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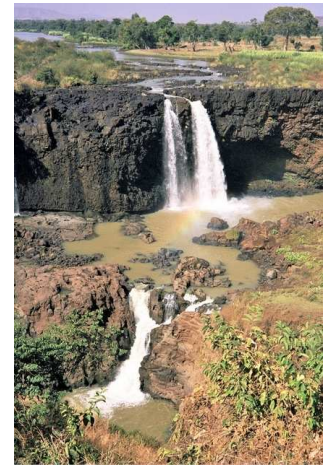
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AAT-1117

TIMKET FESTIVAL IN LALIBELA, AXUM, GONDAR AND BAHIR DAR

Duration: 14 Days / 13 Nights



Tour Highlights:

- Celebrate Ethiopia's colorful, orthodox Timket Festival in Lalibela
- Walk the path of pilgrims between the amazing rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Boat trip on Lake Tana to visit ancient monastery Ura Kidane Mihret and Azwa Maryam
- Explore the dramatic nature of the Blue Nile & Tis Isat Falls
- Visit the Castles of Gondar, which are known as Africa's Camelot
- Visit the splendid vestiges of the fabled Queen Sheba in Axum
- Traditional Ethiopian farewell dinner with "coffee ceremony"
- Shop the stalls of Merkato, the largest open-air market in Africa
- Best accommodations available in Ethiopia

Travel date: 15 - 28 January 2010

Departure with a minimum of two participants.

Please arrange your international flight in such a way that you arrive in Addis Ababa on the 15 January in the morning or early afternoon. For earlier arrivals a transfer can be arranged on request.

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Day 1: 15 January 2010: Arrival in Addis Ababa

WELCOME TO ETHIOPIA. On arrival in Addis Ababa our representative will meet you at the airport. After transfer 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 Archaeological Museum, where the 3,6 million year old skeletal remains of "Lucy" rest, which were discovered in 1974. Proceed to the ethnological Museum at Addis Ababa University, the Holy Trinity Cathedral and Mount Entoto, which rises up to an altitude of 3200 meters and offers a panoramic view of the metropolis. Overnight in 4-star hotel.

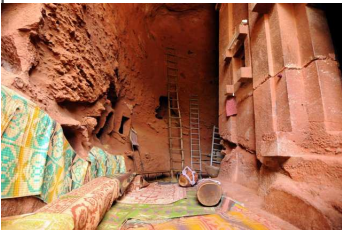


Day 2: 16 January: Drive to Dessie, ca. 8 h

Drive to Dessie through the Great Rift Valley. Continue driving to Tarma Ber which is at the same time viewpoint and escarpment of the Rift Valley. We arrive in Dessie in the early afternoon.

Day 3: 17 January: Drive to Lalibela, ca. 7 h

On the way to Lalibela we visit the Hike Estrefanos monastery on Lake Hike. 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 interconnected by a maze of tunnels and passages with openings to hermit caves and catacombs.



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 4: 18 January: In Lalibela

Morning 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. Afternoon visit of the other group of rock churches in Lalibela. Bet Giyorgis, possibly the most elegant of all the Lalibela churches, lies somewhat isolated in the south-west part of the village on a sloping rock terrace. It can only be reached through a tunnel. The group of four, south of the Jordan River, consists of Bet Emanuel, Bet Mercurios, Bet Abba Libanos and Bet Gabriel-Rufa'el. In the afternoon attend the Eve of Timket, Epiphany at Lalibela.



Day 5: 19 January: Timket Festival in Lalibela

Timket is Ethiopian for Epiphany. It is the most important and colorful event of the year. The festival starts at Timket Eve, January 18, eleven days after the orthodox

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<p>Christmas. Although the festival is largely religious, it has no lack of secular elements such as partying and match-making. The Ark of the Covenant is said to be abducted from Jerusalem and brought to Ethiopia during the first millenium BC. Since then, it has become the most sacred element of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Tens of thousands of church members and believers, chanting, dancing, drum-beating and horn-blowing are attending the festival. After the chief priest blesses the water, the celebration reaches its climax.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;">   </div> <p>Day 6: 20 January: Drive to Mekele, ca. 7 h On this day, you drive long to Mekele but the gigantic ups and downs of the landscape are nice to experience as well as the magnificent scenery</p>		
<p>Day 7: 21 January: Drive to Axum, ca. 6 h Drive to Axum through the Adwa Mountains. En route visit Weckro Cherkos rock church, the 2500 year old Yeha temple and the close by church of Aba Aftse. The small town of Axum contains some most enigmatic monuments. By the 1st century AD, the Axumite Empire dominated the trade routes between Asia and Africa for nearly a thousand years. Despite the decline of the empire followed by the rise of Islam in the 7th century AD and the closure of trade routes to Asia, Axum continued to be a centre of Ethiopian power. Today it is a site of pilgrimage and contains a collection of ancient buildings. The huge granite stele are the most famous monuments in Axum. The largest measured thirty-three meters and weighed about 500 tons, but it fell centuries ago and lies in pieces next to the still standing stele. Axum's greatest claim is that it is the resting place of the fabled Ark of the Covenant.</p>		
<p>Day 8: 22 January: In Axum Visit the historical and archaeological sites of Axum. The ancient city marks the location of the heart of ancient Ethiopia. The archaeological and historical 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, and some historical crowns of ancient emperors.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  </div>		
<p>Day 9: 23. January: Drive to Gondar, ca. 8 h On this day you drive long but enjoy very beautiful and spectacular landscape along Tekeze Gorge and Simien Mountains. The road rises from 1400m trough hairpin bends up the mountain side to 3100m in just 40 km! The drive up to Debark showcases the immensely beautiful landscape of the Simien Mountains. You will arrive in Gondar early in the evening.</p>		
<p>Day 10: 24 January: In Gondar, ca. 2h Visit the Castles of Gondar which are included in the World Heritage List, the Royal Fassiledes Bath and the church of Debre Birhan Selassie with its unique murals. Then we drive to Bahir Dar for overnight stay.</p>		

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<p>Day 11: 25 January: Blue Nile & Lake Tana After breakfast visit the impressive Blue Nile Falls, locally known as Tiss Isat or 'Smoke of Fire'. Four hundred metres wide, when in flood, and 45 meters deep, the falls throws up a continuous spray of water droplets. After lunch we take a boat trip on Lake Tana to visit ancient monasteries. 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 12: 26 January: Drive to Debre Markos, ca. 5 h After breakfast drive to Debre Markos. We experience a typical Ethiopian-African landscape as we drive from Bahir Dar to Debre Markos: wide grazing land, hilly mountains with numerous farmlands. This is the famous teff growing region of the country.</p>		
<p>Day 13: 27 January 2010: Drive Addis Ababa, ca. 6 h After breakfast drive to Addis Ababa en route you will visit the famous Blue Nile George and the Debre Libanos Monastery. Evening we will invite you a fare well dinner in an Ethiopian restaurant with dances from different ethnic groups.</p>		
<p>Day 14: 28 January 2010: Departure</p>		
<p>PRICE Price per person (on the basis of 2 travellers) = US \$ 2.780 Price per person (on the basis of 3 travellers) = US \$ 2.280 Price per person (on the basis of 4 travellers) = US \$ 2.000 Single room supplement = US \$ 300</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 - 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 		

