

Lost Worlds of Ethiopia

TRIBES OF THE OMO VALLEY AND SPECTACULAR FESTIVALS



TRIP DATES

2024

September 12-27, 2024 Meskel Festival

2025

January 4-19, 2025 Timkat Festival
September 12-27, 2025 Meskel Festival

ITINERARY	3
TRIP COST, PAYMENT & INSURANCE	14
ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE	15
TRIP LEADER	16
TRIP DETAILS	17
TOUCAN CLUB	18



Lost Worlds of Ethiopia

TRIBES OF THE OMO VALLEY AND SPECTACULAR FESTIVALS

From its Orthodox Christian heritage in the mountain highlands to the animistic tribes in the Great Rift Valley, Ethiopia holds a fascinating mix of cultures. In the highlands, we explore Axum—Ethiopia’s holy city—and World Heritage-listed Lalibela, with its 12th century subterranean churches. A different side of Ethiopia thrives in the far south, where we visit the tribal cultures of the remote Omo Valley. Each trip is timed for a festival—January trips attend Timkat, the exuberant Epiphany celebration; in September, we’ll witness Meskel, with its flickering bonfires and carpets of yellow daisies.



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Itinerary (Timkat Festival Departures)

TIMKAT FESTIVAL DEPARTURES (JANUARY)

The Timkat Festival, the biggest celebration of the year in Ethiopia, marks Epiphany on the Western Gregorian Calendar. We've scheduled our departures to spend two days in Addis to enjoy Timkat at its most colorful. Timkat is a three-day affair that begins with Timkat Eve, when dramatic processions take place through a night of fasting. The great Timkat Day, which commemorates Christ's baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, is followed on the third day by the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel. For Timkat, tej (a honey drink) and tella (a barley drink) are brewed, special bread is baked, sheep are slaughtered, and gifts are given to children. Worshippers dress in the dazzling white of traditional Ethiopian dress, in dramatic contrast to the brilliant-hued velvets and satins of the priests' ceremonial robes and umbrellas. On Timkat Eve, the priests bring out the tabots, the engraved wooden or stone slabs that are the symbols of the Ark of the Covenant, then proceed to a pool or river to bless the water where the next day's celebration will take place. It is the tabot, rather than the church building, that is consecrated, and the tabot remains wrapped in velvet cloths, hidden from the gaze of the layman. The evening air is filled with the smell of incense and the sounds of ringing bells and blowing trumpets. At dawn, the priests bless the water and slip a golden cross into it, extinguishing a consecrated candle in the water. The water is then sprinkled on the assembled congregation in commemoration of Christ's baptism and the tabots are brought back by solemn procession to their churches. Huge crowds of worshippers come to observe the extraordinary Timkat ceremonies and it is a great privilege to be able to witness them.

DAY 1

ARRIVE ADDIS (ITINERARY 1)

Upon arrival in Addis Ababa, trip members are met at the airport and transferred to the Sheraton Hotel, our comfortable base in Addis. In the afternoon, we gather for an orientation meeting, then enjoy a Welcome Dinner...D

DAY 2

ADDIS

Our explorations of Addis include the Anthropological/Ethnographic museum with the richest collection of Ethiopian icons and paintings, ranging in age from the medieval period to the modern era. We'll then visit the nearby National Museum—the highlight here is the paleontology section that includes the remains of the feted Dinknesh, a specimen of *Australopithecus afarensis* discovered in 1974 by paleoanthropologist Donald Johanson. Known in popular parlance as "Lucy," its Ethiopian name means "you are marvelous." Overnight at hotel...BLD

DAYS 3-5

JINKA / OMO RIVER VALLEY TRIBES

We fly to Jinka (1.5 hours), set at the edge of the dry savannas of 835-square-mile Mago National Park along the east bank of the Omo River, and begin exploring the tribes of the Omo River Valley. In the savanna of the Omo



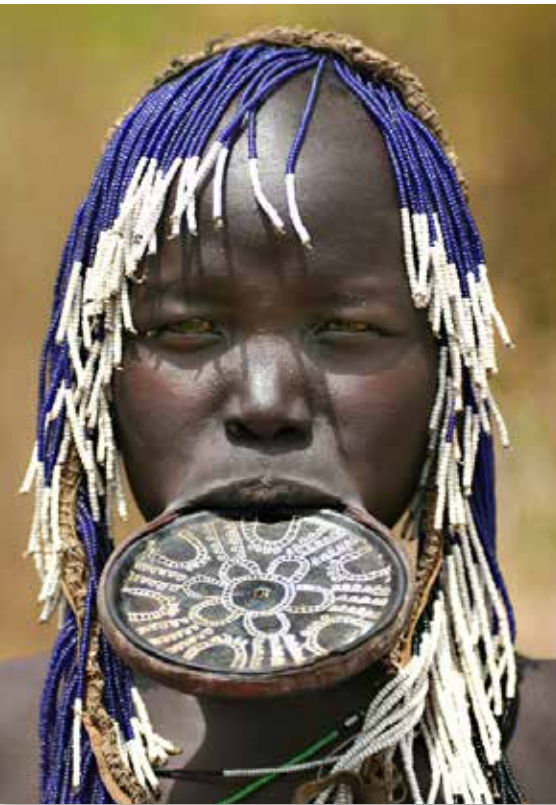
TRIP DETAILS AT-A-GLANCE

- Length:** 16 days
Arrive: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Depart: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Lodging: 3 nights at the 5-star Sheraton in Addis, 12 nights very rustic hotels and lodges
Meals: All meals included (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
Activity: Cultural Adventures
Trip Level: 1 2 3 4 5 6
Rugged road travel by 4WD vehicle, easy walks, cultural explorations

