

**Tour Name** Ethiopian Wildlife  
**Arrival P/U** Bole Airport, Addis Ababa  
**Departure D/O** Bole Airport, Addis Ababa

### Itinerary at a glance

Day	Location	Accommodation	MealPlan
1	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Golden Tulip Hotel Addis	LDBB
2	Bale Mountains NPark	Bale Mountains Lodge	L-DBBL
3	Bale Mountains NPark	Bale Mountains Lodge	DBBL
4	Bale Mountains NPark	Bale Mountains Lodge	DBBL
5	Bale Mountains NPark	Bale Mountains Lodge	DBBL
6	Lalibela	Tukul Village	LDBB
7	Simien Mountains NPark	Simien Lodge	L-DBBL
8	Simien Mountains NPark	Simien Lodge	DBBL
9	Simien Mountains NPark	Simien Lodge	DBBL
10	Simien Mountains NPark	Simien Lodge	DBBL
11	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia		Trsf

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

Met at Bole airport and transferred by private vehicle

Full day in Addis. Sightseeing is available should time permit. The rich culture of Ethiopia, and its international links, has endowed the city with many fine restaurants and street side cafe's. Nightlife, including many cinemas, traditional dancing houses, casino's and bars provide entertainment until the early hours.

We start out day by driving north up to Mount Entoto. In 1881 Emperor Menelik II made his permanent camp there, after remains of an old town (believed to have been the capital of 16th century monarch Lebna Dengel) were discovered, which Menelik took was a divine and auspicious sign. Addis Ababa at between 2300 - 2500 meters is the third highest capital in the world and Entoto is a few hundred meters higher - as we drive up the hill there is an appreciable drop in temperature and the air is filled with the scent of the Eucalyptus trees which line the road. From the top, there is a panoramic view of the capital and surrounding countryside. Our guide will point out the city's major landmarks. Entoto is an important watershed; to the north, water flows to the Blue Nile and the Mediterranean Sea, to the south, to the Awash River and on to Djibouti. Two important structures remain within the old imperial compound on Entoto, the churches of Mariam and the Archangel Raguel. It was in the church of Mariam that Menelik was crowned Emperor of Ethiopia in 1889, and in the small museum in the compound there are various clothes, court and household implements and weapons dating from the period. Leaving the churches we descend to Addis Ababa, stopping off at the National Archaeological Museum. Here visitors can see exhibits ranging from the 3.5 million-year-old bones of Lucy, from the Axumite and Gondarene periods through to the period of the monarchs Tewodros and Menelik II.

**Golden Tulip Hotel Addis Ababa-Deluxe Room LDBB**

#### Day 2 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - Bale Mountains National Park

A full day drive southwards to the Bale Mountains National Park.

**Bale Mountains Lodge-Cottage L-DBBL**

#### Day 3 Bale Mountains National Park

A full day on the Sanetti Plateau in search of the world's rarest canid - The Simien Wolf.

**Bale Mountains Lodge-Cottage DBBL**

#### Day 4 Bale Mountains National Park

A full day on the Sanetti Plateau in search of the world's rarest canid - The Simien Wolf.

## **Bale Mountains Lodge-Cottage DBBL**

### **Day 5 Bale Mountains National Park**

A full day with the Researchers from EWCP.

**Bale Mountains Lodge-Cottage DBBL**

### **Day 6 Bale Mountains National Park - Lalibela**

Drive two hours to the airstrip at Robe to board our 2 hour private charter flight across the Great Rift Valley to Lalibela. Met on arrival at the Lalibela airport and transferred by road 40 minutes up the mountainside to the town centre. On market day (Saturday), the road is a spectacle of traders walking to and from market. At the end of the 12th and beginning of the 13th centuries King Lalibela of the Zaghwe dynasty built a series of rock hewn churches – the New Jerusalem as he called it – now rightly acknowledged to be one of the wonders of the world. There are 11 churches in the town named after him, with others in the surrounding countryside. All are still in use today. (The churches are divided into two groups, the division being the River Yordanos or River Jordan.) It is estimated that the churches took 25 years to construct – for the Kingdom based on Roha (later renamed Lalibela) to have kept a large work force engaged in economically unproductive labour for such a long period means that it disposed of a large economic surplus and was very wealthy. The area then was clearly fertile and agriculturally productive, whereas now deforestation and population pressures on the land have reduced its productivity. After checking into the hotel we will start our tour of the first group of churches, returning to the hotel for lunch, and continuing the tour in the afternoon.

**Tukul Village-Cottage LDBB**

### **Day 7 Lalibela - Simien Mountains National Park**

After breakfast transfer down the mountainside to the Lalibela Airport in time for your mid morning Ethiopian Airlines scheduled flight (approx 1 hour) to Gondar, which in the 16th Century was the second largest city on the African continent, and the centre of the Abyssinian empire.

Gondar was the imperial capital from the 17th to mid 19th centuries, and today visitors can see the imperial compound, with castles still in good condition (some recently restored) and the bath of King Fasilides, where at Timkat (Ethiopian Epiphany) a nearby river is diverted to fill an area the size of a small swimming pool. Worshippers plunge into the cold water in a re-enactment of the baptism of Christ in the River Jordan. Although many of Gondar's churches were destroyed during the Mahdist invasion from Sudan in the 1880s, one very fine example, Debre Berhan Selassie, was saved, according to the legend, by a swarm of bees. The walls and ceiling are completely covered with murals. We end our tour with a visit to the ruined palace of Queen Mentowab, and the church of Qusquam. We will visit the former Felasha (Ethiopian jews) village at Wolleka, to buy some of the characteristic pottery sold there. Most of the Felasha or Bait Israel as they prefer to be called, were taken to Israel in the 1980s.

