

Ethiopia in Detail

with the Tribes of the Omo Valley



Blue Dot Travel
Go somewhere different

January 2027 | 25 Days

\$15,490 per person, twin share
Solo Supplement: \$2,250

Tour Highlights

- Explore Africa's oldest independent country, the cradle of humanity
- The Timkat Festival – one of Africa's most colourful 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
- Exploring the spectacular Bale Mountains, spotting the endangered Ethiopian wolf
- A stay amongst the diverse 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 Tribes of 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 is home to extraordinary archaeological sites. Experience the bustling capital, Addis Ababa, with its vibrant markets, museums, and modern glass offices, all right next door to traditional homes. Watch the locals fishing in the Lakes region south of the capital, where you'll witness a plethora of birdlife. Head further south to the stunning Bale mountains where you'll keep a lookout for the rare Ethiopian wolf. Visit the fascinating tribal region of the Omo Valley, where you'll feel like you are living a National Geographic documentary. 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 features a wide range of scenery, from the peaks of the Simien Mountains in northern 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, beautiful lakes in the heart of the country, formed by millennia of heavy rainfall that deluged Africa at the same time northern Europe was experiencing 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, and a third 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 to Active

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

Friday 15th January DEPARTURE

Depart Australia for Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, set in the heart of the country. Flights are likely to be via Dubai with Emirates, arriving early on the morning of 16/1 (to be confirmed).

Day 1, Saturday 16th January ARRIVAL INTO ADDIS ABABA

Your guide will meet the group at the airport and transfer you to your hotel, a 15-minute drive away. You'll get some help with exchanging money along the way. Any activities today will depend on the flight's arrival time. Your tour leader will host a "housekeeping" briefing before the welcome dinner at the hotel. Overnight: Addis Ababa **B/D**

Day 2, Sunday 17th January ADDIS ABABA

Today, we'll visit some of Addis Ababa's core sights, starting with the National Museum, home to a replica of "Lucy". Lucy's bones were found in Ethiopia in 1974. She is the oldest known upright-standing hominid, dating back more than 3 million years. The group will then drive to the top of Mt. Entoto for a panoramic view 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. Dinner at the hotel. Overnight: Addis Ababa **B/D**

Day 3, Monday 18th January ADDIS - ZIWAY

After breakfast, we'll check out of the hotel and drive south into the Rift Valley Lakes Region to reach Lake Ziway. This lake is home not only to a variety of waterfowl (geese, pelicans, storks, and more) but also to ancient island churches. It was here that the Ark of the Covenant was hidden for centuries when the pagan queen Yodit – Guidt destroyed the Axumite Empire and burnt the churches in Axum. Now, Timkat is celebrated on the lake in a unique yet traditional manner. On the afternoon of Timkat (Ethiopian Epiphany), the group will attend a vibrant gathering where worshipers march through the streets, singing and drumming, following the procession of the Tabots (tablets) from several churches. Overnight: Ziway **B/L/D**

Day 4, Tuesday 19th January ZIWAY – LANGANO (TIMKAT)

Today, we are privileged to witness the Timkat (or Epiphany) celebration, Ethiopia's most important religious festival. This colourful ceremony, led by priests in their vibrant regalia, is fascinating. Early in the morning, we'll attend the Timkat celebration as believers gather for mass. The priests will preach about baptism, and the tablets will be returned to the church by the traditional small boats, resulting in a colourful ceremony. After lunch, we'll drive to Lake Langano, one of the most beautiful lakes in the Rift Valley. Overnight: Langano **B/D**

Day 5, Wednesday 20th January LANGANO – BALE MOUNTAINS

After breakfast, the group will transfer to Robe Town and check into the hotel. Then, we'll drive to Bale Mountains National Park at the park headquarters, Dinsho. The park contains a dazzling blend of landscapes across its 4,000km high Afro-Alpine plateau, from glacial lakes and volcanic ridges to moorlands, jungle, and forests. There will be opportunities to spot wildlife both day and night, including bohor reedbeek, warthog, grey duiker, golden jackal, and spotted hyena. Birds that can be seen include the Abyssinian longclaw, winding cisticola, marsh harrier, Abyssinian ground hornbill, spot-breasted plover, Rouget's rail, wattled ibis, Abyssinian catbird and many more. After visiting the national park, return to Robe, where we will spend three nights. Overnight: Robe **B/D**

Day 6, Thursday 21st January BALE MOUNTAINS

Early in the morning, the second day in the park is devoted to visiting the endemic Ethiopian Wolf (also known by numerous other names). We'll drive to Sodota campsite, one of the best places to visit the den of wolves, as the pack will be hunting in a group at dawn. There are just 400 or so of these adult canids left, making it the most endangered canid in the world. After, return to the hotel. Overnight: Robe **B/D**

