

AFRICA · HISTORY · DESERT · DIVING · OFF THE BEATEN PATH

 Sudan

Sudan has more pyramids than Egypt, yet the royal tombs of Meroë, the sacred mountain of Jebel Barkal and the temples of Kush have only ever seen a trickle of visitors. Add desert camps, Nubian villages along the Nile and Red Sea reefs. The war that began in April 2023 changed everything, so check the FCDO advice first.

 **The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of Sudan.**
Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.
FCDO advice last updated 11 May 2026.

 CAPITAL Khartoum	 CURRENCY Sudanese pound (SDG) £1 ≈ SDG 596	 LANGUAGE Arabic, English	 BEST TIME Nov–Feb
 DAILY BUDGET £45–£230 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type C, D 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 10h 30m via Cairo, Jeddah or Istanbul ~£600–£1,000 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+2 standard time

Sudan was the heart of the ancient Kingdom of Kush, whose Nubian pharaohs ruled Egypt as its 25th Dynasty, and its archaeology is extraordinary. The classic itinerary looped north from Khartoum: first to the pyramid fields of Meroë and the temples of Naqa and Musawwarat es-Sufra, then across the Bayuda Desert to Karima for Jebel Barkal, the royal tombs of El-Kurru and the pyramids of Nuri. Further north lie Old Dongola, Kerma's mud-brick Deffufa and the Third Cataract. On the Red Sea, the coral-stone ruins of Suakin and the reefs off Port Sudan make a separate trip.

Before the war, travel here meant camping under the stars, long drives on empty roads and having UNESCO-listed sites almost to yourself. Hospitality was famous, and strangers were routinely invited in for tea. Trips were run by a handful of specialist operators, and practicalities were demanding: cash only, permits for travel and photography, intense heat for much of the year and alcohol effectively unavailable. The war that broke out in April 2023 caused enormous destruction in Khartoum and displaced millions of people. Any return to tourism depends on events, so treat this page as background and check the FCDO advice.

Top 5 highlights

1

HISTORY

Pyramids of Meroë

Around 200 steep-sided pyramids of the Kushite royal cemeteries rise from the dunes at Begrawiya, many with their tops removed by a 19th-century treasure hunter. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it lies a few hours' drive north-east of Khartoum.

2

SACRED SITE

Jebel Barkal

A flat-topped sandstone mountain at Karima, held sacred by Egyptians and Kushites as a home of the god Amun. Temples and pyramids cluster at its base, and from the top you can watch sunset over the Nile and desert.

3

HISTORY

Kerma and the Western Deffufa

A towering mud-brick temple at Kerma, capital of one of Africa's earliest kingdoms around 2500–1500 BC. The nearby museum displays black granite statues of Kushite pharaohs unearthed at Dukki Gel.

4

HISTORY

Suakin

An island port of coral-stone houses that was for centuries a key Red Sea trading harbour and pilgrim port for Mecca, now a crumbling ghost town linked to the mainland by a causeway south of Port Sudan.

5

NATURE

Sanganeb Marine National Park

A lone coral atoll off Port Sudan with sheer walls, sharks and a lighthouse, part of a UNESCO site. Nearby Sha'ab Rumi still holds the remains of Jacques Cousteau's Precontinent II undersea station.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Khartoum

≈ 6 million people

The capital, with Omdurman and Khartoum North, spreads around the meeting of the Blue and White Niles; pre-war highlights included Omdurman's souq and Friday Sufi ceremonies at Hamed al-Nil's tomb.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Nyala

≈ 800,000 people

The main city of Darfur, a trading hub in the far west not far from the volcanic Jebel Marra highlands; it has rarely featured on visitor itineraries.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Port Sudan

≈ 500,000 people

Sudan's main seaport, which served as the de facto seat of government after war reached Khartoum in 2023; the base for Red Sea liveaboards, Sanganeb reef and the ruins of Suakin.

Populations are pre-war estimates; fighting since 2023 has displaced millions and changed city sizes in ways not yet measured.

When to go to Sudan

Best time: **Nov–Feb**.