From Gondar it's a three hour drive north to the Simien Mountains National Park. We stop at the town of Debarq to complete National Park registration formalities and to collect a scout and local guide before continuing onwards.

**Simien Lodge-Standard room L-DBBL**

### **Day 8 Simien Mountains National Park**

A full day in the Simien Mountains National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since the late 1960s, the park presents perhaps the most dramatic scenery in Africa – great volcanic plugs, formed some 40 million years ago and eroded over the aeons into fantastic crags, pinnacles and flat topped mountains, “the chess pieces of the Gods”, as one writer described them, tower over precipitous gorges, river valleys and plains stretching all the way to Eritrea. There are many peaks over 4000 metres, and Ras Dashen at 4620 metres is the highest in the country and the fourth highest in Africa. The day shall be spent searching for the endemic Gelada or bleeding heart baboon, the Walia Ibex, the Simien Wolf (the rarest canid in the world) and rock hyrax, and endemic birds such as the Thick billed Raven, Black headed Siskin, White Collared Pigeon, Wattle Ibis, White billed Starling, Spot breasted Plover and White backed Black Tit and spectacular Lammergeyers with 3meter wingspans. The Afro-Alpine flora, meadows and grasslands punctuated by Giant Lobelia and flowering Red Hot Pokers with truly breathtaking.

**Simien Lodge-Standard room DBBL**

### **Day 9 Simien Mountains National Park**

A full day in the Simien Mountains National Park

**Simien Lodge-Standard room DBBL**

### **Day 10 Simien Mountains National Park**

A full day in the Simien Mountains National Park

**Simien Lodge-Standard room DBBL**

### **Day 11 Simien Mountains National Park - Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

After a morning in the park it's a three hour drive back to Gondar.

Fly Ethiopian Airlines scheduled flight 1245/1355 hrs from Gondar to Bole Airport, Addis Ababa.

Met at Bole airport and transferred by private vehicle if required.

## Accommodation Information

### Golden Tulip Hotel Addis Ababa

The Golden Tulip Addis Ababa is a striking, brand new hotel with a convenient location for business guests and tourists alike. This gleaming 4 star hotel in Addis Ababa is situated just 1 km from Bole International airport, with the city centre's attractions only a short distance away as well. Enjoy a warm welcome that blends international service standards with local hospitality. You'll find a range of amenities at your disposal, including conference facilities, bars, and restaurants.

There are 90 spacious 4 star hotel rooms and suites available at the Golden Tulip Addis Ababa, all outfitted to the highest standard with a touch of luxury. Non-smoking and family rooms are available to suit every need, and Wi-Fi access connects you to the world for a small fee. Enjoy the convenience of private bathrooms in our spacious rooms and suites, complete with complimentary toiletries. All rooms include air conditioning, a refrigerator, and minibar.

The well-trained staff at the Golden Tulip Addis Ababa is on hand to attend to your every service need, with concierge and laundry services on offer. This 4 star hotel in Addis Ababa caters for business guests with extensive conference facilities, suitable for up to 200 guests. Plan your next special event or simply relax in our onsite fitness centre and gym. Dining is one of the greatest pleasures at the hotel, with a varied selection of international cuisine and room service available.

Just 1 km from the airport, the Golden Tulip Addis Ababa is ideally situated for both arrivals and departures from within Africa or further abroad. All the excitement of Addis Ababa is just out the door, and you'll find the African union, international embassies, and business district a short drive away.



### Bale Mountains Lodge

Bale Mountain Lodge is an 8 room boutique Forest Wilderness Lodge in the Bale Mountains National Park (BMNP) of south central Ethiopia. The lodge was open for business in late Oct 2013. The location of the lodge has been selected to provide an excellent opportunity for guests to experience a pristine wilderness that incorporates the largest tract of Afro-alpine moorland remaining on the continent, the majority being over 3800m above sea level, whilst living in a stunning cloud forest which offers access to the Rift Valley and wider local attractions. This amazing mix of habitats supports myriad rare species, many endemic to Ethiopia and some found only within the park. 60% of the remaining Ethiopian Wolves, the world's most rare canid, are found within the park; other species include the endemic Mountain Nyala, Menelik's Bushbuck, various rodent species and numerous endemic amphibians and reptiles, plus lions, rare Giant Forest Hogs and significant numbers of endemic or rare bird species. Since living on site our resident naturalist has also discovered a new snake species believed to be an endemic black morph variety new to science. We await confirmation as we write. Teams of university researchers are also currently investigating the butterflies of the forest, and are expecting to find unique species.

The central lodge nestles into the hillside so as to minimize the visual impact on the surrounding area, and is built using local slate-grey coloured stone. The attached dining room is a 'tukul' in style featuring a thatched roof, with a sweep of windows maximizing the amazing views of the natural clearing and mountain range beyond. A central sunken fireplace creates a snug area in which to relax during the chillier mountain evenings. All lodge 'menyetta-bets' (guest-rooms) are spacious and comfortable with a wood burning stove in each room to provide warmth and a cosy atmosphere. Furniture is being manufactured locally using sustainable wood, and all our soft furnishings are locally sourced and are of the highest quality with an emphasis on comfort with Ethiopian style. The Service Quarters for Bale Mountain Lodge, which includes staff accommodation, laundry, maintenance and store facilities, along with staff ablutions and study and conservation facilities, are also built to the highest standards using local materials in order to blend into the surroundings.

