



Ethiopia - A Land of Intrigue

The ancient home to heroines and heroes from the days of Queen of Sheeba, to Haile Selasse...

Trip Length: 20 days / 19 nights

February to March 2023

Minimum 6 guests / Maximum 10



Included meals marked each day. B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

6 -10 USD 4550.00 / Single supplement USD 695.00

(2020 prices quoted. 2023 prices to be confirmed)

Ethiopia, in the Horn of Africa, is the most populous, landlocked country in the world. With archaeological finds dating back more than 3 million years, it's claimed to be the region from where modern humans first set out for the Middle East and places beyond. In 1974, paleontologists discovered 'Lucy' in Hader, north-east of Addis Ababa. At 3.2 million years old, Lucy is the oldest and most complete skeleton of an early human ancestor ever discovered. She was named after the Beatles song, 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds', that played over and over during a night of celebrations after her discovery.

Day 1, Monday: Arrive Addis Ababa

Check into our hotel

Ethiopia's diplomatic capital and the commercial and cultural hub of the country, sits in the highlands bordering the Great Rift Valley. Established in the 19th century, it is often referred to as Africa's political centre. It's also complex, chaotic, colourful, a buzz to all our senses, and the best place to sample Ethiopian food. It's where your understanding of Ethiopia begins.

Day 2, Tuesday: Addis Ababa (D)

We'll meet our English speaking guide at the hotel who will accompany us throughout our Ethiopian experience. There will be some time to see the sights of Addis Ababa including the National Museum that houses Lucy.

Overnight at hotel



Injera and its accompaniments - traditional food of Ethiopia

Day 3, Wednesday: Fly from Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar (B, L, D)

Drive time to Lake Tana: .5 hours

Drive time to Blue Nile Falls: 1.5 hours

Walk time at Blue Nile Falls: 1.5 hours

It's an early flight today and after breakfast we'll be transferred to Bole International Airport for our flight to Bahir Dar where we will be met and taken to Lake Tana. At Lake Tana we'll board a boat and cross the lake to see the monastery of Ura Kidanemihret. We return across the lake and after lunch we will drive (it may be a little rough) to the Blue Nile Falls area and walk to see the famous Blue Nile Falls, a waterfall on the Blue Nile River and one of Ethiopia's best known tourist attractions. A small boat will row us back across the river to meet our bus that returns us to our hotel. It's a long day, but a very memorable one.

Overnight in hotel

Day 4, Thursday: Bahir Dar to Gonder (B, L, D)

Drive time 2.5 - 3 hours

Drive through the Amhara people's region to Gonder. The Amhara people trace their roots to Menelik I, the child of the Queen of Sheeba and King Solomon. We also pass through scenic Taragedam where Judaism was preached before Christianity reached Ethiopia in the 4th century. We'll arrive in Gonder around lunch time and check in to the hotel before enjoying some sightseeing in Gonder, with our guide.

Overnight in hotel

Day 5, Friday: Gonder to Sankaber, Simien Mountains National Park (B, L, D)

Drive time 3 - 4 hours

Walk time 2 hours

Today we drive towards Simien Mountains National Park, a destination with unique wildlife and breath-taking views. The towers and rocky formations have been described as '*the chess pieces of the Gods*'. Gentle, grass-covered highland ridges dotted with giant lobelia end abruptly at 1000-2000 m deep escarpments. We will stop at the park headquarters in Debark to collect our local trekking guide, game scout and park permit. After lunch, it's a steep drive to Sankabar, the first campsite in the park, and we'll stop along the way for a lunch break. For acclimatisation, we'll walk the last two hours into Sankabar Camp and this may be our first chance to spot Gelada baboons.

Overnight at Sankaber Camp - tents

Day 6, Saturday: Sankaber Camp to Geech Camp (B, L, D)

Walk time 6 - 7 hours

We begin our trek with all the trekking staff including mules and muleteers who transport our camping gear and food. It's quite a strenuous day with ups and downs but there are great views as we walk from Sankaber to Geech. Along the way we'll pass spectacular Jinbar Waterfall that plummets into the Geech Abyss. After descending to Jinbar Wenz which feeds the waterfall, we'll head uphill past Geech village to our campsite. If you are up to it, a gentle walk to the summit of nearby Kedadit (3760 m) provides excellent 360 degree views. It's also a great spot to watch the sunset!

Overnight at Geech Camp - tents (3600 m)



Day 7, Sunday: Geech Camp to Imet Gogo (B, L, D)

Walk time 5 - 7 hours (optional)

From the campsite there is an optional hike along the escarpment to the summit of Imet Gogo (3926 m) the best known observation point in the Simien Ranges. The views along the escarpment are stunning and from the rocky viewpoint, it's possible to see the lowlands and gain an awesome 360 degree perspective of these incredible mountain ranges. An hours walk across the grassy plateau brings us to our lunch spot on the cliff edge. If you do opt for this walk there's a good chance to see Ethiopian Wolves and Walia Ibex. The Walia Ibex, part of the mountain goat family, is one of the world's most endangered mammals. We return to camp by the same route.