Day 7, Friday 22nd January SODOTA

Early in the morning, we will drive back to the Sodota campsite to spot wildlife. Along the way, enjoy the landscape with its moorlands, streams, and patches of Afro-alpine vegetation. There will also be an opportunity to visit local villages. Overnight: Robe **B/D**

Day 8, Saturday 23rd January ROBE – HAWASA

After breakfast in the hotel, transfer to Hawasa. This is one of the Great Rift Valley lakes in central southern Ethiopia. It's the best place for bird watching. Stroll around the lake shore and spot several species of birds, including Egyptian Geese, Pelican, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill and other species. Overnight: Hawasa **B/D**

Day 9, Sunday 24th January HAWASA – YIRGALEM

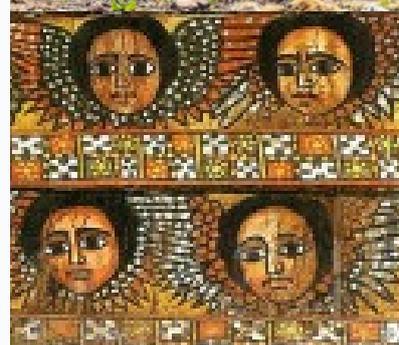
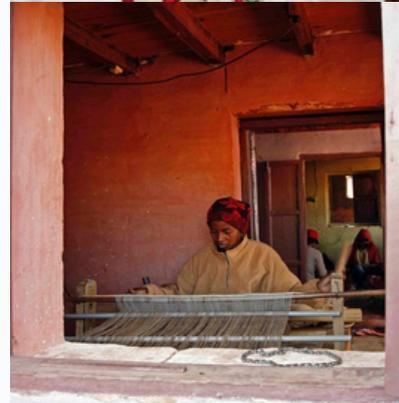
After breakfast, we'll drive to Yirgalem – about an hour's drive. We'll stop at Lake Awassa, the vibrant town, and the fish market by the lake along the way. After lunch, we'll check into the lodge, where the group will stay for two nights. Overnight: Yirgalem **B/D**

Day 10, Monday 25th January SIDAMA PEOPLE

Breakfast is a lovely experience overlooking the natural forest. Afterwards, we'll drive to nearby villages to meet the Sidama people, learn about their coffee farms, and explore their agricultural way of life. This is a great opportunity to see how the rural people of this region live. Expect to be out for most of the day. Return to lodge for dinner. Overnight: Yirgalem **B/D**

Day 11, Tuesday 26th January YIRGALEM – ARBA MINCH

We'll drive southwest to Arba Minch, about 4 hours and 15 minutes. The city of around 200,000 inhabitants is situated on the ridge – known as the "Bridge of Heaven" between the two largest Rift Valley lakes, Chamo and dark-red Abaya. The town offers panoramic views of the lakes and the Guge Range to the west. On the way, we'll visit the Wolaita people and their village. Our accommodation has a spectacular position on the edge of the bluff above the lakes. Overnight: Arba Minch **B/D**



Day 12, Wednesday 27th January ARBA MINCH

After breakfast, drive to the shores of Lake Chamo for the amazing boat ride to see the crocodile market. Also, crocodiles bask in abundance on the shores of Lake Chamo. In the afternoon, get ready to immerse yourself in Dorze culture. The best place to learn the weaving of cultural clothes. They are also known for their 12-metre-high bamboo houses. A group of women will perform traditional dances and serve us local snacks. Dinner at the hotel. Overnight: Arba Minch **B/D**

Day 13, Thursday 28th January ARBA MINCH – KEY AFER MARKET – JINKA

Today, we begin our descent into the Omo Valley, a valley within the Rift Valley. This is the place best known for its tribal people. On the way, stop at Keyafer to see the colourful weekly market where the Tsemai, Ari and Benna people come together to trade. They'll be selling livestock, spices and other goods. Then we drive to Jinka, which is the centre of this region. Overnight: Jinka **B/D**

Day 14, Friday 29th January JINKA

Early in the morning, we'll make an excursion to meet the Mursi people in the Mago National Park. The Mursi are known for their tradition of clay lip plates, a highly valued adornment for women. The bigger the plates, the more beautiful they are. Return to Jinka for lunch, then meet the Ari people in their villages in the afternoon. The Ari are semi-pastoralists, also known for their artisan culture. Overnight: Jinka **B/D**

IMPORTANT NOTE: The tribal people of Ethiopia, particularly in the Omo Valley region, are private and do not like having their photos taken without permission. It is very important to allow the guide to negotiate with the chiefs and elders before anyone takes photos. Once there is an agreement, you may snap away, but do not do so until given the go-ahead.