HIGHLIGHTS

- Spectacular festival on each trip: Timkat (January) or Meskel (September)
- The rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, the medieval castles of Gondar
- Tribal villages of the Karo, known for their body painting, and the Bume and Mursi tribes
- Small group size—maximum 8—for greater flexibility and more authentic cultural encounters

Itinerary



“This was my third trip with WT and it certainly won’t be my last. The itinerary was fascinating, our Trip Leader delightful, and the WT office wonderfully responsive.”

Sandra C., New York, NY

River Valley live a fascinating mix of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, from the Nyangatom and Kara to the Bena and Hamar, coexisting in a harsh land that is all but forgotten by the rest of the world. For the most part, they have separate languages. There are few interactions between tribes except at markets. In the wet season, October through November, and April, the tribespeople largely remain in their villages to take care of communal tasks such as honey gathering and cultivation. With the approach of the dry season, the men leave with their herds to find good pastures, moving to the grassy banks of seasonal watercourses.

Most of the tribespeople wear simple cotton wraps, much decorative jewelry, and elaborate hairstyles. Many men have decorative scarring that indicates their tribal rank, hunting achievements, and and bravery in inter-tribal conflicts. The men of the Mursi tribe are renowned warriors and Mursi women are famous for the lip plates they use for adornment. The Mursi speak a Nilotic language and are a homogeneous group governed by their own ancient rituals.

We make daily excursions to visit villages and meet a wide variety of tribal peoples. Our itinerary in the Omo region is flexible and subject to local conditions. The following is a sample itinerary: At Korcho, a small Karo village, we visit some homes and watch traditional body paintings and adorations performed by Karo men, women, and children. Photography is allowed during this ceremony and you are welcome to participate.

Overnights at a basic lodge in the Omo Valley...BLD each day

Driving Details: Jinka to Mursi round trip on a dusty bush road, approximately 3-4 hours; Jinka to Murulle 5-6 hours, mostly an asphalt road with the last 5 miles a dusty and bumpy bush road; Murulle to Kanganatan to visit the Nyangatom is about 2-3 hours round trip, mostly on asphalt road round trip.

DAY 6

ARBA MINCH

A long but scenic drive brings us to Arba Minch. Along the way we visit the Konso ethnic group. Check into our basic hotel, which has a panoramic view of Nech Sar National Park and its two lakes, Chamo and Abaya. Time permitting, we enjoy a walk to a scenic local spring. Overnight at hotel in Arba Minch...

BLD

Driving Details: 6-7 hours

DAY 7

ARBA MINCH / DROZE VILLAGE / LAKE CHAMO

We visit a mountain village of the Dorze people, famous for their weavings, with a chance to explore the weekly market. After lunch back at our hotel, we take a boat excursion on Lake Chamo, where we may have the opportunity to see Nile crocodiles and aquatic birds. Overnight at hotel..BLD

DAY 8

BAHIR DAR

We fly to Bahir Dar, where we visit a church to meet the local deacon and also take a boat excursion out to an island monastery in Lake Tana. The town of Bahir Dar rose to prominence in the 16th century and is a center for commerce and government for the region. Around 20 of the 37 islands in the lake have monasteries, with some dating to the Middle Ages. Due in part to their difficult access, the lake's churches are well preserved and rich with the best of Ethiopian religious paintings, illuminated manuscripts, and other treasures. From a hilltop above the city, near the palace of the former Emperor Haile Selassie, there are panoramic views of the city and the lake. Overnight at a basic hotel at Lake Tana...BLD

Travel Details: Approximately 1-hour flight



DAY 9

SIMIEN MOUNTAINS

After breakfast, we drive to Gondar, Ethiopia's royal capital until 1868 and set at an altitude of 7,500 feet. From here we head up into the Simien Mountains, a spectacular landscape of deep gorges, sharp ridges, and steep jagged peaks, including Ras Dashen, Ethiopia's highest peak at 14,930 feet. Simien Mountains National Park is home to unique wildlife that include the endangered walia ibex, Ethiopian wolf, and the gelada baboon, as well as more than 180 species of birds. Overnight at Simien Lodge...BLD

