

## **TOUR CODE: WIE/ET 172**

### **SUMMARY OF KEY DETAILS**

- **TYPE OF TOUR : - NATURAL, HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL**
- **DESTINATION: - BAHIRDAR/GONDAR/ SIMEN MOUNTAIN/ AXUM/MEKELLE/LALIBELLA**
- **MODE OF TRANSPORT: - FLIGHT AND DRIVE**
- **DURATION: - 11 DAYS AND 10 NIGHTS**
- **ACCOMODATION: - SUPERIOR 3 OR 4 STAR HOTELS AND LODGES**

### **DAY 1 ADDIS ABABA**

Arrive in Addis Ababa. Reception and transfer to the hotel, where the rooms are readily available to freshen briefly before starting our journey of discovery. The exploration of the town starts at the Entoto hills from where we have stunning views over the city. We also visit the National Museum where we included can see the skeleton of the famous Lucy. Lucy is one of the oldest hominids on Earth, belonging to the Australopithecus afarensis. Then we visit the Holy Trinity Church where are the mausoleums of Emperor Haile Selassie and his wife.

### **DAY 2 ADDIS ABABA - BAHIR DAR**

After breakfast, transfer to the airport and flight to Bahir Dar, located on the southern shore of Lake Tana. The rest of the morning is devoted to visit the waterfalls of the Blue Nile, where the water of the river enters after an impressive fall in a narrow ravine. Lunch overlooking the Tana lake and the pelicans and other waterfowl that live there. In the afternoon we take a boat trip on Tana lake, situated at an altitude of 1800 meters and thus the highest lake in Africa. In the lake are about 40 islands of which house some Ethiopian Orthodox monasteries and churches whose history often goes back to the 14th century. Christianity in Ethiopia is already present in the 4th century and was therefore not spread by European settlers. The program includes a visit to the monastery of Ura Kidane Mehret.

In the afternoon we will drive (some 30 Km) and visit to the Blue Nile Falls the most spectacular water fall. It is known as **Tis Abay** in Amharic, meaning "smoking water". It is situated on the upper course of the river, about 30 km downstream from the town of Bahir Dar and Lake Tana. The falls are considered one of Ethiopia's best known tourist attractions. The falls are estimated to be between 37 and 45 meters high.

### **DAY 3 BAHIR DAR - GONDAR**

A journey of about two and a half hours brings us to Gondar. Along the halt is held in Awra Amba. Awra Amba is an 'ideal village'. The community is self-supporting. We visit the local school and the home. Gondar was the imperial capital in the 17th and 18th century and home to many beautiful monuments. We bring include a visit to the imperial city district (Fasil Gibi), the Debre Birhan Sellasie Church with its beautiful murals and Bath emperor Fasilidas. The day ends with a visit to the Dashen brewery, where we can taste the refreshing barley beer which is brewed here.

### **DAY 4 GONDAR - SIMIEN MOUNTAINS**

Just outside Gondar we stop at a Falasha village. The residents are black Jews who live from pottery and weaving. We visit the synagogue. Then we head for the Simien Mountains (about 2½ hours drive) from the viewpoint of Kossoye and the small, historic town of Amba Giorgis. With peaks above 4000 meters, this volcanic mountain also known as the "Roof of Africa". The mountain range is crisscrossed by Wide River between often mists hang that whole a mysterious glow. We make a pretty, little effort demanding walk, where we sort of become one with nature and fully enjoy the beautiful scenery around us. In November the landscape colors are beautiful because of the flowers and greenery. Chances are very high that we encounter baboons during the walk, the only grass-eating baboons in the world to exclusively occur in the Ethiopian highlands. These animals, also called gelada's, live in large groups and are also not afraid of people, so they can be accessed until pretty close.

### **DAY 5 SIMIEN MOUNTAINS – AXUM**

We leave this beautiful piece of nature and continue our trek to the north, in the direction Axum. A portion of the ride runs through the National Park of the Simien Mountains and we enjoy so regularly beautiful views. The drive continues through the valley of the Tekeze River. It is therefore today made regular time for photo stops and a stop on the frankincense trees that grow in this region is on the program.

