Ethiopia

WONDERS OF LANDSCAPE AND CULTURE

March 10 – 22, 2020

The great land of Ethiopia is one of the world’s outstanding treasures. The geographic isolation of much of the country, located on a high plateau, has created a distinct culture reflected by over three thousand years of literate civilization.

On this tour, we’ll explore the history, tradition, culture, and nature of northern Ethiopia. This is the country of the Queen of Sheba, of the source of the Blue Nile and of magnificent UNESCO World Heritage rock-hewn churches. The country’s famous “13 months of sunshine” slogan is not just about the weather. So much is magical about Ethiopia from the rock cut church ‘built by angels’ to the immense big sky landscapes of the north, to the scent of frankincense accompanying the coffee ceremonies.

We follow a chronological route starting with the ruins of the ancient 1st century Kingdom of Axum to see giant obelisks and royal tombs to the monolithic cave churches carved out of rock of the 13th century ‘New Jerusalem’ of Lalibela and onward to the 16th century fortresses of Gondar. We visit the spectacular Simien National Park to observe the Gelada Baboons and travel to the source of the Blue Nile, one of the world’s great natural wonders.

You will witness the procession of the Ark of the Covenant in Axum and learn about why the Ethiopian Coptic calendar is seven to eight years behind the Gregorian calendar in a tradition dating back to the arrival of the Queen of Sheba.

Throughout your trip, the dramatic scenery, a mix of jagged mountain peaks and fertile plains bisected by fields of grain and riven by deep gorges of exceptional natural beauty, will hold you spellbound.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS BY:

WorldwideQuest
Alumni Expeditions
SIGNATURE MOMENTS

- Admiring dramatic scenery in the highlands
- Visiting the ancient home of the Queen of Sheba
- Taking part in a traditional coffee ceremony
- Meeting Ethiopian priests to learn about Christianity in Ethiopia
- Marveling at exquisite murals in remote rock-cut churches

STUDY LEADER

Susan Ackerman, ’80, the Preston H. Kelsey Professor of Religion, joined the Dartmouth faculty in 1990 after completing her graduate work at Harvard and after brief stints teaching at Winthrop College, in South Carolina, and the University of Arizona. Although she is a specialist in the religion of ancient Israel and the religions of Israel’s eastern Mediterranean and ancient Near Eastern neighbors, she is also very interested in Europe’s religious heritage. Professor Ackerman received the Faculty Award for Service to Alumni Continuing Education in 2006 in recognition for her work on these trips and in other alumni events.

Professor Ackerman’s publications include several articles and three books, “Under Every Green Tree: Popular Religion in Sixth-Century Judah”, about ancient Israelite ritual behaviors; “Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel”, which examines the social roles described for women in the book of Judges and the analogs of these roles found elsewhere in biblical tradition and in eastern Mediterranean literature; and “When Heroes Love: The Ambiguity of Eros in the Stories of Gilgamesh and David”.

Gheralta
Friday, March 13: Gheralta
The landscapes of the northern Tigray region recall the American southwest with scattered sharp peaks rising from the rolling semi desert. The Teka Tesfai cluster of churches carved out of the ground are as intriguing as the landscape is beautiful. Visit some of the finest examples, including the Medhan Alem Adi Kasho Church, the oldest church in the area distinguished by its imposing exterior with four front columns and two large doors. We may witness the extraordinary sight of the Afar tribes’ camel trains, some selling salt, arriving from the sun blasted Danakil Depression.

Overnight: Gheralta Lodge, Gheralta
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Saturday, March 14: Drive to Axum
A drive on good, paved road takes us through rugged sandstone terrain; the road climbs to over 3000 metres high with terrific views over terraced slopes. Stop in Yeha, to see the 2500-year-old Axumite Temple of the Moon. While no-one knows what religion was originally practiced here, there are suggestions of a pagan fertility cult in the decorations. Axum is a World Heritage Site with a wealth of antiquities associated with the ancient civilization which lasted from the 1st to the 8th centuries CE. The exquisitely carved obelisks dating from the 3rd and 4th centuries CE are unique masterpieces and purported to be the tallest single pieces of quarried stone in the ancient world. While many have fallen, the tallest still standing in its original location is about 75 feet tall. The 79 foot, 1700-year old Obelisk of Axum, which resided in Rome for the last 70 years, has recently been repatriated.