DAY 10

GONDAR

We drive back to Gondar and spend the day exploring this medieval city, surrounded by mountains on all sides, with Lake Tana in view in the distance. Founded by Emperor Fasilides in the 17th century, Gondar has been called the "Camelot of Africa" because of its castles and fortress-like battlements. By European standards, the Gondar castles may not be elaborate, but their very presence in Africa makes them a rare and imposing sight. Ambassadors of the Ottoman Empire and of Louis XVI of France were once entertained here. Gondar's Debre Birhan Selassie Church is famous for its "winged angel" faces that decorate the entire ceiling. Gondar was also the home of the Falasha, the "black Jews" of Ethiopia, most of whom left for Israel in 1991. Overnight at a basic hotel in Gondar...BLD

Driving Details: 2.5-3 hours

DAY 11

AXUM

We fly to Axum this morning. The great mystery of Axum is its claim to be the resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. This claim is connected to the legend of King Solomon, whose son Menelik is said to have brought the Ark here some 3,000 years ago (Menelik founded the Solomonic dynasty, of which Haile Selassie was the last emperor).



Itinerary



After lunch, our explorations include the Church of St. Mary of Zion, where the Ark of the Covenant resides within a special chapel. There are actually two churches, the older constructed in the early 17th century and containing the crowns of many former Ethiopian rulers. The newer church was constructed by Emperor Haile Selassie, who opened it at a ceremony with Queen Elizabeth in 1965. The ruins of the original church, probably erected in the 4th century, still stand. Axum has a fascinating history. Archaeologists believe that the Queen of Sheba (1000 BC) visited Axum. Ruins thought to be the Palace of Sheba have been located a few miles outside of town. The first recorded kingdom in Ethiopia grew around Axum during the 3rd century BC, and it was in Axum in the 4th century that Christianity became the state religion, under orders of King Ezana. Axum became a vital trading crossroads between Asia and Africa, falling into decline only after the rise of Islam in the 7th century. Despite its decline, it remained Ethiopia's religious capital and the place where Ethiopian emperors came for their elaborate coronations. North of the town square are Axum's impressive monolithic stelae, or obelisks, the largest of which once weighed 500 tons. The largest still-standing stela is 75 feet tall. All were carved from single pieces of granite and are decorated with carved doors and windows and metal ornaments with pagan symbols. At the base of each of the stelae is a stone altar with bowl-shaped depressions thought to be used for sacrifices. Overnight at a basic hotel...BLD

