

Ethiopia in Detail

With the Omo-Valley

Blue Dot Travel
Go somewhere different

January 2027 | 25 Days

\$16,400 per person, twin share

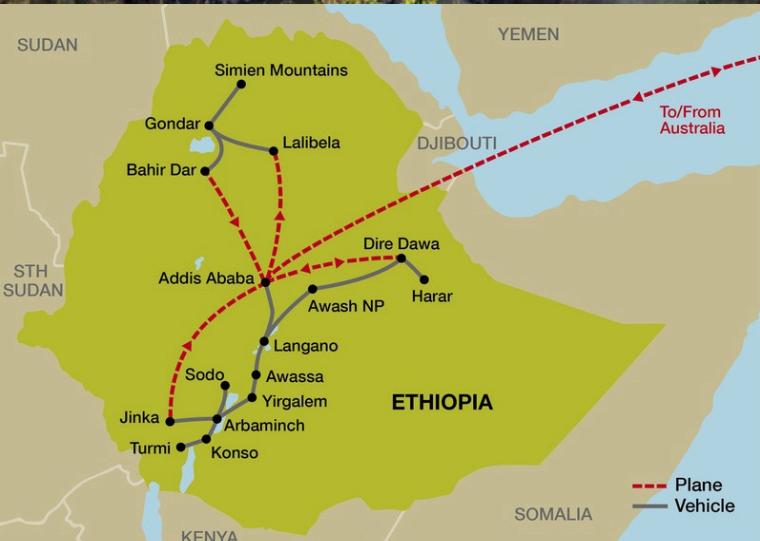
Solo Supplement: \$2,250

Tour Highlights

- Lalibela's 13th-century rock-hewn churches which must be seen to be believed
- The Timkat Festival – one of Africa's greatest annual events
- Visit to Catherine Hamlin's fistular hospital
- Traversing Africa's Great Rift Valley, where lakes and forests have sprung from the deep gorges
- Visiting Gondar's palaces and fortress
- Exploring the spectacular Simien Mountains, spotting gelada baboons, endangered ibex and rare Simien fox
- A stay amongst the Ancient tribes of the Omo Valley, with their fascinating rituals and body adornment
- Harar's elegant Islamic architecture and ancient markets



Ethiopia in Detail - with the Omo Valley



Tour overview

With its fabulous 3,000-year history, diverse peoples, vibrant culture, wildlife, and magnificent scenery from high mountain plateaus to parched deserts, 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, known as the Ethiopian Highlands, with an average altitude of 2,000 metres and 20 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 Earth's surface, visible from space, known as the Great Rift Valley. The Valley is 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 of Semitic, Hamitic, 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 130 million-strong population earns its 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.

Activity rating: Moderate



You must be capable of: walking up to 8,000 steps daily; occasionally ascending 3-4 flights of steps; standing at attractions for 1-2 hours; boarding and disembarking transport unaided and handling your own luggage.

Friday 15th January DEPARTURE

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

Day 1, Saturday 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. We will depart for a visit to Hamlin College late in the morning. Overnight: Addis Ababa **B/D**



Day 2, Sunday 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 panoramic views of the city, 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: Addis Ababa **B/D**



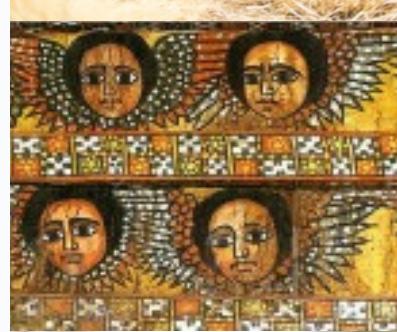
Day 3, Monday 18th January ADDIS - LALIBELA

After an early breakfast, we'll transfer to the airport and 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 make 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: Lalibela. **B/L/D**



Day 4, Tuesday 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 hotel late in the afternoon. Overnight: Lalibela **B/D**



Day 5, Wednesday 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 Lalibela hotel. Overnight: Lalibela. **B/D**



Day 6, Thursday 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 to enjoy the wonderful views and 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: Bahir Dar **B/D**

