

# ETHIOPIA

DETAILED ITINERARY

THE HORN OF AFRICA

Nov 13/23

Woman from Mursi tribe.



Photo: © Cheryl Chanter

Few places offer such a myriad of experiences for the traveler as Ethiopia. Much of the fascination of this country lies in its many historical sites. According to legend, the first Ethiopian king, Menelik, was the son of the biblical King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba! Ethiopia also has nine national parks, protecting many of its endemic species. The ancient tribal culture compliments the unique history and nature of Ethiopia. Experience tribal cultures such as the Hamar, the Mursi and the Dorze, whose traditional lifestyle is a stark contrast to our modern life.

We explore Ethiopia, using the capital of Addis Ababa as our base. We travel to the historic north to see the Blue Nile Falls before taking a boat journey across the Blue Nile. We visit a monastery church on Lake Tana before traveling to Gondar, our base for exploring the incredibly scenic Simien Mountains. We explore Lalibela and the monolithic churches carved out of pink granite that date back to the 12th century.

Returning to our base in Addis Ababa, we then head to the tribal south, into the Omo Valley.

## FACTS & HIGHLIGHTS

- 23 land days • Maximum 16 travelers • All meals included • Start and finish in Addis Ababa • Includes 3 internal flights • Visit 5 UNESCO Sites • Explore the monastery churches of Lake Tana • Hike in the stunning Simien Mountains • Visit the monolithic churches of Lalibela • Visit the sites in Gondar • Omo Valley • Encounter the Mursi, Karo, Hamar and Dorze tribes

## DEPARTURE DATES & PRICE

<b>Sep 16 - Oct 08, 2024</b>	-	<b>\$8495 USD</b>
<b>Sep 16 - Oct 08, 2025</b>	-	<b>\$8795 USD</b>

Meskel Festival in Addis Ababa

## Activity Level: 3

**Comfort Level:** 5 days over 9,000 feet. Some rough/dusty roads and long drives.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** Comfortable hotels in the north and the south, but the accommodations in the south are more basic. All have private bathrooms.

**ELDERTREKS**



SMALL GROUP  
**EXOTIC ADVENTURES**  
FOR TRAVELERS 50 PLUS

We take a boat trip on Lake Chamo for crocodile and hippo spotting and then visit a Konso village.

Our journey takes us into the region of the Mursi people, whose women have the practice of using disks to expand their lower lip. We go “off-roading” to the River Omo, then on to Turmi to visit the Hamar and other Indigenous tribes. We travel up through the Rift Valley, concluding our journey back in Addis Ababa.

## DAY 1 ARRIVE IN ADDIS ABABA

You are met on arrival in Addis Ababa and transferred to our hotel. The name of the city in Amharic means ‘new flower’. Founded in 1886 by Menelik II, it is located at 2,500m (8,202ft) above sea level in one of the highest parts of the Entoto Mountain chain (3,000m / 9,842ft above sea level).

Addis Ababa is a pleasant city with wide avenues of jacaranda trees, interesting museums and one of the largest open-air industrial markets in Africa, known as the “Mercato”. We meet this evening for dinner and orientation.

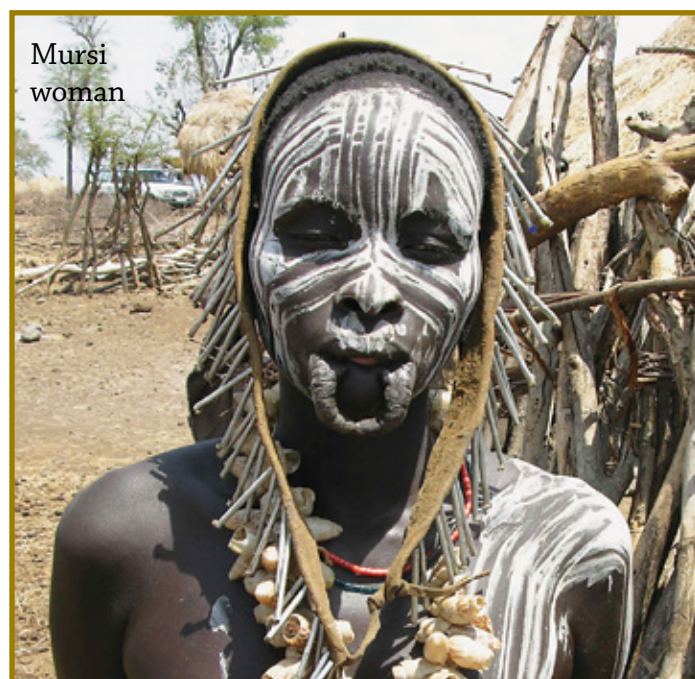
Overnight in Addis Ababa.

