



BEST SELLER

Highlights of Ethiopia

ETHIOPIA - TRIP CODE ET

DISCOVERY

Why book this trip?

Take a journey through one of Africa's least explored countries - a true blend of natural wonders and ancient history. A visit to the dramatic, arid landscapes of the Danakil Depression kicks-off an adventurous fortnight of discovery, including Lalibela's rock-hewn churches and the rugged Simien Mountains.

- **Lalibela** - Explore the ancient monolithic churches that have been so well preserved in this valley-hidden town
- **Simien Mountains** - Walk through the spectacular mountain scenery, home to the gelada monkey
- **Dallol** - See the unique geology of this acidic volcano's brightly coloured springs and geysirs

- **Timkat Festival** - Visit Ethiopia during one of the holiest times in the Orthodox calendar

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| INCLUDED MEALS Breakfast: 13 Lunch: 3 Dinner: 1 | TRIP STAFF Explore Tour Leader Boat Crew Driver(s) Local Guide(s) Muleteer(s) | TRANSPORT Bus Boat Flight | ACCOMMODATION 11 nights comfortable hotel 2 nights simple 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 - Join trip in Addis Adaba and spend the afternoon visiting the city's highlights

Arrive in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital city and the political capital of Africa. Barely more than a century old, the city is home to both the African Union and United Nations Economic Commission of Africa, playing a strategic role in the continents politics. As a busy international and domestic hub, the city is the gateway to Ethiopia's geological, religious and historical highlights.

Today our Leader will meet you in the hotel reception at 11.30am for the welcome meeting, followed by lunch in the hotel's restaurant before departing for an afternoon guided tour of Addis' highlights. After lunch we will start our tour visiting three of the city's most important sites; Holy Trinity Cathedral, the Ethnological Museum and the National Museum.

As the final resting place of much-loved Haile Selassie, Holy Trinity Cathedral is one of the country's most sacred places of worship. Visiting on day one begins to develop an understanding of the intrinsic role that religion plays in an Ethiopians' day to day life.

Next we'll visit the National Museum, home to one of the world's most important palaeontological exhibits in the world; 'Lucy'. Discovered in 1974 in Ethiopia's Afar region, these partial ancestral remains are believed to be 3.2 million years old and significantly changed the scientific understanding of evolution. Finally, this afternoon we'll visit Addis' Ethnological Museum housed in Haile Selassie's former palace. The museum's exhibits are a great introduction to life throughout Ethiopia, with displays set in a chronological order to take you through traditions of childhood, adulthood and death.

If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer this morning, you'll need to arrive into Addis Ababa Bole International Airport (ADD).

If you wish to join this afternoon's city tour, you must arrive at the hotel by 1pm. If you are booking your own flights, we recommend giving yourself at least 90 minutes to clear the airport. From the airport to the hotel is around 15 minutes' drive, so therefore the latest your flight can arrive is 11.15am. Should you miss the welcome meeting, your Leader will inform you of any essential information as soon as you catch up.

Please note: A majority of flights will land into Addis Adaba in the early morning and it's often too early to be able to check straight in to your room. However, early check-in is requested but is subject to availability, and early arrivals will have access to the bar and restaurant, toilets and the hotel lobby.



ACCOMMODATION:

Jupiter International Hotel - Bole (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: LUNCH

DAY 2 - A guided visit to Unity Park in Addis before flying to Mekele in the country's historic north

This morning we will visit Unity Park. Newly opened in 2019, Unity Park is set upon the grounds of the old Grand Imperial Palace. The palace was originally constructed under the reign of Emperor Menelik, and has since been the decision-making seat of Ethiopia: successive occupiers included both Ethiopia's final emperor Haile Selassie and the Marxist President Mengistu. Closed to the public eye for many years, and once used as a torture chamber, the palace has been renovated and now sits proudly within the indigenous, botanical garden. A symbol of Ethiopia's growth from poverty, Unity Park represents a change of times in the country, as our local guide will be pleased to explain.