Day 7, Friday 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 15th-century frescoes. 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.. Overnight: Bahir Dar **B/D**

Day 8, Saturday 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: Gondar **B/D**

Day 9, Sunday 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 a wilderness lodge where we stay for two nights. Overnight: Simien Mountains NP **B/D**

Day 10, Monday 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, we will be free to enjoy the hotel's beautiful grounds. Overnight: Simien Mountains NP **B/D**

Day 11, Tuesday 26th January SIMIEN MOUNTAINS - GONDAR

After a relaxed breakfast, we'll drive back to Gondar. In the afternoon, you'll visit the Palace of the 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: Gondar **B/D**

Day 12, Wednesday 27th January GONDAR – ADDIS – DIRE DAWA

Today is predominantly a day of transfers. After breakfast, we'll head to the airport for your flight to Addis, then connect to Dire Dawa. The group will be met at the airport and transferred to the hotel. Overnight: Dire Dawa **B/D**



Day 13, Thursday 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 served as the base from which the Muslim leader Ahmed Gragn led 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 his successor. 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: Harar **B/D**



Day 14, Friday 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. Overnight: Lake Langano **B/D**

Day 15, Saturday 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: Awassa **B/D**



Day 16, Sunday 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 the lodge, where we have a two-night stay. Overnight: Yirgalem **B/D**

Day 17, Monday 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. Overnight: Yirgalem **B/D**

Day 18, Tuesday 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 has a spectacular position on the bluff's edge, overlooking the lake. Overnight: Arbaminch **B/D**



Day 19, Wednesday 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 into 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: Konso **B/D**

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

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



Day 21, Friday 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, where the Tsemai, Ari, and Benna people come together to trade everything from livestock to various spices and much more. Then we drive back to Jinka. Overnight: Jinka **B/D**

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

Today, we head deeper south into the Omo Valley and to Turmi. In the afternoon, we will visit a Hamar community to learn about their way of life. Overnight: Turmi **B/D**

Day 23, Sunday 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. Crossing the River Omo, some kilometres before it disappears into Lake Turkana on the Ethiopian-Kenyan border, we'll visit the Dassenech people. Then continue to Dimeka, to enjoy one of the most colourful markets you might ever see, where the Hamar people come together every Saturday and Tuesday for trading. Overnight: Turmi **B/D**

Day 24, Monday 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. Tonight, we'll have a farewell dinner and recap our amazing journey through the highlights of this fabulous country. Overnight: Addis **B/D**

Day 25, Tuesday 9th February ADDIS ABABA – DEPARTURE

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

Day 26, Wednesday 10th February

ARRIVE HOME



Accommodation

Our hotels are carefully chosen to capture the local atmosphere and set you up in an ideal location. You can expect accommodation ranging from standard hotels to boutique-style hotels and smaller, independently owned establishments. Below are sample hotels on this tour:

Harmony Hotel Addis Ababa
www.harmonyhotelethiopia.com

Haile Resort Awassa
www.hailehotelsandresorts.com/hawassa

Buska Lodge Turmi
www.buskalodge.com

Why Blue Dot?

Travel is more than just moving from one place to another; it is an opportunity to explore this vast planet, connect with its people and marvel at its beauty. We have established a group of loyal, like-minded travellers who share this feeling and have taken multiple tours with us. With Blue Dot, you'll experience

- Thoughtfully designed itineraries with unique experiences
- Small, inclusive groups with a maximum of 16 travellers
- The support of both an Australian tour leader* and experienced local guides
- Programs designed to meet the needs of mature-age travellers
- Hands on, personalised service including customised flight bookings
- Tipping included in your tour cost

*Australian leaders accompany groups with more than 10 travellers.

Blue Dot welcomes solo travellers

In fact, over half of our clients are solo travellers. We understand it can be daunting to travel on your own, and we'll ensure your travel is safe, inclusive and enjoyable. You can confidently join our groups, knowing that we bring solo travellers together to share the camaraderie of an unforgettable adventure.

Enquiries and bookings

A \$500 deposit is required to secure your booking.

For more information:

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