## DAY 2 DRIVE TO LAKE LANGANO

To begin the southern part of our adventure, we head off in 4x4 vehicles to Lake Langano, which is about 143 miles (230 km) from Addis. Enroute, we visit the lakes of Debre Ziet and Zeway.

We arrive at our lodge in the early afternoon. We can then enjoy some free time to relax and enjoy this wonderful part of the country.

Overnight in Langano.







Blue Nile waterfalls

### DAY 3 DRIVE TO ARBA MINCH

We set out early today and pass by the Rift Valley lakes before arriving at Arba Minch. This town is the largest in southern Ethiopia. It is situated between the Rift Valley, Lake Abaya and Lake Chamo. Enroute we will visit the Alaba village and we will drive through Welayta and Gamogoffa area.

Overnight in Arba Minch.

**Note:** Omo Valley Adventure In order to fully experience and explore this incredibly diverse, yet sometimes isolated UNESCO area, we really get “off-the-beaten-track”. Sometimes the road is in rough condition (if there is a road at all) so you should be prepared for some bumpy drives. Accommodation in small towns is modest. A certain spirit of adventure is required for this journey and any travel hardship will certainly be made up for in experience!

### DAY 4 VISIT THE CHENCHA VILLAGE & BOAT TRIP ON LAKE CHAMO

Morning drive 40kms northwest of Arba Minch to Guge Mountains to visit the Dorze and Chenchas villages. Once warriors, the Dorze have now turned to farming and weaving to earn a living. They speak an Omotic tongue and the Dorze name is synonymous with the best-

woven cotton cloth. The “elephant huts” of the Dorze are unique and worth seeing. Also, the Dorze beehive-shaped houses are constructed entirely of organic material and has its own small garden surrounded by beds of spices, cabbage and tobacco. Some of Ethiopia’s best woven cottons come from Chenchas, which is located 8 km northwest of Dorze Village. Men weave and women spin.

Afternoon boat trip on Lake Chamo to see the crocodiles, hippos & aquatic bird species. The northern shores of Lake Chamo are famous for its large crocodiles, which can be seen in great numbers lounging in the heat. The lake is about 32km long and provides a lush wetland habitat for many species of flora and fauna.

Overnight in Arba Minch.

### DAY 5 DRIVE TO JINKA

Our drive today will offer some of the most beautiful scenery Ethiopia has to offer - soft rolling hills with dark red soil and plentiful crops and forests. The road continues into the savannah, running alongside the mountains of Men, then following the Karkerte Mountains, providing splendid panoramic views until reaching the soft terraced hills of Konso.

We will enjoy a visit in the Konso village to meet the locals who are excellent farmers. The Konso people consists of a pagan society who erect totem poles on the tombs of their dead.

We arrive in Jinka in the evening in time to enjoy dinner.

Overnight in Jink.

## **DAY 6 VISITING THE MURSI TRIBES AND ARI VILLAGE**

This morning we will enjoy a very unique Mursi tribal encounter outside of their village. The Mursi women have the custom of expanding their lower lips using disks that gradually get larger and larger. These are people who farm the land and breed livestock, and they live in almost complete isolation from the rest of the world.

