

EXPLORE!

Ethiopia in Depth
13 days

Ethiopia - Trip code SHE



Ethiopia in Depth

On this tour lecturer, writer and photographer Chris Bradley will guide us through Ethiopia's unique history, myths and legends. We visit many of the country's natural and cultural highlights, including the Tississat Falls and the rock-cut churches of Tigray and Lalibela. We also explore Fasiladas' castle complex at Gondar and the 3000-year-old temple at Yeha.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Travel with Chris Bradley** - Learn about the history and archaeology of Ethiopia from a knowledgeable lecturer
- ★ **Tigray and Lalibela** - Explore impressive churches carved in rocks
- ★ **Bahar Dar** - Walk to the top of Tississat Falls, the 'Water that Smokes'
- ★ **Axum and Yeha** - Obelisks, temples and palaces in the final resting place of the Ark of Covenant
- ★ **Simien Mountains** - Rugged and spectacular mountain scenery
- ★ **Gondar** - Exceptionally well preserved castles from the 17th Century

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Join tour Addis Ababa

Addis is situated at an elevation of around 2438m and is only about a century old. It has some elegant modern buildings and is quite spacious with wide streets and green areas. It remains the capital of a predominantly rural area. This afternoon we will make an orientation tour of the city visiting the two major highlights of the city, the Ethnographic Museum and the church of the Holy Trinity, whose large dome and slender pinnacles make it a landmark in the city.



Accommodation: Ghion Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - To Debre Markos via the holy site of Debre Markos

Today we start our journey and drive to Debre Markos paying a visit to Debre Libanos on the way. It is not hard to see why Debre Libanos was selected as a holy site. For hundreds of years it was probably the most holy site of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It was founded by Saint Tekle Haymanot, who Christianised much of present day Ethiopia and today one of its most revered saints. The current church was built in the 1950s, and the site is impressively set beneath a cliff on the edge of a gorge and is a peaceful place to wander. It is here in a nearby cave that Tekle Haymanot reputedly stood on one leg for 7 years. It is believed that he survived on one

seed a year, fed to him by a bird and as a result of this habit his leg fell off.



Accommodation: Gozamen Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - To Bahar Dar via the Blue Nile; visit the Tississat Falls

The Blue Nile begins its journey in the Ethiopian highlands, many believe from the waters of Lake Tana itself and from there continues its epic odyssey, joining forces with the White Nile at Khartoum, before finally reaching its end at the Mediterranean, some 2,750 miles away. Situated on the shores of Lake Tana, Bahar Dar is the capital of the Amhara region and an important centre for trade and commerce. Over the centuries it's been the sight of a number of temporary capitals for Ethiopian kings and its setting on the shores of the lake makes it an attractive town to base ourselves as we explore more of the surrounding area. This afternoon we visit Tississat Falls, Amharic for 'water that smokes' located about 32km south of Bahar Dar. After crossing a 16th century Portuguese built bridge, we plan to walk up the hillside on an easy path to a viewpoint (approximately 45 minutes). From here we hope to see the falls, measuring some 400m across and dropping 45m into a deep chasm (viewing of the falls is subject to local authorities allowing water to flow from the Blue Nile dam).



Accommodation: Tana Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Boat trip on Lake Tana; drive to Gondar

We spend this morning aboard a boat travelling on Lake Tana visiting some of the historical places which have been used for refuge over the centuries. These secure lush islands have protected Christian emperors and their riches during times of upheaval and invasion, and might even have played host to the Ark of the Covenant. Small well-protected churches still contain religious treasures within their sanctuaries, including crowns and chalices. We hope to include visits to Ura Kidane Mehret and Azwa Mariam on the Zeghie peninsula, dating back to medieval times and containing valuable manuscripts and vestments. This afternoon we will continue our journey by driving to Gondar.



Accommodation: Goha Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - In Gondar; visit Debre Berhan Selassie church and castle complex

Located on the high plateau, Gondar was once the imperial capital of Ethiopia for 200 years. 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 a remarkable bath 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. This afternoon, as well as visiting the castle ruins, we'll also make a visit to the Debre Berhan Selassie Church famed for its ceiling frescoes of many faces.



Accommodation: Goha Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Drive to Debarq; walk in the Simien Mountains

A morning's drive takes us to Debarq in the Simien Mountains. The range lies north of Gondar and many of the peaks rise above 4000m, with the highest peak of Mt. Ras Dashen at 4543m being the fifth highest in Africa. The mountains are criss-crossed with tracks worn out by the local people travelling from village to village or moving their animals to fresh pastures. The combination of these tracks and the spectacular scenery make for excellent walking. We will take a short trek this afternoon to enjoy this region. There maybe time today to visit Wolleka Falasha village. The Falasha Jews are thought to have arrived in Ethiopia 3,000 years ago at the time of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, but their history is shrouded in mystery. The name Falasha means 'exiled' in Amharic, and they themselves claim decent from Moses - it is interesting to note that according to the Bible, Moses took an Ethiopian wife. Almost all of the Ethiopian Jews were taken to Israel during the wars and famines of the 1980s and 90s, but they have found it difficult to assimilate themselves into the modern Israeli lifestyle.



