

Eden

Between the sea and the mountains

Eden - Khalid al-Dhababi

Eden is one Yemen's most cosmopolitan cities. God has blessed it with natural, historical and cultural features, all tourist attractions. It was born in the cradle of the sea, danced on its sand and sang to the tune of the waves. It also has a unique geographical location between two seas.

Eden welcomed traders approaching by sea and coming over land. It used to be an open market for world trade: ships came from the East, usually from India and West from Greece. It was described by the Greeks as "The Store of the Arabs", combining the smallness of the place with the largeness of humanity. It always welcomed different ideas and religions as seen from the remains of graves, temples and churches for the Hindus, Jews and Christians scattered throughout the city. But it always remained an Arab Islamic city. As Yemen's commercial capital the universal message is loud and clear: we all live in one world.

Location

Eden is situated at the South western tip of Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula, bordered to the North by Lahhaj, to the East by Abyan and to the South by the Gulf of Eden. It is a volcanic peninsula with an area of 6980 sq. km. and a population of 560,000 (1995).The

temperature varies between 23.3 degrees in winter to 36.2 degrees

in summer with about 37-62% humidity. The rain is about 50mm in winter and spring and totally dry in summer.

Historical Background

Eden is an eternal name which has been mentioned in holy books, linguistic works and historical texts. It can be concluded from old and new studies that the location of historical Eden is the modern town of Crater.

It was named in the Turah and was famous for its trade with the Phoenicians. The unique geographical location and the function of a trade centre gave it an important role in maintaining a dialogue between different cultures and nations. It was declared the main port in the region and a free market in 1850.

The city had a turbulent time during the Islamic period - the era of warring states, such as al-Ziadiyah, al-Najahiah, al-Maininah, al-Salihiah, al-Zariaiah and al-Ayubiah. The Portuguese and the Ottomans fought over it in the sixteen century, then the British arrived in 1839 and stayed until 1967. When the country first became independent Aden was the capital of the Democratic Republic of Yemen. The two Yemen's, north and south, united in 1990 and Aden became the commercial capital. In 1996, it was made a free trade zone. →

منارة عدن.
Eden Minaret.

Cultural heritage and tourist attractions

There is no shortage of historic sites guaranteed to be of interest to tourists including:

The Wall of Eden

This wall prevented smuggling in and out of the city and was also important for defence. It used to have six main gates: Al-Sina'a Gate, Huma Gate, Al-Saktah Gate, Al-Fardah Gate, Mashref Gate and Hige Gate. Some of the stone wall is still standing between the mountains in the region.

Dams and Reservoirs

Eden has eight dams. Its reservoirs, known as al-Tawilah at the head of al-Tawilah valley with a capacity of about 20 million gallons are the most prominent historical feature.

Al-Agaba Gate

This gate was enlarged by the Ottomans and the British to allow two carriages. It is near Eden's main gate. ➔



History written on the stone.

تاريخ مكتوب على الحجر.



باب عدن.

A gate in the Eden Wall.



Al-Khier Mosque in Eden.

مسجد الخير في عدن.



A market in Crater.

سوق كريتر.

Sirah Castle

This 16th century castle on Sirah Mountain, was a defence against pirates and foreign invaders, such as the Portuguese and the British.

Places of worship

Eden has many old and new mosques famous for their Arabesque and tall minarets. The mosques are still used as religious schools and places for the study of the Arabic language. The most important mosques are:

- The Mosque of Abyan built during the reign of Caliph Othman by his son Aban.

- The Eidrous Mosque built by Sheikh Abu Bakr bin Abdullah al-Eidrous.
 - The Jafari Ethna Ashari Mosque in Eidrous Road
 - The Buhra Ismaili Mosque in Shikh Abdullah Street.
 - The Hanafi Mosque in Imam Ali Street
- Other mosques include Jawhar Mosque, Hussein al-Ahdal Mosque, al-Mahdli Mosque, Hamid Mosque, al-Hashimi Mosque, al-Noor Mosque, al-Khier Mosque and al-Radhi Mosque.

Eden also has several churches including St. Joseph's Church in Crater St Anthony's Church and the Anglican Church in Tawahi.

There are several Hindu temples including Hingrag Matagi, Hatoman and Miyshranq Shrena.

The Minarat in Crater

Built on a multisided base it has assumed a conic shaped as it rises skywards with a helical staircase of 86 steps. This is the minaret of an old mosque, dating back to Caliph Omar bin Abdul-Aziz in the 8th century.

Museums

The National Museum and the museum of local folklore provide valuable insights into Yemen's history. The artefacts at the National Museum such as pots and tools date back to the stone and bronze ages.

Coast line

Eden has several magnificent beaches, such as Haigat, Abu al-Wadi, Goldmore, Ghader, Aben Coast, Kod al-Nimr, the Sea Bride, Faqam, Water Server, East Eden and the Khil Gulf. Al-Malha is among the many natural havens for migrant sea birds.

Shopping

For many years, Eden was the only market place in Arabia. Many of the markets, known for their spices, sweets and clothes, are named after different communities: Souk al-Zafaran, Souk al-Banian, Souk al-Yahud, Souk al-Buhra and the Indian Souk. Other famous markets are: Souk al-Tawil, al-Midan Souk.

Eden Cuisine

Sea food is the favourite in Eden with many different delicious fish always on the menu. European, Indian and Chinese food is also available, along with Pizza Hut!

Hotels

The first chain of hotels in Eden and al-Tawahi was established 1886 when the Grand Hotel was built. Nowadays, there are hotels ranging from one to five star.

Yemen's commercial capital is a lot more than a port and a free-trade zone: it is a historic city with an international flavour, a melting pot of cultures and traditions and a variety of tourist attractions: a cosmopolitan venue in a unique Yemeni setting. ■