After our visit, we return to Jinka where we will explore a small but very interesting local anthropological-ethnological museum run by a German foundation, dedicated for the different tribes of the Omo Valley.

Overnight in Jinka.

## **DAY 7 HAMER VILLAGE VISIT, TO TURMI**

Today we will have a long drive which will take us from Jinka to Turmi, passing through the Woyto Valley as we go. Turmi is home of the Hamer Tribe. This afternoon we will visit the Hamer village with an opportunity to take photos and learn about their society.

The Hamers are one of the most beautiful and dignified people of the Omo Basin. The women color their hair with red earth and butter and wear elegant leather skirts festooned with tiny pearls.

Overnight in Turmi.

## **DAY 8 EXPLORE THE TRIBES IN TURMI**

We travel through the savannah in a typically African landscape arriving at Murele, located on the River Omo surrounded by huge trees. This is the land of the Karo tribe. Here it is possible to meet them and visit their village along the river.

In the afternoon we drive back through the savannah, along tracks that are barely visible, passing through a vast meadowland with shrubs and umbel lifers (“umbrella” acacia trees).

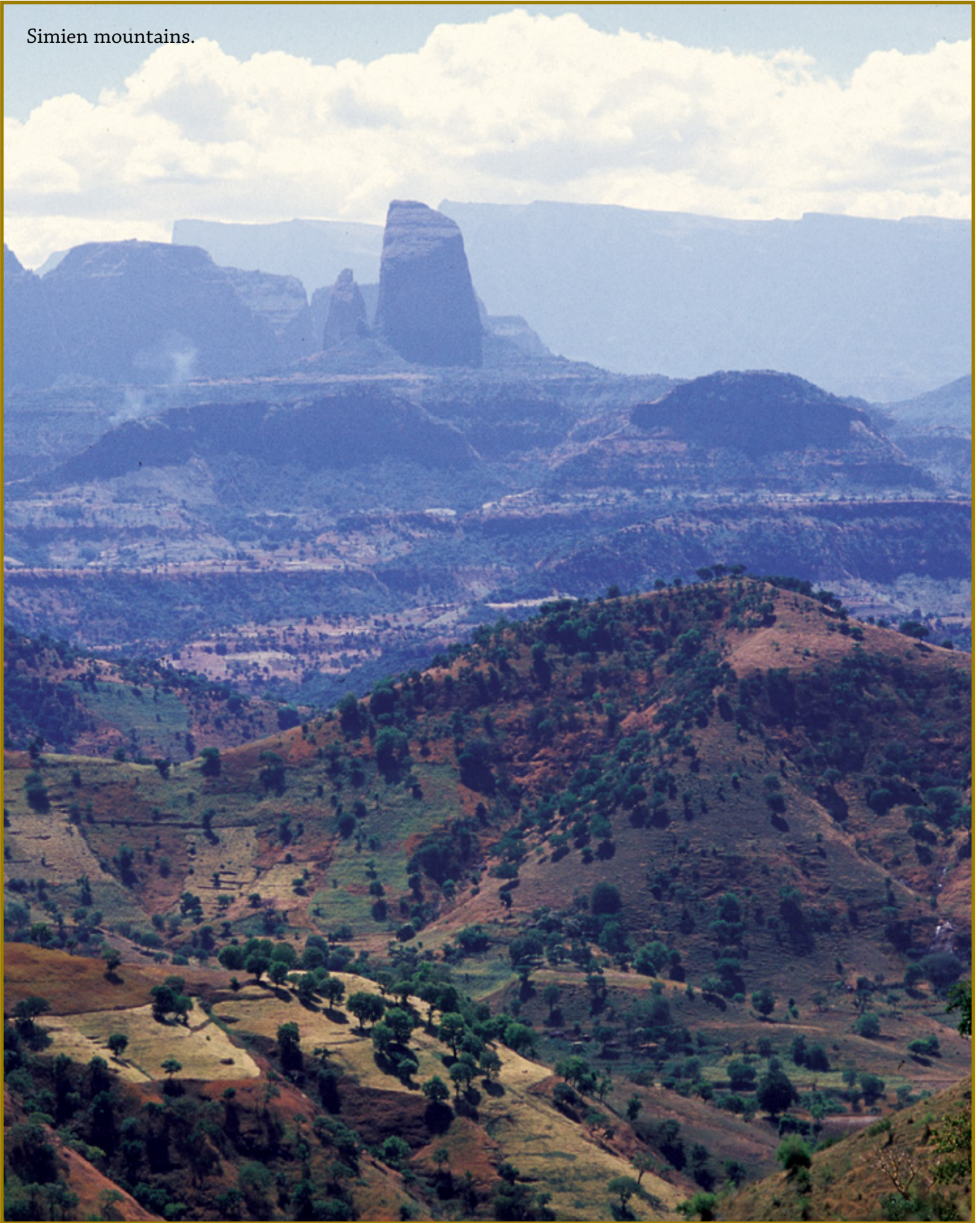
Overnight in Turmi.