Overnight at Geech Camp - tents (3600 m)

Day 8, Monday: Geech Camp to Chennek Camp (B, L, D)

Walk time 7 - 9 hours

Today we walk along the undulating escarpment with some steep ups and downs on a seldom used track to Kurbet Metaya viewpoint. This viewpoint is a gap in the cliff where there are breathtaking views of the sheer mountains to the west. Chennek Camp is a spectacular location in a beautiful valley at the base of Bwahit Peak and bounded by a semicircular ring of cliffs. There is a large troop of Gelada Baboons nearby.

Overnight at Chennek camp - tents (3620 m)

Day 9, Tuesday: Chennek Camp to Axum (B, L, D)

Drive time 7 - 8 hours

After an early breakfast in the campsite we collect our picnic lunch from Chennek Lodge and drive to Axum along one of Ethiopia's most scenic roads, snaking down through the Italian built Lima – Limo zigzag road and the Tekeze River gorge.

Overnight in Axum - hotel

Day 10, Wednesday: Axum (B, L, D)

Axum, the original capital of the Kingdom of Aksum, is one of the oldest continually inhabited places in Africa. It is also the alleged resting place of the Arc of the Covenant, and the home of the Queen of Sheeba. One of the major features of Axum is a collection of obelisks around 1700 years old. The tallest obelisk, the Great Stele, is 33 m long and the largest stele in the world. We spend the day with our guide visiting the historic sights in Axum.

Overnight in Axum - hotel

Day 11, Thursday: Axum to Gheralta (B, L, D)

Drive time 8 - 9 hours

After breakfast in the hotel we leave Axum and drive through Adwa to Hawzen and visit the temple of Yeha, the oldest standing structure in Ethiopia. We'll also visit one of the rock churches of Tigray called Medhanialalem Adikesho before we continue on to our lodge accommodation for the night.

Overnight in Gheralta - lodge

Day 12, Friday: Gheralta to Mekelle (B, L, D)

Drive time 3 hours

Walk time 1.5 hours

A day to visit the famous rock churches of Tigray, Abreha Astebeha (4th century), a rock-hewn church with a painstakingly decorated interior and Debre Mariam Korkor, another rock-hewn church situated on one of the high mountains of Gheralta, overlooking the dramatic Gheralta Mountains. A climb from the base to the mountain brings you to the church. After lunch at Wukro we continue driving towards Mekelle for dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight in Mekelle - hotel



Obelisk of Axum

Day 13, Saturday: Mekelle to Hamed Ela Camp (B, L, D)

Drive time 4 hours

We'll travel in 4x4s to Hamed Ela, stopping at Berhale to arrange permits and a police escort. We'll also get to see local Tigrean and Afar villages, and maybe some camel caravans carrying salt bars to their local towns.

Overnight at Hamed Ela Camp - tents

Day 14, Sunday: Dallol and Lake Asale (B, L, D)

Days activity approximately 9 hours

After an early start we'll drive to Dallol in the south-eastern part of the Denakil Depression. This is the hottest and most active place on the earth's surface, with an average temperature of 40-50°C. This stunning and colourful landscape has been formed by volcanic activity. Then we'll head to Lake Asale where we'll see the salt miners at work. At 155 m below sea level, this is the lowest point in Africa; the second lowest point on earth after the Dead Sea, and the world's largest salt reserve. This is a day when we walk with the Afar people and should see the long camel caravans transporting salt blocks. Later we'll drive back to the campsite for dinner. **Overnight at Hamed Ela Camp - tents**

Day 15, Monday: Erta Ala (B, L, D)

Drive time 4 - 5 hours

Walk time 4 hours

This morning we'll drive to Dodome where we'll stow our gear and water on a camel train and hike to Mt Erta Ale, an active volcano (613 m) of rumbling lava to see colourful and spectacular eruptions. Our guides will pitch tents near the caldera of the volcano where we'll spend the night.

Overnight camping on the crater rim

Day 16, Tuesday: Erta Ala to Mekelle (B, L, D)

Walk time 3 hours

Drive time 7 hours

Early in the morning we will walk around the rim of Erta Ale volcano, then walk back to the base of the mountain for breakfast, before starting the drive back to Mekelle.

Overnight in Mekelle - hotel



Camel trains take our gear to Erta Ala camp

Day 17, Wednesday: Mekelle to Lalibela (B, L, D)

Drive time 9 hours

We leave Mekelle and head to Lalibela through varying landscapes. We will stop at the town of Weldia for lunch and then drive on to Lalibela, again through the Amhara peoples' villages.

