
Ethiopian Odyssey

A COX & KINGS PRIVATE TRAVEL JOURNEY

EXPLORING THE CULTURE, NATURAL HISTORY AND WILDLIFE
OF ETHIOPIA

Addis Ababa ♦ Baher Dar ♦ Gondar ♦ Semien Mountains ♦ Lalibela ♦ Axum

TOUR DETAILS

8 Days / 7 Nights

START / FINISH

Addis Ababa / Addis Ababa

2009 PRICES:

\$3245 per person double occupancy
\$ 645 single supplement

Internal Airfare: \$575 per person (subject to change)

WHAT'S INCLUDED

All accommodation as per the itinerary based on
breakfast daily

Full board dining daily and all sightseeing activities
included as per the itinerary

All internal flights and road transfers as per the
itinerary

Services of English-speaking local guides for all
sightseeing activities throughout as per the itinerary

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

International Airfare from the United States

Visa fees

Travel insurance

Airport taxes and excess baggage fees

Gratuities

Personal expenses such as alcoholic beverages,
laundry and telecommunication charges

Journey through an ancient land that has welcomed travelers for thousands of years. The only African country that has never been colonized, Ethiopia has a rich Orthodox Christian tradition, which was retained when all its neighbors embraced Islam in the 17th century. Travel through this enthralling and beautiful country, rarely explored by tourists and discover the layers of history that have shaped this timeless land.

We begin at the geographical center of Ethiopia – the capital city of Addis Ababa, which is set on a high plateau nearly 8000 feet above sea level. Travel to Baher Dar to see the source of the Nile, and to Gondar, the first capital city of the Ethiopian Empire, where castles were built by a succession of emperors. The take a full day's excursion into the volcanic Semien Mountains, known as the Roof of Africa, where the highest peak reaches nearly 15,000 feet.

Two days will be spent exploring the mysterious rock hewn churches of Lalibela, which have been in continuous use by Orthodox priests since the 12th century. Carved below ground level, some churches reach a height of over 30 feet high. Then finally, on to Axum, ancient land of the Queen of Sheba. Here, at St. Mary's Church, stand before the crowns of former emperors, representing over 1000 years of Ethiopia's history. However, please note that the original St. Mary's Church does not permit women.

We invite you to embark on this epic journey through mystical, Abyssinia.

Day One Addis Ababa

Arrive today in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where you will be transferred to your hotel. Enjoy an afternoon city tour. **Sheraton Addis**

Sheraton Addis. The Sheraton Addis is set in mountainous countryside, 7800 feet above sea level. The hotel is conveniently located near the capital's main attractions, including the National Palace and the Merkato, one of the largest open-air markets in Africa. Elegant guest rooms, exceptional recreational and meeting facilities and an extraordinary selection of fine restaurants make the Sheraton Addis the ideal African luxury destination.

Day Two Baher Dar

You will have an early flight to Baher Dar this morning. Take a cruise on Lake Tana, the largest lake in Ethiopia. There are 33 islands on the lake, and 23 of them have churches and monasteries of considerable historical and cultural interest. Some of the islands and churches forbid women to enter. Visit the monastery church of Ura Kidane Mihret Monastery in Zeghie Peninsula, which allows both genders. This church has mural frescoes and also possesses old icons, manuscripts, old crosses and crowns of former Kings and Queens, which are displayed to the visitors.

Return to Baher Dar for lunch before continuing on to the deacon school and an excursion to the Blue Nile Falls, which is known locally as Tiss Issat Falls. This means smoke of fire and the falls are named after the spectacular smoky bubbles of the falling waters.

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This afternoon you can take a boat trip before returning to your hotel for dinner. **Papyrus Hotel or Tana Hotel**

Day Three Baher Dar to Gondar

After some morning sightseeing in Baher Dar, you will transfer to the airport for your flight to Gondar, the first capital city of the Ethiopian Empire. Gondar first began in 1632 with the reign of Fasilidas. In Gondar, there are dozens of castles built by various emperors over the course of 236 years. The city is more European than African and also has Islamic influences.