Timket celebration





Simien mountains.





## DAY 9 ARBA MINCH VIA KONSO, ARBORE TRIBE

Today we start our return journey northward, towards the lakes of the Rift Valley. The Rift Valley is a deep fissure that extends for over 3728 miles (6,000 km) from the Middle East to Mozambique, testimony to the violent and massive shifting of the Earth's tectonic plates. The rift contains a marvelous series of lakes, which are teeming with fish and provide a habitat for hundreds of species of birds. Enroute, we visit an Arbore village and, time permitting, stop at some small markets.

We travel along the side of Lake Chamo and arrive at Arba Minch late afternoon to early evening.

Overnight in Arba Minch

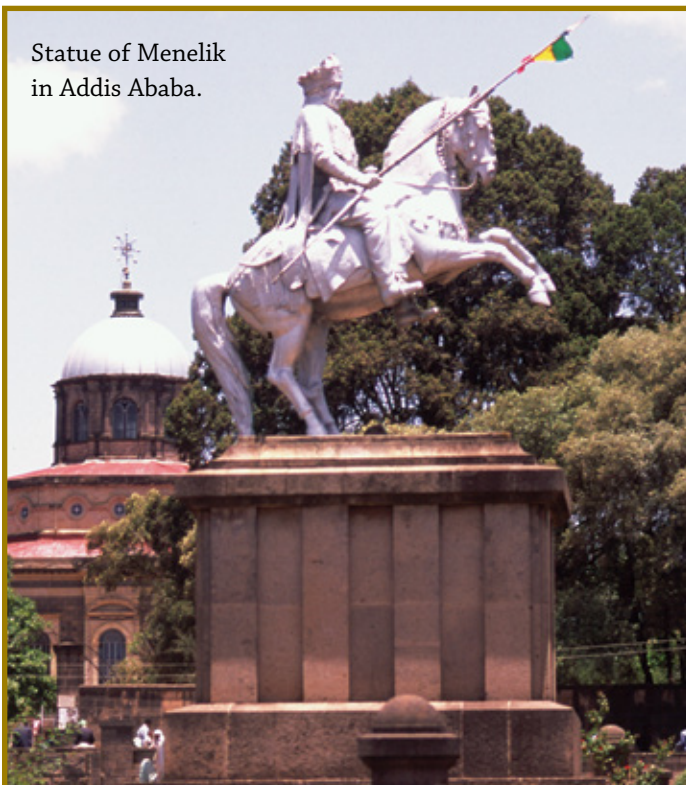
## DAY 10 SHENKELE GAME RESERVE, DRIVE TO AWASSA

This morning we return to the road that leads back up the Rift Valley. We cross fertile land planted with bananas, cereals and tobacco, inhabited first by the Oromo people and then by the Sidamo. All kinds of fruit are sold along the roadside.