Overnight: Sabean Hotel, Axum
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Sunday, March 15: Axum
Aksum is believed to be the home to the biblical Ark of the Covenant, housed in a sanctified chapel presided over by a single guardian – the only person allowed to see the object. Today we will witness a memorable and rare occasion; a model of the Ark will be carried through town by white-robed priests accompanied by a procession of pilgrims.

Overnight: Sabean Hotel, Axum
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Coffee ceremony
Monday, March 16: Fly to Lalibela
This morning fly to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Lalibela known as the Eighth Wonder of the World for its magnificent churches rock-hewn churches carved into the soft volcanic earth. It's an isolated, mystical world – legend has it that that one of the churches was built by angels in a single day. Over our two days here we’ll visit the 11 medieval monolithic cave churches. Of particular interest are the 38-feet-tall Medhane Alem, the largest monolithic rock-hewn church in the world, with stunning early frescoes and the isolated Bet Giyorgis, connected to the others by a system of trenches.
Overnight: Maribela Lodge, Lalibela
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Tuesday, March 17: Lalibela
Travel out of the town to the 12th-century royal church of Yemrehanna Krestos, built inside a cave and elaborately painted in the interior with fine Coptic murals and ceiling decoration. Please note that we access this site with an hour long drive on unpaved gravel road, following by another 45 minutes of dirt track road. The scenery is stupendous. Return to Lalibela in the afternoon to continue our visit of the spectacular churches.
Overnight: Maribela Lodge, Lalibela
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Wednesday, March 18: Fly to Gondar and drive to the Simien Mountains
A short flight takes us to Gondar, called the Camelot of Africa for its castles and battlements. The 16th century fortress-city contains palaces, churches, monasteries, and private buildings marked by Hindu and Arab influences, subsequently transformed by the Baroque style brought by the Jesuit missionaries. Visit the fascinating Debre Birhan Selassie Church, founded in 1690, to see magnificent colourful frescoes depicting Biblical and medieval Ethiopian scenes.
Overnight: Mayleko Lodge, Gondar
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Thursday, March 19: Simien Mountains Excursion
Drive up into one of Africa’s largest mountain ranges. Massive erosion over the years on the Ethiopian plateau has created one of the most spectacular landscapes in the world, with jagged mountain peaks, deep valleys and sharp precipices dropping some 5000 feet. The area is home to some extremely rare animals such as the Gelada baboon, the Simien fox and the Walia ibex, a goat found nowhere else in the world. Enjoy an afternoon hike to observe the Gelada baboons; unaccustomed to Western visitors, the pack will allow us to mingle quietly with them.
Overnight: Mayleko Lodge, Gondar
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Friday, March 20: Drive to Bahir Dar
Observe Ethiopian Palm Sunday in Gondar, taking in the festivities in Gondar, before continuing south. The drive over good paved road takes to the picturesque lakeside town of Bahir Dar. Stop to admire the view of the lake from the ruins of the impressive Guzara Castle and from Bezawit Palace, the former palace of the Haile Selassie, the last emperor of Ethiopia.
Overnight: Avanti Nile Hotel
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Saturday, March 21: Bahir Dar
Lake Tana is the source of the Blue Nile, a connection that explains many of Ethiopia’s links with the ancient world. Visit the impressively scenic site and take a private pontoon boat to visit several monasteries on the lake including Ura Kidhane Mihret with walls covered by 16th century murals and Awiza Maryam with several animated 18th century paintings. Celebrate our Ethiopia adventure with a farewell dinner this evening.
Overnight: Avanti Nile Hotel
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Sunday, March 22: Fly to Addis Ababa and depart
This morning fly back to Addis. Take a last look at the city from the heights of the Entoto Hills and visit the Shiromeda Cloth Market for hand-woven embroidered textiles and weavings. As most flights depart Addis in the late evening, enjoy the use of a day room at the Hilton Hotel to rest up before being transferred to the airport for homeward-bound flights.
Day room: Hilton Hotel, Addis Ababa
Meals: Breakfast

Note: The itinerary and accommodation described in these notes are subject to change due to logistical arrangements and to take advantage of local events.
TOUR DETAILS

Tour Cost (per person): US$6595

Single Supplement: US$1295

We would be happy to try to match you with a suitable roommate. If we are unable to, the single supplement will apply. This will be collected at 90 days prior to departure.

