

TOUR CODE: WIE/ET-136

SUMMARY OF KEY DETAILS

- **TYPE OF TOUR : - HISTORICAL, CULTURAL, NATURAL, TREKKING AND SAFARI TOURS**
- **DESTINATION: - BAHIRDAR /GONDAR/ LALIBELLA/ SIMEN MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK/ DALLOL/ ARBAMINCH/ JINKA/ MURSI/ MAGO/ KONSO/ OMORATE**
- **MODE OF TRANSPORT: - DRIVE**
- **DURATION: - 22 DAYS AND 21 NIGHTS**
- **ACCOMODATION: - SUPERIOR 3 STAR HOTELS**

DAY 1: DRIVE FROM ADDIS ABABA TO BAHIRDAR

Depart early in the morning you will drive from Addis Ababa to Bahirdar via Debremarkos. Bahirdar city is located in north-western part of Ethiopia. It is the capital city of the Amhara Region and emerged one of the leading tourist destinations in Ethiopia, with a variety of attractions in the nearby Lake Tana and Blue Nile river. After check in to your hotel you will stay the night in Rah Nile Hotel.

DAY 2: BAHIRDAR

On this day after brief breakfast you will start visit Bahirdar. The first visit will be to Lake Tana and the monasteries. Lake Tana is the largest lake in Ethiopia and fourth largest in Africa, spanning an area of more than 3500 square Km. This highland lake set at an altitude of 1800 meters above sea level and was formed by a volcanic eruption. The lake is the main source of the Blue Nile and hosts several species of birds and wildlife. The island dotted all over the magnificent waters is places where some of the most captivating and oldest monasteries in Ethiopia can be found.

Some of 21 churches that are mostly spread out on the 39 different islands located on the lake go all the way back to the 13th century. The Churches contain the earliest religious and historical manuscripts, awe-inspiring incarnations of ecclesiastic art, royal crowns and scepters used by early Christian kings and emperors.

After lunch, you 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 DRIVES FROM BAHIRDAR TO GONDAR

On the morning of this day, you will drive 185 km to reach to Gondar. Upon arrival you will check in to your Hotel and take a rest some and start the tour.

You will start from the Royal Castles of Gondar which were built in the 17th Century A.D. It is surrounded by high stone walls containing the 17th century palaces of King Fasiladas, King Iyasu and Queen Mentewab and different other buildings. The next place worth visiting will be Bath of Emperor Fasiledes (the bath is filled with water for the important Timkat (epiphany) ceremony once a year. The ceremony replicates Christ's baptism in the Jordan River, and is seen as an important renewal of faith.). The last historic tour in Gondar will be Debre Birhan Selassie Church (Trinity at the Mount of Light). The Church has stunning ceilings depicting beautiful scenes of winged Angels, biblical events, Saints, martyrs and the life of Christ. Depending on the time availability, you can also visit the Castle of Empress Mintewab, and Kuskwam Complex which is a royal compound built by the Empress Mentewab. There are also other churches in Gonder such as Medhane Alem (the Church of the Savior, built during the reign of Fasiladas); Gemjabet Maryam, Attami Mikael, and Ilfign Giyorgis, all of which have beautiful paintings in their walls.

DAY 4: DRIVE FROM GODAR TO SIMEN MOUNTAION NATIONAL PARK

On the third day, you will drive from Gondar to Sankober. The first place to hike is Buyit Ras it takes 3-4 hour for hiking to Sankober, which passes close to the escarpment edge. Near to Sankober, there is a beautiful view on both side of the escarpment ridge and where you will likely see the endemic Gelada baboons then you will depart into a valley, through which the Wazla (or Koba) River runs. (This river is often dry). Coming out of the valley you will see the views of

the Jinbar River waterfalls falling into the Geech Abyss. Continuing along, you will cross the Jinbar River and ascend into the village of Geech. It takes 4-5 hours for total trekking. You will stay the night camping (depending on the weather condition).

DAY 5: IMETGOGO/ CHENEK

After an early breakfast, you will depart from Geech to the peak of ImetGogo which is 3926m above sea level. Here you will explore spectacular views over the lowlands – one of the highlights of the trip. As you continue to Chenek, you will pass KorbeteMetia, a solid rock wall which opens up exposing beautiful views over the lowlands and the escarpment. This is also a good place for spotting lammergeyers. Overnight camping in Chenek (depending on the weather condition).

