

**Tour Name** ETHIOPIA EASTERN  
**Arrival P/U** Bole Airport, Addis Ababa  
**Departure D/O** Bole Airport, Addis Ababa

### Itinerary at a glance

Day	Location	Accommodation	MealPlan
1	Harer	Rewda Guest House	LDBB
2	Harer	Rewda Guest House	LDBB
3	Wabe Gorge	Wabe Valley Fly Camp	LDBB
4	Bale Mountains NPark	Bale Mountains Lodge	LDBB
5	Bale Mountains Park	Bale Mountains Lodge	LDBB
6	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 - Harer

Fly Ethiopian Airlines scheduled service (approx 1430/1530 hrs Addis to Dire Dawa). Fly eastwards for ninety minutes from Addis Ababa Bole Airport to Dire Dawa, where you are met on arrival and driven the one hour onto the ancient holy islamic city of Harer.

**Rewda Guest House LDBB**

#### Day 2 Harer

Full day in Harer a traditional walled Islamic city dating back to the 10th century.

**Rewda Guest House LDBB**

#### Day 3 Harer - Wabe Gorge

Drive southwards via the pilgrimage site of Sheik Hussein, and eventually onto our "fly-camp" in the spectacular Wabe Gorge.

**Wabe Valley Fly Camp LDBB**

#### Day 4 Wabe Gorge - Bale Mountains National Park

Drive Southwards to the Bale Mountains National Park, stopping en-route at The Sof Omar Caves before continuing onto the Hareenna Forest.

**Bale Mountains Lodge-Cottage LDBB**

#### Day 5 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 LDBB**

#### Day 6 Bale Mountains National Park - Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Drive 2 hours to the Robe Airstrip and connect with Ethiopian Airlines back to Addis Ababa.

### Accommodation Information

#### Rewda Guest House

Harar is an amazing ancient, predominantly Muslim city in the east of Ethiopia, said to be the fourth holiest Muslim city in the world after Mecca, Modena and Jerusalem. It is definitely worth a visit.

Rewda Guesthouse is in the old walled city. This cocoon like guesthouse occupies an old Harari house at the absolute heart of the old town. It is a very special place, set in a courtyard, immaculately clean and beautifully maintained; it is one of the best examples of a traditional Harari house which is accessible to tourists.

Its main feature is the large, multi-layered central room of the house, in which the walls are covered with brightly coloured traditional baskets, and the later tin and plastic replacements. The effect is beautiful. Expensive house objects like porcelain, glass, etc. are exposed in built-in shelves.

The floor in the living room is terrace like, elevated in five levels (five being a very important number for Harrar inhabitants, i.e. there are 5 gates leading to Harrar, there are 5 daily prayers, etc). The five floors are covered with various carpets and dozens of embodied cushions.

The bedroom is basic but clean, likewise the bathroom (shared with one other double room). Rest your head in one of the two well-kept rooms and marvel at the thoughtfully decorated common areas. Throw in the warm welcome of Rewda, your congenial host, and you have a winner.



### **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 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.



### Reserve and Park Information

#### Harer

Harer is located in the east of Ethiopia, some 520 km from Addis Ababa. It constitutes one of Ethiopia's nine autonomous regional states.

Visitors can travel by air to Dire Dawa, from where it is less than an hour by road (there are daily flights), or by road from Addis Ababa, which will take all day. The road is asphalt, and there is spectacular scenery en route, as one drops a kilometre and a half in altitude to cross part of the Afar Region, ascending in altitude again around the Arba Gugu and Chercher Mountains.

There had been settlements in the area since the 10th century, but the city attained prominence in the sixteenth century under the great Muslim warrior, Ahmed bin Ibrahim al-Ghazi, or Ahmed Gagn, (Ahmed the Left Handed), who brought the Jihad or Holy War to the Ethiopian highlands. In Christian historiography he has been demonised as a destroyer and sacker of churches and monasteries, Muslim commentators however point out that he was merely giving the highlanders a taste of what they had been inflicting on the lowlanders for several centuries previously.

Prior to that, being sufficiently far away from the Christian centres of power, the site had served as both a refuge for Muslims under threat and also as a centre of Islamic learning and culture in the Horn as a whole. With the death in battle of Ahmed Gagn the kingdom he had established disintegrated, but Harer survived as an independent state and trading centre for many centuries, before falling under Egyptian control for 10 years (1875-85) and in 1887 was incorporated into the Ethiopian Empire under Menelik II. With the building of the Djibouti - Addis Ababa railway, which by passed Harer, Harer's commercial importance declined, but it has retained its importance as a centre of Islamic learning - there are 140 mosques and shrines within the city and it is said to be the fourth holiest place in Islam, after Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem.

Harer today continues to attract the fascination of visitors. The site itself is scenically stunning - situated on a magnificent hilltop and surrounded in part by deep gorges, it was originally chosen for the ease with which it could be defended. To add to its impregnability, the 16th century leader Nur ibn al-Wazir Mujahid built a defensive wall around the city, which with its five gates remains one of the most distinctive features of the city. The mountain chain on which Harer is located is surrounded by deserts and low lying savannah.