All electric power used at the lodge will be generated by a 25Kw micro-hydro power plant which is located in the river some 500m east of the main lodge building. The plant generates power by diverting 30% of the river

flow through a turbine which has been located at the bottom of a 25m drop, down which the diverted water is piped. Timing mechanisms and power management will ensure that this constant power will be sufficient to deliver all the electricity needs of the lodge but some backup wood burning boilers will be included for those times when river flow drops to its lowest levels. Efficient appliances, such as heat-pump hot water heaters, will ensure that the lodge minimises its power draw to ease power management issues.

The lodge takes water from the river and subjects it to slow sand filtration and purification. Water is stored in large holding tanks and is pumped up to the top of the site during periods when power draw from the Micro-Hydro plant is low. The high tank provides pressure head for our taps and showers and as the water leaves the header tank it passes through a UV filter to provide a final level of purity which will permit our water to be drunk straight from the tap.

Bale Mountain Lodge is committed to minimising non-biodegradable waste. To that end packaged products will be kept to a minimum with maximum use being made of local food products and bulk purchases. Solid waste will be processed through the Biogas unit which in turn produces gas for cooking. Once this waste has been rendered inert it will be used as fertilizer on the site or supplied to Rira to improve soil quality for the production of vegetables. Waste water will initially be filtered through the same biogas unit but run off will be subjected to further filtration before being fed through a cleansing reed bed and permitted to flow back into the stream. All firewood on site will be sourced through sustainable plantations to the south of the park in order to ensure that fires are carbon neutral. In addition to this source of wood it is planned to press briquettes from waste paper and combustible materials in order to provide additional fuel whilst minimising wood use.

### Activities

In the immediate vicinity of the lodge can be found a number of mapped and marked tracks that take guests into the forest, out to a hot springs location or up onto the plateau. The forest teems with wildlife of all types but of particular note are the endemic Bale Monkeys, which can routinely be seen in and around the lodge site, alongside the spectacular birdlife of the forest. Other primates, rare cats and unusual plants may be seen and every trip into the trees provides a different experience.

No trip to Bale would be complete without spending time on the Sanetti Plateau. Most trips up to the heights result in a sighting of the rare Ethiopian Wolf but even those trips that do not get a sighting can be sure of amazing bird watching, stunning views and, at 4000m above sea level, a truly breath-taking experience.

For guests who wish to explore the region in more depth there are many attractions outside the park. To the south is the central Rift Valley where the landscape becomes arid and scrub-covered providing a habitat for different rare indigenous birds to those found in the tropical forest. A day trip from the lodge will often result in a sighting of the exceptionally rare Prince Ruspoli's Turaco which is found in a small area between Dolo Mena and Negele, some 50km south of the lodge. A day trip in the opposite direction will take you to the spectacular Sof Omar Caves, the largest limestone caves in Eastern Africa, and a significant religious site for the Islamic inhabitants of this part of Ethiopia. For the most adventurous and well equipped a visit to Sof Omar can be combined with a drive north to the ancient walled city of Harar, one of the most holy Muslim cities in the world.



### Tukul Village

Tukul Village Hotel is located in the picturesque and historic city of Lalibela. From its elevated vantage point and proximity to the famous rock-hewn churches of Lalibela there are amazing views. Tukul Village is a hotel with attractive views of Lalibela and its surroundings. It is in fact not a hotel but a small village. It is within walking distance of many of the ancient churches - the attraction of Lalibela - such as the Church of St. George.

The rooms are large and completely independent with their own private balconies and spacious modern bathrooms - clean, tiled and boast modern and reliably hot showers - located in a modern version of the traditional African thatched huts.

There is an attractive restaurant serving both European and Ethiopian meals, also a cafe/bar. Internet, fax and a printer are at your disposal and there is also a small second-hand bookshop on the premises. The hotel

now has free Wi-Fi.

The living spaces are simple, well-kept and spacious, with comfortable beds and plenty of natural light pouring through the floor-to-ceiling windows on one side. All have their own balconies, with views towards St. George's Church and the local market. There are currently six split-level tukul huts in the village offering 12 rooms and a further 12 are currently under construction.

The hotel is fully equipped for arranging all tours in and about Lalibela. It provides specialist tours and supplies guides who speak English, French and German. The hotel is close to the ancient rock-hewn churches such as that of St. George, making it a great base to explore them. There are 11 rock churches in Lalibela and 800 Priests and Deacons to witness. Mules can be used to reach the more inaccessible churches. There is also a museum nearby and a local school which can be visited.

For those who love bird-watching there are many species to witness flying above the hotel such as kites, ravens, falcons and the Lammergayer (bearded vulture).



### **Simien Lodge**

Fantastically located amongst the crags and peaks of the Simiens – the ideal base for exploring this incredible eco-system. There are twenty main rooms, which are about 60 metres from the main restaurant area so as to provide total peace and tranquillity. There are two rooms with double queen-sized beds and all the other rooms have 2 large single beds. The single beds are one metre wide for a good nights sleep. The beds all have duvets but extra blankets are provided for those who feel the cold.

It is sometimes forgotten that the Simiens are high and at night it is cold. So we do our best to take the chill off the rooms with an underfloor heating system, which works by solar energy. During the day, hot water is pumped underfloor and stored in the thick concrete floor. This raises the temperature by about ten degrees during the day. Guests often say that they cannot feel the heat. This is because it is not like a steel radiator, which warms up and gives off its heat quickly. With a concrete floor it is an inertia system and the calories of heat are given off over a 24-hour period. The safari suites have all the facilities of the main rooms but with an extra lounge. This lounge can be converted into an extra bedroom for families. The main bedroom has a queen-sized bed. The lounge has two twin beds.

