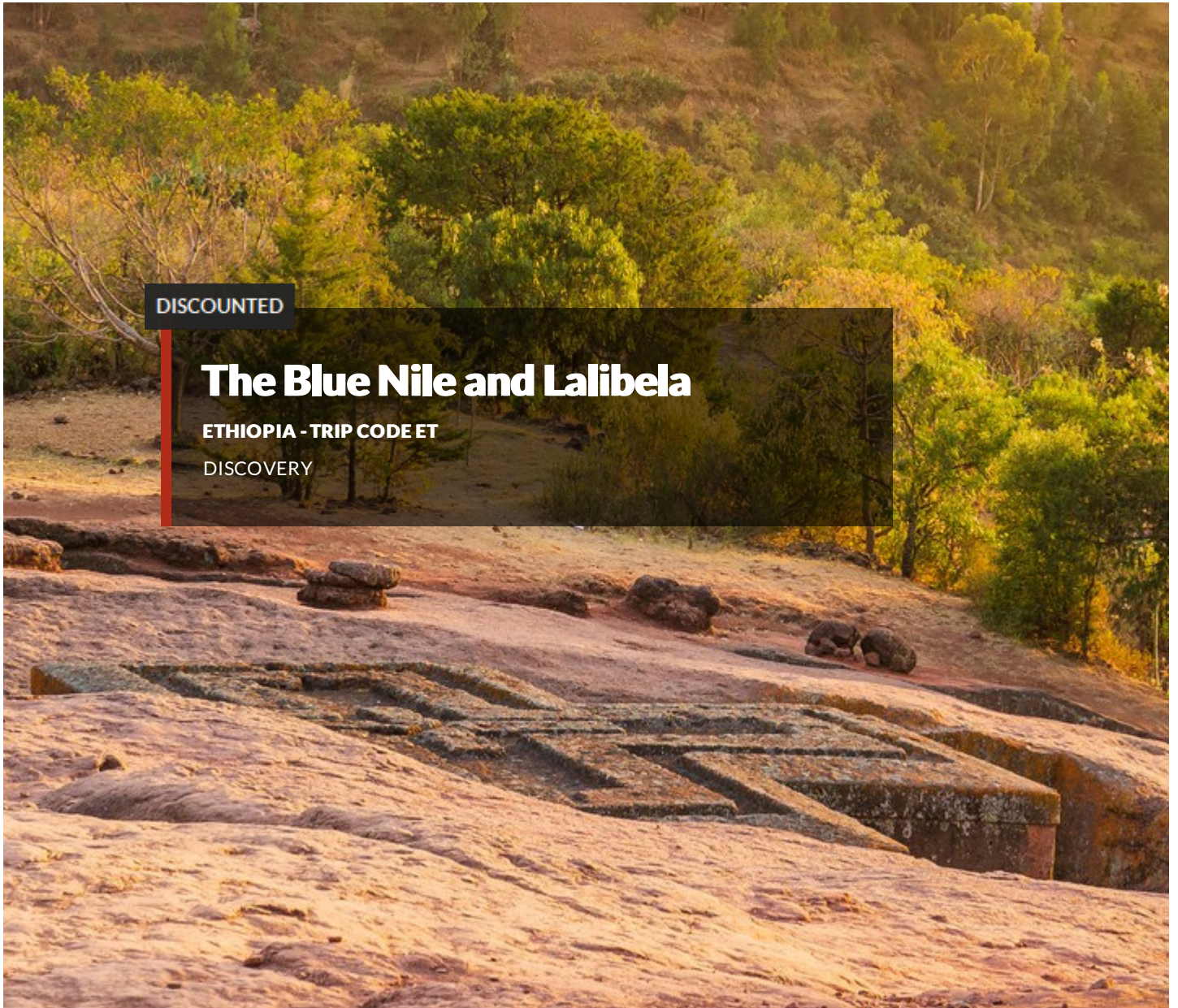


# EXPLORE!



## Why book this trip?

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Take a journey through one of Africa's least explored countries - a true blend of natural wonders and ancient history. The medieval town of Harar kicks-off a fortnight of exploring rock-hewn churches, rugged mountains and thundering waterfalls.