We'll return to the hotel in time for some free time for lunch, before collecting luggage and transferring to the airport for our late afternoon flight north to Mekele. This ancient town is the political capital of the Tigray region and the gateway to one of Ethiopia's most impressive geological areas, the Danakil Depression. The evening is free for you to get some rest ahead of a very early wake-up call for tomorrow's adventure.



ACCOMMODATION:

Axum Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Explore the other-worldly landscapes of the Danakil Depression

Waking before the sun rises, our 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 four hours this morning by 4WD away from any populated areas into the vast Danakil Depression. Along the way we may see traditional and ancient scenes of this region; camel caravans. Tribal Afar people have called this inhospitable region home for many centuries and continue to make their living now just as they did hundreds of years ago, by collecting salt from the desert and transporting it back to the towns to sell in the market. These nomads live a life that spans different countries but have no sense of borders, no nationality and no political rights.

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. When we arrive there will be plenty of time to walk around the colourful pools, learn about the unique geology from our local guide and of course take photos of the spectacular scenery. The time spent here depends on the heat but generally we spend around 1 - 2 hours at Dallol before the return journey.

After a very busy day, your evening is free to relax.



ACCOMMODATION:
Axum Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

DAY 4 - Drive to Axum, along the way visit historic Negash Mosque and Ethiopia's oldest archaeological site, The Great Temple of Yeha

This morning we will depart Mekele to begin our journey around Ethiopia's 'Historical Route', first making our way to ancient Axum.

Today's drive takes most of the day but will be broken up with plenty of stops along the way. We'll drive for about one hour before stopping at Negash Mosque; the first mosque in Africa. Muslim refugees are said to have come to Ethiopia, then the Kingdom of Abyssinia, escaping persecution in Mecca in the 7th century. In most areas of the country, Muslims and Christians live side by side in harmony. We'll be guided around the mosque and told of its historical significance, and there may be the chance to meet the imam.

Continuing our journey, we'll drive for another three hours, stopping for a picnic lunch, before arriving at The Great Temple of Yeha. Dating back some 3,000 years, this pagan site was first professionally excavated in the early 1900's and is a great reminder of how long Ethiopia has played a role in human civilisation, predating both Islam and Christianity. A guide will show us around the compound explaining the significance of the stone structure, including the extremely advanced joinery, and what the excavations have uncovered so far. We'll then continue on to Axum, the sacred home of biblical Queen of

Sheba and the Ark of the Covenant.

We'll arrive into the dusty city of Axum in the late afternoon. For a city of such historical significance, its surprisingly small and charming. We'll be staying in a centrally located hotel, along the main street lined with trees and busy with bajaj taxis, Ethiopia's version of an auto rickshaw. This evening you're free to choose somewhere for dinner and the Italian influence can easily be found with many good coffee and pizza options.



ACCOMMODATION:

Yared Zema Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 5 - Discover Axum with a local guide, including the ancient obelisks and St Mary of Zion

After a relaxing breakfast, we will spend the day exploring Axum with a local guide. Evidence of the city's former glory as the capital of the Axumite Kingdom can be easily found in the ruins of palaces and churches, plus an abundance of giant obelisks that stand as mute reminders of a mysterious past.

We'll take a short drive to a hill just north of Axum to visit King Kaleb's tomb. King Kaleb is the most documented Axumite King, who extended the powers of the Axumite kingdom far beyond modern day Eritrea and Ethiopia but all the way across the seas to southern Arabia. With our local guide we'll descend down the stone stairways into the stone-carved tombs. As well as the monarchical history, it's the precision in the stonework that is a wonder to see and a mystery to archaeologists.