### **DAY 6 AXUM**

The Axum kingdom that flourished between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 6 of the century can rightly be called the cradle of Ethiopian civilization. A town of modest dimensions, is all that remains of the once magnificent capital Axum. Here and there are scattered but still a lot of monuments that recall the glory days of yesteryear. An entire day devoted to the visit of Axum, still the holiest city in the country. The day begins with a visit to the famous monolithic stelae or obelisks marking the graves of important people. Then visit the Church of Saint Mary of Zion, where the Ark of the Covenant would be preserved. Tradition tells how Menelik I, the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba brought the Ark to Axum and founded the dynasty of Solomoniden. This dynasty ends reportedly only by Haile Selassie. Furthermore, the program includes a visit to the ruins of the palace of the Queen of Sheba, the tomb of King Kaleb and his son King Gebre Meskel and the archaeological museum. Let us immerse briefly in the bustle of the local market.

## **DAY 7 AXUM - MEKELE**

Drive to Mekele (about 4 hours drive) through the historic Adwa Mountains. It was during the battle of Adwa which Menelik II in 1896 the Italian invaders inflicted a decisive defeat and managed to drive them out as Ethiopia. Visit to Yeha, one of the main pre-Axumite sites. The main attraction of Yeha is the fifth of the century church of Abba Afse, dedicated to one of the "nine saints", the founders of the Ethiopian Church. Inside the church are the remains of a two thousand five hundred year old temple, called the Temple of the Moon. We pass Debre Damo, a monastery atop a mesa. Monks and priests climbing through a rope. That is the only entry and with a little luck you will also goats and supplies in a basket on the same path going up. Women are not allowed. Lunch in Adigrat. In the afternoon visit to the church of Wukro Kirkos in Tigray.

## **DAY 8 MEKELE - LALIBELA**

Ride Mekele to Lalibela. This ride is without doubt one of the most scenic rides that can be done in Ethiopia. This is the region where the famine in the 80s of last century struck. People were subsequently returned and, thanks to new water, they can now live from the proceeds of their country. The typical huts and farms make the landscape an idyllic whole. Here is mainly grown teff, a type of grass which is the basic food for the Ethiopian. We travel in the harvest season. The grain is threshed with oxen and peasants singing harvest songs.

## **DAY 9 LALIBELLA**

Lalibela was among the 10 th and 13 the century under the name Roha the capital of the Zagwe dynasty. In the beginning of the 13 the century the city was renamed by the great eponymous king Lalibela. Lalibela is sometimes called "Black Jerusalem", a name that owes the city has to his 11 world famous rock-hewn churches, which are on the UNESCO World Heritage List. An entire day is devoted to visiting the 11 churches of this unique place: Bete Giorgis, Bete Medahne Alem Bete Meskel, Bete Maryam, Bete Denagel, Bete Golgotha.

## **DAY 10 LALIBELA**

Excursion to Yimrehane Christos, located some 40 kilometers from Lalibela. Here we visit a grotto built in a 11th the century Church who are slightly older than the churches in Lalibela. On arrival we heard from afar the water splashing down. The waterfall forms a curtain for the entrance of the church. First, our eyes have to adjust to the darkness and then we see the beautiful church. The building is constructed from marble and wood on the outside and inside very nicely finished. At the back of the cave we do a macabre discovery. Return to Lalibela where there in the afternoon some free time is. For lovers, there is a visit includes the Church of Neakutolaab, built in a cave in a steep cliff. In the early evening visit to a project of the city of Peer. Disadvantaged young people get a meaningful occupation. In the evening we enjoy a farewell meal, enlivened by local authentic music.

## **DAY 11 LALIBELA - ADDIS ABABA**

Quiet morning and then transfer to airport for flight to Addis Ababa and End of the Tour.