- **Lalibela** - Explore impressive churches carved in rocks
- **Simien Mountains** - Spectacular mountain scenery, home to the Gelada monkey
- **Harar** - A medieval walled city and the cradle of Islam in Ethiopia.



**INCLUDED MEALS**  
Breakfast: 13



**TRIP STAFF**  
Explore Tour  
Leader  
Boat Crew  
Driver(s)  
Local Guide(s)  
Muleteer(s)



**TRANSPORT**  
Bus  
Boat  
Flight



**ACCOMMODATION**  
9 nights  
comfortable hotel  
2 nights simple  
hotel  
2 nights hotel



**TRIP PACE:**  
Full on



**GROUP SIZE:**  
10 - 16

## Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

### DAY 1 - Trip starts in Addis. Afternoon city tour.

Arrive in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's bustling capital city. This morning your leader will meet you at 11am in the hotel reception for the Welcome Meeting. After a chance to hear about your exciting upcoming trip, your leader will assist in arranging lunch before an afternoon exploring the city and getting a taste for Ethiopia.

The tour will include some of the city's highlights, including the Church of the Holy Trinity, which with its large dome and slender pinnacles has become a landmark in the city. We'll also visit the Ethnographic Museum which is located in the attractive grounds of Addis University before ending the tour with a visit to the National Museum which houses 'Lucy'. Legendary 'Lucy' was discovered in Ethiopia in 1974 and is the partial remains of one of human kind's earliest ancestor, believed to be 3.2 million years old.

Tonight is free to experience one of the many restaurants in the city, and your leader will be happy to assist in making arrangements.



**ACCOMMODATION:**  
Jupiter International Hotel - Bole (or similar)

**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



**MEALS PROVIDED: NONE**

### DAY 2 - Morning flight to Mekele. Afternoon visit to Wukro Chirkos and Negash Mosque

We'll have an early start this morning due to our flight to Mekele. Arriving in Mekele around mid-morning, we'll venture out of the city straight away to visit the monolithic Wukro Chirkos about 90 minutes away. Wukro Chirkos has many tales surrounding its existence and when exactly it dates back too, but it's thought to be older than some of Lalibela's more famous rock-hewn churches and built somewhere in the region of 1,300 years ago.

From here, we'll continue on a short drive to Negash Mosque. One of the most sacred places of worship for Ethiopia's Muslim community, this ancient mosque is the burial site for Muslims who came to the Christian country of Abyssinia, now modern day Ethiopia, to escape persecution in the very early days of Islam.

Later this afternoon we'll make the 90 minute return drive to Mekele, our home for the next two nights. This evening we'll be a relaxed one ahead of a big day tomorrow.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Atse Yohannes Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 3 - Full day visit to Dallol National Park

Waking before the sun rises, a Dallol National Park visit requires a very early start but it's guaranteed to be worth it. Prepared with day bags and packed lunches, we'll travel for 4 hours this morning by 4WD away from any populated areas into the vast Danakil Depression. As we drive east the landscape changes dramatically, becoming unearthly and arid. Dallol is the result of changing geological activity and the bright yellow, green and red acidic pools are a colourful reminder you are standing in one of the earth's most uninhabitable places. We'll spend between 2 - 3 hours at the site before making the return journey.

Tonight will be free and a great chance to reflect on the amazing adventure that today has been.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Atse Yohannes Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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#### **DAY 4 - Morning flight to Addis Ababa. Free afternoon.**

This morning we'll return to Mekele airport for a mid-morning flight back to the country's capital, Addis. On arrival we'll check in to our hotel and your leader will be happy to advise on lunch recommendations.

After a very busy and long two days, your afternoon will be free to spend as you desire. Your leader will be on hand to give advice on how to spend your time, otherwise you may wish to visit Merkato; thought to be Africa's largest market and employing some 13,000 people. Broken down into different districts depending on the wares being sold, Merkato is a shock to all of the senses, and while you must remain vigilant (as with any busy area) you will be rewarded with fragrant spices, excellent souvenir ideas and an insight to daily life in Addis.