Accommodation: Simien Park Hotel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Drive to Axum; the former capital of the Ethiopian empire

Although the roads are rough and dusty, the views in this remote part of Ethiopia are simply spectacular and more than make up for them. The drive affords some excellent photo opportunities of the jagged Simien Mountains and the Tekeze Valley. The route is dotted with intermittent mountain hamlets that add to the splendour of the scenery. Our journey brings us to the sacred city of Axum in the Tigrayan region, that 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. Should the road to Axum be impassable due to local conditions, we plan to return to Gondar and fly to Axum.



Accommodation: Yared Zema Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Sightseeing in Axum

Evidence of Axum's former importance now lies at several points in or near the town. Ruined fortresses, palaces and churches, plus an abundance of giant obelisks or 'stelae', carved from enormous slabs of granite stand as mute reminders of its former glory. Axum makes claim 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.



Accommodation: Yared Zema Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Drive and visit Yeha and Adwa; continue to Adigrat

Today we head east from Axum to Yeha, said to be Ethiopia's oldest settlement, probably dating back almost 3,000 years. A large temple, dedicated to the moon god Ilmuqah, is related to other pagan temples to the same god in Yemen, indicating connections across the Red Sea from the earliest times. The temple was later converted into a church in the 6th century, but still has wonderful friezes of ibex carved into the façade. En route we shall make a visit to the important town of Adwa, set amidst rugged mountains. It was at Adwa that the Ethiopians became the first African nation to repel a colonial power, when they defeated the Italian army in 1896. Since then, Ethiopia has been a symbol of African independence, free from European control. We will visit the Saturday market here. This afternoon we continue to the town of Adigrat.



Accommodation: Agoro Lodge (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Visit Tigray churches; continue to Mekele

Today we head into the Tigray region to discover the remarkable rock-cut churches. These architectural gems were created prior to the 16th century and unknown to the outside world until the 1960s. About 150 are now known to be in existence with all but a handful still in active use by the orthodox Christian community. We look to explore two clusters including Abreha We visit Atsbeha and the sandstone church of Chirkos at Wukro with its cruciform pillars and barrel vaulted ceiling. We will also make a visit to the Negash Mosque and tombs which is the most important Islamic site in Ethiopia and the oldest mosque outside Arabia!



Accommodation: Axum Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Scenic drive to Lalibela

A full days drive today takes us to the south, between the mountains to the west and the stark landscape of the Danakil Depression to the east, via the town of Woldiya, to arrive at the remarkable archaeological site of Lalibela.



Accommodation: Panoramic View Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - In Lalibela; visit rock cut churches

We spend today exploring one of the world's most remarkable historic sites. Although churches carved in rock are found in other parts of the world, those found in Ethiopia are particularly interesting. Generally, they were excavated on all sides of a rectangle, leaving a large block of stone isolated in the centre. This rock was then shaped and formed both inside and out and the carvings show extremely skillful workmanship. Lalibela, the 'New Jerusalem', is thought to have been constructed some 800 years ago by King Lalibela. Lalibela was his capital city, but today it is a small village, virtually cut off from the outside world. Our tour this afternoon involves a certain amount of scrambling through a labyrinth of tunnels. The churches stand in two main groups on either side of a stream, known locally as 'The River Jordan'. There are 11 rock-cut churches of which the most impressive is Bet Giorgis. It is carved in the form of a Greek cross and approached through a passage in the rock. Between them, these rock-cut churches are one of the great wonders of the world. Most churches have a permanent roof built over them to preserve them and are listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.



Accommodation: Panoramic View Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Fly Addis Ababa. Tour ends.

We aim to fly to Addis early in the afternoon where the tour ends.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 12



Transport

Bus
Boat
Flight



Trip staff

Boat Crew
Guest Lecturer
Local Guide(s)
Muleteer(s)



Accommodation

10 nights standard hotel
2 nights simple hotel

Trip information

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. Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Time difference to GMT

+3

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Christian, Islam

Language

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.

Addis Ababa - National museum £1

Lalibela - Naktuleab Church or Genete Mariam Church (price dependant on numbers)

Clothing

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

Footwear

Good walking shoes with ankle support are highly recommended as well as comfortable sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daysack.

Equipment

Sun cream, a torch, memory cards for cameras. Insect repellent against fleas could be useful for the churches at Lalibela. You may want to consider taking walking poles for support on walks.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised 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. Accordingly, you should allow US\$ 40 for tipping of local drivers, guides, boat crew and for any miscellaneous tipping of hotel staff.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Country Information

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

£3 - 5

Dinner price

£6 - 10

Beer price

£1.5

Water price

£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

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.

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.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying 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 now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. 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. 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.
