

EXPLORE!



Why book this trip?

This trip is a great way to see and photograph the rich culture and incredible landscapes of Ethiopia with professional photographer Renato Granieri - winner of the 2018 Nat Geo Traveller photographer of the year. Organised to maximise photo opportunities, Renato will be on hand to assist in getting the best images possible of this fabulously photogenic destination. Photograph dramatic rock-hewn churches in Lalibela and venture into the rugged Simien Mountains to spend time capturing the curious geleda monkeys. Also organised within the trip is exclusive access to a traditional coffee ceremony, and being the birthplace for the humble coffee bean this experience provides a wonderful opportunity to capture some authentic shots of something very Ethiopian.



INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 13



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



TRANSPORT
Bus
Boat
Flight



ACCOMMODATION
10 nights standard
hotel
3 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 tour Addis Ababa

Sitting at an altitude of 2438 metres, Addis Ababa is a modern African city which is far more developed than you might imagine. Barely more than a century old it is home to some elegant buildings set along wide streets, dispersed with plenty of green space.

This afternoon, after time to freshen up, we will head out on a city tour to include the landmark that is the Church of Holy Trinity and the Ethnological Museum. This museum is said to be one of the finest in Africa, and is the ideal place to start understanding the many cultures that come together within one country and how history has defined present day Ethiopia. Addis Ababa is also a great city for street photography, with plenty of interesting scenes to photograph, and inquisitive, friendly locals. As we explore there will ample opportunity to take photos of the scenes we pass.



ACCOMMODATION:
Ghion Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Drive to Debre Markos via the holy site of Debre Libanos

This morning we will begin our journey with a drive to Debre Markos, via Debre Libanos. At Debre Libanos, founded by Saint Tekle Haymanot who Christianised much of present day Ethiopia and is today one of the country's most revered saints, the current church is impressively set beneath a cliff on the edge of a gorge; a peaceful place to wander. It is believed that in a nearby cave Tekle Haymanot stood on one leg to pray for seven years, surviving on just one seed a year that was fed to him by a bird and as a result of this habit his leg withered away and fell off!

From here we'll continue on the long drive to the city of Debre Markos, stopping a few times along the route for a picnic lunch and to stretch our legs.



ACCOMMODATION:
LBS Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Travel to Bahar Dar; visit the Tississat Falls

The Blue Nile begins its journey in the Ethiopian highlands, 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, our destination this afternoon is Bahar Dar, the capital of the Amhara region and an important centre for trade and commerce. Over the centuries it's been the site 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.

Later this afternoon we visit Tississat Falls, Amharic for 'water that smokes' located about 30km 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 each way). 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). It's an excellent spot from which to take photographs, and for those that have brought along tripods and ND filters we can experiment with long exposures.



ACCOMMODATION:
Tana Hotel (or similar)



Grade: 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 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.

After some time to enjoy lunch, this afternoon we will drive to Gondar. Before arriving in the town, we will make use of the fading light of the setting sun to take some photos of the surrounding scenery during the so-called 'golden hour'. We plan to arrive in Gondar in the early evening.



ACCOMMODATION:
Goha Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL 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 and is home to exceptionally well-preserved 17th century castles; the largest and best-kept is that of King Fasilidas. Featuring round turrets and wooden balconies, the entire complex of buildings is unique in Ethiopia and unlike anything found elsewhere in Africa. We'll spend time this morning exploring the complex, shooting the intricate architecture from several different angles, from up close as well as from a distance for those wide angle shots. As well as a visit to the castle ruins, we'll also visit Debre Berhan Selassie Church which is famed for its ceiling frescoes of many faces.

After lunch we continue on, driving to Debarq, our base in the Simien Mountains. On the way, there may be the opportunity to visit a 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. Translating to 'exiled' in Amharic, the Falasha claim to be descendants of Moses.

After arrival, the late afternoon is free to relax and review our images or perhaps for doing some editing. In our free time our expert photographer is on hand to answer any technical questions you may have, or to offer assistance advice on editing and post-production.



ACCOMMODATION:
Simien Park Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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

We rise at dawn today in the spectacular Simien Mountains. This 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 on the African continent.

We leave shortly after sunrise for a hike into the wilderness of this mountain region and to find the gelada monkeys. We spend ample time with these inquisitive primates, photographing them from different angles and focal lengths as our expert photographer provides tips and insights for getting the best shots. The mountains are marked 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 not only for stunning photos but also for some excellent walking.

The late afternoon is free to relax and review our images or perhaps for doing some editing.



ACCOMMODATION:
Simien Park Hotel (or similar)



Grade: 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. The full day's drive affords some excellent photo opportunities of the jagged Simien Mountains and the Tekeze Valley. The route is dotted with intermittent mountain hamlets and huge baobab trees that add to the splendour of the scenery. There will be scheduled stops to break up the journey, walk around and to get a cool drink, and not least to take plenty of photos.

