

## Overview - Tourism

Written by EED Admin

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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 Dinkeneshe, 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 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.



Ethiopia, an old country beyond all imaginations, has culture and traditions dating back over 3000 years. With over 80 different Ethnic groups with their own language, culture and traditions. The strong religious setting, celebrations and festivals play an important part in every ones daily life.

Church ceremonies are a major feature of Ethiopian life. The events are impressive and unique. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has its own head, follows its own customs, and is extremely proud of its fourth century origins.

Ethiopia's Islamic tradition is also strong and offers colorful contrast, particularly in the eastern and south-eastern parts of the country. In fact, there were Ethiopian Muslims during the lifetime of Prophet Mohammed. This rich religious history is brought to life in the romantic walled city of

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Harar, considered by many Muslims to be the fourth "Holy City" following Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem.

Ethiopia is a land of natural contrasts, from the tops of the rugged Simien Mountains to the depths of the Danakil Depression, at 120 meters below sea level one of the lowest dry land points on earth. The cornucopia of natural beauty that blesses Ethiopia offers an astonishing variety of landscapes: Afro-Alpine highlands soaring to around 4,300 metres, moors and mountains, the splendor of the Great Rift Valley, white-water rivers, Savannah teeming with game, giant waterfalls, dense and lush jungle... the list is endless.

Ethiopia's many national parks enable the visitor to enjoy the country's scenery and its wildlife, conserved in natural habitats, and offer opportunities for travel adventure unparalleled in Africa.

The wildlife consists mainly of East African plains animals, but there are now no giraffe or buffalo. Oryx, bat-eared fox, caracal, aardvark, ccolobus and green monkeys, Anubis and Hamadryas baboons, klipspringer, leopard, bushbuck, hippopotamus, Soemmerings gazelle, cheetah, lion, kudu and 450 species of bird all live within the park's 720 square kilometres.

extending to the known beginnings of humankind. The Axumite kingdom was one of the great civilizations of the ancient world and has left behind the mystery of the great Stellae found at Axum. In the late middle Ages great religious civilizations flourished in many parts of the country, particularly at Lalibela where churches hewn out of massive monolithic rock testify not only to great faith but also to great architectural skills.

And in the former capital of Gondar many significant castles speak of the same legacy. All these would be enough to make Ethiopia a fascinating place to visit and travel through, but Ethiopia has so much more to offer.

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