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meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Somaliland Uncovered

Tour Duration – 7 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●●● | Culture ●●●○○ | History ●●●●● | Wildlife ●●○○○

Tour Pace

Moderate

Tour Highlights

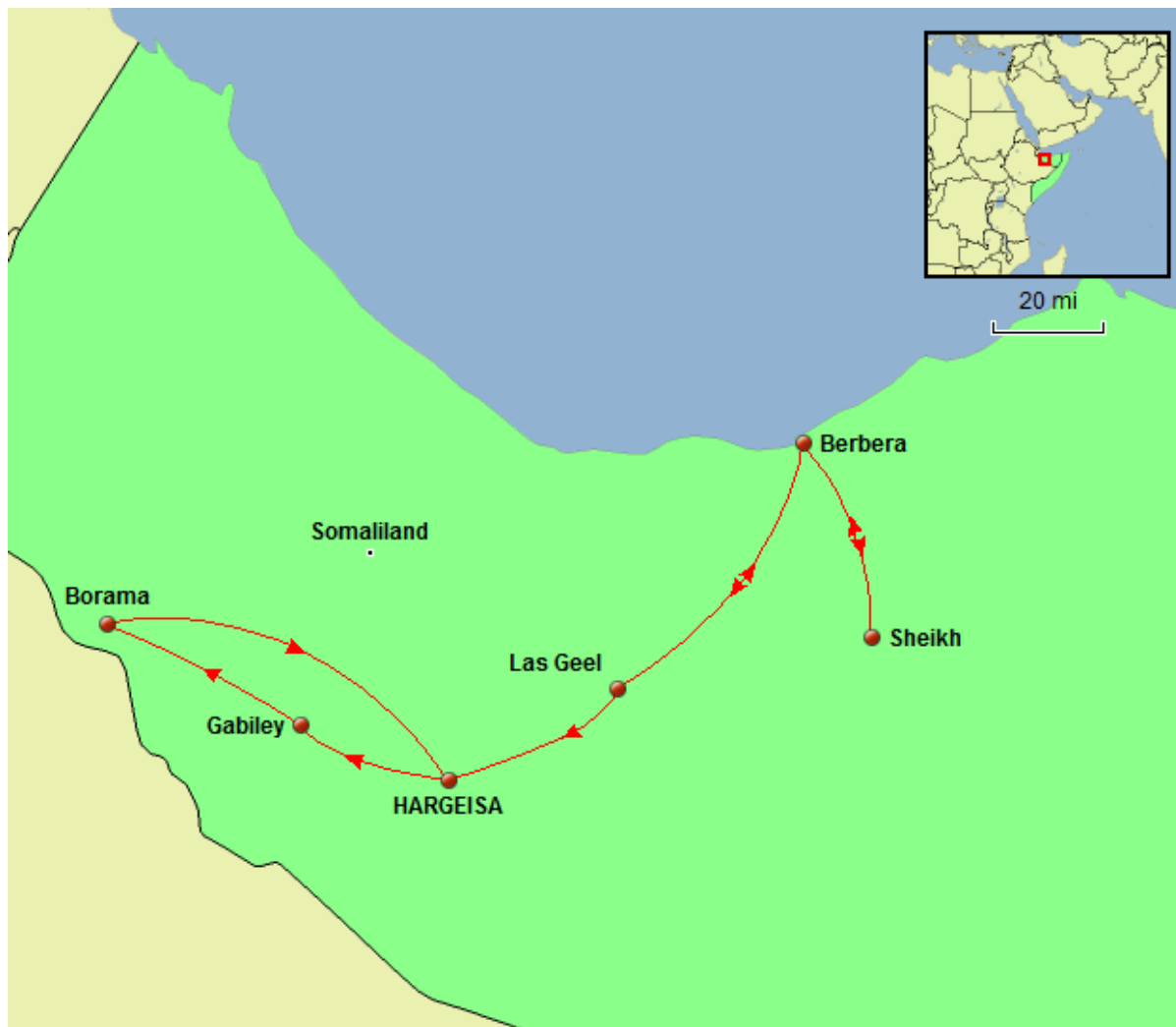
- ✓ Discover the unknown delights of Somaliland, an unrecognised state with much to offer the Africa enthusiast
- ✓ Explore Hargeisa, the capital and visit the markets
- ✓ Travel to the caves of Las Geel, where rock art dating back 5,000 years has been found – one of the best-preserved examples in all of Africa





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Tour Map



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Comfortable tourist class hotels although some can be basic
Included Meals: Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
Group Size: Maximum of 12
Start Point: Hargeisa – you can arrive any time on day 1
End Point: Hargeisa – you can depart any time on day 7
Transport: 4WD – Transfers may be in a sedan car
Country Visited: Somaliland