Travel Details: Approximately 30-minute flight

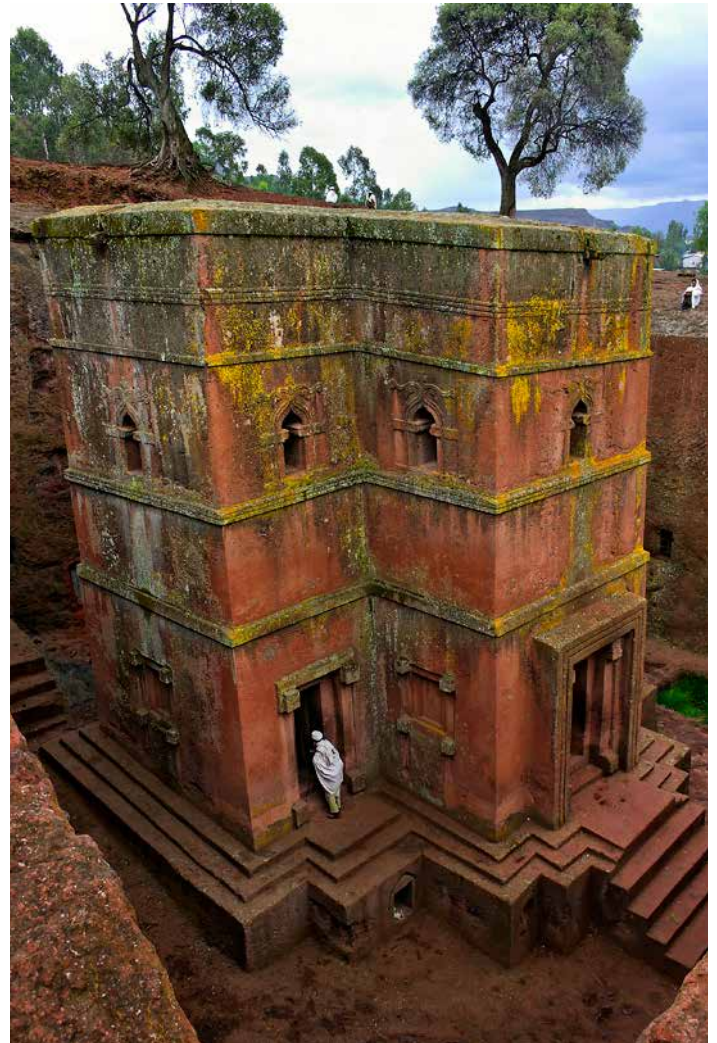


DAYS 12-13

LALIBELA

A morning flight takes us to Lalibela, where we spend a memorable day exploring some of Ethiopia's famous rock-hewn churches. This ancient town is known for its concentration of 12th century churches carved out of solid rock. There are no less than 1,000 such churches in the Lasta region of Lalibela, some hidden in enormous caves. Some of the churches are cut into volcanic rock, some are quarried enlargements of natural caves, and others are connected by a maze of underground tunnels. The architectural styles vary widely, from Grecian pillars and Arabesque windows to Egyptian-style motifs. With their unique architecture and artistry, Lalibela's remarkable churches truly must be seen to be believed. In his youth, King Lalibela was attracted to the monastic life and later made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. After he came to power, he ordered these amazing churches created, and they were built without using mortar or wood and completed in the 12th century. The largest, Bete Medani Alem, is 100 feet long, 70 feet wide, 35 feet high, and has rock walls that are up to six feet thick. Its basilica has five naves. This particular church is thought to be a copy of the great cathedral of Saint Mary of Zion, built in the Ethiopian city of Axum in the 4th century. Dinner and overnight at a basic hotel in Lalibela...BLD each day

Travel Details: Approximately 30-minute flight



DAY 14

ADDIS

We fly back to Addis, with the remainder of the day to rest or explore on your own. Overnight at the Sheraton Hotel...BLD

Travel Details: Approximately 50-minute flight

DAY 15

ADDIS (TIMKAT EVE)

Our main focus today is to watch the vibrant processions of Timkat Eve. In the evening, we'll enjoy a Farewell Dinner. Overnight at Sheraton Hotel...BLD

DAY 16

ADDIS (TIMKAT DAY) / DEPART

Today is the main Timkat Day, and we watch the morning processions and celebrations around town, with day rooms at the Sheraton. Transfer in the evening to the airport to depart on homeward-bound flights...BLD

Itinerary 2 (Meskel Festival Departures)

MESKEL FESTIVAL DEPARTURE (SEPTEMBER)

Meskel, held each September, celebrates The Finding of the True Cross. The largest and most colorful Meskel celebrations are held in Addis, and our September departures are in Addis for the Meskel Eve ceremony. Meskel has been celebrated in Ethiopia for more than 1,600 years and commemorates the discovery of Jesus' cross by the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great. The original discovery is said to have taken place on March 19, 326 AD, but the feast is celebrated in September, with the lighting of a bonfire on Meskel Eve. On Meskel Eve, branches are gathered and topped with yellow daisies then ignited. The branches symbolize the actions of Empress Helena, who when no one would show her the Holy Sepulchre, lit incense and prayed for help. Where the smoke drifted, she dug and found three crosses. Meskel coincides with the mass blooming in September of carpets of golden yellow "meskel daisies" (adey abeba in Amharic) in the highlands. The festival starts with the planting of a large tree in the main square on Meskel Eve. People bring poles topped with meskel daisies and place them around the tree to form the towering pyramid that will become the bonfire. In Addis, the celebration starts early in the afternoon, when a huge procession of flaming torches approaches the main square. The marchers include priests, students, brass bands, and people pulling floats bedecked with huge crosses. Thousands gather at the square to join in, and as evening darkens, the flames grow brighter. Dancing, feasting, and even gun salutes mark the occasion, and not until dawn does the burning pyramid finally consume itself. Any national holiday such as Meskel is an occasion for wearing traditional Ethiopian dress, and we enjoy mingling with the throngs of worshippers in Addis on Meskel Eve. Traditional instruments are usually played during important church occasions, and we may also see costumed horsemen, with their horses gaily caparisoned for the occasion.



DAY 1 ADDIS

Upon arrival in Addis Ababa, trip members are met at the airport and transferred to the Sheraton Hotel, our comfortable base in Addis. In the afternoon, we gather for an orientation meeting, then enjoy a Welcome Dinner...D

DAY 2 ADDIS

Enjoy a city tour of Addis, which may include the Ethnological Museum and the famous National Museum. Overnight at the Sheraton Hotel...BLD

DAY 3 BAHIR DAR

We fly to Bahir Dar, where we visit a church to meet the local deacon and also take a boat excursion out to an island monastery in Lake Tana. The town of Bahir Dar rose to prominence in the 16th century and is a center for commerce and government for the region. Around 20 of the 37 islands in the lake have monasteries, with some dating to the Middle Ages. Due in part to their difficult access, the lake's churches are well preserved and rich with the best of Ethiopian religious paintings, illuminated manuscripts, and other treasures. From a hilltop above the city, near the palace of the former Emperor Haile Selassie, there are panoramic views of the city and the lake. Overnight at a basic hotel at Lake Tana...BLD
Travel Details: Approximately 1-hour flight

DAY 4 SIMIEN MOUNTAINS

After breakfast, we drive to Gondar, Ethiopia's royal capital until 1868 and set at an altitude of 7,500 feet. From here we head up into the Semien Mountains, a spectacular landscape of deep gorges, sharp ridges, and steep jagged peaks, including Ras Dashen, Ethiopia's highest peak at 14,930 feet. Simien Mountains National Park is home to unique wildlife that include the endangered walia ibex, Ethiopian wolf, and the gelada baboon, as well as more than 180 species of birds. We'll overnight at a local lodge in this dramatic setting...BLD
Driving Details: 6-7 hours

