

# SUDAN



**Blake Evans-Pritchard**

**Violetta Polese**

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The City Trail Guide  
to  
Khartoum  
and  
the rest of Sudan



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Egypt

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Lake Nasser

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Port Sudan

Suakin

Arkowitz

Dongola

Wadi Halfa

Kerma

Karima

Merowe

Atbara

Meroe

Shendi

Khartoum

Eritrea

Kassala

Gedaref

Darfur

Khartoum

Wad Medani

Sennar

Kosti

El-Obeid

Aba Island

Malakal

Wau

Rumbek

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# The Essentials

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If you spend too long listening to the daily news reports about Sudan, you might be forgiven for thinking that, should you set foot in the country, you will be entering nothing short of a war zone. News reports inevitably tend to focus on the grimmer parts of the country, such as the relentless fighting in both south Sudan and Darfur, which has abated in recent years but has not died away completely. But, in Khartoum, you will see precious little of this.

It is a shame that so many people who have not visited the country have a negative impression of it, and that many of those who do arrive in Khartoum find it such a difficult city to adapt to. For a city nestled midway between the Arabic and African worlds, Khartoum is a surprisingly safe place to be, and locals are generally very welcoming of foreigners.

Many visitors to Khartoum complain that there is precious little to see and do in the nation's capital, but this is not true. For those who look, Khartoum has many hidden charms. This guidebook provides a good starting point for uncovering them.

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## When to go

The best time to visit Khartoum, in terms of the weather, is between November and March, when the air is cool and dry. This also coincides with the height of the tourist season and, therefore, is when things are most likely to be open.

If you don't like the heat, avoid the summer months (April to June).

This is also the time when the rains start. Not only do the rains make it exceedingly difficult to travel around the country. They also make sightseeing in Khartoum particularly unpleasant, since they turn many of the streets in the city into rivers of mud.

There are fewer tourists in Khartoum during the summer months. This is also when many expats choose to take their main holiday of the year. Accordingly, you will find that a lot of international and local travel agencies close their offices then, and you may find it harder to book trips over this period.

Something else to think about is whether you want to visit Khartoum during Ramadan. Ramadan can be an interesting time to be in Khartoum, but it is also another period when things are more likely to be shut.

Prior to 2007, restaurants and cafés were prohibited from opening in the day during Ramadan. However, in order to accommodate non-Muslims, the government has introduced a new licence for those places that want to open during this period. Only 15 restaurants (those most commonly frequented by expats) were granted a licence in 2007, but this number is expected to increase during Ramadan in 2008. Shops also tend to have more restricted opening hours, and may refuse to serve food and drink during the day.

Moreover, it can be difficult to find taxis in the early hours of the evening, when the Sudanese are eating. Another inconvenience is that many tour operators cut back the services they offer.

Since Ramadan is based on the Islamic calendar, the date on which it falls migrates through the seasons. The exact date actually depends on the official observation of the moon at a given time of year, but it is possible to have a good idea of when it might start (☛ p28).

☛ p241 for help learning Arabic.

## Language

Sudan has two official languages: Arabic and English.

In Khartoum, many people have only a fairly basic knowledge of English. Nevertheless, you can get by without learning Arabic and you will notice that better-educated citizens do speak quite good English.

A number of southerners who live in Khartoum speak their own tribal languages, as well as Arabic. In many cases, they can also communicate in English, since that is the common language of the south.

Sudanese Arabic, as spoken in Khartoum, is distinct from the Arabic dialects spoken in other countries. A variation of the language, called Juba Arabic, is also widely spoken in the south.

## Tourist information

If you are already in Khartoum, your first point of call should be the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife (near Musalamia Bridge; ☎ 0183 773 711 or 0183 466 103; ✉ admin@sudan-tourism.gov.sd). The Ministry staff are very helpful, although they are only able to provide a few rather out-of-date maps and leaflets written in either French or English, plus a few booklets of postcards.

The Ministry's website (🌐 www.sudan-tourism.gov.sd), is currently only available in Arabic, although there are plans to create an English one.

The headquarters of the Ministry of Tourism should not be confused with one of its smaller offices located on Abu Sinn Street, directly opposite Dandas International Hotel. The main purpose of this office is to provide photography permits (☛ p24).