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Somaliland Uncovered

Somaliland is not Somalia. A self-declared independent state unrecognised by the rest of the world; Somaliland has its own government and currency and has escaped the chaos that has engulfed its notorious cousin. Perched on the Horn of Africa and bordered by the Red Sea, Somaliland is a country of proud traditions born out of its largely nomadic heritage, keen to welcome visitors. This short trip gives the intrepid traveller a unique insight into a country that does not officially exist. Starting in the capital Hargeisa we wander the markets and soak up the atmosphere before heading to Borama, Las Geel, Berbera and Sheikh where we meet local nomadic communities and learn about the challenges they face in this parched corner of the continent. After visiting the eastern towns of Arabsiyo and Gabiley, we then travel to the spectacular rock art site of Las Geel – one of the most impressive examples of prehistoric art in Africa. From here we journey to the coastal city of Berbera with its colonial architecture and discover the stunning scenery around Sheikh before heading back to the capital, Hargeisa. But Somaliland is above all characterised by its people – facing some of the harshest conditions on our planet, hindered in their efforts at international recognition by an underserved association, yet some of the friendliest and most exuberant people you will ever meet.

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Hargeisa

Arrive in Hargeisa and transfer to your hotel, where the rest of the day is at leisure to relax. Overnight Damal Hotel or similar. (D)

Hargeisa

Somaliland's capital is a manageable city, with a relatively small population and fairly low-key in character. Founded at the turn of the 20th century, it became the capital of British Somaliland during the colonial period, to be later superseded by Mogadishu following independence and unification with the former Italian colony. It would be difficult to describe Hargeisa as being packed full of 'must-see' sights – it is largely destroyed during the civil war of the 1980s, today it is a fairly modern city, but its attraction lies in its general ambience. With a relaxed feel to the city, Hargeisa, it's not uncommon for locals to approach you to start up a conversation – you will undoubtedly be of much interest as one of the few travellers there. In the afternoon, the city takes on a decidedly languid feel as much of the population indulges in the national pastime of chewing khat, a mild stimulant that is chewed to release its effects. As you might expect, Hargeisa has some large markets, selling everything one can imagine – of particular note are the money changers with their bricks of Somaliland shillings.



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The one 'sight' that you can't miss is the Civil War Memorial, consisting of a crashed MiG fighter jet mounted on a podium. Hargeisa doesn't have the 'wow' factor of some other African cities, but it more than makes up for it with quirky charm and friendly inhabitants.

Day 2: Hargeisa

Spend the morning exploring the city and seeing some of its sights, including the War Memorial with its unusual monument of a crashed MiG fighter plane, the markets -including the gold and khat markets- and a traditional Somali house. Overnight Damal Hotel or similar. (BLD)

Day 3: Hargeisa - Arabsiyo – Dhagah Khoure - Gabiley - Borama

A full day excursion eastward, visiting the town of Arabsiyo and its valleys, on the way to Gabiley. Gabiley is known as the breadbasket of Somaliland and is renowned for its agriculture. We will also visit the rock art site at Dhagah Khoure and then to Borama, for the night. Overnight Hotel Rays Borama or similar. (BLD)

Day 4: Borama – Jufo – Hargeisa

Borama is an important education centre and is the home of the historic Amoud University. The first post war institution of higher learning throughout Somaliland. Morning Borama sightseeing and Amoud University then back to Hargeisa. On the way back we stop at the nomadic settlement of Jufo, before returning to Hargeisa. Overnight Damal Hotel or similar. (BLD)

Day 5: Hargeisa - Las Geel – Berbera

Travel to the caves of Las Geel, where rock art dating back 5,000 years has been found – one of the best-preserved examples in all of Africa and a real highlight of the trip. After visiting the site we continue to Berbera on the coast, with its interesting architecture from both the Ottoman and British periods much of which is now in ruin, which we explore. Overnight Hotel Mansoor or similar. (BLD)

Las Geel

The paintings at Las Geel are perhaps one of the most important rock art sites in all of Africa. Dating back at least 5000 years, Las Geel consists of a complex of caves and rock shelters, the most significant of which is a 100 square metre surface with at least 250 individual paintings. The figures depicted here are cattle, giraffe, and hunters accompanied by dogs, among others, and they are exceptionally well preserved, making this a real delight for anyone who is even in the slightest bit interested in rock art.

Berbera

Somaliland's second city, Berbera has long been an important trading post by virtue of its position on the coast on the Gulf of Aden. Once occupied by the Ottomans, Berbera is home to a fascinating old quarter – not as well preserved as you might find elsewhere in Africa but nonetheless an interesting place to explore, with winding alleys and impressive mosques. It's not known when the city was founded, but references to it have been made to it in Greek literature from the 1st century, and Chinese documents from the 9th century when it was described as trading in ivory and slaves. It was close to Berbera that the famed British explorers Speke and Burton were attacked by Somali warriors while waiting to proceed to the interior, narrowly escaping with their lives.

Day 6: Berbera - Sheikh – Hargeisa

We spend the morning exploring Berbera. After lunch, we leave the city and travel through the mountains to Sheikh, through fantastic scenery with great views of the dry plains below. At Sheikh we visit the ruins of Ferdusa, a city dating back to the 16th century. Later in the afternoon we drive back to Hargeisa for the evening. Overnight Damal Hotel or similar. (BLD)



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Sheikh

The town of Sheikh is located in the Golis Mountains, reached via a very scenic drive from Berbera. It differs from much of the rest of the country in that the altitude here means that the landscape is greener – relatively rare in such a parched region.

