



Travel through history from Axum to Lalibela across the Ethiopian highlands...

Duration

12 days

Description

The North of Ethiopia is one of the most remarkable areas in the country for history and art. It offers testimony of the glorious past of the first Christian African country and its powerful Empire, which dates back thousands of years. Its amazing monuments, its precious treasures, its wonderful frescos, through the boundless landscapes crossed by both, rivers and deep gorges, will lead the tourist through a very special experience.

Must see

Axum: palaces, obelisks and fortresses. Lalibela: eleven monolithic churches hewn out of the rock over 800 years ago; their beauty and artistic and architectural accomplishment, make them "the eighth wonder of the world". Bahir Dar: Blue Nile's majestic waterfalls and Tana Lake which has 37 islands hosting ancient Coptic monasteries rich in wonderful frescos. Gondar: castles, memories of an imperial era, churches with magnificent wall paintings.

When to go

The best period of the year to visit this area of the country is during the religious

celebrations; these events are popular for pilgrims. The most important Coptic festivities are: Christmas (Gena) at the end of December, Epiphany (Timket) on January 19 and Easter (Fasika), generally celebrated one week after the Catholic Easter. All areas can be visited from January to December, but in July and August it is the rainy season.

Means of transport

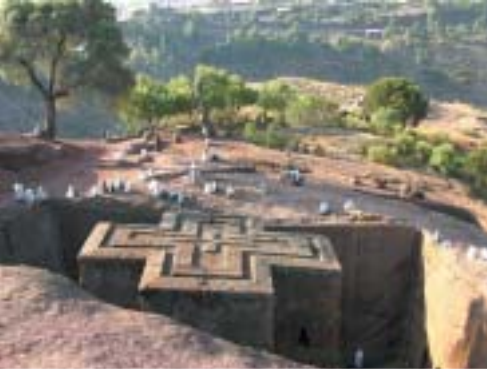
Minibus (coaster) / 4WD.

Hotels

3*/4* hotels. We would like to point out that, sometimes, the hotel standard does not meet the European one.

Notes

In a few monasteries and churches women are not allowed to enter. Travel from town to town can be tiring because of the road conditions.





Day by day

01 

Arrival in Addis Abeba, transfer and hotel accommodation. Lunch and city tour. Visit the National Museum, interesting for Sabei finds and Lucy's remains, an Australopithecus Afarensis who lived in the Awash valley 3 million and half years ago; the Ethnological Museum, the Entoto Hill, the most panoramic city place and the open market, one of the largest in Africa. Dinner and overnight at Ghion hotel.

02 

Very early departure to Bahir Dar. On the way, visit the Debre Libanos monastery. Stop for lunch at Dejen or Debre Markos. Late afternoon arrival in Bahir Dar, accommodation, dinner and overnight at Tana hotel.

03 

After breakfast, boat trip on Tana Lake - visit 3 monasteries on the peninsula, where paintings and manuscripts, which go back to the Ethiopian Middle ages, are kept. The walls of the monasteries are painted with scenes of New Testament and local Saints' life. Very interesting are: icons, silver Coptic crosses, regal crowns and holy vestments. Back to the hotel for lunch. In the afternoon visit to Blue Nile's waterfalls, the town and the market. Dinner and overnight at Tana hotel.

04 

Early morning departure to Gondar, a town located 185Km Northern of Bahir Dar. Hotel accommodation and lunch. Early afternoon visit castles in the imperial area, Debra Bhiran Selassie church with its famous ceiling painted with magnificent angels and Zobel castle, which is known as Emperor Fasilidas's swimming pool. Dinner and overnight at Goha hotel.

05 

At dawn drive to Axum through Ethiopia's most scenic highland range that offers breathless panoramas: the Simien Mountains. It is a full day drive but it is worth. Packed lunch. Arrival, dinner and overnight at Yeha hotel.

06 

Axum city tour: the Obelisks, the Queen Saba's palace, the Saint Mary of Sion church that hosts the Ark of the Covenant brought to Ethiopia by Menelik I in the days of King Salomon, a small museum with interesting finds, a testimony of the trades between Axumite Empire, Egypt and South Arabic peninsula. Dinner and overnight at Yeha hotel.

07 

Early morning departure to Mekele. Packed lunch. Visit two churches hewn out of the rock, easily reachable from the main road. The first one, Adi Kasho, is one of the most ancient and beautiful churches of Tigray. It is well known for its coffered ceiling. The second one, Wukro Cherkos, is a monolithic limestone church that is dated back to VIII century. It is known for its cubic capitals and the Axumite frieze on the walls. Late afternoon arrival in Mekele, dinner and hotel accommodation at Hilltop Hotel.

08 

Drive to Lalibela. Packed lunch and late afternoon arrival in Lalibela. Dinner and overnight at Roha hotel.

09 

Early morning visit to the famous Ashten Marian church situated on the mountain. Lunch. Early afternoon visit the first group of monolithic churches. Lalibela is famous for these churches and is known as "the African Petra or Jerusalem". The underground and cross-shaped Saint George Beta Marian church with walls and ceilings beautifully painted and the majestic Beta Medane Alem represent one of the biggest tourist attractions of Ethiopia. Dinner and overnight at Roha hotel.

10 

Early morning visit to the second group of churches. Unbelievable carving work! The reddish stone monolithic rock were dug inside and carved outside to shape the roof, the façade and the walls that were chiseled to make doors and windows. The churches are connected by underground passages. After lunch a visit to the market. Dinner and overnight at Roha hotel.

11 

Flight Lalibela - Addis Abeba. Arrival, transfer and hotel accommodation. Free afternoon with minibus available. Dinner in a typical Ethiopian restaurant with traditional songs and dancing. Overnight at Ghion Hotel.

12 

Departure.