DAY 5 GONDAR

We drive back to Gondar and spend the day exploring this medieval city, surrounded by mountains on all sides, with

Lake Tana in view in the distance. Founded by Emperor Fasilides in the 17th century, Gondar has been called the “Camelot of Africa” because of its castles and fortress-like battlements. By European standards, the Gondar castles may not be elaborate, but their very presence in Africa makes them a rare and imposing sight. Ambassadors of the Ottoman Empire and of Louis XVI of France were once entertained here. Gondar’s Debre Birhan Selassie Church is famous for its “winged angel” faces that decorate the entire ceiling. Gondar was also the home of the Falasha, the “black Jews” of Ethiopia, most of whom left for Israel in 1991. Overnight at a basic hotel in Gondar...BLD
Driving Details: 4-5 hours

DAY 6

AXUM

We fly to Axum this morning. The great mystery of Axum is its claim to be the resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. This claim is connected to the legend of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, whose son Menelik is said to have brought the Ark here some 3000 years ago (Menelik founded the Solomonic dynasty, of which Haile Selassie was the last emperor). After lunch, our explorations include the Church of St. Mary of Zion, where the Ark of the Covenant resides within a special chapel. There are actually two churches, the older constructed in the early 17th century and containing the crowns of many former Ethiopian rulers. The newer church was constructed by Emperor Haile Selassie, who opened it at a ceremony with Queen Elizabeth in 1965. The ruins of the original church, probably erected in the 4th century, still stand. Axum has a fascinating history. Archaeologists believe that the Queen of Sheba (1000 BC) lived near Axum. Ruins thought to be the Palace of Sheba have been located a few miles outside of town. The first recorded kingdom in Ethiopia grew around Axum during the 3rd century BC, and it was in Axum in the 4th century that Christianity became the state religion, under orders of King Ezna. Axum became a vital trading crossroads between Asia and Africa, falling into decline only after the rise of Islam in the 7th century. Despite its decline, it remained Ethiopia’s religious capital and the place where Ethiopian emperors came for their elaborate coronations. North of the town square are Axum’s impressive monolithic stelae, or obelisks, the largest of which once weighed 500 tons. The largest still-standing stelae is 75 feet tall. All were carved from single pieces of granite and are decorated with carved doors and windows and metal ornaments with pagan symbols. At the base

of each of the stelae is a stone altar with bowl-shaped depressions thought to be used for sacrifices. Overnight at a basic hotel...BLD

Travel Details: Approximately 30-minute flight

DAYS 7-8

LALIBELA

A morning flight takes us to Lalibela, where we spend a memorable day exploring some of Ethiopia’s famous rock-hewn churches. This ancient town is known for its concentration of 12th century churches carved out of solid rock. There are no less than 1,000 such churches in the Lasta region of Lalibela, some hidden in enormous caves. Some of the churches are cut into volcanic rock, some are quarried enlargements of natural caves, and others are connected by a maze of underground tunnels. The architectural styles vary widely, from Grecian pillars and Arabesque windows to Egyptian-style motifs. With their unique architecture and artistry, Lalibela’s remarkable churches truly must be seen to be believed. In his youth, King Lalibela was attracted to the monastic life and later made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. After he came to power, he ordered these amazing churches created, and they were built without using mortar or wood and completed in just a 23-year span in the 12th century. The largest, Bete Medani Alem, is 100 feet long, 70 feet wide, 35 feet high, and has rock walls that are up to six feet thick. Its basilica has five naves. This particular church is thought to be a copy of the great cathedral of Saint Mary of Zion, built in the Ethiopian city of Axum in the 4th century. Dinner and overnight at a basic hotel in Lalibela...BLD each day

Travel Details: Approximately 30-minute flight

DAY 9

ADDIS / ABJIATTA-SHALLA / LANGANO

Fly to Addis and drive southwest through the Rift Valley toward Ethiopia’s fantastic tribal country, with a visit to Lake Abijatta-Shalla National Park. Overnight at a basic hotel in the Rift Valley...BLD

Travel Details: Approximately 1-hour flight, approximately 3-hour drive

DAY 10

ARBA MINCH

A long but scenic drive brings us to a mountain village of the Dorze people, famous for their weavings, with a chance to explore the weekly market. After lunch, we drive south to Arba Minch and check into our basic hotel, which has

Itinerary

a panoramic view of Nech Sar National Park and its two lakes, Chamo and Abaya. Time permitting, we enjoy a walk to a scenic local spring. Overnight in Arba Minch...BLD
Driving Details: Approximately 6 hours

DAY 11

JINKA

We drive through a scenic wonderland and a tribal kaleidoscope of communities, with a late afternoon arrival in Jinka, set at the edge of the dry savannas of 835-square-mile Mago National Park along the east bank of the Omo River. We'll visit Konso Village in the afternoon and enjoy our overnight at a basic hotel...BLD
Driving Details: 5-6 hours

DAYS 12-14

OMO RIVER VALLEY TRIBES

In the savanna of the Omo River Valley live a fascinating mix of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, from the Bume and Karo to the Bena and Hamar, coexisting in a harsh land that is all but forgotten by the rest of the world. For the most part, they have separate languages. There are few interactions between tribes except at markets. In the wet season, May to September, the tribespeople largely remain in their villages to take care of communal tasks such as honey gathering and cultivation. With the approach of the dry season, the men leave with their herds to find good pastures, moving to the grassy banks of seasonal watercourses. Most of the tribespeople wear simple cotton wraps, much decorative jewelry, and elaborate hairstyles. Many men have decorative scarring that indicates their tribal rank. The men of the Mursi tribe are renowned warriors and Mursi women are famous for the lip plates they use for adornment. The Mursi speak a Nilotic language and are a homogeneous group governed by their own ancient rituals.