Another key landmark we'll explore is the stelae field where granite obelisks dating back to the 6th and 7th centuries can be found. It's thought that 90% of the original stelae field has since been built upon by unknowing residents, so what we see today is just a peek into Africa's most powerful kingdom. The tallest standing obelisk is 24 meters and weighs a huge 160 tonnes but the largest constructed was a huge 33 metres tall and still lays exactly where it fell a few steps away. The Axum obelisks are particularly noteworthy because while monolithic structures were a traditional burial practice across all of Saharan Africa during early pagan times, none have been as large or created as much mystery as those found in Axum. Depending on any ongoing excavation, we will hopefully be able to go inside one of the underground tombs to learn more about the Axumite burials. We'll also visit Axum museum on the same site.

Just across the road, behind the Jacaranda trees, is the Church of our Lady Mary of Zion compound, allegedly, the final resting place of the sacred Ark of the Covenant. We'll visit the church complex that is home to three scared buildings; the large 1950s Lady Mary of Zion Cathedral built by Haile Selassie as somewhere to bring men and women together in prayer, the older 17th century Old Church of Lady Mary of Zion that is only open to men, and the small Chapel of the Covenant, said to be home to the Ark, and closed off to all visitors. We'll have time to go inside the modern Orthodox cathedral to see the brightly coloured art that adorns the walls, and while the males in our group will be able to visit the old church too, there will be time to wander around the pretty courtyard - a great place for people watching - as well as hear the tales of the Ark from our guide. As the Ark itself is not allowed to be seen, biblical historians

and archaeologists the world over have differing opinions on whether this can be true but to Christian Ethiopians this is fact.

Today's running order is dependent on the crowds at each site and our guide will plan accordingly. At the end of the day, there may be some time to take a stroll through the town visiting the large market square and browsing the many stalls and small shops before making your way back to the hotel.



ACCOMMODATION:

Yared Zema Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Drive through the mountainous Tekeze Valley to Debark, the gateway to the Simien Mountains

We'll be up bright and early this morning for breakfast and to pack up the bus ahead of our long but incredible journey to Debark, the gateway to the Simien Mountains.

The full day drive takes us high over the Simien Mountains and through the Tekeze Valley where giant baobab trees loom. This road has recently been completed and is now smooth asphalt for a majority of the route, and the drive usually takes around seven to eight hours. Our leader will ensure there are plenty of comfort stops, photo opportunities and a break for lunch in one of the many villages we pass.

We should arrive into Debark in the late afternoon. Virtually untouched by tourism other than those coming through on their way to the mountains, Debark is a small roadside town with just a few simple hotels. We will be staying in a centrally located, family run property and there is a cafe-bar on site, which although modest in its appearance serves great coffee and a good selection of local beers. While there are a small number of places serving food in the town, the hotel is often the best opportunity for a wholesome evening meal.



ACCOMMODATION:

Simien Park Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Walk in the awe-inspiring Simien Mountain National Park and search for gelada monkey grazing on the plateau

We'll have an early breakfast this morning before driving 45 minutes into the Simien Mountains National Park, where we will begin our walks. It is a rough road from our hotel up into the mountains but the scenery more than makes up for it.

A UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of Ethiopia's main attractions, the mountain range is quiet and we are often the only ones out on the trails. While a wildlife viewing can never be guaranteed, one of the highlights of walking in this outstanding area is the chance to spot the endemic gelada monkeys. Often quietly appearing from over the hillside in huge numbers, the gelada monkeys are the last living species of the ancient grazing primates and are very relaxed in human company. If we're lucky enough to find them, we'll take the time to sit with them for a while, just watching as the older ones groom one another and the young ones play. As we sit quietly with just our camera clicks for noise, the monkeys will often approach and sit close without any concern. After some time, we'll collect our packed lunches from the bus and make our way to a viewpoint to eat before beginning our second walk this afternoon.

Today will be made up of two walks, taking around 90 minutes each, split by a picnic lunch break at a viewpoint. The walks are along well-worn trails but can be rocky underfoot with steep ascents and descents in places. The porters are with the group to assist but a general level of fitness is required to complete the walks. Good walking shoes and a hat are absolutely essential, and a walking pole is recommended if you're used to using one. Our leader will stop often for short breaks and photo opportunities but as the walks are at altitude anyone can struggle and it's essential to notify the leader if you feel unwell. The bus remains in the park throughout the day so the second walk is optional and those who would like to give it a miss can be driven to the end point to meet the group.



