

Blue Dot Travel

Go somewhere different

Ethiopia

Departs
15th January 2026





\$16,490 pp

Twin-share, excluding
international airfares
Single supp \$2,490

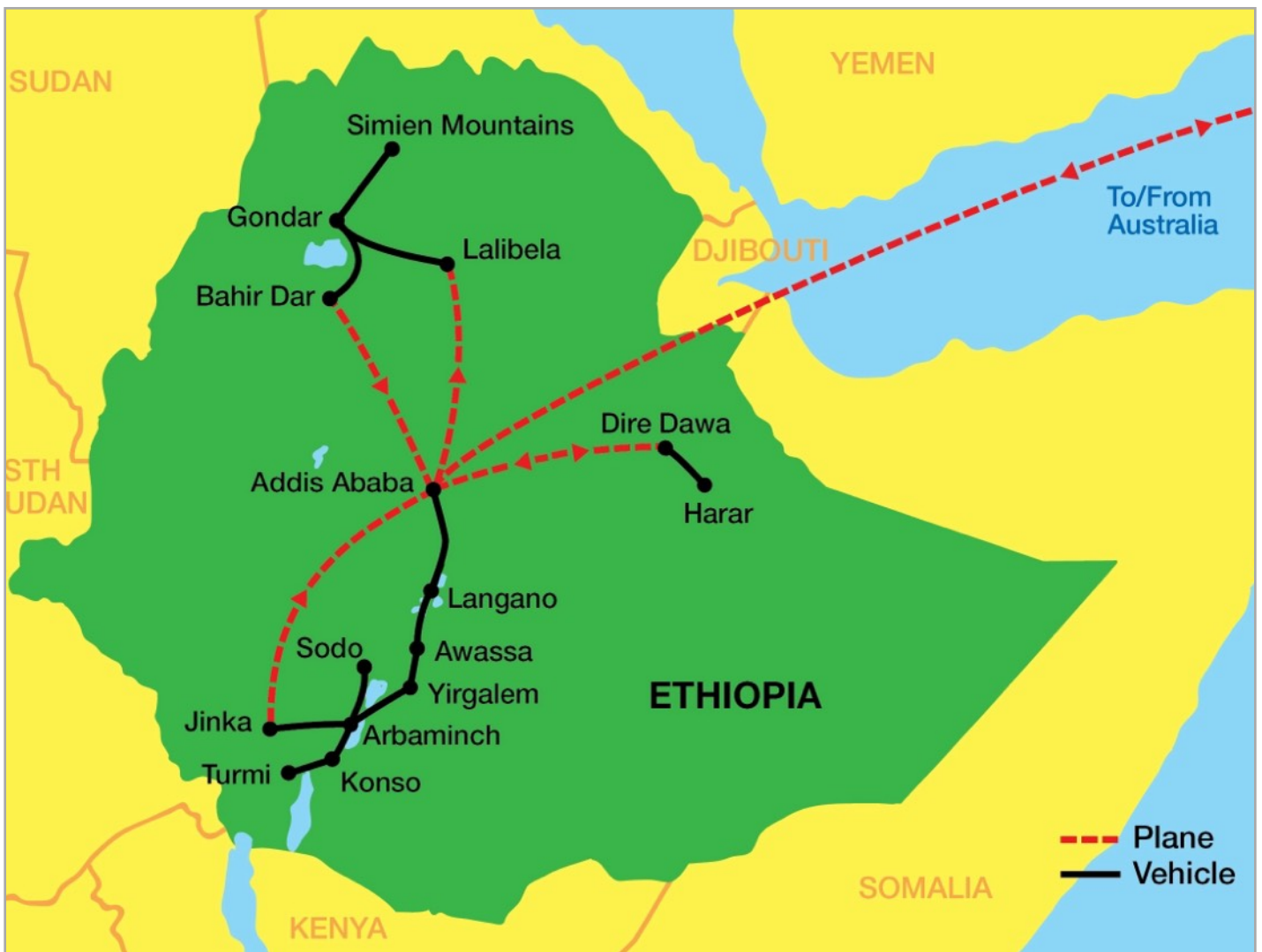
ETHIOPIA - INCLUDING THE OMO VALLEY

With its fabulous 3,000-year history, diverse peoples, vibrant culture, varied wildlife and fauna, and magnificent scenery embracing every landform from high mountain plateaus to parched deserts, Ethiopia is a destination without peer. Add to this the one of the finest climates in Africa ("thirteen months of sunshine!") and you have so many reasons to visit this incredible country. Located in the northeast Horn of Africa, Ethiopia is the oldest nation in Africa. A country with one of the richest histories on the African continent, Ethiopia has extraordinary archaeological sites. In the North of the country are the seventeenth century castles and the Imperial Compound of Gondar, the monasteries of Lake Tana and the thirteenth century monolithic rock-hewn churches of King Lalibela in the Wollo Region – the Eighth Wonder of the World. In the East, the 1000-year-old city of Harar, with its 99 Mosques, is the fourth holiest city in Islam, after Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem.