After lunch we visit the gorgeous landscape of Shenkele Game Reserve, which is protecting the last pocket of the original Ethiopian savannah. We have a great viewing opportunity to see large herds of the endemic and beautiful antelope, called Swayne's hartebeest, one of the rarest animals in of all Africa, with a population less than 700. Shenkele is virtually the only place in the world where you can see this elegant antelope.

We make our way to the regional capital, Awasa. It is located at 1685m (6119ft) and sits at the edge of the smallest lake in the Ethiopian Rift Valley.

Overnight in Awasa.



Statue of Menelik  
in Addis Ababa.





Gondar ruins.



## DAY 11 FISH MARKET AND LAKE AWASA

Today we set off to explore the famous fish market of Asa Gebeya, located on an inlet to Lake Awasa. Every morning, fisherman arrive by their wooden rowboats loaded with their daily catch of tilapia. The setting is spectacular, with the mountains, the lake and rich vegetation of dense scrub and woodland. We then make our way to Amora Gedel Park which is home to many birds, as well as guereza and grivet monkeys.

After lunch, we enjoy a motorboat ride along Lake Awasa, the smallest lake of the Rift Valley lakes. Lake Awasa (9000 hectares) is surrounded by rolling hills, formed in an ancient volcanic crater. The area teems with bird life including several endemic species, along with hippos, and if we are lucky, we may also see a pygmy goose.

We return to our hotel in the afternoon with time to relax poolside before dinner.

Overnight in Awasa

## DAY 12 DRIVE BACK TO ADDIS ABABA

This day, we drive to Addis Ababa enjoying more of the Rift Valley landscape and the stunning views over the Lakes of Abijata and Shala. We have the possibility of visiting the Ostrich farm at Abijata Shala National Park. Then to Lake Ziway, the largest of the Northern group of rift valley lakes covering 440 km<sup>2</sup> surrounded by volcanic hills and is home of the Zay people. The lake earned just a quick hit on a southern stopover, for its productive birdlife and hippopotamus. The lake encompasses five Islands, including Gelila, Fundro, Debre Sina, Tsedacha and Tulu Gudo, which is home to a monastery said to have housed the ark of the covenant around the ninth century.

Overnight in Addis Ababa.

## DAY 13 CELEBRATING MESKEL FESTIVAL IN ADDIS ABABA

Meskel which is celebrated on the 28th of September daisies burst out in all their majesty.

It is celebrated on the Eve (on the 27th) of September to commemorate the finding of the true Cross by Empress Helena wife of Constantine the Great in the fourth century. The celebration is conducted on Squares where many people are gathered together.

Overnight in Addis Ababa.

## DAY 14 FLY TO BAHIR DAR AND THE BLUE NILE

We take a short flight this morning north to Bahir Dar. Bahir Dar is a pleasant city located on the shores of Lake Tana, the largest lake in Ethiopia. After our arrival, we drive directly to the Blue Nile Falls, which is known locally as Tissisat (smoking water) 100m (328ft) wide, the water plunges for 45m (148ft) and depending on the fluctuations at the nearby dam, may give rise to steam clouds and rainbows. We cross the Blue Nile by boat to return to the point of departure.

After lunch on the shore of Lake Tana, we take a boat to a nearby peninsula to visit beautiful Orthodox monasteries such as Ura Kidane Mihiret. Ura Kidane Mihiret is the best known of the monasteries and has an important collection of religious icons from the 16th to 18th centuries A.D. There are 37 islands on Lake Tana and 30 of them have churches and monasteries of considerable historical and cultural interest.

If time permits, we will visit the colorful Bahir Dar market.

Overnight in Bahir Dar



## DAY 15 DRIVE TO GONDAR

This morning we drive to Gondar, arriving at our hotel by lunchtime. Gondar was the first capital city of the Ethiopian Empire, which began in 1632 with the reign of Fasilides. Gondar is known for its remarkable collection of crumbling castles built by various emperors over the course of 236 years. Gondar is often referred to as the 'Camelot of Africa'. The city seems more European than African.

