



Ethiopia is a fascinating and complex country, unlike any other place in the world. This journey through northern Ethiopia unveils an ancient land steeped in mystery and legend. It is a land full of extraordinary religious relics and highland scenery of unsurpassed grandeur. From Addis Ababa, the capital, we fly to Axum, seat of one of the foremost empires of the ancient world. Here we glimpse the 'dawn' of Ethiopian civilisation (400BC) and visit the ruins of Yeha.

In the Highlands of Lasta, we visit Lalibela, the 'New Jerusalem', with its extraordinary 'sunken' churches carved from solid rock. In Gondar, we explore the country's imperial heritage and architecture before driving north into the majestic Simien Mountains. Experience this soaring mountain range with its rocky crags and pinnacles, plunging chasms, lush river valleys and endemic wildlife. Our remarkable journey ends at Lake Tana, source of the Blue Nile and the setting for numerous monastic island settlements.

AN ANCIENT LAND STEEPED IN MYSTERY AND LEGEND



Imperial Compound, Gondar



Pelican, Lake Tana



St. Georges Cathedral, Addis Ababa

14-DAY ITINERARY, DEPARTING 30 JANUARY 2021

30 January London / Addis Ababa

Suggested flights (not included in the cost of the tour) Ethiopian Airlines ET 711 departing London Heathrow at 10.20 hrs arriving Addis Ababa at 20.55 hrs. On arrival transfer to the Radisson Blu Hotel, where two nights are spent. The hotel is centrally located 6 km from the airport and a short distance from the city's main points of interest. Dinner under own arrangements.

31 January Addis Ababa

Full day city tour of Addis Ababa starting with a drive up Mount Entoto, the previous capital of Ethiopia, which has panoramic views over the city and surrounding countryside. See the Mariam Church with its traditionally-painted interior. Visit the colourful Shero Meda Market.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Continue the tour of the city by coach and explore Addis Ababa's wide tree-lined streets, fine architecture and vibrant atmosphere. Visit St. George's Cathedral noted for its distinctive octagonal form. Visit the Archaeological Museum which contains artefacts dating from the South Arabian period of the so-called pre-Axumite civilisation of Tigray. Dinner at the hotel.

1 February Addis Ababa / Axum

Transfer to Addis Ababa airport for

an early flight to the ancient city of Axum. On arrival transfer to the centrally located, comfortable Sabean Hotel where two nights are spent.

Lunch at the hotel. Axum is thought to have been founded in the 1st century BC and reached its zenith between the 3rd and 5th centuries AD when the giant obelisks were built. The afternoon city tour includes the Stelae Park, which has the largest single pieces of erected stone in the world and the ruins of King Kaleb's Palace. Visit the 'Pool of the Queen of Sheba', and the ruins of a 1st-century villa that is known locally as the 'Palace of the Queen of Sheba', which indicates how impressive the palace must have once been. Dinner at the hotel.

2 February Axum

Travel through beautiful country to visit the 2,700-year-old ruined city of Yeha with its rock-hewn tombs and remarkable, well-preserved 12-metre high stone temple.

Following lunch in a local restaurant, visit the compound of the Tsion Maryam (St. Mary of Zion) Church thought by the Ethiopians to house the true Ark of the Covenant. See the outside of the building before visiting the treasury. Following this the women of the group visit the modern church built by Haile Selassie, whilst the gentlemen visit the 17th Century church built by Emperor Fasilidas. Dinner at the hotel.