ACCOMMODATION:
Simien Park Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Simple Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

DAY 8 - Drive to Gondar and explore the medieval castles and holy baths

Leaving Debarke after breakfast this morning, we make our way towards medieval town of Gondar, located on the high plateau just north of Lake Tana. The drive will take all morning and we should arrive to our accommodation around lunchtime. Our hotel is located on a hill above Gondar and the terrace, with a swimming pool, is a great spot to enjoy the views. We'll arrive with time for a quick lunch break at the hotel's restaurant before we meet our local guide for this afternoon's visit to Gondar's famous monuments.

Gondar is most famous for its exceptionally well preserved 17th century castles. With architecture which is unexpected in Africa, the castles were built here as part of King Fasilidas royal camp and our local guide will tell us the history of this royal enclosure. The same king also built remarkable baths a short drive away, known as the 'Pavilion of Delight' which we will also visit. These baths have the feeling of

being lost in time where the surrounding nature has quite simply taken over, and yet remain in use regularly for holy festivals due to their sacred significance. The entire royal complex of buildings in Gondar is unique in Ethiopia and unlike anything found elsewhere in Africa.

We also visit Debre Berhan Selassie Church. Set in a peaceful walled garden, this pretty, thatched-roof church is famed for its ceiling frescoes of angel faces. Men and women can both enter using separate entrances and inside this small church icons and biblical artwork cover the walls.

This evening will be free to relax, perfect for a sundowner on the terrace.



ACCOMMODATION:
Goha Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 9 - A free morning to relax before an afternoon drive to the lakeside town of Bahir Dar

There's no rush this morning as we take some time to enjoy the relaxing setting of our hotel. Take a lazy breakfast on the terrace, have some time to swim or take a taxi into town for the chance to wander around the art-deco, Italian built town centre.

Around midday we will depart the hotel and head into the centre of Gondar for a lunch stop; choose from one of the Italian-inspired cafes or join the locals for traditional shiro wat, a spicy chickpea stew.

This afternoon's drive will take around four hours, ending in our home for the next three nights, Bahir Dar, the capital of the Ethiopia's Amhara region. Our hotel is brilliantly positioned right on the shore line of Lake Tana with a big, shady garden which is a perfect spot to sit watching the many birds in the trees and see the sun go down over the lake. This evening is free and options include eating in the hotel's humble restaurant which serves good Ethiopian and European food, or perhaps taking a bajaj taxi into the town centre for a fresh, grilled fish dinner.



ACCOMMODATION:
Tana Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 10 - See the lake come to life on an optional sunrise boat trip, followed by a walk to Blue Nile Falls

This morning there is the chance an optional sunrise boat trip on the lake. The trip requires a very early start as we head out before the dawn, but the sunrise makes it worth it! Armed with cameras and a warm jumper we'll be taken out on the lake with a local guide who will aim to help us spot some of the lake's resident wildlife, including hippos, fish eagles, pelicans and other bird life as this body of water comes to life. It's also a wonderful insight into life on the shore side, as we watch many local fishermen take to the water in their papyrus canoes and the main commuter ferry chug slowly along the water.

Returning to the hotel for a hearty breakfast, we will drive to south of Bahir Dar towards Tississat Falls, also known as Blue Nile Falls. Although only 30km from the centre of town the journey takes around 90 minutes due to the poor road conditions, however, the road itself is lined with villages and farms the whole way so there is plenty to see. Together with a leader and a local guide, we will take a five minute boat ride across the Nile to begin a 30 minute walk to our first viewpoint. From here, you will begin to understand the Amharic translation for these falls - 'the Water that Smokes'. After time to have a coffee with the locals in the shade, we will continue with the walk for a further one hour passing through quiet countryside before meeting the bus and returning to Bahir Dar in time for lunch.