Group Size: 12 – 18 participants

What’s Included:
• Airport transfers at destination for passengers arriving and departing as per the group itinerary
• Accommodations based on double occupancy in listed hotels or similar
• All meals with bottled water, coffee, tea
• Bottled water available for all excursions
• All ground transportation by private air-conditioned vehicle
• Four internal flights (Addis/Mekele, Aksum/Lalibela, Lalibela/Gondar, Gondar/Addis)
• Excursions as listed with experienced English-speaking local guides
• All entrance fees
• Gratuities for escort, local guides, drivers, hotel and group meals
• Taxes
• Fully escorted by our Tour Manager

Not Included:
• Roundtrip international airfare from your home to Addis Ababa
• Airport and departure taxes
• Airport transfers if arriving or departing separately from group itinerary
• Meals and beverages not included in the itinerary
• Items of a personal nature, ie laundry, drinks, phone calls, etc.
• Travel insurance
• Visa fee (US$70 at time of writing, obtained in arrival in Ethiopia)
• Additional transport due to any emergency situation

Payment Details:
A non-refundable deposit of US$500 per person is required to reserve a space on this tour. A payment of US$1000 per person is required 6 months prior to departure. Final payment is due at least 90 days prior to departure.
**Level of Activity: Act**

Please note that this trip requires a good level of fitness. Walks of up to 60 - 90 minutes over uneven terrain are required when we visit some sites. You will best enjoy this trip if you have unimpaired mobility and can cope with everyday walking and stair climbing without difficulty. Your spirit of adventure will be rewarded by a magnificent experience.

**Accommodation**

We are staying in best available hotels throughout the tour. These hotels are at the three star plus/four star level, simple, clean, and well maintained. All rooms have private facilities and all hotels have WiFi.

**Transportation**

On some days we will have drives of 4 – 5 hours. Road conditions range from well-paved highways to occasional unpaved roads. Some bathroom stops during our drives are ‘bush stops’. Our minibus is well maintained but not new.

**Weather**

We expect clear, sunny skies as we explore northern Ethiopia. Temperatures range from highs of 75°F – 79°F to overnight lows of 63°F.

**Travel Documents**

You will require a passport for your trip to Ethiopia. Please make sure that it is valid for six months after the date of your return home. A visa is required for travel to Ethiopia. Currently a one month visa may be obtained on arrival only at Bole International Airport at a cost (current) of US$70.

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**Terms and Conditions**

For additional information about our terms and conditions, please refer to your booking form, the current brochure or our website. All participants booking with Worldwide Quest are covered by the terms of the Ontario Travel Industry Act (Worldwide Quest International, Ontario - License # 2667946).

**Cancellation Policy**

All payments are non-refundable, however you may transfer your initial deposit for any land tour to another tour 90 days or more prior to your scheduled departure date. Initial deposits for cruises are non-refundable and non-transferable. Your second payment and your final payment are non-refundable and non-transferable. If you cancel within 90 days prior to trip departure, all associated trip costs are non-refundable. The tour price is quoted as a package. No partial refunds or credits will be given for services not used. In the event of a cancellation, you must notify Worldwide Quest immediately and in writing.

**Travel Insurance**

We urge you to ensure that you have adequate cancellation and medical insurance in place, should an unexpected event cause you to cancel or interrupt your trip or should the tour not be operable per our terms and conditions. We will offer you Manulife insurance coverage. Medical insurance including emergency medical evacuation coverage is mandatory on all our tours.