##### **ACCOMMODATION:**

Jupiter International Hotel - Cazanchis (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



**MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST**

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#### **DAY 5 - Fly to Bahar Dar**

We have a very early start this morning as we take a flight north to Bahar Dar, capital of the Amhara region and situated on the shores of Lake Tana. After checking into our hotel we take a one hour approximately cruise across the lake to the Zeghie Peninsula. Here we disembark and have a 15 minute walk along a rough pathway up to Bete Maryam Monastery also known as the House of Mary. This impressive building dates back to medieval times and contains valuable murals and religious treasures. After our visit we make our way back across the lake arriving at our hotel around mid-afternoon, and have the rest of the day free to enjoy the surroundings. Our hotel is positioned right on the shore line and provides a wonderful setting for a sundowner. We can also walk around the lake and into town from here, visiting the local market or relaxing in one of the coffee houses where we hope to see a traditional coffee ceremony.



##### **ACCOMMODATION:**

Tana Hotel (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



**SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE**





MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 6 - At Bahar Dar; visit Tississat Falls**

This morning you may choose to take an optional boat trip across the lake. Here we focus on the wildlife, as hippos, fish eagles, pelicans and other birdlife are often spotted at this early hour. After breakfast we drive a short distance south of Bahar Dar towards Tississat Falls, also known as Blue Nile Falls. We cross the Nile by a local boat before taking a 30 minute walk to the hill top viewpoint. From here, you can understand the Amharic translation for these falls - 'the Water that Smokes'. Unfortunately, the construction of a nearby hydroelectric plant dramatically reduces their volume on occasions, but they are still an impressive sight to behold. There may be the opportunity to extend our exploration to a further one hour circular walk which passes through small villages. After lunch we drive to where the river meanders towards the falls. Here it becomes the Blue Nile on its thousand-mile journey to meet the White Nile at Khartoum. Hippos can often be spotted from this viewpoint. Tonight is a free evening, you may like to sample the fresh fish in one of the local restaurants.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Tana Hotel (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 7 - Drive to Gondar**

Leaving Bahar Dar we drive across the Nile as we make our way towards Gondar, located on the high plateau just north of Lake Tana. We break the journey with a coffee stop in the town of Woreta, a bustling place where we enjoy the ambience of the locals walking to market. Gondar's most famous monuments are its exceptionally well preserved 17th century castles. The largest and best is that of King Fasilidas. It is a stone-built construction with round turrets and wooden balconies. The king also built remarkable baths a mile or so outside of town known as the 'Pavilion of Delight'. This whole complex of buildings is unique in Ethiopia and unlike anything found elsewhere in Africa.

We should arrive at Gondar in time for a quick lunch before spending the afternoon exploring these impressive sites as well as visiting the baths and the castle ruins. We also make a stop at Debre Berhan Selassie Church, famed for its ceiling frescoes of many faces.





ACCOMMODATION:  
Goha Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 8 - Drive to Debarq; walk in Simien Mountains

We can enjoy a relaxed morning and possibly a swim at our hotel in Gondar before getting back on the road and setting off for Debarq. This is about a four hour journey, and the scenery becomes increasingly spectacular as we head towards the Simien Mountains. Many of the peaks here rise above 4000m, the highest is Mount Ras Dashen which at 4543m and is the fifth highest in Africa. Debarq is a small town and is the gateway to the Simien Mountains. The facilities here are very basic but the locals are friendly and welcoming. We have dinner in our hotel and if lucky may be treated to some local music and dancing.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Sona Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 9 - In the Simien Mountains

Today we explore the Simien Mountains National Park on foot. It is a rough road from our hotel up into the mountains but the scenery more than makes up for it. With very few people venturing here we often have the mountains all to ourselves. Walking along well-worn tracks we keep a look out for the endemic gelada monkeys. They often appear as if from nowhere, in huge numbers, and are very relaxed in our company. We may sit with them for some time, just watching as the older ones groom each other whilst the youngsters play in the trees. We return to the bus for our packed lunch before taking a more

challenging walk this afternoon. This takes us higher into the mountains and the views are spectacular. We follow established tracks and incorporate numerous stops for rest and photos. If you prefer there is the option to remain on the bus should you not want to take the longer walk.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Sona Hotel (or similar)



