



Scarlet Lake Natron Tanzania

Lake Natron is mostly inhospitable to life, but it is gorgeous to the eye. The lake in Tanzania receives less than 500 millimeters (20 inches) of rain in most years. Evaporation usually exceeds that amount, and the lake needs input from some local rivers to maintain a water supply in the dry season.

This Landsat 8 image from March 2017 shows Lake Natron's chromatic charisma. Volcanism helps make the unusual color. Nearby volcanoes produce molten mixtures of sodium carbonate and calcium carbonate salts that move through faults and well up in hot springs. This briny, alkaline environment is too harsh for most common types of life, but salt-loving microorganisms (haloarchaea) bloom in the shallow pools and impart pink and red colors to the water.