



THE DONGOLA

GUESTHOUSE

Where does the name of the guest house come from?

1) Old town Dongola

The once flourishing capital of the Christian kingdom of Makuria, which lasted from the 6th to the 14th century, going from Nubian to Christian to Muslim at the hands of the Egyptian Mamluks, is now the ruins of a medieval city 80 km from modern day Dongola. You can see the tantalizing record of the wealth this mysterious desert kingdom once enjoyed in the edifice of the its Throne Hall and the cruciform cathedral known as the Church of Granite Columns. Medieval Dongola was described as having many churches, large houses, wide streets within a city wall, and, from 1002, a red-brick palace.

Since our house was also originally built of red bricks, it could be assumed that the builder was inspired by this city.



Modern Dongola

Modern day Dongola happens to have a similar standing as its medieval counterpart. It's the largest town in the region, the capital of the northern state and the heart of Nubia proper. The town is an agricultural centre for the surrounding area, which produces cotton, wheat, barley, sugarcane, and vegetables.

Old Dongola Timeline

- c. 500 - c. 1365 CE The Nubian kingdom of Dongola flourishes in the Sudan.
- c. 540 CE Traditional date that the Kingdom of Dongola adopts Christianity.
- c. 652 CE A non-aggression and trade treaty is signed between the Kingdom of Dongola and Egypt.
- c. 697 CE The Kingdom of Dongola absorbs or unifies with the two neighbouring Christian kingdoms of Faras (Nobatia) and Alodia.
- c. 1002 CE A large palace is built at Dongola, capital of the Nubian kingdom of that name.
- 1276 CE The Mamluks of Egypt attack the Nubian kingdom of Dongola.
- 1315 CE The Mamluks of Egypt install a Muslim puppet ruler in the Nubian kingdom of Dongola.
- 1317 C The cathedral of Dongola is converted into a mosque.
- c. 1365 CE The Kingdom of Dongola moves its capital from Dongola to Daw.



THE DONGOLA

GUESTHOUSE

2) Dongola Horse

The Dongola horse is a riding breed, indigenous to the African countries of western Eritrea, Cameroon, and Sudan. Besides being linked to the Barb, it is also said to have a striking similarity with the Arabian horse, particularly regarding temperament. Because of their strong stature and excellent riding abilities they had been of immense use in the past. The King of Sennar had obtained some of these horses in the year 1772, describing them to be of a fine quality with a strength equivalent to coach horses, though light and free in movements and spirit.



They also served as cavalry horses for the Abyssinian troupes during the Italian-Abyssinian war. Moreover, the lighter version of the hunter horse developed after importing the Dongola to Italy. The original version of Dongola is mostly extinct one of the prime reasons being mixed breed with the Barb, Arab as well as their crossbreeds.

3) Mapungubwe National Park

Mapungubwe National Park is a national park in Limpopo Province, South Africa. It is located by the Koloape River, south of the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe rivers and it abuts on the border with Botswana and Zimbabwe, and forms part of the Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area. It was established in 1995 and covers an area of over 28,000 hectares (69,000 acres). The park protects the historical site of Mapungubwe Hill, which was the capital of the Kingdom of Mapungubwe, as well as the wildlife and riverine forests along the Limpopo River. The Mapungubwe Hill was the site of a community dating back to the Iron Age. Evidences have shown that it was a prosperous community. Archaeologists also uncovered the famous golden rhino figurine from the site.



Mapungubwe National Park is renowned for its scenic landscape, with sandstone formations, woodlands, riverine forest and baobab trees.

The Vhembe Dongola National Park was renamed Mapungubwe National Park and opened officially on Heritage Day, 24 September 2004. In the 21st century, Mapungubwe has been embraced as a site of significance by South Africans and the international community. The Mapungubwe National Park was declared in 1998. The Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape (MCL) was declared as a National Heritage Site in 2001 and it was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2003.

With the park's UNESCO World Heritage Status, a building has been constructed that houses a museum section with many of the artefacts uncovered in the park on display.



THE DONGOLA

GUESTHOUSE

4) Dongola to Mapungubwe

The 80-year battle to conserve the Limpopo Valley

Mark Berry & Mike Cadman published a booklet about Dongola in 2006.

In it, you tell the story of the creation of Dongola National Park, which was later renamed "Mapungubwe" as it developed.

It would be too much to recount this 66-page work. But this much about the naming we can quote:

"... Dongola Kop was the name of a prominent mountain at the centre of the reserve. Why the name Dongola was chosen is not known, but some of the British forces fighting with Lord Kitchener during the Anglo Boer War had also fought near the town of Dongola on the Nile in northern Sudan - Old Dongola being the ancient capital of the Christian Kingdom of Nubia between the 6th and 14th centuries."



The Dongola Camp with the Dongola Kop in the background, 1929