This afternoon visit the palaces, the library of Fasil's son, residences and baths of Fasilidas; followed by a visit to the church of Debre Berhan Sellassie (Light of the Trinity), which is located at the summit of a hill and surrounded by fortified walls. Finally, visit the Kuskum Church. **Fogera Hotel or Goha Hotel**

Day Four Gondar & Semien Mountains

Today depart on a full day excursion to the National Park of the Semien Mountains. The road passes over mountainous areas of wild beauty, drawing close to the national park of the Semien massif. In Amharic, "Semien" means "North." In the park, many of the mountain peaks exceed 13,000 ft; the highest is Ras Dejen, at almost 15,000 ft 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 of the Semien Mountains and the Gelada Baboons, which are endemic to Ethiopia. Enjoy a picnic box lunch at Senka Ber. Before returning to Gondar, visit the previous village of the Felasha (African Jews) who have now migrated to Israel. **Fogera Hotel or Goha Hotel**

Days Five & Six Lalibela

Once the thriving capital of a medieval dynasty, Lalibela is still remarkably beautiful. The village is hardly visible as the peak of Mount Abune Yousef dominates the horizon. Legend holds that in this town, once called Roha, a mother saw her baby in a cradle surrounded by a dense swarm of bees. Ethiopian belief is that the animal world could foretell the advent of important personages, so she called her son "Lalibela", meaning, "the bees recognize his sovereignty."

Learn other local folklores on your visits to remarkable rock-hewn churches built over 800 years ago. Almost superhuman in their scale, these towering edifices are truly a world wonder. After lunch in the afternoon visit the 1st part of the Rock Hewn Churches (there are six), namely: Bet Golgotha, Bet Mika'el (also known as Bet Debre Sina), Bet Maryam, Bet Meskel, Bet Danaghel, and Bet Medhane Alem. **Jerusalem Guest House Hotel, Lal or Roha Hotel**

Day Seven Axum

The legends narrated in the Kebra Negest (the Book of Kings in the Old Testament) recount how the city of Axum as early as the 10th century BC was the city where the Queen of Sheba resided. It is recounted that Menelik, the son of Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, brought the Ark of the Covenant to Axum almost 3000 years ago. It remains there to this day, preserved in a sanctuary. Famous long before the time of Christ, Axum was the capital of the long Axumite reign, one of the oldest African empires. Axum represented a crucial connecting-point between Africa and Asia for almost a thousand years.

Visit the steles: granite monoliths dating from pre-Christian times and decorated with symbolic engravings. In ancient times, there were seven steles. Now one of them is in Rome as Mussolini took it there during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. However it is now being prepared for its return to Ethiopia. Visit the city and marvel at the historic tomb of the former King Remehai and the Queen of Sheba's palace. Culminate this exciting day with a visit to the church of Saint Marry of Zion, the most important building in Axum, which contains the crowns of Ethiopian kings and other treasures. **Remhai Hotel or Yeha Hotel**

Day Eight Addis Ababa & Depart Ethiopia

Today you will fly back to Addis Ababa for an afternoon at leisure. You can visit Merkato, the biggest open-air market in Africa. Another interesting site is the Holy Trinity Cathedral, wherein lies buried Emperor Haile Selassie, the last of Ethiopia's emperors. Holy Trinity Cathedral is probably the largest of all the Ethiopian Orthodox churches in Addis. It was the favorite place of worship for Haile Sellassie. On the grounds of the Cathedral there are gravesites of the royalty and family. There are also memorials for soldiers who lost their lives defending the country. Within the Cathedral are the tombs of Haile Selassie and his wife, Mennen. Also present are the thrones they occupied during service.

Later today you will be transferred to the airport for your departing flight out of Africa.

End of Tour Arrangements

Private tours depart daily subject to availability. Please call for details.

When to go: The best time to visit the Ethiopian highlands in the north is October to June. From July to September, it is hotter and heavy rain occurs. Nighttime temperatures can fall to near or below freezing in the mountains, particularly during the dry season. Because of the elevation of the country, it is advisable to bring a sweater year-round.

Please note: We wish to re-emphasize that travel within Ethiopia is an adventure at every moment. Moderate fitness and a sense of adventure are very helpful for your enjoyment of this journey. Although Ethiopia is not a luxury destination, and accommodation outside of Addis Ababa is 2- or 3-star at best, any shortcomings in the accommodation and facilities within the country are far outweighed by the exquisite and unique culture, history and wildlife found in this amazing country.

Recommended add-on Private Safari & Travel Journeys:

- Omo Valley: Cultures of Southern Ethiopia – 7 Days / 6 Nights
- Gorillas in the Mist – 4 Days / 3 Nights



Ethiopian Orthodox Church religious festival (Ethiopia)

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