Later this afternoon there will also be the option to go with our local guide by bus to a viewpoint high above Bahir Dar. This evening is then free to do as you choose.

Please note: The volume of water at Blue Nile Falls can be unpredictable particularly in Nov/Dec due to the nearby hydro-electric plant. The water can be reduced or diverted entirely without notice.



ACCOMMODATION:
Tana Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 11 - Cruise out across Lake Tana to Zeghie Peninsular visit 13th century Bet Maryam

We will walk down the hotel's dock again after breakfast to join our local guide on a cruise across the lake to the Zeghie Peninsular. Set at the southern end of Lake Tana, this headland is home to ancient monasteries hidden among lush forest that buzzes with bird life and butterflies. On arrival, we follow a rough pathway, through fruit and coffee trees for about 15 minutes before reaching the 13th century Bete Maryam Monastery. Also known as the House of Mary, this active monastery is the oldest on the peninsular and home to some 10 monks. With walls constructed from mud and ceilings made of bamboo and juniper the building itself is impressive to see. The valuable murals inside date back to the 16th century and were created with paints derived from the surrounding flora.

After our visit we'll make our way back to the boat. As we will be within Lake Tana Biosphere Reserve, there is the opportunity to spot a wide variety of impressive birds in the canopy, including the yellow-fronted parrot and malachite kingfisher.

Arriving back at our hotel in the early afternoon, we'll have the rest of the day free to enjoy the surroundings or you may like to take a walk to the nearby winery offering a selection of Ethiopian wine.



ACCOMMODATION:
Tana Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 12 - Fly to Lalibela, explore ancient rock-hewn churches and see the Timkat celebrations begin

This morning we depart the shores of Lake Tana and take a short flight to Lalibela, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's most remarkable historic sites.

Upon landing at Lalibela's tiny airport, we will meet our driver for the next two days and take the rough, ascending road to the town about 30 minutes away. Deemed 'The New Jerusalem' it is believed the town was constructed some 800 years ago by King Lalibela as his capital city. We'll have some time for lunch before heading out with a local guide this afternoon to begin exploring this historic treasure.

Lalibela is home to 11 rock-hewn monolithic churches split into the northern and southern clusters, which stand on either side of a stream, known locally as 'The River Jordan'. Although churches carved into rock are found in other parts of the world, the ones in Lalibela are particularly grand and the carvings show extremely skilful workmanship. The stories of how the churches were constructed vary slightly depending on the story-teller but all such descriptions highlight how strong the Ethiopian's faith is. This afternoon we focus on the northern cluster; it's a privilege to be able to visit the site as these churches are not simply a historic attraction but are actually still in use by the local Christian community and host regular mass.

The final church we'll visit this afternoon stands in isolation, a short walk from the others and that is the magnificent Bet Giyorgis. 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. This afternoon's tour does involve a certain amount of scrambling along uneven paths and through tunnels, so good walking shoes are essential.

This evening we will witness the preparations for tomorrow's remarkable Timkat ceremony. This Orthodox Christian event celebrates the Ethiopian Epiphany marking the baptism of Jesus Christ in the River Jordan. This evening the build-up to Timkat begins, and we will join the crowds to see priests from different monasteries parade their church's Tabot through the streets in a procession made up of hundreds of pilgrims. This huge celebratory procession makes its way to a ceremonial spot where the priests will remain with the Tabots all night in prayer.



ACCOMMODATION:

Mountain View Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 13 - Join the Timkat celebrations

We will have a very early start today, in time to see the Timkat processions continue. For many this day is sacred and the streets will be full with pilgrims dressed in white, similar to scenes described in the Bible; like stepping back in time. This morning we will see each priest christen their Tabot and congregation in holy water as musicians and the crowds create a rhythmical drumming beat. From here, each congregation will follow their priest on the return procession, before everyone gets together for the Timkat feast.