The restaurant is a spacious area with a log fire centrepiece. The kitchen is essentially Swiss made, hygienic and ergonomic. In the evening we generally serve a set meal, which is prepared by our master chef Teschome. This is normally international fare but we accommodate for vegetarian and other religious foods. All day long we serve an "A la carte" menu of Ethiopian and European food. Weddings are sometimes held at the lodge and they are very colourful affairs.

The Simiens are without doubt the most spectacular mountains scenery in Africa. Trekking in the Simiens is a must for anyone who likes spectacular views. Some of the cliffs drop vertically for over a mile, justifying the description of Africa's Grand Canyon.

#### Fact file:

- \* Ideal base for exploring the incredible eco-system
- \* 20 main rooms (2 double rooms & 18 twin rooms)
- \* Underfloor heating system
- \* Trekking in the Simiens
- \* Climbing to the summit of Ras Dashen (4620m)
- \* Magnificent views
- \* Mountain biking





## Flights and Other Information

### Lunch & City Tour in Gondar

The city of Gondar, Ethiopia, is located 500 kilometers north of Addis Ababa, 35 kilometers from Lake Tana, and in the foothills of the Simien mountains. The city itself dates to the 17th century AD, when it was part of the Abyssinian empire, a capital city founded in 1634 by Emperor Fasilidas. Gondar is probably best known for its numerous beautiful castles with architecture derived in part from medieval Spanish and Portuguese traditions. Gondar is now a tourist hot-spot, called "the Camelot of Africa." Although many of Gondar's churches were destroyed during the Mahdist invasion from Sudan in the 1880s, one very fine example, Debre Berhan Selassie, was saved, according to the legend, by a swarm of bees, which routed the invaders. The walls and ceiling are completely covered with murals - the angels' faces on the ceiling have become a common motif in Ethiopian design. The tour ends with a visit to the ruined palace of Queen Mentowab, and the church of Qusquam. The Mini Fogera is also worth visiting in the evening for cultural music (asmari) and national food.



## Reserve and Park Information

### Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Addis Ababa, the Capital of modern Ethiopia, and gateway for most tourists, is the political and commercial heart of the Country, now a city of 4 million people; Emperor Menelik founded it in 1887.

This big, sprawling, hospitable city is more than 2,200 meters high in the foothills of Mount Entoto, Modern buildings and wide open boulevards stand side by side with historic churches, palaces and monuments as well as simple country style huts. The air is filled with the scent of flowers and eucalyptus trees, and the rich vibrancy of a city that is home to so many cultures. Modern Addis Ababa also plays host to many international organizations, including the OAU, the Economic Commission for Africa, and other multi national bodies, who all have their headquarters here. As a major international city, Addis Ababa offers a wide range of excellent hotel facilities, from luxury international hotels to a good number of mid priced and budget accommodations. State of the art conference facilities attract numerous international meetings to Ethiopia. The rich culture of Ethiopia, and its international links, has endowed the city with many fine restaurants and street side cafes. Nightlife, including many cinemas, theatres, casinos and bars provides entertainment until the early hours. Today, Addis Ababa is an up to date thriving city. Served by a modern airport at Bole, just 8 kilometres from the center, the city is linked by Ethiopian Airlines, and a large number of regional and international carriers, to Africa and the world.

Originally Menelik chose Entoto as the site for the capital city however, great Emperor though he was, over this he was over ruled: Taitu, his wife, soon found Entoto too wet and windy. She was attracted to the warmer, more fertile hills and plains below, where natural hot springs at Finfine, the Oromo name for the area, provided bathing opportunities and a softer environment for court life. So the capital was moved and Taitu named the city: Addis Ababa the New Flower. When the court moved down from Entoto the Emperor and his immediate entourage occupied the most prominent hill, his retainers, with their mules and cattle, settling on its slopes. In due course he built the palace and banqueting hall where thousands of his soldiers could feast at one sitting. The area, known as the Old Ghibbe, is now the seat of Government. The chiefs built their houses on other hilltops, and these picturesque structures, with their wooden balconies and occasional

turrets, can still be spotted among the more modern buildings of the town. Addis Ababa did not develop according to modern town planning concepts, rather it grew organically. During a city tour one may see modern buildings next to buildings that were constructed in the Italian style in the 19th and 20th century, open markets next to shopping centres, palaces next to modern hotels, Ethiopian churches next to large parks. Addis has never been known to bore a visitor! Interesting places for a visit in the city are the Ethnographic Museum housed on the University Campus with a fascinating wealth of information and exhibits relating to Ethiopia cultural and ethnographic heritage.

**The Menelik Mausoleum:** built in 1911, in the old Baata church, it serves as a tomb for emperors, princes and martyrs of freedom. Built to house the tomb of Emperor Menelik II it also includes the graves of members of his family and the Emperor Haile Selassie. **St. George's Cathedral:** built in 1896 in the traditional octagonal shape by the Emperor Menelik II to commemorate his victory at Adwa, it is dedicated to the national saint of Ethiopia. The museum houses a wide collection of important religious paintings, crosses of many designs, historic books and parchments, and beautiful handicrafts. There are also fine examples of modern paintings by the famous Ethiopian artist Afewerke Tekle. **Trinity Cathedral:** built in 1941, to a European design, in commemoration of Ethiopia's liberation from Italian occupation. **The Jubilee Palace:** on Menelik II Avenue, this modern palace was completed to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie I.