We will have time to explore the city and later to rest after a busy few days.

Overnight in Gondar.

## DAY 16 DRIVE TO SIMIEN MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

This morning we visit Fasilides Palace, probably the most impressive of all the castles found in the area and the oldest!

After lunch, we have a long drive to the Simien Mountains, where we will be staying in the highest lodge of Africa, at 3400 meters.

Overnight in the Simien area

## DAY 17 ADVENTURE IN THE SIMIEN MOUNTAINS

We have a full day to enjoy the Simien Mountains (UNESCO World Heritage Site). The road passes over mountainous areas of wild beauty. In the park, many of the mountain peaks exceed 4,000m (13,123ft).

The highest is Ras Dejen, at 4,543m (14,905ft) above sea level. These mountains consist of volcanic masses that have been eroded away by centuries of rain. Today they have amethyst-colored peaks and deep gullies which have been further deepened by rivers. The crevices play host to the walia ibex. The

escarpment offers scenic views and the chance to see the endemic gelada baboons, sometimes in herds of over a hundred, along with the endemic walia ibex whose population is now on the rise after poaching drove them to near extinction. Cliff-nesting birds are also common, including the lammergeier (bearded vulture).

Overnight in the Simien area

## DAY 18 DRIVE BACK TO GONDAR AND FLY TO LALIBELA

A short flight takes us from Gondar to Lalibela. The city contains 11 monolithic churches that were built in the 12th century and are carved out of pink granite rock. They have been classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Each church has a unique architectural style, and all are superbly carved, and most of them are decorated with well-preserved paintings. The entire city may be described as a sculpture dedicated to the glory of God.

This afternoon we visit Nakuta Lab, followed by a coffee ceremony.

Overnight in Lalibela.

## DAY 19 EXPLORING LALIBELA AND THE NORTHERN CHURCHES

Today we spend time exploring the best churches in the northern, as well as eastern areas of Lalibela. Tonight, we will enjoy our group dinner with spectacular views of the area.

Overnight in Lalibela



Timket Festival.





## **DAY 20 FLY TO DIRE DAWA VIA ADDIS ABABA, DRIVE TO HARAR**

Today, you transfer to Addis Ababa airport for your flight to then road transfer to Harar which is 55km apart from Dire Dawa.

The high stone walls of Harar city are pierced with five gates and topped by twenty-five towers. The medieval walled city of Harar stands amid green mountains, on the east wall of the Great Rift Valley near the Somali border. Harar's heritage is almost entirely Muslim and Oriental; with its 90 mosques and shrines. Harar is considered to be the fourth most sacred center of the Islamic world. Its Islamic character is best expressed in the Grand Mosque (AL JAMI), which dominates the town. Rightly renowned for its intricately worked filigree jewelry of silver, gold, and amber. Harar's Megalo Gugo Market is a center for beautiful baskets of woven grass, decorative wall-mats, and bright shawls, as well as all the fruit, vegetables, spices and grains of the province.

Harar's five gates - the only means to enter or leave the city center - have been guarded over the years. One of the gates of the city happens to be the impressive 'Shawa Gate'. For centuries it has served as a bridgehead for the entry of Islamic ideas into Africa from the nearby Arabian Peninsula.

We will visit the popular attraction 'a hyena man' show in the evening.

Overnight in Harar

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## **DAY 21 DRIVE TO DIRE DAWA**

Today after breakfast we will explore Harar city including the old walled town. We will see the Harari Museum, Rimbaud House, which was built by Indian merchants on or very near where Arthur Rimbaud lived out his last ten years and which has since been converted into a gallery. We will see a 16th century grand Mosque with its elegant twin towers and slender minaret, the church of Medhane Alem, which houses a gallery with traditional religious art









works, the tomb of Abu Said Ali an early Muslim ruler. At the colorful Shoa Gate Market we can shop indigenous handicrafts and jewelry. We will also see the recently registered UNESCO World Heritage Site registered Jugol, located within the wall of Harar.