3 February Axum / Lalibela

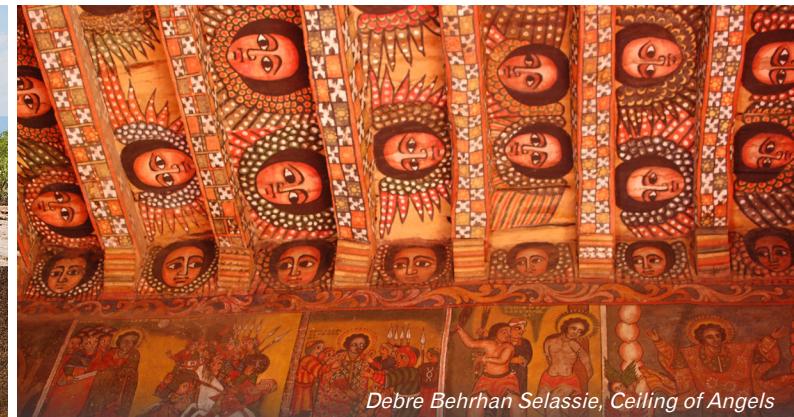
Transfer to Axum airport for a late morning flight to Lalibela, high in the Lasta Mountains. On arrival transfer to the Mezena Hotel (or similar) where two nights are spent. The hotel has spacious and modern bungalows, all with scenic views of the hills of Lalibella, a spa and swimming pool.

Lunch at the hotel. This afternoon, tour the city of Lalibela which is a strikingly singular site with its incredible and majestic churches built into the mountain rock which still offer an insight into Ethiopia's rich Christian heritage. It was built 'with the help of angels' by its most famous King, Lalibela, as the 'New Jerusalem' in the 12th century. Today it is a World Heritage Site comprising eleven remarkable rock-hewn churches. Explore the first group of these, the North Western Cluster, each architecturally unique and the network of narrow passageways and tunnels linking them. Dinner at the hotel.

4 February Lalibela

Visit the second group, the South Eastern Cluster, of these unique rock-hewn sanctuaries, followed by the more isolated, majestic church of St. George.

Lunch at a local restaurant. See the Nakuta La'ab Monastery a relatively simple church built around a shallow



cave in which several holy pools are fed by natural springs. Visit the local market and experience a traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony. Dinner at the hotel.

5 February Lalibela / Gondar

Transfer to Lalibela airport for a lunchtime flight to Gondar. On arrival, transfer to the Mayelko Lodge, which is a comfortable lodge a 15-minute drive from the city centre, where two nights are spent.

Late lunch at the hotel. Afternoon introductory city tour of Gondar, the first settled imperial capital from the 17th to mid-19th century and notable for its castles and churches. Visit the ruined Palace of Empress Mentewab at Kuskuam and the beautiful church of Debre Berhan Selassie, with its unique murals and 'Ceiling of Angels'. Dinner at the hotel.

6 Febrary Gondar

Continue exploring Gondar by visiting the well-preserved imperial compound of Emperor Fasilidas and his descendants with its castles and the 'Bath of King Fasilidas', a pilgrimage site filled by diverting a river nearby. These dramatic fortresses are unlike any other in Africa and combine architectural traditions from the Axumite period with outside influences, providing a unique insight into the prosperity

of Ethiopia during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Lunch at a local restaurant followed by an afternoon at leisure. Dinner at the hotel.

7 February Gondar / Simien Mountains

Drive to Buyit Ras in the Simien Mountains, considered by many to be the most beautiful mountain range in Africa (a drive of about three hours). Two nights are spent at Limalimo Lodge, perched on the edge of the Simien Escarpment. The bar and restaurant have views along the dramatic escarpment and onto the lowlands below. The rooms are scattered around the site among the trees with views over wooded hillsides.

After lunch at the lodge spend the afternoon exploring the extraordinary natural beauty of the Simien Mountains, with their high plateaux, deep gorges and plunging waterfalls, and their rugged pinnacles and peaks swirling in cloud. The mountains are home to remote villages and a variety of indigenous wildlife including over 50 bird species. Dinner at the lodge.

8 February Simien Mountains

This morning, leave the lodge by coach for Chenek, in the eastern part of the park. Spend today exploring

the Simien Mountains on foot with your local guide. From Chenek there are superb views of this spectacular landscape and hopefully the opportunity to see Walia ibex and Gelada baboon.

After a picnic lunch continue to explore the surrounding area on foot before returning to the lodge for dinner.