Harer has grown beyond its walls, and is now divided into the old and new towns. Within the walled part, the jegol, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the streets are narrow and winding while the houses have distinct architectural features, with carved woodwork and specially shaped windows and doors. The interiors are distinguished by different levels, raised platforms and niches set into the walls.

Immigrants to the city over the last 150 years - Arabs, Europeans, Egyptians, highland Ethiopians and Oromos and Somalis from the surrounding regions - have introduced both their architectural styles and cultures, making the city today a unique blend of different ethnic groups, although the indigenous Hareri architectural style remains dominant. (The Hareri people, or the Aderes, have their own language, Aderigna, a Semitic root language).

A tour of Harer today will take in the walls and the old city, the various markets in which Harer's ethnic diversity is easily seen, the recently restored house of the French poet Rimbaud, the government museum and the community museum attached to the cultural centre, the church of Medhane Alem, the palace of Ras Mekonnen (the father of Emperor Haile Selassie I), and the Jami Mosque. A visit to a typical Hareri home can also be arranged - some of these old homes have now opened up as cultural guest houses, allowing visitors to stay within the jegol.

After dark, visitors can see Harer's famed "hyena men" summon and feed hyenas just outside the city walls.

Harer is famous for its intricate filigree jewelry in gold and silver, in which amber is often set, finely woven baskets and wall mats, and for the bright and colourful shawls with which the women of the city adorn themselves.

In the second decade of the 21st century, Harer retains many of the characteristics and charm of a pre-industrial society - although change has come, the living social organisms, the way of life, the culture, the role of religious groups and leaders are still alive and respected. The social ties that link people together find expression in the cooperation of the community in organising weddings and funeral ceremonies and in the restoration of mosques and meeting places.

The city of Harer has managed to retain a certain timeless quality, which added to its architectural distinctiveness and its vibrant social life, make it a "must" on any traveller's itinerary.



### **Wabe Gorge**

The Wabe Shebele Gorge is arguably one of the most dramatic gorges in Ethiopia. When passing through the gorge on this little travelled road, it may be hours before another car is seen. The gorge winds into a vast uninhabited lowland. Reaching the brink of the gorge, a gigantic canyon-like formation slithers 1,000m below. The road snakes through the gorges, providing fantastic views, then twists down through a second and third gorge until it reaches the Wabe Shebele Bridge. The three sections each have their own distinctive flora and fauna. Wildlife sightings may include rock hyrax, klipspringer and leopard. There are places to camp around the first and second gorge.

### **Dire Sheik Hussein:**

The holy shrine of Sheik Hussein is located in the northeastern part of Bale on the edge of the Wabe Shebele River, 180km from the Bale Mountains National Park headquarters. The shrine of Sheik Hussein is named after a Muslim holy man called Sheik Hussein Bin Malka, who was respected for his religious teaching, high devotion and miraculous deeds. According to local legends, he was born in the 12th century and lived for 250 years, 70 of which he spent in the shrine. Pilgrims from all over the country come on foot, horseback and by mule from up to 1,000km away to pay homage and to partake in a ceremony organized in memory of their religious leader. The pilgrimage takes place twice a year: in June to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Sheik Hussein and in October to celebrate the birth of the prophet Mohammed. The pilgrimage depends on the lunar calendar, so the exact date varies each year.

The shrine is located at the end of town and is surrounded by whitewashed walls. Tucked behind the shrine is Zemzemdure, a lime green, algae-covered pond where local people gather holy water to cure ailments. Buried within the shrine are Sheik Hussein's daughter and son. Jewara, dust from the ground in the burial rooms, is rubbed on foreheads and necks as a blessing. Guides are mandatory and can be found outside the main gate; prices should be agreed upon before entering. Shoes are removed and left outside; long pants and

long-sleeved shirts should be worn. Women should wrap shawls around their waists. See directory for further information. After the celebration, some of the pilgrims continue on to the holy cave of Sof-Omar, located 164km from the shrine.

### **The Cave of Sof Omar**

The caves of Sof-Omar are located about 115km from the Bale Mountains National Park headquarters and 95km from the zone's capital of Robe. It is one of the longest underground caves in Africa, with a total length of over 1.5km. The meandering Web River lies in an entrenched gorge, 150m below a level basalt plateau. The river gorge is spectacular for its depth and for the limestone cliffs that line it. The caves were carved out of the limestone by the Web River, which has changed course over time, creating an accessible passage and carving out ornate and immense pillars, domes and chambers. Fossilized mollusks can be found within the large limestone blocks.

The full walk through the caves is 1.7km and takes three to four hours. From December to May, the river is low enough to cross, although water can be waist-deep in some places. Look out for the bats that hang overhead and the eels that live below.

The name Sof-Omar is derived from a Muslim holy man who lived in the cave with his daughter. It is a place of worship for Ethiopian Muslims: two holidays are celebrated each year where around 1,000 people gather. The first occurs for 15 days in May and the second soon after in June. Because they depend on the moon, exact dates vary each year.

Vervet monkeys frequently pass close to the cave and are likely to steal any food left unattended. The countryside around the Sof-Omar caves abounds with wildlife such as dik-diks, lesser kudus, leopard tortoises, rock hyraxes, as well as more than 50 species of birds, including the endemic and elusive Salvadori's seedeater.



**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 Haremma 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.