Day 15, Saturday 30th January JINKA – DIMEKA – TURMI

In the morning, drive deeper into the Omo Valley to stop at Dimeka – the centre for the Hammer people with their dyed orange hair and colourful beads. Here, you can see the colourful market where the Hammer people gather each week. Then continue to Turmi to spend more time with the Hamar. Overnight: Turmi **B/D**

Day 16, Sunday 31st January TURMI – OMORATE – TURMI

Early in the morning, the group will drive to Omorate to experience life in this remote part of Ethiopia. You'll visit the Dassenech people crossing the river Omo, some kilometres before it disappears into Lake Turkana on the Ethiopian-Kenyan border. Return to Turmi and spend the rest of the afternoon at one of the Hammer villages. Overnight: Turmi **B/D**

Day 17, Monday 1st February TURMI – KONSO

After breakfast, drive to Konso. After checking into the lodge, we will visit the Konso people and their villages to observe their distinctive terracing, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. If available, there's an opportunity to meet with the traditional king of the Konso and visit his compound. Overnight: Konso **B/D**

Day 18, Tuesday 2nd February KONSO – SODO

Today is mainly a day of transfers. You'll have a leisurely breakfast before departing from Konso to Arbaminch, which will take around two hours. We'll stop for lunch, then continue to Wolaita Sodo. Overnight: Sodo **B/D**

Day 19, Wednesday 3rd February SODO – CHEBERA CHURCHURA NATIONAL PARK

This morning we'll drive to Chebera National Park. In this well-preserved national park, there is an opportunity to spot wildlife such as elephants, hippopotamus, cape buffalo, lions, and leopards. Overnight: Chebera Chuchura NP **B/D**

Day 20, Thursday 4th February CHEBERA CHURCHURA NATIONAL PARK

Enjoy breakfast at the lodge and head out in the park for a second-day visit. Enjoy the park's scenery and wildlife. Overnight: Chebera Chuchura NP **B/D**

Day 21, Friday 5th February CHEBERA CHURCHURA NATIONAL PARK – JIMMA

After breakfast, drive further west to the birthplace of coffee – the Kaffa Region and the historic city of Jimma with a population of around 200,000. We'll explore the coffee plantations and production in this storied trade hub. In the afternoon, visit the Aba Jiffar Palace and the city. Overnight: Jimma **B/D**

Day 22, Saturday 6th February JIMMA – WENCHI

Today the group has a long drive northeast across the Gibbe River Valley to Woliso. After a break, continue to Wench, a place of retreat known for its breathtaking landscape, adventure activities, and a spiritual centre set in a tranquil natural setting, surrounded by the Wench crater lake. The lake is at around 3,000 metres above sea level, so you may feel a little lethargic at times. Overnight: Wench **B/D**

Day 23, Sunday 7th February WENCHI AND SURROUNDS – ADDIS ABABA – HARAR

After an early breakfast, the group will head out for a boat trip to reach the Monastery of St. Kirkus, located in the middle of the lake and visit this historic church. Then we'll drive to Addis Ababa (about three hours), fly to Dire Dawa, and drive to Harar. We'll visit the old town of Dire Dawa and the historic train station, and then drive about two hours to Harar across the mountains. Overnight: Harar **B/D**

Day 24, Monday 8th February HARAR

Today we will visit the fascinating walled city, high in the Ahmar Mountains, founded in the 7th century. Harar 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's conqueror. Enjoy a guided tour of Harar on foot, through the narrow lanes to see the markets, museums, the restored Rimbaud House, and the people and their highly decorated homes. Overnight: Harar **B/D**

Day 25, Tuesday 9th February HARAR – ADDIS ABABA – DEPARTURE

After breakfast, drive back to Dire Dawa and fly to Addis. We'll finish our visit to Addis to the Ethnological museum and, potentially, do some shopping along Churchill Road, before transferring back to the airport for your flight back home. **B**





Accommodation

Our hotels are carefully chosen to capture the local atmosphere and set you up in an ideal location. You can expect accommodation that comprises a mix of standard hotels, boutique-style hotels, and smaller, independently owned establishments. Below are some of the hotels on this tour. Final hotels may change, and a complete list will be shared with you.

Harmony Hotel Addis Ababa
www.harmonyhotelethiopia.com

Haile Resort Awassa
www.hailehotelsandresorts.com/hawassa

Buska Lodge Turmi
www.buskalodge.com

Wenchi Eja Eco Lodge
www.wanchi-ija.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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