The drive 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. We hope to arrive in time to enjoy a well-deserved sundowner.



ACCOMMODATION:
Yared Zema Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Sightseeing in Axum

We have a full day exploring Axum by bus and on foot with our local guide. We will head out early to avoid most of the crowds and to take advantage of the best light.

Evidence of Axum's 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 1960s.

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, browsing the shops and photographing the hubbub of daily activity.



ACCOMMODATION:

Yared Zema Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 9 - 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. Before continuing on to Adigrat, we'll also visit 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.



ACCOMMODATION:

Agoro Lodge (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE





MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 10 - Visit Tigray churches; continue to Mekele

Another early morning start today sees us head into the Tigray region to discover the remarkable rock-cut churches. These architectural gems were created prior to the 16th century and were 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'll visit two examples of the rock-cut churches, many of which are older than the ones we'll see in Lalibela, including Atsbeha and the sandstone church of Chirkos at Wukro, which features cruciform pillars and barrel vaulted ceiling. We plan to be able to get there early enough to avoid the majority of the crowds, so we can spend plenty of time photographing the architecture whilst being relatively undisturbed. 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 of Arabia!

We'll arrive into Mekele in the early evening and after checking in we'll set up at a nice spot for sunset, watching as the lights of town come alive underneath us. There may also be time to wander around the town or visit the colourful market.



ACCOMMODATION:
Axum Hotel (or similar)

Grade: 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, our home for the next three nights. There will be plenty of stops along the way at scenic spots for photos and to stretch the legs.



ACCOMMODATION:
Mountain View Hotel (or similar)

Grade: 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 and it's 11 rock-carved churches. 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. Once his capital city, this former bustling city is today a small village, virtually cut off from the outside world.

We'll be joined by a guide today to learn about the area's fascinating history. We will plan our visits carefully to take advantage of the best light and to try and avoid the crowds. To this end, we expect a very early start this morning, with a nice long break over lunch before picking back up our sightseeing later in the afternoon as the light begins to soften. We should also be extra-careful with our kit as today will include a certain amount of scrambling between rocks and through tunnels.

The churches stand in two main groups on either side of a stream, known locally as 'The River Jordan' and between them are considered to be one of the great wonders of the world. Most of the churches now have a permanent roof built over them to preserve them and are listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.



ACCOMMODATION:
Mountain View Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 13 - Visit the church of Yemrehanna Kristos; Free afternoon

Overlooking the mountain of Abune Yosef, the tallest mountain in Lasta, this morning we drive towards

one of Ethiopia's best-preserved late Axumite churches. Named after the 12th century Zagwe priest-king and saint, the church of Yemrehanna Kristos is built of stone and wood inside a cave. We'll make a ten minute walk uphill through a forest of juniper trees to the entrance. As well as it's wondrous setting, behind the church lies a pile of mummified bodies said to be that of pilgrims and holy men. Legend has it that a door found inside this church was given as a gift by the Caliph Saladin himself during the time of the crusaders.

In the afternoon, we have the opportunity to attend an exclusive coffee ceremony which is very much part of the social and cultural life of many Ethiopians. This provides a thoroughly interesting subject to photograph, telling a story about the birth of coffee here in Ethiopia. We plan to spend plenty of time here, with our expert photographer on hand of course to offer his insight, knowledge and direction.



ACCOMMODATION:
Mountain View Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 14 - Fly Addis Ababa. Tour ends.

Today we'll take an early afternoon flight back to Addis where the tour ends.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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	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.

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

Camera - A DSLR or mirrorless camera is recommended to make the most of the photography opportunities on this trip. Alternatively any camera that allows you some manual control (aperture

priority, shutter priority etc) will be of benefit on this trip.

Lenses - No specific focal lengths are required for this trip, so please bring along what you have and our expert photographer will help you get the best out of it. However, if you do own a number of lenses, a telephoto lens will be particularly useful for this trip when shooting wildlife. A wide-angle lens will also be advantageous for landscapes, architecture and some street scenes.

Tripod - Tripods are not allowed in all sites, although one will come in handy for some locations, slow shutter speed shots and low-light situations. A lightweight travel tripod is recommended.

Memory cards - It is a good idea to bring spare memory cards and consider bringing something to download your images on to in case you run out of memory space. While cards can be bought on the trip, they may not be available at all locations and the quality cannot be guaranteed.

Charger / spare battery - You will need to bring your charger and a spare battery may also come in handy. As well as the above we recommend to bring sun cream, a torch and an insect repellent against fleas could be useful for the churches at Lalibela.

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 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, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow US\$50 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.

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 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. 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.



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**