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AAT-1116

ETHIOPIAN CHRISTMAS IN LALIBELA, BAHIR DAR & OMO VALLEY TRIBES

Duration: 14 Days / 13 Nights






Tour Highlights:

- Celebrate Ethiopian Christmas in the amazing rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Boat trip on Lake Tana to visit the ancient monastery Ura Kidane Mehret and Azwa Maryam
- Explore the dramatic nature of the Blue Nile & Tiss Isat Falls
- Explore the fascinating and strange cultures of the indigenous tribes of the Omo Valley in a modern, air-conditioned 4WD
- Visit the Karo, the Dorze, the Hamar, the Woito, the Arbore, the Konso and the Mursi people in their villages
- Get to know the traditional lifestyle, colorful dresses and strange rituals, like inserting clay plates in their lower lips, amazing hairstyles, body-painting or scarring
- Traditional Ethiopian farewell dinner with “coffee ceremony” and traditional dances of the different ethnic groups.

Travel date: 29 December - 11 January

Departure with a minimum of two participants.

Please arrange your flight in such a way that you arrive in Addis Ababa on the 29 December in the morning or early afternoon. For earlier arrivals a transfer can be arranged on request.

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<p>Day 1: 29 December: Day 1: Arrival in Addis Ababa On arrival our representative will meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel. An overview of the program will be given. The rest of the day visit historical sites in Addis Ababa, including the National Archeological Museum, where the 3.6 million year old remains of Lucy rest, whose skeletal remains were discovered in 1974. You will also visit the Ethnological Museum, the Holy Trinity Cathedral and Mount Entoto which rises up to an altitude of 3200meters and offers a panoramic view of the metropolis. Overnight 4-star hotel.</p>		
<p>Day 2: 30 December: Drive to Arba Minch Drive to Arba Minch via Wolayta Sodo. En route visit Chencha and the Dorze village, high in the mountains north of Arba Minch. The Dorze are well known as master weavers and live in interesting igloo-shaped houses. Arba Minch - meaning 'Forty Springs' in Amharic - takes its name from the bubbling streams that cover the forest and the flats of the town.</p>		
<p>Day 3: 31 December: Drive to Jinka After breakfast drive to Konso where you visit the Konso people, known for colorful dresses and unusually engraved wooden statues, used as grave markers. Continue along impressive land terracing to the village of the Woito people, near the Woito river. On the way to Jinka stop at the Key Afer Market (Thursday is market day), a tribal market, where different ethnic groups gather to sell and buy their agricultural products.</p>		
<p>Day 4: 1 January: Jinka—Mursi—Jinka After breakfast leave Jinka and drive to the Mursi village to visit and appreciate the very attractive culture of the Mursi tribe. They are renowned for the strange custom followed by their women who, on reaching maturity, have their lower lips slit and circular clay discs inserted. Proceed to Mago National Park. After a picnic lunch, you will drive to see big mammals and different species of birds. In the late afternoon drive back to Jinka.</p>		
	<p>Day 5: 2 January: Jinka—Turmi After breakfast drive to Turmi through Dimeka for the visit of the Hamar people and their village. Turmi is a small town, which is the base to visit the Hamar people.</p>	
<p>Day 6: 3 January: Drive to Arba Minch On the way back to Arba Minch visit the Cushitic speaking Arbore people and their villages. The Abores people adorn themselves with beads and aluminum jewelry.</p>		
<p>Day 7: 4 January: Drive to Lake Langano The soft brown waters of Langano are set against the blue backdrop of the Arsi Mountains which soar to 4000m. Over 150 species of birds have been recorded here.</p>		
<p>Day 8: 5 January: Drive to Addis Ababa Early morning drive back to Addis Ababa. En route short visit of the Ethiopian Rift Valley Lakes with</p>		

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their various colorful water birds. Afterwards proceed to Addis Ababa. Overnight in 4-star hotel.



Day 9: 6 January: Fly Lalibela

After breakfast transfer to the airport and flight to Lalibela. The town of Lalibela, lies among the Lasta Mountains at 2630 m above sea level and remains until today a place of pilgrim and devotion for Ethiopian Christians.

