

Asmara - Africa's Modernist City

Asmara-Africa's Modernist City One of the most astonishing, cutting edge architecture, art avenues city, Asmara, the capital city of Eritrea is located in the Horn of Africa & is renowned for its rich collections of early modernist architecture. The city is situated on a plateau about 2400 meters above sea level and is established on a favorable climate for its inhabitants. In the late 19th century, after becoming the capital of the Italian colony, Asmara grew from small village to sizeable town by the 1920s.

The city grew substantially as significant number of Italians marched in response to the preparation of Mussolini's regime invasion of Ethiopia. Subsequently, the city became a kind of experimental ground for modern architecture and urban planning designs. This is prevailed in the numerous types of buildings, which were built in various styles including: Eclectic, Neo-Classical, Futurist, Novecento, Monumentalist, Rationalist and Modernist, as part of the grand city development plan, embracing boulevards and generous sidewalks. Among the astonishing buildings, one can find the bold and daunting modernist structure inspired by the shape of an aircraft: the Fiat Tagliero gas station, built in 1938. Other buildings include Residential and commercial buildings, Churches, Mosques and Cinemas like Impero, built in 1937. Asmara has one of the most complete and significant collections of modern architecture in the world.

Despite Eritrea's unique and brutal encounter with modernity, Eritreans all over the world possess a profound love for their capital city. Asmara exhibits an outstanding example of the interchange of cultural influences brought by the advent of modern architecture and innovative engineering in uniquely African context. Asmara, the stunningly magnificent city, is well endowed with peculiar historic urban landscape, ought to be preserved both at a national and international level.

Asmara Heritage Project office, under the auspices of Zoba Maekel Administration, has initiated to nominate Asmara for UNESCO World Heritage List. The project office is making great effort to undertake a detailed research study about Asmara: to prepare a conservation master plan, nomination dossier and to promote public awareness. Regarding this, consent has been reached to prepare the required documents in the year of 2014-2015 and to be submitted to UNESCO World Heritage Center. It is firmly believed that, Asmara is the strongest contender to get the World Heritage status.

The endeavor underway to unearth the mystery of the overlooked city through UNESCO's bidding would add a motivating impetus of preserving the cultural heritage at community level in general and the respective authority in particular. The present nomination for UNESCO World Heritage listing is a testament to this devotion and a commitment of the Government to safeguard Asmara's unique heritage and long term sustainable development.



Asmara Heritage Project would like to extend its appreciation for interested readers and users of this brochure, who are believed to have a handful input on conserving our unique cultural heritage, ringing a wakeup call for our joint responsibilities. As a result, the city inhabitant's at large and future generation would learn and understand its significance by conserving this distinctive built heritage.

