

Tour Name Ethiopia Danakil Depression
Arrival P/U Bole Airport, Addis Ababa
Departure D/O Bole Airport, Addis Ababa

Itinerary at a glance

Day	Location	Accommodation	MealPlan
1	Danakil Depression	Danakil Mobile Tented Camp	LDBB
2	Danakil Depression	Danakil Mobile Tented Camp	LDBB
3	Erte Ale Volcano	Erta Ale Star Camp	LDBB
4	Danakil Depression	Danakil Mobile Tented Camp	LDBB
5	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia		

L-Lunch, D-Dinner, BB-Bed and breakfast, LDBB-Lunch, dinner, bed and breakfast. Game drives & activities at the discretion of guide.

Day by Day Itinerary

Day 1 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - Danakil Depression

Fly Addis to Mekele.

Drive six hours to Hamed Ela. Experience one of the geologically most active areas on the planet and some of the most awe-inspiring landscapes: the Danakil desert, active volcanoes with boiling lakes of lava, the surreal landscapes of colors, salt, geysers, springs and fumaroles at Dallol, and the great salt lake - an unparalleled moonscape, where salt mining and trading has been going on with camel caravans since Biblical times. On this expedition, we climb active Erta Ale volcano and stay one full night on the volcano caldera. We pride ourselves with excellent logistical preparation, highly competent professional and friendly staff, close interactions with local people, delicious food prepared will more than compensate for the hardness and sometimes spartan character of living conditions we'll find ourselves in.

Danakil Deluxe Mobile Camp LDBB

Day 2 Danakil Depression

Full day at At the miners' town of Ahmed Ela near Lake Assale we'll watch the centuries-old ritual of salt cutting, the shaping of salt blocks and the endless caravans arriving and leaving loaded with the precious "white gold". We also visit the hot springs of Dallol. These hot springs are composed of different minerals along with sulphurs and potash and create spectacular colours. Dallol is renowned as being the hottest inhabited place on earth.

Danakil Deluxe Mobile Camp LDBB

Day 3 Danakil Depression - Erte Ale Volcano

After an early breakfast we drive a full day with our Afar militia escorts to Dodum at the foot of the Erta Ale volcano. Erta Ala is the highlight of this expedition, and is one of only 5 permanent lava lakes in the world. From here in the relative cool of early evening (5-6 pm), we start our four to five hour climb to the rim, while our gear and water is carried by camels. After refreshments on reaching the summit, we walk to the lava pit to see one of the world's most spectacular sights when the red lava in the crater lights up the night sky. Only a few hours sleep this night !

Erta Ale Star Camp-Star Camp LDBB

Day 4 Erte Ale Volcano - Danakil Depression

After a light breakfast, tea and toast, and the sight of the African sunrise from Erte Ale, we set off down the mountain and a further six hour drive to Hamed Ela where we will make camp for the night.

Danakil Deluxe Mobile Camp LDBB

Day 5 Danakil Depression - Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Morning visits, and then drive back to Mekele. Break for lunch in Berahile.

Fly Mekele to Addis. Connect out

Accommodation Information

Danakil Mobile Tented Camp

No safari in Africa is complete without the experience of a few nights out in the wilderness under canvas, or better still, under the stars.

Our camp is lightweight but very comfortable and operated by a small but experienced crew who also cook and serve delicious food and act as waiters and tent stewards, led by an experienced guide.

These camps combine the most important elements of a safari: you have a crew of people to look after you, great food freshly prepared and cooked over an open fire (there's nothing like a bit of wilderness to boost a healthy appetite). There en-suite flush toilets and hot showers from safari bucket-showers and after winding down and swapping stories around the campfire. At night you collapse gratefully onto your full size wooden bed, in an insect-proof tent. You soon sink into a deep sleep under the watchful eye of the askari.

The huge advantage of a mobile camp is that it takes you to the wilder parts of Africa. In the evenings after you return from your days activities you'll find a blazing fire, kerosene lanterns and bedrolls laid out on the ground, where you can sit and enjoy a welcome drink.

Camping isn't for the fainthearted or luxury addict - but if you think you might enjoy it - you will love it!

Fact file:

- * Luxury Mobile tents
- * En-suite shower tent (bucket shower, hot water always available on request)
- * En-suite flush toilet tent
- * Safari basin, filled with hot water on request
- * Full sized beds, linen, & blankets
- * Camp chair & awning 'verandah'
- * Camp fire
- * Fresh prepared and fire-cooked food
- * Tea, coffee, bottled water, juice (alcoholic beverages if requested in advance)
- * Experienced camp crew including professional safari guide



Erta Ale Star Camp

Our very simple camp will be reluctantly carried up the slopes of this active volcano by camels. We promise nothing, but shall make the best of a very harsh environment. A bed with bedding under the stars on the rim of an active volcano.



