

ERITREA

The principal language spoken is Tigrinya, however, Tigre and Arabic is also used.

There are nine officially recognized ethnic groups in Eritrea: Afar, Blien, Hidareb, Kunama, Nara, Rashaida, Saho, Tigre and Tigrinya. The population in southern and central Eritrea is primarily Christian, while the population of northern Eritrea is primarily Muslim.



Eritrea is a small country in the horn of Africa bordering Ethiopia, Sudan, Djibouti and the Red Sea. Eritrea has one of the best colonial architectural structures in the world. Their cultures remain intact, diverse, and colourful with nine ethnic groups that contribute to the country's cultural immersion

Eritrea has experienced numerous challenges throughout the years such as drought, famines and recurrent war. As a result, poverty has become more rampant in a country where over 66 per cent of people live below the poverty line. Some families live on remittances.

The name Eritrea comes from a Greek word meaning 'Red Sea' and the country is largely untouched by development and tourism. The capital is Asmara and the current population of Eritrea in 2022 is approximately 3.6 million

Different communities in Eritrea celebrate various festivals that showcase the rich culture of the country as follows:

- New Year's Day
- Christmas Day
- Orthodox Epiphany (end of the 12 days of Christmas)
- Fenkil Day (honours the patriots and martyrs who ended the colonial rule and celebrates the country's independence)
 - Birth of the Prophet
- Martyr's Day (pays tribute to the freedom fighters who died for Eritrea's liberation)
 - Bahti Meskerem (recognizes those who sacrificed during their freedom campaign against Ethiopia)
 - Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan)
 - Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice)

Greeting somebody with a handshake and the word "Salam" is common. Lengthy, elaborate greetings are normal, especially on special occasions.

Women greet each other by ululating (an expression of strong emotion) and kissing each other on each cheek three times.




The flag of Eritrea was adopted in 1995. The red represents the bloodshed in the struggle for independence. The blue signifies the Red Sea and its marine resources. The Green stands for the country's agricultural exuberance and yellow represents its mineral resources



Each year, thousands of Eritrean students, some still under 18, are conscripted into the country's abusive indefinite national service program. National service is supposed to last 18 months, but the government often extends it to well over a decade. National service hampers children's access to education and family life.

The Ethiopian government has begun to refuse to register unaccompanied children to seek asylum. If children are unregistered, they don't have access to food, shelter, protection, or any psychosocial support. That exposes them to many external risks, including exploitation.



The main traditional food in Eritrean cuisine is tsebhi or zigni (stew), served with injera (flatbread made from teff, wheat, or sorghum and hilbet (paste made from legumes; mainly lentil and faba beans). Eritreans eat exclusively with their right hands, using pieces of injera to pick up bites of entrées and side dishes. Utensils are rarely used within Eritrean cuisine.

Habesha Kemis is a traditional ankle length dress which is worn by Eritrean and Ethiopian women at formal events as well as at casual occasions. A zuria is a dress worn by the Tigrinya women in Eritrea. Traditional zurias go to the ankles, sometimes with a gauze hood around the head and shoulders. Zurias come in different forms and designs with an extra sheen due to the demands of fashion. Zurias are worn during holidays, weddings, or parties.

The traditional formal wear of the men Eritrea consists of long sleeve, knee-length shirt, and matching trousers. Most shirts are made with a Mandarin band or Nehru collar.

***Thank you to our young people who supported in writing this guide*