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

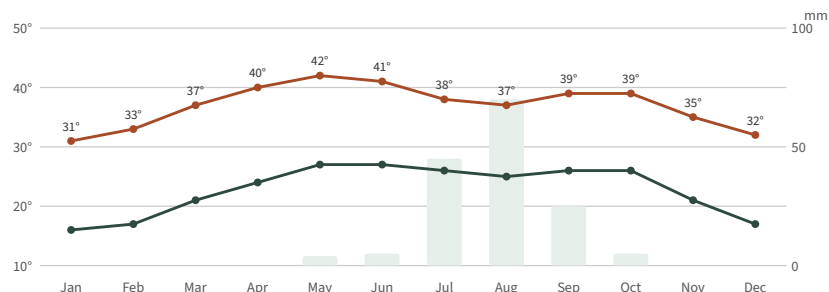
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Khartoum

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Feb–Mar

Eid al-Fitr

The festival ending Ramadan brings family visits, new clothes and feasting on sweet biscuits called kahk, with offices closed for several days; it falls in February or March in the late 2020s.

Aug

Mawlid al-Nabi

The Prophet's birthday is marked with nights of Sufi drumming, chanting and fairground stalls, traditionally centred on Omdurman; the date moves about 11 days earlier each year.

How much does Sudan cost?

SHOESTRING

£45

per person / day

≈ SDG 26,822

hostels, street food, buses

MID-RANGE

£110

per person / day

≈ SDG 65,564

3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis

COMFORTABLE

£230

per person / day

≈ SDG 137,089

4-star+, guided trips, private transfers

Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Ful medames

Slow-cooked fava beans mashed with oil, cumin and lime, topped with cheese, egg or falafel and scooped up with bread; Sudan's universal breakfast.

Kisra with mullah

Kisra is a thin, slightly sour sorghum flatbread, eaten with mullah stews such as weika, made with dried okra.

Jebena coffee

Coffee spiced with ginger or cardamom, brewed in a clay jebena pot and served in tiny cups by street-side 'tea ladies'.

Getting around

Before the war, comfortable buses ran on paved highways from Khartoum to Port Sudan, Atbara, Karima and Dongola, while desert sites needed a 4x4 with driver, usually arranged by a tour operator. Domestic airlines linked Khartoum with Port Sudan and Darfur, and visitors also needed travel and photography permits. How much of this works today is unclear, so seek current information from operators and the FCDO.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



C D

230V — bring a UK-to-C/D adapter

DIALLING CODE

+249

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

TIPPING

Not traditionally expected, but tips for drivers, guides and hotel staff are appreciated; round up taxi fares and restaurant bills.

ETIQUETTE

Dress conservatively: long trousers for men, loose clothing covering arms and legs for women. Use your right hand, accept offered tea, and avoid eating in public during Ramadan daylight hours.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Port Sudan New International Airport (PZU), Port Sudan; Khartoum International Airport (KRT), Khartoum

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Telephone: **999** (ambulance, fire, police)

Source: FCDO "Getting help"

TIME ZONE

UTC+2 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the right

Visas & entry for Sudan

Shown for a British passport.

Visa required — apply before you go

You must have a visa to enter Sudan.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

 See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

- Hepatitis A
- Tetanus
- Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

- Chikungunya
- Dengue
- Hepatitis B
- Measles
- Meningococcal disease
- Polio
- Rabies
- Tuberculosis
- Yellow fever

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Sudan

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	Independence Day
Thu 7 Jan 2027	Coptic Christmas Day
Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Wed 10 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Thu 11 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Fri 12 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Sun 2 May 2027	Coptic Easter
Sat 15 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Mon 17 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Tue 18 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Wed 19 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Sun 6 Jun 2027	Islamic New Year (date may shift)

Sat 14 Aug 2027

Prophet's Birthday (date may shift)

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Arabic

ENGLISH	ARABIC	SAY IT
Hello	السلام عليكم	<i>as-sah-LAAM a-LAY-kum</i>
Thank you	شكراً	<i>SHOOK-ran</i>
Please	من فضلك	<i>min FAD-lak</i>
Excuse me	لو سمحت	<i>law sa-MAHT</i>
How much is this?	ده بكم؟	<i>da bi-KAM</i>

Know before you go

Check the FCDO travel advice before any planning, and confirm your insurer will cover Sudan; most policies exclude places where the FCDO advises against travel.

International bank cards have long been unusable in Sudan, so bring all the cash you need in clean, recent US dollar or euro notes.

Never photograph military sites, bridges, government buildings or airports, and ask before photographing people; historically, visitors also needed a photography permit.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.