### Tour operators and booking agencies

**Raidan Travel and Tours** (☎ 0187 557 455 or 0912 301 928; ✉ raidantravel@gmail.com) offers a good range of tailor-made packages to suit most budgets.

**Khartoum Travel and Tourism Company** (☎ 0183 779 100; 🌐 www.khartoumtravel.net).

**Air Booking Centre** (☎ 0183 776 731; ✉ nilein@gmail.com; 🌐 www.abctravelplus.com) can arrange domestic and international flights at reasonable prices.

**The Italian Tourism Company** (Street 27, Amarat; ☎ 0183 487 961; 🌐 italtour@sudanmail.net; 🌐 www.italtoursudan.com) specialises in package tours of the north.

**Sudan Travel and Tourism Club Agency** (New Abu Alela Building, Barlamman Street; ☎ 0183 743 118/20/21; ✉ info@sudantravelclub.com; 🌐 www.sudantravelclub.com).

**Sudanese International Tourism Company** (☎ 0155 124 805).

**Ace's Travel and Tourism Agency** (Malik Street, Amarat; ☎ 0183 472 350 or 0183 472 332; ✉ aces\_tourism@yahoo.com).

If you are planning your trip from outside of the country, you might like to think about whether you want to see Sudan as part of an organised tour or simply travel around on your own.

If you are keen to join a tour, there are several good options available, with more and more tour operators starting up in the country all the time. You can contact most local tour agencies from abroad, and they will be happy to arrange your trip ahead of your arrival in the country.

One advantage of going through tour operators is that they can help cut through any red tape in the country, and sort out all visas and permissions that you might need in order to see the places you want to see. Bear in mind that it is not necessarily cheaper to go through a local tour operator based in Sudan than it is to go through an agency that runs tours from abroad, as is the case with other destinations.

• p42 for travelling around the country.

• p160 for a list of suggested travel itineraries.

### Useful websites

If you are not keen on organised tours, and would prefer to travel on your own, then the following websites provide some useful information:

- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade ([www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au))
- US Department of State ([www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov))
- UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office ([www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk))
- Sudan Net ([www.sudan.net](http://www.sudan.net))

## Getting there and away

### By air

As one might expect, Sudan is well-linked to the rest of the Arab world by its air network. There are also frequent flights to neighbouring Kenya in the south.

Sudan is less well-connected to the West, though. Due to sanctions, it is not currently possible to fly direct from the United States to Sudan. Travellers who wish to make this trip should fly via an intermediary country such as Amman, Dubai or Cairo. There are currently no direct flights to Sudan from New Zealand, Australia or Canada.

The two main air carriers that fly between the UK and Sudan are Sudan Airways and British Mediterranean Airways (BMED), a subsidiary of British Midland Airways (BMI). Flights will usually stop in an intermediary country (such as Jordan or Egypt) to pick up more passengers.

Frankfurt in Germany is another popular departure point for direct flights to Khartoum.

Khartoum's International Airport is conveniently located close to the city centre (a short five-minute taxi or bus ride). A new international airport is being built one hour's drive from the city, in Omdurman, to replace the current one as the main international airport. It is due to be completed in 2010, but could be delayed until 2013.

A taxi from the airport should cost you a maximum of 15 SDG for most destinations in the city. If you are travelling to Amarat, you shouldn't pay more than 7 SDG. For Khartoum 2 and 3, or other destinations south of the Nile, a taxi ride from the airport should cost you no more than 10 SDG. You should only pay

## Based on detailed first-hand research by people living and working in Sudan

For centuries, explorers have been captivated by Sudan's amazing diversity.

Whether you are visiting or living and working there, this guidebook will ensure that you make the most of your stay.



### Main Features

- Essential tips for getting the most out of Sudan
- 24 pages of full-colour photos
- Clear and detailed street and country maps
- Major bus routes of Khartoum
- A full section on living and working in Sudan
- Where to eat and where to shop
- How to spend your free time in the city
- Cultural tips and business etiquette
- A complete history of the country
- Downloadable files for learning Sudanese Arabic

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