After a morning quite unlike any other, we will spend the afternoon visiting the southern cluster of churches with our guide. The historical facts about the churches of the southern cluster are somewhat vague, and legend tends to creep in. Some believe the churches of Lalibela were built in a night with the help of angels, some say it took nearly a quarter of a century, while more modern estimates say the carving of these monolithic structures would have taken centuries. No matter which you believe, once standing within the church complex you can't help but get wrapped up in the mystery of it all.

This evening is free and there are many local restaurants to choose from, including the legendary Ben Abeba. Run by business partners Susan, from Scotland, and Ethiopian Habtamu, this unusual looking restaurant serves locally-sourced Ethiopian dishes with a twist.

Please note: Over the days of Timkat, Lalibela will be very busy with both pilgrims and visitors, and so churches may be closed without notice or access limited. Your leader will advise you on any changes.



ACCOMMODATION:
Mountain View Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 14 - Fly from Lalibela to Addis Ababa where the trip ends

This morning we fly from Lalibela to Addis Ababa where the trip ends. Ethiopian Airlines confirm our internal flights timings from Lalibela to Addis Ababa four weeks before departure and internal flights can be subject to last minute changes. Therefore, the official end of the trip is 4pm in Addis Ababa. If you're arranging your own international flights, the earliest your flight can depart from Addis Ababa Bole International Airport (ADD) is 7pm, allowing time for the recommended three hour check-in.

For all customers departing later in the evening from Addis Ababa Bole International Airport (ADD), shared dayroom facilities will be provided until 7pm. Once checked out the luggage will be loaded on to the bus and we will depart for one final meal together before we transfer to the airport.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

Trip information

Climate and 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.

| Time difference to GMT | Plugs | Religion | Language |
|------------------------|-------------|------------------|------------------|
| +3 | 2 Pin Round | Christian, Islam | Amharic, English |

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.

Bahir Dar - Sunrise boat trip ETB 200 (minimum 5 people to operate)

Clothing

Daytime temperatures are mainly warm and comfortable but early morning and evenings in the highlands can be cold. We recommend layers and a thick jumper or fleece, plus a lightweight wind/waterproof

jacket. A hat is essential.

Take swimwear if you plan to use the hotel's pools.

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

A hat and sun cream are essential throughout the trip. A torch can be useful in the case of power outages.

For the walking in the Simien Mountains and Lalibela, a pair of good walking shoes/boots are essential and walking pole(s) if you use these regularly.

A filter water bottle is very useful on this trip to ensure you have access to clean drinking water at all times.

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.

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|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 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.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Flight

Accommodation notes

Ethiopia's infrastructure for tourism is still very much developing and once outside of Addis Ababa the standards vary dramatically. A majority of our accommodation choices are rated as 'comfortable' because they all have en-suite facilities, are clean and have the expected amenities including towels and bedding.

However, the comfortable hotels are not comparable to European standard, so be prepared for power and hot water shortages, also low water pressure can be an issue. Most properties have wifi, however, it can be intermittent and often only available in the hotel's common areas. Rooms do not have mosquito nets, so bring this with you should you wish to use one. Hotels do not often provide toiletries so please ensure you pack your own.

In Debarke we stay in a simple, family-run property. Each room is ensuite but rooms are more basic with very simple furnishings.

Hotel restaurants generally serve good Ethiopian food but menus will be simple and similar at each, and while the service is often friendly it can be slow.

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety 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, Commonwealth & Development 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 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 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

A Yellow Fever vaccination and certificate maybe required when travelling to Ethiopia, please check with your doctor/travel health centre. 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.

Additional Information

Why book this trip

This trip is for travellers who want to get to grips with Ethiopia; as one of just two African countries not to be colonised, Ethiopia has a long, colourful history that has developed into a culture quite unlike anywhere else. There will be a chance to taste the food, learn about the religions that dominate day to day life and explore the lunar like landscapes of the Danakil and rugged terrain of the Simien Mountains.

Reviews



AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS



PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE



AIRPORT
TRANSFERS