We will drive to Dire Dawa and visit the Ethio-Djibouti Railway, which once connected Addis Ababa to the port city of Djibouti.

Overnight in Dire Dawa.

## **DAY 22 FLY BACK TO ADDIS ABABA**

We fly back to Addis Ababa this morning. After lunch, we enjoy a free afternoon. you may want to visit one of the many museums or the interesting mercato.

Overnight in Addis Ababa

## **DAY 23 DEPART ADDIS ABABA**

We say farewell to this remarkably varied country with a transfer to the airport for your departure flight.



## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

### 1. HOW BIG ARE THE GROUPS?

Each group is limited to 16 participants. Small groups are an important ingredient in adventure travel. They allow for more interaction and more personalized service throughout the itinerary.

### 2. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

All accommodations throughout; all meals, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); bottled drinking water throughout the trip; all internal transportation; airport transfers on day 1 and departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); all day trips and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary; tips for hotels (portage), national guide, bus driver, restaurants and spot guides; services of a trip leader.

### 3. WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

International flights, tips to ElderTreks tour leader, alcoholic drinks, visas and travel insurance.

### 4. ARE THESE “EDUCATIONAL” TOURS?

Yes, in the broadest sense of the word, “educational”. We visit many nature reserves and local villages. We also have talks and discussions on many aspects of Ethiopian history and culture, but this is only one aspect of what we do. We believe that it is equally educational to meet new people on a non-commercial basis, visit their home and even try to learn a few words in the native language. Sometimes the most “educational” moments are spent having a cold drink with locals in a street market.

### 5. HOW DO WE TRAVEL WHILE IN ETHIOPIA?

All land transportation is included in the land price of the trip. We have our own vehicles for road travel — we use a coaster mini-bus in the north and 4 x 4 vehicles in the south; we travel on three domestic flights, and we use a boat on Blue Nile, Lake Tana, Lake Chamo.

### 6. WHAT ARE OUR ACCOMMODATIONS LIKE?

We stay in comfortable, well located accommodations with private washrooms through-out the north. Basic accommodation in the south (hotels have private washrooms).

### 7. WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

Ethiopia’s climate reflects its topography. The highlands are classed as temperate with an average daytime temperature of 60°F (16°C). The far south and the eastern lowlands are hot and dry; the western lowlands are hot and humid. Throughout the trip, you can expect temperatures between 59° –77°F (25°– 15°C).

### 8. WHEN IS PAYMENT DUE?

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 USD (plus insurance if you require it) is due at time of booking and will reserve your place on the tour. Payment of the full land cost is due 120 days before departure. Cancellation charges are applicable and are outlined in the “Terms and Conditions” section of our brochure.

### 9. IS MEDICAL INSURANCE REQUIRED?

Insurance coverage is not included in the cost of your trip. Please note that medical insurance is not required for this adventure but is recommended. ElderTreks offers comprehensive travel insurance and we are happy to provide you with a quote if you call our office. If you are purchasing insurance elsewhere, please ensure you provide the details to ElderTreks as soon as possible.

*\*Please note those travelers with pre-existing medical conditions must take out travel insurance at the time of deposit*

### 10. WHAT SHOULD I TAKE ON THE TOUR?

There is a detailed “What to Take” list in our Trip Kit, which we will send to you after you have booked the trip.

### 11. WHAT MEALS ARE INCLUDED?

All meals during the itinerary are included, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day. We eat a variety of local foods prepared in a wide range of settings.

### 12. CAN YOU ARRANGE MY FLIGHTS?

We would be happy to take care of your air arrangements. ElderTreks offers personalized flight itineraries — not group flights. Stop over en route, come in a few days early, or extend your stay. Call for a customized flight itinerary.

### 13. WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

If you have any further questions about the trip, please do not hesitate to contact our office for additional information. A Trip Kit containing further details on the destination will be sent to you once you have booked the trip.





Rock Church dedicated to St. George, Lalibela.



Karo tribe village.

