

AKSUM – STELAE FIELD & NORTHERN GATEWAY

OVERVIEW

Aksum (Axum), near Ethiopia's northern border, anchors the legacy of the ancient Aksumite Kingdom, a major power between the 1st and 7th centuries CE. The UNESCO-inscribed archaeological zone features monolithic granite stelae, royal tombs, and palace ruins. The town is also associated with the Church of Maryam Tsion and Ethiopia's long Christian tradition.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Northern Stelae Park: Field of giant stelae, including the Great Stele (fallen), the Rome-returned Obelisk of Axum, and the King Ezana Stele area; subterranean tomb entrances dot the site.
- Dungur “Queen of Sheba’s Palace” Ruins: Elite residential complex with stone foundations and axial plans.
- Maryam Tsion Precinct: Historic church complex central to Ethiopian Orthodoxy; access rules vary by gender and by inner sanctum restrictions.
- Outlying Sites: May Hedja and other stelae/inscriptions in the wider landscape.

1–3 DAY PLANS

- One Day: Stelae Park and museum; Maryam Tsion precinct.
- Two Days: Add Dungur ruins and nearby inscriptions; sunset at hill viewpoints; coffeehouse circuit.
- Three Days: Day trip to Yeha (Sabaean temple ruins) if road/security conditions allow.

PRACTICALS

- Access: Domestic flights connect when operational; overland access depends on current regional conditions—confirm before travel.
- Seasonality: Similar to highland north; clearer Oct–Feb; summer rains Jun–Sep.
- Etiquette: Respect church rules; photography may be limited in sanctuaries.

SOURCES SUMMARY

Archaeological facts reflect the UNESCO Aksum listing and established site plans; church-access notes are based on longstanding practice.