#### Climate

Altitude and proximity to the Indian Ocean affect Ethiopia climate. The temperatures on the higher plateaux are pleasant year round but in certain seasons the temperature rises to 28 Centigrade in the lowlands and drops to Zero on the high mountain peaks. The rainy season is from June to October whilst the rest of the year is dry. The end of the rainy season is one of the most appropriate times to visit the remote tribes, when the River Awash floods along the Omo Delta making some of the more remote villages accessible. This is traditionally a time for ceremonies and thanksgiving.

#### Language

Amharic is the official language of Ethiopia, while English, French and Italian are widely spoken, especially in the business & academic circles. There are 80 different languages with 200 dialects broken down into 4 main groups: Semitic, Hametic, Omotic and Nilo Saharan. The Semitic languages are related to both Hebrew & Arabic and are mostly spoken in the Northern & Central areas. The principal Semitic language is Amharic. The Hametic languages are found mainly in the East, West & South Oromiffa is the predominant language in these areas. The Omotic group of languages are spoken in the Southwest, generally in the area of the Omo River. The nilo Saharan languages are spoken in a wide area along the Sudanese frontier. Some of the written languages use the Ge'ez alphabet the language of the ancient Axumite kingdom (the only indigenous written language in all of Africa). Today some of the written languages in Ethiopia still use the Latin alphabet.

#### Traditions:

Ethiopians tend to be conservative in their own country. A handshake greeting is normal with a pleasant discussion on personal matters before getting down to business. Time is not that important and patience is much needed at times. The longer the greeting, the closer the friends. The coffee ceremony is a sacred tradition in Ethiopia (where the beverage originated) and is an integral part of everyday life. The coffee ceremony takes place 3 times a day: morning, noon & evening, prepared in a special pot and poured into a special cup.



#### **Bale Mountains National Park**

**Bale Mountains National Park** is an area of high altitude plateau that is broken by numerous spectacular volcanic plugs and peaks, beautiful alpine lakes and rushing mountain streams that descend into deep rocky gorges on their way to the lowlands below. As you ascend into the mountains you will experience changes in the vegetation with altitude, from juniper forests to heather moorlands and alpine meadows, which at various times of year exhibit an abundance of colourful wildflowers. The Park is the largest area of Afro-Alpine habitat in the whole of the continent. It gives the visitor opportunities for unsurpassed mountain walking, horse trekking, scenic driving and the chances to view many of Ethiopia's endemic mammals, in particular the Mountain Nyala and Semien Fox, and birds, such as the Thick-billed Raven, Wattled Ibis, Blue-winged

Goose, and Rouget's Rail. The mountains rise from the extensive surrounding farmlands at 2,500m above sea level to the west, north and east. The National Park area is divided into two major parts by the spectacular Hareenna escarpment that runs from east to west. North of this escarpment is a high altitude plateau area at 4,000m altitude.

The plateau is formed of ancient volcanic rocks (trachytes, basalts, agglomerates and tuffs) dissected by many rivers and streams that have cut deep gorges into the edges over the centuries. In some places this has resulted in scenic waterfalls. From the plateau rise several mountain massifs of rounded and craggy peaks, including Tullu Deemtu the second-highest mountain in Ethiopia at 4,377m above sea level. (Ras Dashen, near the Simien Mountains National Park in the north is the highest - 4,543 m). A major part of the central peaks area is covered by a capping of more recent lava flows, still mainly unvegetated, and forming spectacular rock ripples and pillars. Many shallow depressions on the plateau are filled with water in the wet season, forming small lakes that mirror the surrounding scenery. Larger lakes such as Garba Guracha ("black water"), Hora Bachay and Hala Weoz, contain water all year round. These many lakes provide habitat for water birds, especially migrating ducks from Europe during the northern winter.

**The Ethiopian Wolf** (*Canis simensis*) is one of the most endangered canids on the planet. Also known as the Abyssinian wolf, Abyssinian fox, red jackal, Simien fox, or Simien jackal is a canid native to Africa. The numerous names reflect previous uncertainty about its taxonomic position, but it is now thought to be related to the wolves of the genus *Canis* rather than the foxes it superficially resembles. The Ethiopian wolf is found at altitudes above 3,000 metres (9,800 ft) in the Afro-alpine regions of Ethiopia, and is the top predator of the ecosystem. It is the most endangered canid in the world, with only about seven populations remaining, totalling roughly 550 adults. The largest population is found in the Bale Mountains in southern Ethiopia, although there are also smaller populations in the Semien Mountains in the north of the country, and in a few other areas. Claudio Sillero-Zubiri at the University of Oxford is the zoologist most closely associated with efforts to save this species of wolf, particularly with his work for an oral rabies vaccine to protect them from the disease passed from local dogs. His work is supported by the Born Free Foundation. A rabies outbreak in 1990 reduced the largest known population, found in the Bale Mountains National Park, from about 440 wolves to less than 160 in only two weeks.

The Ethiopian wolf is a medium sized canid resembling the coyote in size and conformation, having long legs and a narrow pointed muzzle. It weighs 11-19 kilograms (24-42 pounds), with males being 20% larger than females. The coat is ochre to rusty red on the face, ears and upper portions of the body and white to pale ginger on the underparts. Small white spots are present on the cheeks, as well as a white ascending crescent below the eyes. The contrast of red and white markings increases with age and social rank. Females tend to have paler coats. The back of the tail has a short, rufous-coloured stripe which ends in a thick brush of black guard hairs on the tip. The pelt has short guard hairs and thick underfur which protect the wolf from temperatures as low as -15 °C (+5 °F).