DAY 6: DRIVE FROM CHENEK TO GONDAR AND LALIBELLA

On this day you will drive from Chenek to Gondar and Lalibella. When you arrive to Lalibella you will check in to your hotel and have some a rest before you start the tour. The Lalibella tour is the most historic and religious. Lalibella is well known for its eleven Rock-hewn Monolithic (carved from a single rock) Churches, with their magnificent architecture and paintings inside.

The 11 churches at Lalibela, Ethiopia, are regarded as one of the wonders of the world, excavated from solid rock with an immense underground maze of tunnels and passages. There are two main groups of churches, with another church dedicated to Saint George a short distance away.

Ethiopian tradition connects the churches with the most famous King Lalibela of the Zagwe dynasty, and the town, formerly known as Roha, has come to be known by that king's name. The *Life of Lalibela* describes how King Lalibela (who ruled from the late 12th to the early 13th centuries) was carried away to the heavenly Jerusalem. There he was instructed to build the churches. Angels worked beside his men as they cut each one from the rock, and then kept working through the night. However, the style in which the churches were made is remarkably similar to the surviving architecture of ancient Axum, and scholars have become intrigued by the possibility that some of the churches could be much older than the reign of Lalibela. Some of them may also have been constructed as palaces rather than as churches. They do not all follow the conventional alignment of churches to the east.

After the death of Lalibela his tomb and the city itself began to draw thousands of pilgrims. Although his Dynasty was overthrown, Lalibela is still revered as a saint. The churches are seen as a New Jerusalem, with a river named Jordan and sites corresponding to the holy places of the great city.

DAY 7: DRIVE FROM LALIBELLA TO MEKELLE

Early in the morning after breakfast you will drive to Mekelle via Woldya. On the way you will explore Michew Land scape. While you arrive to Mekelle you will check in to your Hotel.

DAY 8 MEKELLE /AHMADELLA (DALLOL)

The adventure tour starts around 10a.m. from Mekelle in the Tigray Region. After drive of 260 km via Berhale we reach Hamadella, which is called "base camp" located in the desert and only 5 km away from Dallol. We have lunch on the way and stop at some places where you can enjoy a very impressive view and you meet the first camel caravans. In Berhale we take the policemen who attempt the group for the tour. We leave the highland and mountains 2000m above sea-level to the stone and salt desert to Hamadella, which is below sea-level (Salt desert up to 120m below sea level).

On arrival in Hamadella, we drive to Lake Asale to see the spectacular view of the sunset reflection. We have our dinner prepared by our professional cook, we are going to spend the 1st night on local afar-beds, open air under the stars or in a wooden cottage in HamadEla.

DAY 9 AHMEDALA /CARAVAN CAMEL /ASAHALE SALT /ABALA

After breakfast early in the morning we start our journey, with 45km through Dallol Depression. On our round we visit different places like salt lakes (red and black water), the colorful salt lakes and thermo active springs of Dallol, potash, sulfur and other minerals, the wide white salt desert, a cave and pure natural designed rocks and the field where the Afar people are harvesting the salt in the traditional way and where the camel caravans start their long trek to towns like Mekelle for the salt business. After half day visitation of Dallol and lunch in Hamadella/Abala we travel to Abala. We spend the night here.

DAY 10 ABALA/ERTALE

Departure is at 9am from Abala, we drive 265km to reach to the bottom of the volcano where the cars can't drive further. In the evening we start 3 up to 4 hours walking to the top of the volcano with joining different partners during the tour. You will visit the volcano after reaching the top and enjoying as much as you had enough and go to sleep in the camp made up of stones.

Day 11 ABALA /LAKE AFRERA /MEKLLE

You will walk to the bottom of the volcano to visit the Lava and walk down to the camp to have breakfast and drive back to Mekelle which we reach in the evening.

DAY 12 DRIVE TO AXUM VIA DEBEREDAMO

You will drive to Axum via Deberedamo and you will visit Debre damo (Females not allowed to enter) and Yeha Temple. **Debre Damo** is the name of a flat-topped mountain, or amba, and a 6th-century monastery in northern Ethiopia. The mountain is a steeply rising plateau of trapezoidal shape, about 1000 by 400 meters in dimension. It is located west of Adigrat, in the Mehakelegnaw Zone of the Tigray Region. The monastery, accessible only by rope up a sheer cliff, 50 ft. high, is known for its collection of manuscripts and for having the earliest existing church building in Ethiopia still in its original style, and can only be visited by men. Tradition claims the monastery was founded in the sixth century by Abuna Aregawi. **Yeha Temple** is a tower built in the Sabaean style, and dated through comparison with ancient structures in South Arabia to around 700 BC. Although no radiocarbon dating testing has been performed on samples from site, this date for the Great Tower is supported by local inscriptions.^[2] David Phillipson attributes its "excellent preservation" to two factors, "the care with which its original builders ensured a level foundation, firmly placed on the uneven bedrock; and to its rededication perhaps as early as the sixth century AD -- for use as a Christian church. Two other archaeological sites at Yeha include Grat Beal Gebri, a ruined complex distinguished by a portico 10 meters wide and two sets of square pillars, and a graveyard containing several rock-hewn shaft tombs first investigated in the early 1960s. One authority has speculated that one of these tombs contained a royal burial, while another believes the ancient residential area was likely one kilometer to the east of the modern village.