Ethiopia is one of the largest countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, covering over one million square kilometres. It has every variety of scenery, from the peaks of the Simien Mountains in north Gondar to the deep Dalol depression in the west. The landscape is dominated by a volcanically formed central plateau, referred to as the Ethiopian Highlands, with an average altitude of 2,000 metres, including twenty peaks of 4,000 metres or higher. These Highlands form the source of four major river systems, the best known being the Blue Nile, which rises in Lake Tana in the northwest. The same outpouring of lava also contributed to a giant tear across the surface of the Earth that can be seen from space, known as the Great Rift Valley. Extending nearly 6,000 kilometres from Syria, through the Red Sea, Ethiopia, and down to Mozambique, this spectacular and abrupt cutting away of the land never fails to strike a traveller with surprise and awe. The Rift Valley is also home to seven large and beautiful lakes in the heart of the country, caused by the millennia of heavy rainfall that deluged Africa at the same time that northern Europe was going through its 'Ice Age'.

The wildlife found in Ethiopia is quite different from that of the rest of East Africa, showing some affiliations with the Middle East, and includes the native Walia ibex, Gelada baboon, Simien fox and mountain nyala. However, it is the people of Ethiopia who truly round out the character of this land of enormous ethnic diversity. Communities originally of Semitic, Hamatic, Nilotic and Omotic stock make up more than 80 ethnic groups (with as many languages). The majority of the population is Christian while a third of its population is Muslim. About 90% of the large population of 91 million earn their living from the land, mainly as subsistence farmers.

Finally, no trip to Ethiopia is complete without witnessing the remarkable Timkat ceremonies, celebrating the Baptism of Jesus. The colours are nothing short of spectacular, and it ranks as one of the world's greatest street festivals.



**Departure, Thursday 15th January
IN TRANSIT**

Depart Australia for Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, situated in the centre of the county. (Flights likely to be via Dubai with Emirates but to be confirmed). Arrive early in the morning on 15/1.

**Day 1, Friday 16th January
ARRIVAL INTO ADDIS ABABA**

Our guide will meet us at the airport and transfer us to the Harmony Hotel where we will stay for two nights. Arrangements have been made for early check-in at the hotel. Our guide will help with money exchange. Late in the morning, we will depart for a visit to Hamlin College. Overnight at the Harmony Hotel (or similar). *B/D*

**Day 2, Saturday 17th January
ADDIS ABABA**

Today, we will enjoy a full-day tour of Addis Ababa. We'll start at the National Museum where the replica of "Lucy" resides. Lucy's bones were found in Ethiopia in 1974. She is the oldest known upright-standing hominid, dating back more than three million years. The group will drive to the top of Mt. Entoto for a panoramic view over the city and then walk through the fabulous Merkato before visiting the Trinity Cathedral. Finally, we will visit the Hamlin Fistula Hospital to see the wonderful work that Australian doctor

Catherine Hamlin and her team have done for many years. Overnight at the Harmony Hotel. *B/D*

**Day 3, Sunday 18th
January
ADDIS - LALIBELA**

After an early breakfast, we'll transfer to the airport to fly to Lalibela. This fabulous city was once the thriving capital of a medieval dynasty known as Roha; it is now the site of the "Eighth Wonder of the World", the churches carved out of solid red basalt. On our way from the airport to Lalibela town, we will have a stop to visit the cave church of Ne'akuto Le'Ab. In the afternoon, we'll explore the first group of rock churches, Golgotha, Mikael, Maryam, Meskel, Danaghel, and Medhane Alem. Overnight at the Top 12 Hotel, where we stay for three nights. *B/L/D*



**Day 4, Monday 19th January
LALIBELA**

Cameras ready... today, we are privileged to witness the famous celebration of Timkat (or Epiphany), Ethiopia's most important religious festival and the main reason for setting the tour date. This colourful ceremony, led by priests in their vibrant regalia, is fascinating and very photogenic. In the

morning, we'll visit the second group of the rock churches, Amanuel, Merkorios, Abba Libanos and Gabriel-Rufael and the separate, remarkable Bet Giyorgis (St. George's Church). At 15.00hrs, we will return to Bet Giyorgis to watch the start and to follow the procession from the churches to the overnight site. We return to the Top 12 hotel late in the afternoon. *B/D*



 **Day 5, Tuesday
20th January
LALIBELA**

A very early rise this morning to visit the site where the clergy spent the night and where a ceremonial "baptism" will take place. Return for

breakfast, and then the group will find the best vantage point to watch the spectacular procession of the tablets, back to their churches. At a number of places along the way, the procession stops for a dance that involves lines of red-and-white garbed priests swaying and chanting to a heavy drumbeat. Last night at the Top 12 Hotel. *B/D*

