

Ethiopia, the best kept secret in Africa



From television images of the country's serious droughts in the early 1980's many foreigners think of Ethiopia as a dry and barren place, devoid of beauty and greenery. This could hardly be further from the truth.

It is undoubtedly a land of contrasts- there are hot, dry, and barren places, as well as rolling hills, fertile highlands, savannah, and mountainous regions that often see frost and sometimes even snow. There are deserts, canyons, gorges, and a wealth of beautiful waterfalls, lakes and rivers. It all combines to make Ethiopia a country of breathtaking scenery that changes constantly from one region to another, a microcosm of an entire continent in a nation the size of France and Spain combined. More than 800 species of birds are found in Ethiopia, of which twenty-eight are found exclusively in the country. There are also 103 separate mammal species, seven of which are endemic.

Ethiopia is the cradle of civilization and religion, home of [Lucy \(Dinknesh\)](#) . Come and visit this breathtaking country, one of the oldest nations on the face of the planet.

Ethiopia is truly a land of contrasts and extremes; a land of remote and wild places. Some of the highest and most stunning places on the African continent are found here, such as the jaggedly carved Simien Mountains, one of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites - and some of the lowest, such as the hot but fascinating Danakil Depression, with its sulphur fumaroles and lunar-like landscape. Ethiopia is old; old beyond all imaginations. As Abyssinia, its culture and traditions date back over 3,000 years. And far earlier than that lived "Lucy" or Dinkenesh, meaning 'thou art wonderful', as she is known to the Ethiopians, whose remains were found in a corner of this country of mystery and contrasts.

Many people visit Ethiopia - or hope to do so one day - because of the remarkable manner in which ancient historical traditions have been preserved. And, indeed, the ceremonies and rituals

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of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, open a window on the authentic world of the Old Testament. In no other country is it possible to find yourself so dramatically transported back in time or to participate with such freedom in the sacred rituals of an archaic faith.

ADDIS ABABA



With a population of more than two million people, Addis Ababa is not only the political capital but also the economic and social nerve-center of Ethiopia. Founded by Emperor Menelik in 1887, this big, sprawling, hospitable city still bears the stamp of his exuberant personality. More than 21,000 hectares in area, Addis Ababa is situated in the foothills of the 3,000 meters Entoto Mountains and rambles pleasantly across many wooded hillsides and gullies cut through with fast flowing streams.

Like any other capital in the world, there is more than enough for anybody to do in Addis. There are numerous restaurants offering various exotic dishes.

Addis Ababa is as cosmopolitan as any of the world's great metropolises, and the architecture is as varied as the city itself. Tall office buildings, elegant villas, functional bungalows, flat, fashionable hotels, conference halls, and theaters - gleaming in their marble and anodized aluminum - vie for attention alongside traditional homes of wattle and daub, surrounded by cattle, sheep, goats, and chickens. There is no designated 'city centre' because, until very recently, there was no urban planning. Addis Ababa simply grew in a natural, organic way, and its present appearance reflects this unforced and unstructured evolution.

Tour and Travel Agencies

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Health Requirements

Prior to entry, visitors should be in possession of a valid health certificate for yellow fever. Vaccination against cholera is also required for any person who has visited or transited a cholera-infected area within six days prior to arrival in Ethiopia.

Customs

Duty-free import are permitted for up to: 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars, 1/2 lb of tobacco, 1 litre of alcoholic beverages, two bottles of perfume. Visitors may export souvenirs with a value not exceeding Birr 500, although some articles (such as animal skins and antiques) require an export permit.

Air Transport

Addis Ababa's Bole International Airport is a gateway to the rest of Ethiopia. The airport also serves many destinations in Africa, Middle East, Asia, Europe and North America. The country's national carrier Ethiopian Airlines has an extensive domestic network flying to 43 airfields and an additional 21 landing strips. There are many other airlines that also serve Ethiopia. Please

[Click](#)

here to get information about

[Airlines Offices in Addis Ababa](#)

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Road Transport

Roads: There are some 4,100 kilometers of asphalt roads with a further 19,000 kilometers of gravel and dry-weather roads. Railway: A 778 kilometers railway line links Addis Ababa with Djibouti, and carries both freight and passengers.

Time

Ethiopia is in the GMT + 3 hours time zone. Ethiopia follows the Julian calendar, which consist of twelve months of 30 days each and a 13th month of 5 or 6 days.

Currency

The local currency is the Ethiopian Birr made up of 100 cents. Visitors may import an unlimited amount of foreign currency, providing declaration of such currency is made to customs on arrival. Foreign currency may be changed only at authorized banks and hotels. The currency declaration form must be retained as this will be required by customs on departure. Visitors,

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however, will be able to change back any excess Ethiopian Birr to foreign currency at the airport before departure.

Climate

There are two seasons: the dry season prevails from October through May; the wet season runs from June to September.

Topography

Ethiopia is on an elevated central plateau varying in height between 2,000 and 3,000 meters. In the north and center of the country, there are 2 mountains whose peaks rise over 4,000 meters.

Economy

About 90 percent of the population earns their living from the land, mainly as subsistence farmers. Agriculture is the backbone of the national economy and the principal exports from the sector are coffee, oil seeds, pulses, flowers, vegetables, sugar and foodstuffs for animals.

Language

Ethiopia is a multiethnic state with a variety of languages spoken in the country, of which there are 83 with 200 dialects. The main three languages are Amharic, Tigrigna and Oromigna. English is also widely spoken.

Electric Supply

Ethiopia uses 220 volts 50 cycles AC.

People

The population is estimated at 65 million, over 50 per cent of whom are under 20 years old. The average number of inhabitants per square kilometer is 49.

Excursions

Excursions within Ethiopia, whether for a day or for a month, may be organized by any of the travel agencies or tour operators.

Hotels

Addis Ababa has hotels that cater to all budgets, from the luxurious Sheraton and Hilton hotels to the tourist class hotels. All tourist resorts offer a choice of modern hotels.