**Grade: Simple Hotel**



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 10 - Drive to Axum**

Today is another long but incredible journey as we drive to Axum. The route takes us high over the Simien Mountains and down through the Tekeze Valley where giant baobab trees loom. This road has recently been completed and apart from the first 40km it is smooth asphalt the whole way. We enjoy plenty of photo stops and take a short walk through a village saying hello to the friendly locals. The sacred city of Axum sits in the Tigrayan region and was the capital of the Ethiopian empire between the 1st and 10th centuries AD. As the birthplace of Christianity within the country, it was also a bustling commercial centre. We arrive in time for dinner and enjoy a two night stay here.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Consular Hotel (or similar)



**Grade: Hotel**



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 11 - Sightseeing in Axum**

We have a full day exploring Axum by bus and on foot with our local guide. Evidence of its former importance now lies in several places in or near the town. Ruined fortresses, palaces and churches, plus an abundance of giant obelisks, or 'stelae', stand as mute reminders of its former glory. We clamber down numerous steps into dark tombs, one of which is believed to be that of King Balthazar, one of the Three Wise Men; whilst we also visit Axum Cathedral, the chandelier here a gift from Queen Elizabeth in the 1960's.

Axum claims to be the final resting place of the sacred Ark of the Covenant, but while its local guardians continue to celebrate the legend, the object of their veneration is kept strictly under wraps. There may be

some free time at the end of the day to take a stroll through the town visiting the large market square and browsing the shops.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Consular Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 12 - Fly to Lalibela, afternoon visit to Ashatan Maryam Church

Today we fly to Lalibela, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's most remarkable historic sites. Deemed 'The New Jerusalem' it is believed to have been constructed some 800 years ago by King Lalibela as his capital city. Lalibela is home to 11 medieval rock cut churches and although churches carved in rock are found in other parts of the world, the ones here are particularly significant. Excavated on all sides of a rectangle, a large block of granite was left, isolated in the centre. This rock was then shaped and formed both inside and out and the carvings show extremely skilful workmanship. This afternoon's tour around the churches involves a certain amount of scrambling along uneven paths and through a labyrinth of tunnels. The churches stand in two main groups on either side of a stream, known locally as 'The River Jordan'. The most impressive and well known of these is 'Bet Giorgis'. Carved in the form of a Greek cross it is approached through a passage in the rock. Between them, these rock-cut churches are one of the great wonders of the world. We spend the afternoon visiting a handful of the churches and will return to see the rest tomorrow.

In the evening we will witness the remarkable Timkat ceremony.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Lal Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 13 - Timkat Celebrations and visit rock cut churches

Today we wake early to see the Timkat ceremonies. This afternoon we will head off into the mountains that encircle Lalibela. Located among these peaks are several more isolated churches. Using mules, we journey for some two hours to Ashatan Maryam church and are rewarded with stunning views over



Lalibela and the peaks and mountains of these remote highlands. Reached by steep paths, it will be necessary to dismount in places due to the shaley path. Good footwear is a must! Vertigo sufferers or people with a low level of fitness may choose not to partake in the mule trek, your tour leader can advise you. In the afternoon, we return to Lalibela allowing more time to explore the rock-cut churches.



**ACCOMMODATION:**  
Lal Hotel (or similar)

**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



**MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST**

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### **DAY 14 - Fly back to Addis**

This morning we will take a flight back to the capital, Addis Ababa, and enjoy a free afternoon in the capital.



**MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST**

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## **Trip information**

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### **Country information**

#### **Ethiopia**

##### **Climate**

Ethiopia is generally pleasant and warm, but varies with altitude. The long rains usually arrive mid-June to early September and the short rains between mid-February and April although this pattern has been completely erratic in recent times. After the rains, the highlands of northern Ethiopia are usually green and thus particularly scenic. The temperature all year round rarely falls below 18°C. Night-time temperatures in the mountains can be cold and can drop below freezing at higher altitude. There is a strong risk of sunburn at high altitude in Ethiopia. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable.

