

Discover Wadi El Gemal National Park

Sites of Interest from the Mountains to the Sea



Main Gate



The best place to begin your exploration of Wadi El Gemal National Park is by climbing to the Visitor's Overlook on the terrace just west of the main entrance.

Atop the hill stands a perfect replica of Roman architecture found at several archeological sites within the Park. True in every detail of style and constructed from the same stone the Romans found here and used in the first century AD, the Visitor's Overlook features a small gallery that gives the visitor a glimpse of what a Wadi El Gemal adventure offers... the majestic mountains, turquoise waters, and the sweeping expanse of the wadi.



Wadi El Gemal Island

Wadi El Gemal Island with its stunningly clear waters and beaches of white coral sand is a favorite place for visitors to the Park. Day boats from Shams Alam diving center are permitted to take visitors accompanied by a guide to the southern spit of the island for snorkeling.



White Eyed Gu

A paradise for tourists, this island fringed by coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangrove stands, and an extensive intertidal flat, is also a haven for dugongs, marine turtles, and an array of seabirds. Wadi El Gemal Island is recognized as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International (IBA).



Osprey

Twenty guests at a time are permitted on the island for a maximum of 3 hours during daylight hours.

Birdwatchers are allowed access to all parts of the island, except during the breeding season, with special permission from the Red Sea Rangers, if they are accompanied by a local guide.



Ras Baghdadi Wetlands

Ras Baghdadi is a delta formed from alluvial sediments brought down through Wadi El Gemal and deposited during the wetter Pleistocene era. Here the freshwater from the mountain watershed meets the seawater creating a brackish marsh.

This special habitat supports a unique plant community. One of the few stands of Dom Palms on the Egyptian Red Sea coast grows here. If you look carefully, you can see the tracks of foxes, wildcats, gazelle and many other creatures attracted to the food, water and shelter afforded by the marsh. While some animals are residents, others, such as migrating birds, stop for a short time.



Dom Palms



Wadi Sikait

The largest emerald mining site in the Eastern Desert in ancient times, Wadi Sikait was one of the few sources of emeralds the Romans knew, and they called it Mons Smaragdus or Emerald Mountain.



Sikait was a vibrant village. Several large multiple-window buildings and two temples evoke village life, meetings, as well as religious and administrative activities. The two temples have a long history. Believed to have been dug in Ptolemaic times and re-cut during the Roman period, archeologists are still working to learn more about this site.



Wadi El Gemal Exploration

Accompanied by a knowledgeable Ababda guide visitors can explore the park either on camel, on foot, or by 4x4 vehicle.

Please follow instructions on where to go and ask about points of interest. Keep to marked trails.

Ask a Park Ranger about additional hiking and camel safari opportunities.



The Desert Mountains... Standing Against Time

Along the Red Sea coast there is a backbone of rugged mountains. Devoid of vegetation, the bare desert mountains reveal their fascinating geological history. The forces of nature: earthquakes, volcanoes and movements of the earth's crust created the spectacular scenery you see all around you.

The mountains, hills and valleys were further shaped through the millennia by water and wind erosion. A network of smaller wadis flows into Wadi El Gemal, forming a vast watershed.



Silhouette of Gebel Hamata



The Wadi ... Sustaining Life in the Desert

Wadi El Gemal is one of the largest and most scenic wadis in the Eastern Desert.

Dorcas Gazelle

A sizable population of Dorcas Gazelles remains in the southern region of the Eastern Desert. This small antelope is well adapted for desert life, extracting all the water it needs from the plants it feeds on.



Acacia Tree

While the Acacia is small in stature, this tree can be hundreds of years old. Adapted for desert life, Acacias have long roots, enabling the trees to reach groundwater deep within the soil.



The Ababda

Traditionally nomadic, some Ababda still herd their flocks through the wadis in search of food and water. Their desert tracking skills are legendary and even Ababda children learn to distinguish the tracks of wildlife in the Park.



Coastal Beaches... Nesting Sites for Sea Turtles

One of the few reptiles adapted for life at sea, marine turtles are graceful swimmers, with their streamlined bodies and flipper-like limbs.