Day 7: Departure from Hargeisa

The day is at leisure until your transfer to the airport in the afternoon for your onward flight. (B)

Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers – please see notes below
All accommodation
Transport throughout the tour with a driver
Services of English-speaking guide / tour leader
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded:

International flights
Any airport taxes
PCR Covid test, if applicable
Travel Insurance
Visas
Drinks
Tip for main tour guide (discretionary)
Items of a personal nature

Important Notes - Airport Transfers

On the first day and leaving day of the advertised itinerary we include airport transfers in the price of your tour if you are arriving and departing on the scheduled flight for this tour - we will advise you of the scheduled airport/hotel pick-up time at the time of booking. These will be provided by our local representative.

If you are planning to arrive before the start date, and/or leave after the end date of the tour, Undiscovered Destinations can arrange private transfers at an additional cost of £130 per vehicle per transfer. This supplement also applies if you do not wish to take the scheduled transfer. Please check with us at the time of booking.

Please note that if you have arranged extra pre and/or post tour accommodation, either through Undiscovered Destinations or directly with the hotel or an agent, airport transfers are not included in the price of your tour. Please contact us if you would like Undiscovered Destinations to arrange private airport transfers at an additional cost (£130 per vehicle per transfer).



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Important Information

Foreign Travel Advice Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present the FCO does not recognise Somaliland as a separate country and considers it to be part of Somalia, to which they advise against all travel. It is likely travel warnings will remain in place for some time to come, and we are only able to accept a booking on the basis that you are aware this is the case and confirm that you are still happy to travel irrespective of the current FCDO advice. <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/somalia>

We work very closely with experienced local contacts and are fully confident that it is safe to operate tours in Somaliland. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

On this tour you can expect to stay in simple but clean and comfortable accommodation. With a few exceptions you can expect rooms to be en-suite, with private bathroom and when necessary air-conditioning will be provided. In general you will find your hotel has a restaurant.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated on this tour without payment of a supplement.

Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.



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Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch £6 / Dinner £8

Drink

Alcohol is not available in Somaliland and is illegal to bring into the country.

Bottle of water £1

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is commonly recognised as a way of rewarding guides and drivers for good service. If you are happy with your guide and driver, please consider leaving a tip for them. We recommend that each group member sets aside approximately \$15-20 for the guide and \$10 for the driver.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: ATM machines which accept international cards are only available in Hargeisa

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Generally cards are not accepted and you should travel with cash

Local Currency: Shilling. However US dollars are widely accepted throughout the country. These must have been issued after 2000 otherwise they will not be accepted

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US dollars

Where to Exchange: Your Guide will advise you

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a 'flight inclusive' package.

You must show a negative PCR Covid-19 test certificate which is dated less than 96 hours to be exempted of quarantine on arrival. Please keep this certificate with you at all times, as it may be requested to board your flight and on arrival at the border control.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a free airport transfer, both on arrival and departure. On the first day and leaving day of the advertised itinerary we include airport transfers in the price of your tour if you are arriving and departing on the scheduled flight for this tour - we will advise you of the scheduled airport/hotel pick-up time at the time of booking. If you are planning to arrive before the start date, and/or leave after the end date of the tour, Undiscovered Destinations can arrange private transfers at an additional cost of £130 per vehicle per transfer. This supplement also applies if you do not wish to take the scheduled transfer. Please check with us at the time of booking.

Please note that if you have arranged extra pre and/or post tour accommodation, either through Undiscovered Destinations or directly with the hotel or an agent, airport transfers are not included in the price of your tour. Please contact us if you would like Undiscovered Destinations to arrange private airport transfers at an additional cost (£130 per vehicle per transfer).



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In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

Visitors from most countries, including those from the UK, EU and US, require a visa for entering Somaliland. A visa can be granted on arrival by an immigration officer. You will require a letter of invitation from a sponsor in Somaliland, a completed visa application form and passport style photo. A charge of \$60 is then payable on arrival in Somaliland.

A \$10 tax is payable on arrival. On arrival, keep hold of your luggage receipt as you are required to show these when collecting your luggage.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance.

A \$10 tax is payable on arrival. On arrival, keep hold of your luggage receipt as you are required to show these when collecting your luggage.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to your country.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Vaccinations & Protection

As with travel to most parts of Africa, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis.



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The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on [best practice when travelling with medicines](#). For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

Preparing for your tour

Climate

Generally speaking, the best time to visit is between October / November and March, when the temperature will be hot, but not uncomfortably so. The hottest season is from May to September and travel can be difficult during this time.

Clothing

Somaliland is hot and so light clothes are generally a good idea.

Islamic dress applies for women. Headscarves should be worn at all times. Long-sleeved blouses or shirts are required and preferably long skirts, although loose-fitting trousers may also work. Islamic long coats, 'manteaux', would not be necessary.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have.

Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes/boots are recommended, as well as a pair of sandals.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 15kgs, and should have soft sides. One large holdall/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 220V/50 Hz and plugs have three pins like those in the UK.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated 3 May 2023.