We make daily excursions to visit villages and meet a wide variety of tribal peoples. Our itinerary in the Omo region is flexible and subject to local conditions. The following is a sample itinerary: At Korcho, a small Karo village, we visit some homes and watch a traditional dance performed by Karo men, women, and children. Photography is allowed during the dance performance. We may also have the chance to see the Karo's famous body-painting done. On one day, we head from our lodge to Kangatan and cross the Omo by boat to visit the Bume people, perhaps enjoying an optional hike beyond the main Bume village. On another day, we visit the main village of the Karo people, where we may have an opportunity to bargain for Karo handicrafts. Overnights at a basic lodge in the Omo Valley...BLD each day

Driving Details: Jinka to Mursi round trip on a dusty bush road, approximately 6 hours; Jinka to Turmi round trip on a gravel road, approximately 5 hours; Turmi to Omorate, approximately 1.5 hours on a gravel road.

DAY 15

ADDIS (MESKEL)

Private charter flight from Omo to Addis (avoiding a two-day drive!), where we watch the processions of Meskel Eve. Overnight at Sheraton Hotel...BLD
Travel Details: Approximately 2.5-hour flight

DAY 16

ADDIS (MESKEL) / DEPART

We'll attend the Meskel day ceremonies this morning and have the rest of the afternoon at your leisure. The celebrations last until evening, and we'll cap off the day with a festive Farewell Dinner before transferring to the airport for departure on homeward-bound flights. Day rooms at the Sheraton Hotel...BLD

Trip Cost, Payment & Insurance

TRIP COST

Prices are per person, valid through 2024

\$9795 (7-8 members)

\$11495 (4-6 members)

Single supplement: \$1700

Internal airfare: \$1650-\$2350 (subject to change)

2025 Trip Cost: Please call for details

To offer the lowest possible cost, our trips are priced according to the number of participants on the trip. All costs are per person, based on double occupancy. If you wish to have a single room, you must pay the single supplement fee. Please note that Wilderness Travel staff, or guests of Wilderness Travel such as travel writers, photographers, or leaders-in-training, are not included in the tier pricing count.

CURRENCY EXCHANGE RATE

Because the prices published for our program are set so far in advance of the trip dates, we are occasionally faced with exceptional cost increases and/or currency fluctuations that affect the actual cost of running the trip. In most years, no price changes are necessary. However, we do reserve the right to raise or lower the trip price if there is a significant change in costs or exchange rates. If this is the case, your final invoice will reflect the difference in trip cost.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

A portion of the trip cost from this trip is donated to the organization Omo Hope (formerly Omo Child), providing a safe, nurturing home and quality education for rescued children from the Omo Valley tribes.

TRIP COST INCLUDES

- Expert leadership of a Wilderness Travel Trip Leader and local guides
- Accommodations (5-star Sheraton in Addis, simple lodging outside Addis)
- All meals included as indicated in the Detailed Itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Land transportation and airport transfers for passengers on recommended flights, and baggage handling
- Sightseeing and excursions as noted in the itinerary

TRIP COST DOES NOT INCLUDE

International airfare, any meals not specified after each itinerary day, international airport departure taxes, charter flights, optional tipping or gratuities to leaders or staff, any additional hotel nights made necessary by airline schedule changes or other factors, pre-trip expenses such as medical immunizations (if any), travel insurance, or passports and visas, and other expenses of a personal nature (alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

At time of reservation: \$600

90 days prior to departure: Balance

CANCELLATION AND TRANSFER FEE SCHEDULE

Up to 91 days prior to departure: No charge!

61-90 days prior to departure: 25% of trip cost

46-60 days prior to departure: 50% of trip cost

45 days or less: 100% of trip cost

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We highly recommend you purchase travel insurance. You can take advantage of a comprehensive Travel Protection Plan designed for Wilderness Travel by Travelex, or purchase other insurance on your own. See our website for details:www.wildernesstravel.com/insurance

Arrival & Departure

Upon confirming your trip reservation, we will send you a Welcome Packet that includes a list of documents (passport, visas, etc.) required for your trip. Please feel free to call if you would like this information before making your air arrangements.

ARRIVAL & MEETING PLACE

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Suggested Airport: Addis Ababa Bole International Airport (ADD)

Suggested Date & Time: Day 1, anytime

Meeting Place: After collecting your luggage, exit the terminal and walk straight towards the ramp. Our local representative will be waiting for you holding a Wilderness Travel sign. The Sheraton hotel also provides a shuttle service for its guests, but Wilderness Travel provides you with its own private vehicle and local representative. Make sure you do not turn left or right, but walk straight ahead towards the ramp area to meet our local representative.