 **Day 6, Wednesday 21st January
LALIBELA – BAHIR DAR**

After breakfast, we'll drive from Lalibela to Gondar through the breathtaking mountains of Lasta. This is a very interesting drive and you will have several stops for enjoying the wonderful views and to meet the local people. Upon arrival, you visit the town markets, Lake Tana to see papyrus boats, and drive to the former Haile Selassie Palace to see its exterior and the high view over the Blue Nile, Lake Tana and the town. Overnight at the Jacaranda Hotel for two nights. *B/D*

 **Day 7, Thursday 22nd January
BAHIR DAR**

This morning we will cross the lake to visit the Ura Kidane Mihret Monastery on the Zeghe peninsula, decorated with highly colourful frescoes dating back to the 15th century. Return to Bahir Dar for lunch. After lunch, we will drive to the Tis Isat "Smoke of Fire" - the Blue Nile Falls (35 km taking about 1 hour), once the most dramatic spectacle on either the White or Blue Nile Rivers, walking from the village over a 17th century Portuguese stone bridge. Return to Bahir Dar for overnight at the Jacaranda Hotel. *B/D*

**Day 8, Friday 23rd January
BAHIR DAR – GONDAR**

This morning we start the next leg of our adventure by driving from Bahir Dar to Gondar (300 km, 3 hours). After lunch, we'll take a tour of Gondar and the Royal Enclosure to view the remains of the 17th-century castles of King Fasiledes and his family. These dramatic castles, built between 1632 and 1855, are often referred to as the "Camelot of Africa". Other sites to be visited in the afternoon are King Fasiledes Bath, and the Gondarian church Debre Birhan Selassie, with its ceiling of winged angels. Overnight at the Roseau Hotel.(or similar). *B/D*

**Day 9, Saturday 24th January
GONDAR – SIMIEN MOUNTAINS**

After a relaxed breakfast, drive into the Simien National Park as far as Sankaber Camp (3 hrs, 137km). From here, you can see the breathtaking topography and many birds

and, if we are lucky, some of the animals for which this Park is renowned, the easiest to see being the Gelada Baboons. Overnight at Limalimo Lodge (or similar) where we stay for two nights. *B/D*

 **Day 10, Sunday 25th January
SIMIEN MOUNTAINS**

After a relaxed breakfast, we will head into the park to enjoy some walks, the scenery and the wildlife. In the afternoon, you will be free to enjoy the hotel's beautiful grounds. Overnight at Limalimo Lodge. *B/D*

**Day 11, Monday 26th
January
SIMIEN MOUNTAINS –
GONDAR**

After a relaxed breakfast, we'll drive back to Gondar. In the afternoon, you'll visit the Palace of Empress Mentewab. Born in the



Qwara province west of Lake Tana and thought to have a Portuguese ancestor, Mentewab rose from these origins to become one of the most powerful women in Ethiopian history. Overnight at the Roseau Hotel (or similar). *B/D*

**Day 12, Tuesday 27th January
GONDAR – ADDIS – DIRE DAWA**

Today is predominantly a day of transfers. After breakfast, we'll go to the airport for your flight to Addis and connect to Dire Dawa. The group will be met at the airport and transferred to The Samarat (or similar) for one night. *B/D*

 **Day 13, Wednesday
28th January
DIRE DAWA – HARAR**

Today, we'll drive from Dire Dawa to Harar, founded in the 7th century. Harar, a walled city high in the Ahmar Mountains, came to prominence in the 16th century when it was the base from which the Muslim leader Ahmed Gragh conducted a jihad against the Christian kingdoms in the west. In 1543, he was defeated, and the stout walls that surround the city today were built by the successor to his conqueror. You'll see the city's walls and five gates by bus and then travel on foot into the narrow lanes to see the markets, the museums, the restored Rimbaud House, the people and their highly decorated homes. After dark, you are taken to see the city's unique attraction, the Hyena Men, where they feed the wild hyenas. It's a little kitsch but entertaining. Overnight at Grand Gato Hotel (or similar). *B/D*



**Day 14, Thursday 29th January
HARAR – DIRE DAWA – ADDIS ABABA (FLIGHT) –
LAKE LANGANO (DRIVE)**

Today, we'll enjoy a scenic drive back to Dire Dawa for our flight (schedule TBA) to Addis Ababa. Upon arrival, the bus will meet us at the airport, and we'll continue south into the "Land of the Lakes" along the highway to Kenya, a journey of approximately 3-4 hours (around 200 km). En route, we visit the shores of Lake Ziway to observe and photograph water birds such as geese, pelicans, and storks. The group

will stay overnight at the shores of Lake Langano. Accommodation will be at the Sabana Beach Resort (or similar). *B/D*