DAY 13: AXUM

After breakfast, you will drive to Axum. The ancient city of Axum is found close to Ethiopia's northern border. It marks the location of the heart of ancient Ethiopia, when the Kingdom of Aksum was the most powerful state between the Eastern Roman Empire and Persia. After you check in to your hotel, we will start a tour in Axum that includes visit to St. Mary church where the original Arc of the covenant housed in, Archeological Museum, Stelaes, tombs, and palace.

DAY 14: AXUM/KOMBOLCHA

Early in the morning after brief breakfast you will start to drive back to Addis Ababa. Your overnight stay will be in Kombolcha Lal Hotel because it is very far to drive to Addis Ababa in one day.

DAY 15: KOMBOLCHA/ADDIS

This day will be your last day of Northern Ethiopia. You will drive from Kombolcha to Addis Ababa in order to continue for the northern Ethiopia Tour.

Day 16 ADDIS/ARBAMINCH

In the morning you will drive to Arbaminch via Butajera. You will visit the Tiya Stanmding stone, we embark on a boat trip on Lake Chamo to visit the hippos and the famous crocodile market. Lake Chamo is 32 kilometers long and 13 meter wide, with a surface area of 317 square kilometers and a maximum depth of 14 meters with a catchment of about 18757 square kilometers in size with an elevation of 1,235 meters with a length of 26 km a widths of 22 km an area of 551 square kilometers a catchment of 2220 square kilometers and a maximum depth of 10 meters. Wildlife include fish like the catfish Bagrus docmac and Nile perch, as well as hippopotamus and Nile crocodiles.

Day 17 ARBAMINCH/JINKA

We proceed driving to Jinka via Weyto and Key Afar. If today is market day, we will stop in Konso and/or Key Afar to visit. The Konso village which constitutes a spectacular example of a living cultural tradition stretching back 21 generations (more than 400 years) adapted to its dry hostile environment.

Day 18 JINKA/MURSI/ TURMI

Early in the morning, we drive to Mago National Park to visit the Mursi tribes, who are known for their lower lip and earlobe plates and proceed driving to Turmi, via Dimeka. On Tuesdays and Saturdays, Dimeka holds one of the most colorful markets in the South Omo. At the evening time if there is a bull jumping which is the traditional wedding ceremony.

Day 19 TURMI/OMORATE/TURMI:

Morning after breakfast drive to Omorate the village of Dassanech tribe living on both side Omo River here we take Canoe to cross the Omo river and visit the Village of Dassanech drive back to Turmi. Afternoon drive to Koricho (the beautifully settled village on the side of Omo River) village of Karo people who are considered the masters of body painting and decorate their bodies with chalk paint often imitating the spotted plumage of a guinea fowl and drive back to Turmi.

Day 20 TURMI/KONSO/ARBAMINCH

Drive from Turmi to **Konso** named after the Konso people known for its religious traditions, waga sculptures, and nearby fossil beds (the latter an archaeological site of early hominids).

The Konso live in an isolated region of the basalt hills. The area is made up of hard rocky slopes. A Konso village maybe fortified by a stone wall used as a defensive measure, their village is located on hilltops and is split up into communities, with each community having a main hut. In order to enter a Konso village, you must pass through a gate and a series of alleys. These paths are part of its security system, keeping the village difficult to access. Then you will continue to drive to Arbaminch.

Day 21 ARBAMINCH/HAWASSA

On this day you will drive from Arbaminch to Hawassa on the way you will visit the Alaba Kulinto traditional house. While you arrive you will check in to your hotel.

Day 22 HAWASSA/ADDIS ABABA

After breakfast, take a boat trip on Lake Awassa to visit the fish market and admire the amazing birdlife in the area, and maybe some hippos. In the afternoon we will continue our drive to return to Addis Ababa and the tour ends when we arrive.