara has wide streets, restaurants, piazzas (town squares), bars and cafes while many of the boulevards are lined with palms trees. The Italian inspired food and culture is very present and was introduced during Italian Eritrea. Countless restaurants and cafes, serve high quality espresso, cappuccinos and lattes, as well as gelato parlours and restaurants with Italian Eritrean cuisine. Common dishes served from the Italian Eritrean cuisine are "Pasta al Sugo e Berbere", which means "pasta with tomato sauce and berbere" (spice), "lasagna" and "cotoletta alla milanese" (milano cutlet).

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Web: <https://kary.com.pl/contact-us/>

Email: energystorage2000@gmail.com

WhatsApp: 8613816583346