Although the Ethiopian wolf is primarily a solitary hunter of rodents, it lives in packs that share and defend an exclusive territory. This differs from most larger social carnivores that live in groups for the purpose of hunting cooperatively. In areas with little human interference, packs may average 6 adults, 1-6 yearlings, and 1-13 pups. Typically, packs are an extended family group formed by all males born into the pack during consecutive years and 1-2 females. One study showed that the sex ratio of adult pack members in optimal habitat was biased toward males by a ratio of 2.6:1. Social gatherings among different packs are more common during the breeding season, and take place in close proximity to the den. Inter-pack confrontations occur at the territorial border. Ethiopian wolves become highly vocal during these interactions, which invariably end with the smaller group retreating from the larger. Males do not disperse from their natal pack, while females will leave at the age of two years, joining another pack should a breeding vacancy occur.

**The Mountain Nyala** (*Tragelaphus buxtoni*) found in Oromia, Ethiopia as gadumsa, is an antelope found in high altitude woodland in a small part of central Ethiopia. Mountain Nyala were named for their similarity to the Nyala but they are now considered closer relatives of the Kudu. Mountain Nyala stand around a metre at the shoulder and weigh 150 to 300 kilograms, males being considerably larger than females. Mountain Nyala have grey-brown coats sometimes with poorly defined white stripes and splotches, their coats darken as they age, the underside is lighter than the rest of the coat. Males have horns which twist one or two times and average slightly less than a metre in length.

Mountain Nyala are endemic to the Ethiopian highlands southeast of the Rift Valley, between 6°N and 10°N. Their former range was from Mount Gara Muleta in the east to Shashamene and the northern Bale Zone to the south; currently, the main area of distribution is the Bale Mountains National Park. Within this range, the Mountain Nyala prefer woodland, heath, and scrub at altitudes of at least 2000 metres above sea level sometimes wandering as high as 4000 metres. Mountain Nyala mainly eat herbs and shrubs. Mountain Nyala live in groups of about four to six animals sometimes ranging to thirteen and occasionally more, these groups are mainly females and calves often with one old male. There are about 2500 Mountain Nyala in existence, which are threatened primarily by the encroachment of too many people in their habitat.





## Lalibela

During the reign of Saint Gebre Mesqel Lalibela (a member of the Zagwe Dynasty, who ruled Ethiopia in the late 12th century and early 13th century) the current town of Lalibela was known as Roha. The saintly king was given this name due to a swarm of bees said to have surrounded him at his birth, which his mother took as a sign of his future reign as Emperor of Ethiopia. The names of several places in the modern town and the general layout of the monolithic churches themselves are said to mimic names and patterns observed by Lalibela during the time he spent in Jerusalem and the Holy Land as a youth. Lalibela is said to have seen Jerusalem and then attempted to build a New Jerusalem as his capital in response to the capture of old Jerusalem by Muslims in 1187. As such, many features have Biblical names - even the town's river is known as the River Jordan. It remained the capital of Ethiopia from the late 12th century and into the 13th century.

The first European to see these churches was the Portuguese explorer Pêro da Covilhã (1460 - 1526). Portuguese priest Francisco Álvares (1465 - 1540), who accompanied the Portuguese Ambassador on his visit to Lebna Dengel in the 1520s. His description of these structures concludes: "I weary of writing more about these buildings, because it seems to me that I shall not be believed if I write more ... I swear by God, in Whose power I am, that all I have written is the truth".

Lalibela is a town in northern Ethiopia. It is one of Ethiopia's holiest cities, second only to Aksum, and is a center of pilgrimage for much of the country. Unlike Aksum, the population of Lalibela is almost completely Ethiopian Orthodox Christian. Lalibela was intended to be a New Jerusalem in response to the capture of Jerusalem by Muslims, and many of its historic buildings take their name and layout from buildings in Jerusalem. There exist ancient rock edifices in Korea, Jordan and no doubt, in many other places around the world. In Ethiopia itself, there are over 50 different regions where rock Churches can be found - stretching as far south as Goba (Bale) and as far west as Bonga (Keffa). In Tigray region alone there are over 100 rock Churches.

Lalibela has the highest concentration of Churches of such architectural elegance and overall engineering sophisticated in one spot. Their lighting systems, channels, water works, network of interconnected subterranean passageways and the sheer magnitude of the whole project are mind boggling - just the excavated material is estimated to be enough to make ten of the Great Pyramid of Egypt. The Churches are attributed to King Lalibela (ca 1200 AD) who was later canonized by the Ethiopian Church and is referred to by Europeans as the legendary Prester John. Their impact is so great that the first European to see them, the Portuguese Priest Father Francisco Alvarez, despaired of being believed by his compatriots and cut short his report.

Anointed king under the throne name Gebre Meskel (servant of the cross), King Lalibela is said to have taken 24 years to construct these Churches. To have kept a large work force engaged in economically unproductive labour for such a long period means that it disposed of a large economic surplus and was very wealthy. The area then was clearly fertile and agriculturally productive, whereas now deforestation and other forms of ecological degradation have reduced its productivity and made it prone to drought.

There are three different types of churches:

**Built-up cave Churches** - ordinary structures built inside a natural cave. Makina Medhane Alem and Yemrehanna Kristos near Lalibela are good examples.

**Rock-hewn cave Churches** - carved inwards from cliff face and sometimes making use of and widening an already existing cave. Aba Lbanos, Bete Meskel and Bete Denagil in Lalibela belong to this group.

**Rock-hewn monolithic Churches** - hollowed in the ground, cut out in one piece from the rock and separated from it all round by a trench except at their base. Bete Medhane Alem, Bete Mariam, Bete Emmanuel and the cruciform Bete Giorgis are Lalibela's outstanding monolithic masterpieces.