DEPARTURE

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Suggested Airport: Addis Ababa Bole International Airport (ADD)

Suggested Date & Time: Day 16, anytime after 3:00 pm

On Day 16, day rooms are held at the Sheraton. We suggest evening departures. A complimentary airport transfer will be provided for all trip members.

INTERNATIONAL AIR TRAVEL

You are responsible for making your own arrangements for flights to and from Ethiopia. Airlines with the most convenient schedules for this trip include:

Air Ethiopia

www.flyethiopian.com

Other possible carriers include:

Lufthansa

www.lufthansa.com

Emirates Air

www.emiratesair.com

Delta/KLM

www.delta.com

There are many online consolidators for booking travel, but for more personal help arranging air transport, you can contact Exito Travel at 1-800-655-4053 in the US or 1-800-670-2605 in Canada. They are very adept at putting flight itineraries together, to even the most far-flung places. More information can be found on Exito's website at www.exitotravel.com.

Depending on your routing, it is necessary to depart from the US one or possibly two days prior to Day 1 of the trip itinerary. The name on your airline ticket must match the name on your passport exactly, and your passport must be valid for at least six months after your date of return to the US.

Please do not purchase your tickets until you are confirmed on the trip. Once your tickets have been purchased, please send us a copy of your airline schedule so we can reserve your airport transfers. It is your responsibility to ensure your flight times coordinate with the arrival and departure logistics for this trip.

HOTEL IN ADDIS

The group hotel in Addis is the Sheraton. If you require additional nights before or after the trip, please contact the hotel directly (www.sheratonaddis.com). Due to the popularity of the festivals, the Sheraton may be sold out. The Hilton Hotel is a good alternative (www1.hilton.com). We suggest booking directly for the best rates. On Day 15, a day room is included. If you need to upgrade to a full overnight, you will need to pay the full cost of an overnight (the Sheraton extends day room use to us as a courtesy).

Trip Leader

Wilderness Travel Trip Leaders have a passion and a joy for creating an unforgettable journey. We are extremely proud of them and the incredible travel experiences they make possible. For more information about our Trip Leaders, including client comments about them and which specific trips they will be leading, please visit our webpage and click on “Trip Leaders”: www.wildernesstravel.com/trip/ethiopia-omo-valley-festival-tour/



DAWIT YEHUALASHET

Dawit Yehualashet is a graduate of Bahir Dar Teachers College, where he studied history and graduated with distinction. He spent two years teaching at a secondary school, then joined Addis Ababa University in 1997 to begin his degree in history. He also earned a Masters degree in political science from Indiana State University. Dawit has been a WT Trip Leader since 2001, and continues to live up to his reputation as a fine guide with an impressive ability to impart historical, cultural, and archaeological knowledge, with great proficiency in English. He also loves traveling the wilder corners of Ethiopia and sharing his knowledge of the ethnic groups in the southern reaches of the country.

Trip Details

WHAT THE TRIP IS LIKE

The trip is Level 2+, moderate, according to our trip grading system. This is a rugged trip in a very remote region. Participants should be fit, healthy, and have no mobility restrictions. Medical facilities on the trip will be far away and often non-existent. Some mornings, we have departures as early as 5:30 am! Trip members must be prepared for some walking and some long days of rugged vehicle travel.

Accommodations at the Sheraton in Addis are excellent, as is the food at that international-standard hotel. Outside of Addis, we stay in “best available” hotels. Although there are private bathrooms in the rooms, you must expect only cold-water showers! Outside of Addis, our meals will be simple and lack variety because there are limited resources in the countryside. Ethiopia has some good beers, but the local wines are not distinguished. You may want to bring your favorite alcoholic beverage from a duty-free shop. Electricity in hotels in rural areas can be intermittent and sometimes generators are operated only during certain hours of the day.

Road travel in rural Ethiopia is very challenging. Our vehicles may break down or get flat tires on occasion, and that can delay the trip. We use vans for the trip, but they may not compare favorably with the vehicles you may be familiar with from safari countries such as Botswana and Kenya. While we are on our rural road journeys, there are no organized toilet facilities available. We will make “pit stops” from time to time so trip members can get out of the vehicle and find a private spot behind a bush.

In Ethiopia, air schedules can often be altered and new government regulations are implemented suddenly. We ask that you bring flexibility and a spirit of adventure to this unique journey, and take pleasure in the knowledge that you will be visiting a fascinating country.

Our trip is designed so that anyone in good physical condition can participate. We encourage you to make an effort to get in good physical condition with exercise beyond your normal routine.

