

Abha-Bada: The Crater Lake

Written by translated by Winta Woldeyesus



Gazing from a distance, the place looks like a hole in the surface of the earth facing towards the sky. But upon a closer look one can see that it is a pristine and eerily still lake in the middle of an arid and desert like area. Flanked by crescent shaped hill on one side and sand dunes on the other, the lake extends over a crater-like area of 20 sq. kms. Named "Abha Bada", this lake is found in the Gelalo sub zone of the Northern Red Sea Region. Though its name literally means 'the smelly lake' in the Afar language, the lake is surprisingly fresh and clear.

Lake Abha Bada is the result of a volcanic eruption in the area some centuries ago. The source of the lake's water is in the sand dunes located on the east side of the lake. Though the water from this source is very warm, it can be used for drinking and doesn't burn the skin unlike hot springs in different parts of the country.

Another amazing aspect of the Abha Bada is the presence of cold and pure water only one meter away from the lake. The place surrounding this water is covered with various vegetations and also has few species of fish. This pond is a source of water and vegetation to many of the pastoralists inhabiting the area particularly in times of drought.

Unlike other lakes Abha Bada does not have any shallow banks, its depth beings right at the edge of its waters. While the actual depth of the lake has yet to be determined, it is clear that this unexplored lake holds many geographical mysteries waiting to be discovered. Being a result of volcanic eruptions in Eastern Africa and the Middle East some centuries ago, the lake is of critical archeological and geographical importance.

Some believe that this lake is directly linked with the Gulf of Zula, though there is no evidence proving this. However, there might be some truth to their viewpoint since the lake is located in the volcanic belt of the country that expands from Arta Ali to Erafayle.

Eritrea has many fascinating tourist sites, one of which is lake Abha Bada. Treading through the sand dunes which surround the lake are one of the adventures a tourists can appreciate, to say nothing of the unlikely water source of the lake.

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