**Lalibela Priests:** Of Lalibela's 8-10,000 people, over 1,000 are priests. Religious ritual is central to the life of the town, with regular processions, extensive fasts, and crowds of singing and dancing priests. This, combined with its extraordinary religious architecture and simplicity of life, gives the city of Lalibela a distinctively timeless, almost biblical atmosphere.

**Climate:** Ethiopia although almost on the equator, experiences temperate climate and sometimes

temperatures below freezing (in the Simien Mountains) due to its high altitude. Throughout the highlands, the climate is moderate and daytime temperatures rarely exceed 25c. Particularly in December and January, the temperature drops at night to around 10c. The hottest months are April and May, just before the main rains. Despite the moderate climate, the sun's rays beat directly down and are not effectively filtered, hence its rays are quite vicious and there is the likelihood of sunburn and sunglasses are advisable. Although Ethiopia has its famous slogan of "Thirteen Months of Sunshine" a year - referring to the thirteen months of the Julian calendar - there are two rainy seasons a year: the irregular short rains from late January to early March and the long rains that stretch from June until mid September. In the highlands, especially on the escarpment, you must also be prepared for quite strong winds. One of the most ideal times to visit Ethiopia is between October and January, when the rains have ceased and most of the plants are green from having received a large amount of moisture.

Fact file:

- \* Location: Northern Ethiopia,
- \* Population almost completely Ethiopian Orthodox Christian  
3 different types of churches:
- \* Built-up cave churches, Rock-hewn cave churches, Rock-hewn monolithic churches



### Simien Mountains

The Simien Mountain massif is one of the major highlands of Africa, rising to the highest point in Ethiopia, Ras Dashen (4620m), which is the fourth highest peak in the continent. Although in Africa and not too far from the equator, snow and ice appear on the highest points and night temperatures often fall below zero.

The Simiens consist of a high plateau, which ends abruptly in deep escarpments up to 2000m deep from which there are vistas of up to 100km over the surrounding lowland valleys. The Northern escarpment offers the most dramatic scenery with wonderful views to numerous deep canyons, dramatic ridges, and isolated monoliths and spires. The dramatic landscape of the Simien Mountains is the result of massive seismic activity in the area about 40 million years ago. Molten lava poured out of the Earth's core reaching a thickness of 3000m. Subsequent erosion over the millennia has left behind the jagged landscape of the Simien Mountains: the gorges, chasms and precipices. The famous pinnacles - the sharp spires that rise abruptly from the surrounding land - are volcanic necks: the solidified lava and last remnant of ancient volcanoes.

**Simien National Park:** 150 kilometres north-east of Gondar, the Simien Mountains National Park covers 179 square kilometres of highland area at an average elevation of 3,300 metres. Ethiopia's highest peak stands adjacent to the park. The scenery is spectacular. The vegetation is principally Afro-alpine, montane savannah and heather. The national park has three general botanical regions. The lower slopes have been cultivated and grazed, while the alpine regions (up to 3600m) were forested, although much has now disappeared. The higher lands are mountain grasslands with fescue grasses as well as heathers, splendid Red Hot Pokers and Giant Lobelia.

The park was created primarily to protect the Walia Ibex, a type of wild goat, and over 1000 are said to live in the park. Also in the park are families of the Gelada Baboon and the rare Simien Wolf. The Simien Wolf although named after the mountains is rarely seen by the visitor. Over 50 species of birds have been reported in the Simien Mountains, including the impressive Bearded Vulture, or Lammergeyer, with its 10-foot (3m) wingspan.

**Climate:** Ethiopia although almost on the equator, experiences temperate climate and sometimes temperatures below freezing (in the Simien Mountains) due to its high altitude. Throughout the highlands, the climate is moderate and daytime temperatures rarely exceed 25c. Particularly in December and January, the temperature drops at night to around 10c. The hottest months are April and May, just before the main rains. Despite the moderate climate, the sun's rays beat directly down and are not effectively filtered, hence its rays are quite vicious and there is the likelihood of sunburn and sunglasses are advisable.

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**Gelada** live only in the high mountain meadows of Ethiopia - an environment very unlike those of their forest or savanna-dwelling primate relatives. This high-altitude homeland is replete with steep, rocky cliffs, to which geladas have adapted. At night, the animals drop over precipice edges to sleep huddled together on ledges. These baboon-size animals are the world's most terrestrial primates - except for humans. As grass-eaters, they are the last surviving species of ancient grazing primates that were once numerous. Geladas spend most of their day sitting down, plucking and munching on grasses. They have fatty rear ends, much like human buttocks, which seem well adapted to this activity. They live in small family units of one male and three to six females. Though males are larger and more colorful, females dominate gelada societies. When an aging male begins to decline, the females in his family decide when he will be replaced by a younger rival though the male will do all he can do drive off such competition. Gelada family units often combine to form large foraging bands of 30 to 350 animals. When food is abundant as many as 670 geladas have been seen together.

**Walia Ibex**, a member of the goat family, weighs 80 - 125 kg (180 - 280 lb). It dwells on steep cliffs between 2500 - 4500 m (8200 - 14,750') in regions characterized by rocky mountains, gorges, outcrops and loose stony screes. It depends on undisturbed juniper and other mountain forest, subalpine grasslands and scrub, and a year-round supply of water. As far as is known, the walia ibex has always had a restricted range in Ethiopia. It has been found only in the Simien Mountains in northern Ethiopia in recent times. It formerly was distributed throughout these mountains, but it underwent a significant decline between 1920 and 1970. The greatest concentration now occurs within the Simien Mountains National Park, mainly along 25 km (16 mi) of the northern escarpment. Its inaccessible habitat provided protection until the advent of modern firearms, which led to a significant reduction in the population. In addition, habitat loss due to increasing use of land for cultivation and development has occurred. With the creation of the Simien Mountains National Park around 1970, poaching appeared to be brought under control. A major conservation problem is that the remaining natural habitat is extremely limited.