The construction of the eleven rock-hewn churches is attributed to king Lalibela of the Zagwe Dynasty. Some of the 12th century churches are monolithic, carved from a sloping mass of red volcanic scoria underlaid by dark grey basalt and inter-connected by a maze of tunnels and passages with openings to hermit caves and catacombs. Some are of the basilica type, having archaic features and imitating architectural elements from earlier periods, yet they differ in design and style. Two are decorated with interesting wall paintings and carved figures. The Lalibela churches are included in the World Heritage List since 1978.



Afternoon visit of the first group of six churches which lie in rock cradles one behind the other: Bet Golgotha, Bet Mika'el, Bet Maryam, Bet Meskel, Bet Danaghel and Bet Medhane

Alem. Bet Medhane Alem, the largest one, is built like a Greek temple and its stone floor is so polished by the countless numbers of visitors that it reflects shafts of light from apertures in the walls high above. In a corner are three empty graves symbolically dug for biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Day 10: 7 January: Ethiopian Christmas Festival in Lalibela

Whole day attend the colorful and largely celebrated Ethiopian Christmas Festival in Lalibela. The procession starts early in the morning around dawn. Many believers and pilgrims attend this important orthodox festival. In the afternoon visit the remaining rock-hewn churches in Lalibela.



Day 11: 8 January: Fly Axum



After breakfast fly to Axum. Visit the historical and archaeological sites of Axum. The ancient city marks the location of the heart of ancient Ethiopia, when the kingdom of Axum was the most powerful state between the eastern Roman empire and Persia. The attractions in Axum include: the archaeological museum, the magnificent monolithic steles and obelisks, the tombs of king Kaleb and king Gebre Meskal, the legendary bath of Queen Sheba and the ruins of her palace. The 16th century cathedral St. Mary of Zion, the holiest church in Ethiopia is

said to host the original Ark of the Covenant. The churches and monasteries of Axum are richly endowed with icons.

Day 12: 9 January: Fly Gondar

After breakfast fly to Gondar. Gondar was founded in 1636 by Emperor Fasiladas. It was the royal

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<p>capital of Ethiopia. Visit the castles and churches built by emperor Fasiladas and his descendants. Later proceed to the fascinating Debre Birhan Selassie Church, termed by the UNESCO as one of the World's heritage sights. Its walls and ceilings decorated with scenes of Biblical lore and medieval history. The next stop will be at the Falasha village where we visit the remaining Ethiopian Jews.</p>   <p>Day 13: 10 January: Drive to Bahir Dar After breakfast drive to Bahir Dar. On the way experience a typical Ethiopian landscape - 180 kms over wide grazing land, hilly mountains with numerous farmlands. On thirty of Lake Tana's thirty-seven islands are churches and monasteries of considerable historical and cultural interest. We will visit two of the most accessible and representative of the monasteries, Ura Kidane Mehret and Azwa Maryam, still serving their original function.</p> <p>Day 14: 11 January 2010: Blue Nile Falls, Fly Addis Ababa, Departure After breakfast visit the impressive Blue Nile Falls, locally known as Tiss Isat or 'Smoke of Fire'. Drive to the small town of Tiss Abay where you walk about 20-30 minutes to reach the best</p>		
<p>PRICE Price per person (on the basis of 2 travellers) = US \$ 2.500 Price per person (on the basis of 3 travellers) = US \$ 2.066 Price per person (on the basis of 4 travellers) = US \$ 1.880 Single room supplement = US \$ 280 Plus domestic flights ca. US \$ 250 (only if the roundtrip international flight is with Ethiopian Airlines) otherwise ca. US \$ 600</p>		
<p>Price includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Special qualified guide as well as mandatory local guide and scout fees in parks and villages - 4-star hotel in Addis Ababa and the best available hotels outside of Addis Ababa - All accommodation based on twin room occupancy - Meals in Addis, on bed and breakfast basis - Meals out of Addis, on full board basis - Farewell dinner in Addis to enjoy traditional Ethiopian food and music - All entrance fees at sites, churches, parks and villages - All transfers and visits in Addis Ababa using mini-bus according to the itinerary - All ground transportation including insurance, fuel and all costs of the driver - Boat trip - A traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony at a convenient time in the program - Government taxes <p>Price doesn't include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International flights - Lunch and Dinner in Addis Ababa - Any kind of drinks, alcoholic or non-alcoholic - Video filming and photographing fees - Incidental meals, snacks and drinks - Tips and items of personal nature like laundry, souvenirs, etc . - All what is not included in the list above 		