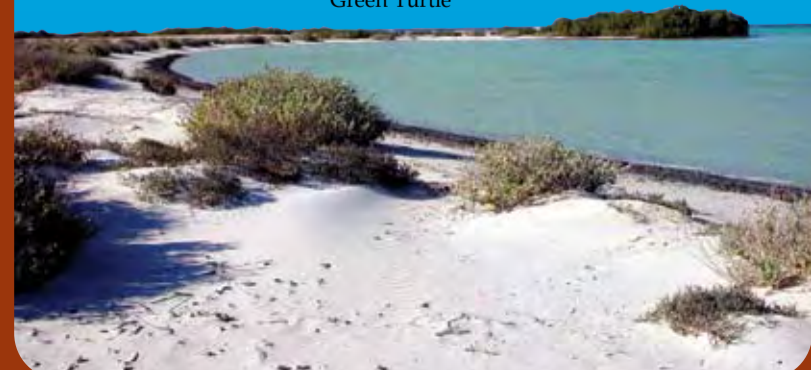
Hawksbill Turtle

The Green Turtle is one of the most common turtle species in the Egyptian Red Sea. An adult can weigh up to 140 kilograms and its shell can reach more than one meter in length. This species is the only sea turtle that is strictly herbivorous as an adult, eating seagrass and algae. Some female turtles are thought to be over a hundred years of age.

When it comes time to lay eggs, sea turtles return to the beaches where they hatched. Two species, the Green and Hawksbill turtles, nest on mainland and island beaches of the Wadi El Gemal National Park.

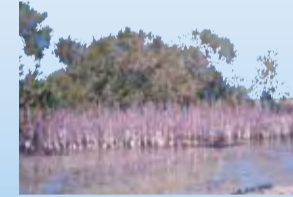


Green Turtle



Mangroves ... The Root of Life

Mangroves are among the few plants able to live in a salty marine environment. The roots of the trees filter seawater and excrete the salt crystals through their leaves.



Mangroves

The mangrove serves many important functions: it offers nurseries for juvenile fish and other marine life, provides nesting and feeding grounds for birds, and protects the shoreline from erosion. The Hamata mangrove stand, 30 000m², is the second-largest in the country.

Tidal Flats

Tidal flats are the transition zone between the land and the sea. Subject to the daily fluctuations of the tide, these rocky and muddy surfaces are constantly inundated and exposed. The shallow pools are home to fish fry, crab, shrimp and mulloks, who in turn, attract a wide variety of birds.



Spoonbills on Tidal Flats



Crab



Coral Reefs ... One of Nature's Wonders







Coral may look like a colorful rock, but it is actually a living animal. Belonging to the animal group that includes jellyfish, these soft-bodied creatures produce a hard skeleton of limestone. Over thousands of years, the reef colony secretes new skeletal material, creating immense structures of living and fossilized corals. Many animals live in and depend on the coral reef, which is one of the richest ecosystems on the planet.

Sea Cucumber, an Essential Partner For Coral

This strange marine animal is related to starfish. Its soft body is covered with hundreds of tiny feet that have suction cups at their ends. As a defense mechanism, sea cucumbers can expel most of their internal organs to confuse predators. They later re-grow the organs. Many marine ecosystems depend upon this invertebrate as a filter of the sea bottom. Without the sea cucumber, corals die. Over-harvesting upsets this delicate balance of the ecosystem.



TAKE NOTHING ... LEAVE NOTHING

-  **Boat anchors destroy the coral. Use the mooring buoys**
-  **Feeding fish harms their ability to hunt for food and changes their behavior**
-  **Touching, walking or standing on corals breaks and kills them**
-  **Spear fishing is illegal, as it alters the reef's ecology**
-  **Garbage kills wildlife. Take it back with you**
-  **Taking corals and shells upsets the ecological balance of the reef**
-  **Hunting is illegal. Report any evidence of it to the rangers**
-  **Stay on tracks and trails. Traffic of all types can harm vegetation, nesting sites, and the landscape**
-  **Do not use local wood for fires. All dead wood belongs to the Bedouin tribes**

Wadi El Gemal National Park

Red Sea



- Legend**
- Site
 - Archeological Site/Ancient Mine Site
 - Town/Village
 - Bedouin Settlement
 - Water Well
 - Dive Site
 - Turtle Nesting

- ▬ Mangrove Stands
- ▬ Regional Road
- ▬ Roman Road
- ▬ Major Trail
- ▬ Minor Trail
- ▬ Ranger Outpost