WEATHER

The highlands have a temperate climate and an elevation ranging from 5,000 to 7,000 feet. It can be cool at night. The southern part of Ethiopia is dry and hot. Ethiopia’s rainy season is March through September, with drier weather in January. However, rain can occur at any time of the year, making the roads muddy and sometimes impassable.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TRIP

Adventure travel often involves exotic destinations, unusual levels of physical exertion, or activities you may not have participated in previously. We work hard to help you choose the right trip for you, paying attention to your individual interests, abilities, and needs. If you have questions about the level of comfort or any of the activities described in this itinerary, please call Wilderness Travel at 1-800-368-2794 and ask for the Africa Manager or email us at africa@wildernesstravel.com.

REFERENCES

We’d be happy to put you in touch with a past client that has traveled with us on this or a similar trip.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

At www.wildernesstravel.com, you can book your trip online or find out about added departures, last-minute deals, and one-time Limited Edition adventures that aren’t listed in our catalog. You can also access our complete library of detailed itineraries filled with enticing photos and videos, read bios of our Trip Leaders, find descriptions of trip accommodations, and check real-time availability of any trips that interest you.

Average Daily Max/Min °F												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Addis	72/41	73/45	73/48	76/45	73/44	72/48	68/50	68/48	70/45	71/41	72/40	72/41
Arba Minch	97/72	99/73	90/64	98/75	96/76	94/76	92/75	93/75	96/77	96/77	95/75	95/72
Rainfall - Inches												
Addis	1	1	3	4	3	8	11	11	7	2	0	0
Arba Minch	0	0	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0

Toucan Club Rewards & Discounts

We are very proud to have one of the highest rates of repeat travelers in the business, and have established the Wilderness Travel Toucan Club to reward you for your loyalty. For more information, please visit the Toucan Club page of our website at www.wildernesstravel.com/toucan.

Here's how it works:

YOUR FIRST TRIP

As a first-time traveler, you receive a lightweight Wilderness Travel T-shirt and set of durable WT Luggage Tags. On subsequent trips, we're happy to send you a new WT T-shirt and set of Luggage Tags by request.

YOUR SECOND TRIP

A top quality Wilderness Travel insulated stainless steel water bottle by CamelBak and a cozy Wilderness Travel fleece vest by Patagonia (\$130 value).

YOUR THIRD TRIP

A versatile Wilderness Travel R-1 pullover by Patagonia (\$140 value).

YOUR FOURTH TRIP

Discounts on the cost of your trip begin! You receive a 4% discount on the tour cost.

FIVE AND MORE TRIPS

You receive a 5% discount on the base trip cost. On your sixth trip, you receive a 6% discount, and so on up to your 10th trip. The maximum discount is 10%, with a ceiling of \$500.

Note: Due to special pricing considerations, Toucan Club discounts do not apply to our Private Journeys or Special Events. However, your participation on these trips does count toward your Toucan discount on future departures of Wilderness Travel's regular adventures.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Toucan Club travel discounts cannot be used in conjunction with any other discount, unless otherwise specified. Discounts are deducted from the base trip cost and shown on the final invoice. The base trip cost is the main land/tier cost and does not include single supplement fees, extensions, internal airfare, or other additional charges. Bonus gifts (T-shirts, luggage tags, vests, water bottles, and pullovers) will be mailed approximately three weeks prior to trip departure. Terms and conditions of Toucan Club bonuses are subject to change or cancellation at the discretion of Wilderness Travel, Inc.



MEN'S T-SHIRT



WOMEN'S T-SHIRT



PATAGONIA SYNCHILLA FLEECE VEST PLUS INSULATED CAMELBAK WATER BOTTLE



PATAGONIA R1 PULLOVER



WILDERNESS TRAVEL HAS BEEN AWARDED:

Best Travel Specialists in the World: *Conde Nast Traveler*, 2024, 4-time winner

World's Best Tour Operators: *Travel + Leisure*, 11-time winner

Best Wildlife, Hiking & Walking Trips: *AFAR Magazine*, 3 years in a row

Best Adventure Travel Companies: *USA Today*

Trip of the Year: *Outside Magazine*, 9-time winner

50 Tours of a Lifetime: *National Geographic Traveler*, 9 years in a row

Best Adventure Travel Companies: *National Geographic Adventure*, 3-time winner

Please be advised that California has established a Travel Consumer Restitution Fund under the California Seller of Travel Law that took effect January 1, 1996. This fund is designed to protect consumers from unscrupulous practices by discount airfare ticket sellers or air charter operators. Unfortunately, this law does not cover non-California residents and, even in the case of California residents, it does not cover any foreign travel where the foreign "providers of transportation or travel services" are not in compliance with the Sellers of Travel Law (compliance being defined as registered as a Seller of Travel in California and a participant in the Travel Consumer Restitution Fund). Thus none of Wilderness Travel's tours qualify and we are required by law to advise each client that they are not covered by the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires sellers of travel to maintain a trust account or bond. This business has a trust account. California Seller of Travel #100769640

While as accurate as possible at the time of printing, this itinerary should be considered an approximate indication of the schedule and scope of activities and trip routing, rather than an inflexible schedule of events; it is subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control. This trip is subject to the Limitation of Liability and all the terms and conditions as detailed in the General Information section of the Wilderness Travel Catalog.

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