<b>Time difference to GMT</b>	<b>Plugs</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Language</b>
+3	2 Pin Round	Christian, Islam	Amharic, English

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## **Budgeting and packing**

### **Optional activities**

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Addis Abba - National museum £1

Bahar Dar - Sunrise boat trip £7 (minimum 5 people to operate)

### **Clothing**

Daytime temperatures are mainly warm and comfortable but evenings in the highlands can be cold. We recommend a thick jumper or warm fleece and lightweight wind/waterproof clothing. Take a sun hat.

### **Footwear**

Comfortable, good walking shoes with ankle support are strongly recommended as well as comfortable sandals.

### **Luggage**

20kg

### **Luggage: On tour**

One main piece of baggage and a daypack. Please note that there is a weight restriction of 7kg for hand luggage/daypack for international and internal flights.

### **Equipment**

Bring sun cream, a torch and memory cards for your camera. An insect repellent against fleas could be useful for the churches at Lalibela.

### **Tipping**

#### **Explore leader**

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. However, you might want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we'd recommend between £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline.

#### **Local crew**

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order

to make things easier for you, your leader may organise a group's tips kitty for included activities and meals and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow US\$50.00 per person for tipping of local drivers, guides, boat crew and for any miscellaneous tipping of hotel staff.

## Ethiopia

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£3 - 5	£6 - 10	£1.5	£1

### Foreign Exchange

#### Local currency

Ethiopian Birr.

#### Recommended Currency For Exchange

It is advisable to take your spending money in Sterling, Euros or US Dollars cash (high denomination notes usually get better exchange rates). Please note that any pre- 1999 or torn US Dollar bills will not be accepted in Ethiopia. Please keep any receipts as you may be able to change back any unused local currency.

#### Where To Exchange

Your Tour leader will advise you.

#### ATM Availability

Very Limited.

#### Credit Card Acceptance

Limited.

#### Travellers Cheques

Very difficult to exchange and are not recommended.

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## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Flight

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## Essential Information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and

customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

### **Under 18 immigration guidance**

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### **Price Guarantee**

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### **Visa and Passport Information**

Ethiopia: Visas for UK nationals can be obtained on arrival, although this can change at short notice, and you should be prepared to queue on arrival. Please ensure you have 2 recent passport sized photos with you when applying on arrival, these may or may not be asked for.

For a single entry visa you can apply via the e-visa website: <https://www.evisa.gov.et/#/home>. You will need to print a copy of your evisa approval letter and present this with your passport at immigration upon your arrival. The approval letter will take a minimum of 3 days to be processed so we strongly advise for you to apply within plenty of time before your departure. You will be permitted to stay within Ethiopia for upto 30 days or upto 90 days depending on which single entry visa you request. We strongly recommend for you to read the Help section on the e-visa website before applying.

You will receive a visa information letter that will state the trip's first night's hotel details for completing your visa application.

If you are arriving into Ethiopia on the first day of the trip please enter the details for the Harar hotel advised on the visa information letter.

If you are arriving into Ethiopia before the first day of the trip and you have booked pre trip accommodation with Explore please enter the details for the Addis Ababa hotel detailed on the visa information letter.

If you have booked your pre trip hotel independently, please use the details for the hotel you have booked.

Should you wish to apply for a visa prior to departure via the consulate in the UK, please note that a single entry visa is valid for 30 days from the date of issue, so you must submit your application no more than two weeks prior to departure. It is also possible to apply for a multi-entry visa which is valid for 3 months from issue.

#### **Important Information for Land Only Customers:**

In order for your domestic flight tickets to be issued for your trip, they must be allocated to an international flight ticket. If you have booked your trip on a land only basis, please contact us at least 60 days prior to your departure with the name of your airline and airline reference details for your international flights.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply through Explore's

recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

## Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

## Transfers

Find out more about [Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions](#) before you book.

### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will

exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## **Flight information**

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them here.

### **Flight Information**

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### **Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore**

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## **Ethiopia**

### **Vaccinations**

We recommend protection against malaria, hepatitis A, diphtheria, tetanus, typhoid and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on the Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Although the risk is low you may also consider immunisation against rabies and meningococcal meningitis. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against Malaria. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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### **Additional Information**





## Reviews



AWARD WINNING  
EXPLORE LEADERS



PRICE GUARANTEE  
PROMISE



AIRPORT  
TRANSFERS