**Lammergeryer** simply nowhere in the world offers such amazing viewing of this formidable bird.

#### Fact file

- \* Established in 1969 , World Heritage Site by UNESCO 1978
- \* One of major highlands of Africa, Highest point (Ras Dashen) 4620 m
- \* Area: 179 sq kms, 150 kms north east of Gondar
- \* Endemic wildlife: Gelada Baboon, Walia Ibex, Simien Wolf and the Lammergeryer Vulture
- \* 3 general botanical regions



#### **Country Information**

##### **Ethiopia, a Kaleidoscope of Culture**

Nowhere in the world is as well endowed with traditional and tribal cultures than Ethiopia. Our typical cultural expedition takes you into this remote region of the African continent where you will be immersed into an array of tribal lifestyles and biblical like living museums, where we will enjoy 'street level culture', with a fascinating blend of cafes, bars, sidewalk musicians, small galleries and bistros, where it is hard to draw the line between participant and observer, or between creativity and its creators. So, why not join Origins on the most amazing cultural expedition of your life, to see people and lifestyles totally unaffected by the western world that you will feel nothing but sheer privilege at being able to travel amongst them. HOWEVER, If you are inconvenienced by spartan accommodations or are apprehensive in unfamiliar situations, then this expedition is not for you !

In Addis Ababa we will explore this historic city and experience the delicious national food dishes. Gondar which in the 16th Century was the second largest city in Africa ! In the daytime we seek out the endemic wildlife of the Simien Mountains, and at night in Bahir Dar enjoy the Amharic singing and dancing of the Mini Fogera. Lalibela the "The New Jerusalem" were as a "fly on the wall" you will experience the living museums in the heart of the Ethiopian coptic church.

A step back in time...

A journey through Ethiopia's historic route is a trip back in time. From the reign of King Solomon, Ethiopia, then known as Abyssinia, was the epicenter of religious mystique and the supposed resting place for the Arc of the Covenant. Rumours and mystery are interwoven with history and heritage: the Knights Templar, the so-called Crusaders, came here in search of their Holy Grail. From Scottish explorer James Bruce to



Hollywood movie mogul Steven Spielberg (Raiders of the Lost Ark) Ethiopia has a story all of its own and a magnetic attraction that crosses all cultures and boundaries.

A visual feast...

Although Ethiopia's rich cultural history may be the primary focus - the sheer breathtaking beauty of this country's scenery overwhelms your senses and embeds itself in your mind's eye. Every journey is a visual feast. The spectacular highlands are a haven for endemic and endangered species such as the Simien Wolf, the Walia Ibex, the Gelada Baboon and the Lammergeyer Vulture. Your journey becomes a quest to absorb and understand the myths and religious crusades that have dominated this land: from the incredible rock-hewn underground churches of Lalibela 'A prayer in Stone' to the dizzying heights of the Simien Mountain Range described by one writer as 'the chess pieces of the Gods' - the experience is multi-dimensional and intense.

Cultural Crossroads...

Ethiopia lies at the northeastern corner of the African continent in an area known as 'the Horn of Africa'. Its intriguing blend of African and Eastern tribal civilizations and tangible aura of religious worship make it a cultural crossroads and spiritual meeting point. This is truly a multi-ethnic state: many distinctions have been blurred by intermarriage but many also remain - an astonishing 83 languages are spoken - falling into 4 main language groups: Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic and Nilo-Saharan (and there are 200 different dialects!). There are many festivals and ceremonies: religious, and ancestral and traditional attire is displayed to match.

Visas

A valid passport is required by all visitors and visas are required and currently cost US\$20 for a single tourist visa, valid 90 days from issue date. We recommend you process your application in good time. Alternatively you can get one on arrival at Bole International if you entry into Ethiopia is via Addis Ababa - it takes around 20 minutes to process. Should you be arriving into Ethiopia by any other route (i.e via the Omo River) then you must obtain your visa in advance from your country of origin.

Fact file

- \* Located in the North East corner of the African Continent, The 10th largest country in Africa
- \* Time zone: GMT +3hours. Julian calendar which consists of 12 months of 30 days each and a 13th month of 5 or 6 days.
- \* Ethiopia extends over an area of 1,112,000 square kilometers
- \* Population estimated at 65 million, divided into more than 80 ethnic groups
- \* National Dish is injera a flat sour dough pancake made from a special grain called teff.
- \* Traditionally Ethiopian's drink Tej (a honey mead) or Coffee with meals
- \* Main ethnic groups: Oromo, Amhara, Tigray, Somali, Guragie, Sidama, Wolaita, Afar, Hadiya and

Gamo.

- \* Geographically dominated by the central plateaux rising to 2,000-3,000 metres above sea level
- \* Ras Dshen at 4,453 metres is the summit of Simien Mountains (the fourth highest mountain in Africa)
- \* The country is highly fertile and crossed by many rivers – the Blue Nile is the most prominent.
- \* Eastern Ethiopia is bisected by the Syrian-African Rift, crossing from North to South creating a series of Rift Valley lakes
- \* Endemic wildlife to view in the highlands includes: Gelada Baboon, Walia Ibex, Simien Wolf and the Lammergeyer Vulture