Day 15, Friday 30th January LANGANO – AWASSA

After a leisurely breakfast with a lake view, we'll drive further south to Lake Awassa. Awassa is a vibrant town and the centre of the Sidama Region. The lake is home to hundreds of bird species. We'll check into our hotel on the lake's shore, where you can immerse yourself in the surrounding nature. The rest of the afternoon is free to explore the lakeside, relax at the hotel, and enjoy the sunset over the lake. Overnight at Haile Resort (or similar). *B/D*

Day 16, Saturday 31st January AWASSA – YIRGALEM

Today, we'll visit the famous fish market in Lake Awassa, where fishermen bring their overnight catches and locals come to purchase fresh fish. Then, you'll proceed to Yirgalem, arriving at Aregash Lodge for a two-night stay. *B/D*

Day 17, Sunday 1st February SIDAMA PEOPLE

After breakfast at the terrace of the lodge overlooking the dense natural forest, we will drive to the nearby villages to see the Sidama people and the coffee farms. We'll return to the lodge later in the afternoon. *B/D*

Day 18, Monday 2nd February YIRGALEM – ARBAMINCH

After breakfast, we'll drive southwest to Arbaminch (280km, about 5 hours), situated on the ridge known as the "Bridge of Heaven" between the two largest Rift Valley lakes, Chamo and dark-red Abaya. The town commands panoramic views both over the lakes and the Guge Range of mountains to the west. On the way, we'll visit the Wolaita people and their village. Our hotel, the Arbaminch Haile Resort, has a spectacular position on the bluff's edge above the lakes. *B/D*

Day 19, Tuesday 3rd February ARBAMINCH – KONSO

After breakfast, we'll drive to the shores of Lake Chamo for an amazing boat ride to see the crocodile market. In abundance are the crocodiles basking on the shores of Lake Chamo. After lunch, we'll drive to Konso. After checking in to the lodge, we will visit the Konso people, their terracing (UNESCO World Heritage Site) and their villages, and, if it is possible, meet the traditional king of the Konso and visit his compound. Overnight at Kanta Lodge. *B/D*

Day 20, Wednesday 4th February KONSO – JINKA – ARI VILLAGE – JINKA (OMO VALLEY)

Today after breakfast, we will start our descent to the Omo Valley, which is a valley within the Rift Valley. This is the place mainly known for its fascinating tribal people. We will arrive at Jinka which is the centre of this region. After checking in to our hotel, we will visit to the nearby Ari village to see these beautiful people and their way of living. Overnight at Jinka Wilderness Lodge (or similar) where we stay for two nights. *B/D*

Day 21, Thursday 5th February JINKA – MAGO NP – KEYAFER MARKET – JINKA (OMO VALLEY)

Early in the morning, we'll head off to the Mago National Park to visit the distinctive pastoralist Mursi people, whose women are known for wearing lip plates. We'll be visiting Mursi villages in the middle of one of the continent's most remote areas. Then, we continue westwards to Keyafer to see the colourful weekly market whereby the Tsemai, Ari, and Benna people come together to trade - varying from livestock to different spices and much in between. Then we drive back to Jinka. Overnight at Jinka Wilderness Lodge (or similar). *B/D*

Day 22, Friday 6th February JINKA – TURMI (OMO VALLEY)

Today, we head deeper south into the Omo Valley and to Turmi. In the afternoon, we will visit one of the most interesting people in Hammer to learn about their lifestyle. Overnight at the Buska Lodge (or similar) where we stay for two nights. *B/D*



Day 23, Saturday 7th February JINKA – MAGO NP – ARI VILLAGE – JINKA

The group will drive to Omorate early in the morning to experience life in this remote part of Ethiopia. You'll visit the Dassenech people crossing the River Omo, some kilometres before it disappears in Lake Turkana on the Ethiopian-Kenyan border. Then we'll continue to Dimeka. Here, we will enjoy one of the most colourful markets you will ever see, where the Hammer people come together every Saturday and Tuesday for trading. Finally, return to Turmi for overnight at Buska Lodge. *B/D*

Day 24, Sunday 8th February TURMI – JINKA – ADDIS ABABA (FLIGHT)

We'll have a relaxing morning before driving from Turmi to Jinka airport for our flight to Addis. Overnight at the Harmony Hotel (where we first started). Tonight, we'll have a farewell dinner and recap our amazing journey through the highlights of this fabulous country. *B/D*

Day 25, Monday 9th February ADDIS ABABA – DEPARTURE

After breakfast, we finish our visit to Addis to the Ethnological Museum (time permitting) and have a local coffee where you can buy Ethiopian beans and bring them home - before transferring to the airport for your flight home or to your next destination. Flights to be advised. *B*

Day 26, Tuesday 10th February ARRIVE HOME



Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required: eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. **An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section.** Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.