9 February Simien Mountains / Gondar / Lake Tana

This morning return south to Gondar, arriving in time for lunch at a local restaurant.

This afternoon continue to Bahir Dar (a journey of about three hours) to the southern edge of Ethiopia's largest lake, Lake Tana. Stay for two nights at the Kuriftu Resort Hotel, located on the shores of the lake. The hotel has breathtaking lake views and a clever blend of native Ethiopian architecture and décor, with a swimming pool with sunbathing terrace and a gourmet restaurant looking out across the lake. The spa offers a range of treatments to help you to relax and unwind. Dinner at the hotel.

10 February Lake Tana

After breakfast visit the Blue Nile Falls, locally known as Tissisat Falls (smoking water), from where the Blue Nile plunges down a sheer rock face



Simien Mountains

TOUR PRICES PER PERSON

Tour Price	£4,840
Single Supplement	£780

PRICE INCLUDES

- Accommodation throughout as shown in the itinerary
- Breakfast daily; 12 lunches; 12 dinners
- Domestic flights with Ethiopian Airlines
- All entrance fees, visits, excursions and transportation as per the itinerary
- Gratuities in restaurants for included meals
- Porterage
- Gratuities to driver/s and guide/s
- Local English-speaking guide/s
- Services of your tour leader throughout

PRICE EXCLUDES

- International flights
- Travel insurance
- Items of personal expenditure (e.g. telephone calls / laundry etc.)
- Government levies or taxes introduced after costing and publication of this programme on 15/02/20

Please note we have not included the cost of the international flights in the tour price. Please contact us for prices should you wish to book them through us.

and begins its long journey to the Mediterranean.

Following lunch at the hotel take a boat trip on Lake Tana, some 4900km² in size and dotted with islands, many with churches and monasteries. Reach the Zeghie Peninsula and visit the monastic complex of Ura Kidane Mehret with its 14th century round grass-roofed churches and exquisite murals. Dinner at the hotel.

11 February Lake Tana / Addis Ababa / London

Transfer to Bahir Dar airport for a morning flight back to Addis Ababa. Day rooms have been arranged at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Addis Ababa.

Lunch at the hotel. Afternoon at leisure to relax at the hotel or the opportunity to further explore the city. Farewell dinner at the hotel. After dinner transfer to the Addis Ababa airport for flight back to London, departing after midnight.

12 February Addis Ababa / London

Suggested flights (not included)
Ethiopian Airlines ET 700 departing Addis Ababa at 01.20 hrs arriving London Heathrow at 06.35 hrs.

Please note for any trip to Ethiopia, a positive, flexible attitude about delays and inconveniences are essential. The high elevations and long journeys can be taxing on one's comfort level. If one is accepting and open, these situations can be part of an extremely rewarding experience. In many places, we are delighted by wonderful hotels in which we stay. However, although service and accommodations have improved tremendously over the past few years, in some places they are best described as 'rustic'. In some locations, plumbing and hot water cannot be relied upon. To enjoy this tour a sense of adventure is essential.

The sites in Ethiopia are as they were originally built and have not been adapted for tourism. There will be slippery stone surfaces, potentially no handrails on steps and access to some of the sites can be uneven. The group can expect to walk/ be on foot for up to three hours whilst visiting some of the sites. The trekking terrain in the Simien Mountains is fairly flat however a level of fitness will be required.

Addis Ababa is at approximately 7,000 ft / 2,100 m so for the first few days participants may be a little breathless. The highest point the group will be visiting is in the Simien Mountains at 10,000 ft / 3,000 m however by this point participants should be acclimatised.





YOUR TOUR LEADER



NICOLA HOWARD

Nicola has a degree in History of Art and a background in fine art and photography. Having lived in Paris, Barcelona and Rome, she speaks fluent French, Spanish and Italian and has specialised in these countries, as well as in Turkey, North Africa and the Middle East. She has previously led a couple of tours to Ethiopia.



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