Overnight in Lalibela - hotel

Day 18, Thursday: Lalibela (B, L, D)

This rural town is known for its churches carved from solid rock. The churches were built during the reign of King Lalibela who ruled Ethiopia in the late 12th century and early 13th century. He intended to build a substitute for the Holy Land, notably Jerusalem and Bethlehem, at a time when Christians were not able to travel to the Holy Land. UNESCO recognises 11 churches as being historically important, and having a considerable influence on Ethiopian Christianity. We'll spend the day exploring Lalibela with our guide.

Overnight in Lalibela - hotel

Day 19, Friday: Lalibela to Addis Ababa (B, L, D)

Transfer to Lalibela Airport for your flight back to Addis Ababa. We'll be met at the airport and transferred to our hotel. There will be time for lunch and some last minute shopping, or some self-guided sight-seeing. In the evening, we'll have a farewell dinner.

Overnight in Addis Ababa - hotel

Day 20, Saturday: Transfer to Addis Ababa Bole International Airport. (B)



What's Included in Ethiopia

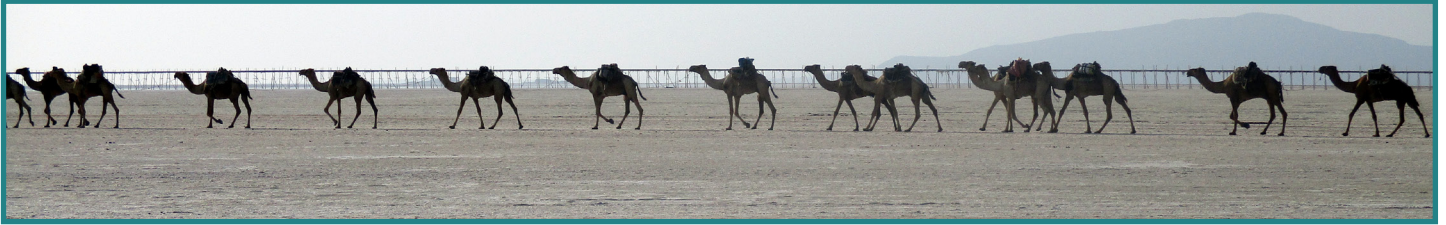
- **Take A Walk Leader** to coordinate the group
- Professional English speaking guides
- Local guides and scouts in parks and villages
- Mules and muleteers to transport camping equipment in Simien Mountains
- Land transfers as listed using Toyota Coaster bus for historic routes, 4x4 Land Cruisers, camels and cameleers for Danakil trip
- Twelve nights accommodation in hotels or lodges
- Seven nights camping (Simien Mountains four, Dallol three)
- Professional chef to prepare meals in the park and at the volcano
- All camping gear and cooking utensils (except sleeping bags and pillows)
- All meals and bottled water as listed (**B, L, D**)
- All entrance fees in all destinations
- Government taxes

What's Not Included in Ethiopia

- International flights from your departure country to Addis Ababa, and from Addis Ababa to your ongoing destination
- Two internal flights in Ethiopia - Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar, and Lalibela to Addis Ababa
- Transfers from Addis Ababa airport to and from hotel upon arrival and departure
- Any accommodation prior to or after the tour dates
- Requested single supplement cost
- All personal trekking equipment including backpacks, sleeping bags and trekking poles
- Meals other than those listed
- Trail snacks
- Personal bottled water, other than that supplied by our operators on treks
- Compulsory travel and accident insurance
- Cash for extra expenses, personal alcohol beverages and other drinks, customary tips for guides and other services, including personal laundry and personal telephone calls
- Cost of any personal activities apart from group activities
- Camera and video charges



Ethiopian souvenirs...



Other General Information

- The currency used in Ethiopia is Ethiopian birr
- ATM machines are available in Addis Ababa and some of the larger towns. Before leaving home, you should inquire at your bank about any transaction fees for using a foreign ATM. At most banks, the total amount that can be withdrawn by any one ATM card is 3,000 - 4,000 birr per day (about AUD \$150 - \$200)
- Your place on this trip will be confirmed upon receipt of your booking form and \$500 deposit
- A detailed gear list will be provided to those booking on the trip

(To ensure the safety and the well being of the group, please bear in mind the itinerary may be altered for reasons beyond our control such as weather and trail conditions, permits being unavailable, and road or park closures. The final hiking selection is at the discretion of our local on-the-ground guides and *Take A Walk* leaders.)

This itinerary is a living document. Please ensure you download the latest version before confirming your travel plans.

As at 11 September 2020 a ban on overseas travel from Australia remains in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Denakil Depression Sulphur Pits - the most active place on the earth's surface