Reserve and Park Information

Danakil - The Hottest Place on Earth.

The Afar Depression (also called the Danakil Depression or the Afar Triangle) is a geological depression, includes Afar Triple Junction, near the Horn of Africa, also a part of the Great Rift Valley, where it overlaps Eritrea, the Afar Region of Ethiopia, and Djibouti. Afar is well known as one of the cradles of hominids, containing the Middle Awash, site of many fossil hominid discoveries; Gona, site of the world's oldest stone tools; and Hadar, site of Lucy, the fossilized specimen of *Australopithecus afarensis*.

The Afar Depression includes the Danakil Desert and the lowest point in Africa, Lake Asal (below sea level). Dallol is also part of the Depression, one of the hottest places year-round anywhere on Earth. The climate

varies from around during the rainy season (September–March) to during the dry season (March–September). Only the Awash River flows into the depression, where it ends in a chain of lakes that increase in salinity. The area is one of the hottest places on Earth, with shaded air temperatures up to

Environment

The lowlands of the Afar Depression are affected by heat and drought. There is no rain for most of the year, and yearly rainfall averages range from 100 to 200 millimetres (4 to 7 in), with less rain falling closer to the coast. The Awash River, flowing north-eastward through southern Afar, provides a narrow green belt and enables life for the flora and fauna in the area and for the Afars, the nomadic people living in the Danakil desert. About 128 kilometres (79 miles) from the Red Sea, the Awash ends in a chain of salt lakes, where its water evaporates as quickly as it is supplied. About 1200 km² (463 sq mi) of the Afar Depression is covered by salt, and salt mining is still a major source of income for many Afar tribes.

The Afar Depression biome is characterized as desert scrubland. Vegetation is mostly confined to drought-resistant plants such as small trees (e.g. species of the dragon tree), shrubs, and grasses. Wildlife includes many herbivores such as Grevy's Zebra, Soemmering's Gazelle, Oryx Beisa and, notably, the last viable population of African wild ass (*Equus africanus somalicus*). Birds include the ostrich, the endemic Archer's lark (*Heteromirafra archeri*), the Secretary Bird, Arabian and Kori bustards, Abyssinian Roller and Crested Francolin. In the southern part of the plain, in Ethiopia, lies the Mille-Sardo Wildlife Reserve (established 1973). Many fossils have been found in the Awash region, not only hominids but also elephantoids, crocodiles and hippopotamus.

Geology

The Afar Depression is the product of a tectonic triple junction (the Afar Triple Junction), where the spreading ridges that form the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden emerge on land and meet the East African Rift. The central meeting place for these three pieces of Earth's crust is around Lake Abbe. The Afar Depression is one of two places on Earth where a mid-ocean ridge can be studied on land, the other being Iceland.

In the Depression, the Earth's crust is slowly rifting apart at a rate of 1–2 centimetres (0.3–0.8 in) per year along each of the three rifts which form the "legs" of the triple junction. The immediate consequence of this is that there are a continuous sequence of earthquakes, fissures hundreds of metres long and deep appearing in the ground, and the valley floor sinking as much as 100 metres. Between September and October 2005, 163 earthquakes of magnitudes greater than 3.9 and a volcanic eruption occurred within the Afar rift. 2.5 cubic kilometers of molten rock was injected into the plate along a dyke between depths of 2 and 9 km, forcing open an 8 meter wide gap on the surface. Related eruptions have taken place in Teru and Aura woredas. The rift has recently been recorded by means of three-dimensional laser mapping Hottest Place On Earth, Episode 1 at bbc.co.uk

Over millions of years, geologists expect the Red Sea to erode through the highlands surrounding the Afar Depression and flood the valley. In about 10 million years, geologists predict that the whole 6,000 km length of the East African Rift will be submerged, forming a new sea as large as the Red Sea is now. At that point, Africa will have lost its Horn. Bojanowski 2006

The floor of the Afar Depression is composed of lava, mostly basalt. One of Earth's great active volcanoes, Dabbahu Volcano, Erta Ale, is found here. The Afar Depression is, in the views of some geologists, underlain by a mantle plume, a great upwelling of mantle that melts to yield basalt as it approaches the surface.



Erte Ale Volcano

Erta Ale means "smoking mountain" in the local Afar language and its southernmost pit is known locally as "the gateway to hell" (as Hekla in Icelandic), and one of the few volcanoes on the world that have a persistent lava lake. Fresh-looking lava flows on the flanks of Erta Ale indicate that the lava lake will periodically overflow (as it did beginning of 2011), sending lava flows down the slopes of the volcano - this is a significant hazard.

