



## Ethiopian Wildlife and History Tour Itinerary

### Day 1 – The pagan temple at Yeha

Fly from Addis Ababa to Axum or Aksum, have an early lunch in Axum then spend the afternoon visiting the fascinating pre-Axumite, pre-Christian temple ruins of Yeha. This is the oldest standing structure in Ethiopia and dates from about 800 BC. Recently an even older palace structure has been unearthed nearby.

Distance - Axum to Yeha: 50 kms. Drive time: 1 Hour each way

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### Day 2 – Discover ancient Axum

Today's adventure is full of ancient history and mystery. The UNESCO World Heritage Site city of **Axum** was the capital of the Axumite empire (400 BCE – 1000 CE). Walk into impressive royal tombs and admire the world's largest single stone obelisk's, or stelae. Visit the grounds of the church said to house the Ark of the Covenant and see the reputed Queen of Sheba's palace ruins.

### Day 3 – Explore the Roof of Africa

Drive the spectacular Ethiopian mountain route from Axum to Debarq. This extraordinary mountain road has recently been rebuilt and makes for a fine driving adventure. There is still a stretch of less than 40 Kms awaiting final asphaltting which may slow our journey but the views are superb.

Distance - Axum to Debarq: 260 Kms. Driving time: 6 Hours

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## Day 4 – Simien Mounains National Park

In the morning drive into the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the **Simien Mountains** National Park to see the incredible views across the Roof of Africa and perhaps some endemic wildlife. After lunch drive to Gondar.

Distance - Debarq to Gondar: 110 Kms. Driving time: 2 Hours

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## Day 5 – King Fasilidies Bath

Spend the morning in the city of Gondar. Enjoy a history and architectural adventure at the UNESCO World Heritage site at Fasil Ghebbi. This is also known as the Royal Enclosure of castles and was built by a succession of kings and a queen when Gondar was Ethiopia's capital for 200 years from the early 17th century. Other highlights include **Emperor Fasilide's 'Bath'** and Debre Birhan Selassie church which is famous for the angelic faces painted on the ceiling.

After lunch drive to Bahir Dar.

Distance - Gondar to Bahir Dar: 180 Kms. Drive time: 3 Hours

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## Day 6 – The source of the Blue Nile

Bahir Dar is on the shores of Lake Tana the source of the Blue Nile. Today's adventure is never far from the water. We will cross by boat then take a forest walk past coffee bushes growing under old growth trees full of monkeys and birds to a famous church known for its elaborate murals and history. After lunch in a hotel garden overlooking the lake we take another boat trip to look for shoreline **birdlife** and the sometimes elusive hippos. If we have time we can explore the buzzing market or take a stroll along the beautiful lake front walkway looking out for the many birds in the lake side trees.

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## Day 7 – Ancient Ethiopian churches

Drive from Bahir Dar to the **World Heritage Site** city of Lalibela. Arrive in Lalibela in the afternoon and visit an ancient church inside a cave a short walk from the road.

Distance - Bahir Dar to Lalibela: 310 Kms. Drive time: 7 Hours

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## Day 8 – Rock-hewn churches of Lalibela

In Lalibela we will visit some of the 12th century **rock hewn churches** in the morning and later venture out of town to visit an especially intriguing and outlying church built inside a natural cave and hidden from the world for many centuries. Today is an adventure into the living history of this holy city.

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## Day 9 – A mountain drive to the lowlands

Descend in altitude from the high plateau, or Amba, by about 1,000 m from Lalibela through beautiful mountain scenery to the commercial and junction city of Kombolcha.

Distance Lalibela to Kombolcha: 310 km. Drive time: 7 Hours

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## Day 10 – Bati Market and Sam's home town

Visit the famous Bati market which is known for the Afar salt traders who bring their caravans up from the desert. Bati is home to the largest camel and cattle market in Ethiopia. Later we will have lunch and a traditional coffee with Sam's friends as part of an authentic home visit and take a look around his home town of Degan in the afternoon.

Distance Kombolcha to Bati via Degan: 40 km. Driving time: 1 Hour

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## Day 11 – Explore Addis Ababa

Fly from Kombolcha to Addis Ababa. After lunch we can look around the city, take a rest or check out the shopping. We will visit the National Museum, Giorgis (St George) Cathedral where former Emperor Haile Selassie is entombed and the late 19th century palace and museum of iconic Emperor Menelik II (r. 1889 - 1913) built on a ridge overlooking Addis Ababa.

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## Day 12 – Travel to Bale Mountains National Park

Fly south to Hawassa (sometimes written Awassa) and be met by our vehicle at the airport. Drive east to the Bale Mountains National Park. We will drive from the centre of the Rift Valley floor, up into the high Bale Mountains. A stop at National Park HQ at Dinsho allows us to get up close to some of Ethiopia's endemic and rare mammals including Mountain Nyala, Menelik's Bushbuck and Wild Pigs. We spend two nights in a luxury lodge inside the park.

Flight time from Addis Ababa to Hawassa: 40 minutes

Drive time for 180 km from Hawassa to Bale Mountains National Park entrance at Dinsho: 3 Hours

Drive time for 100 km from Dinsho to Bale Mountains Lodge: 2.5 Hours

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## Day 13 – Explore Bale Mountains NP

Explore the Sanetti Plateau which lies at 3,500 – 4,000 m. This rocky Afro-alpine landscape is dotted with rare flowers and the unusual looking Lobelia trees in a unique ecosystem high above the cloud line. There is a greater than 50% chance of seeing Africa's rarest carnivore, the Ethiopian Wolf. Drive to the summit of the second highest peak in Ethiopia, Mt Tullu Dimtu, at 4,389 m. Sip a very fine cup of coffee at a local village co-op that harvests wild coffee and go for a bush walk in the Hareenna rainforest.

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## Day 14 – Explore the Rift Valley lakes

Drive down out of the Bale Mountains and back across the Rift Valley floor to Lake Langano. Tonight, we stay in some lakeside luxury at Sabana Lodge. Enjoy the bird song from the acacia tree outside your chalet then go for a swim in the mineral waters of lake Langano that will leave your skin and hair feeling soft and smooth.

Drive time for 280 km from Bale to Lake Langano: 5 Hours

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## Day 15 – Explore the Rift Valley lakes

Relax at the resort and after lunch explore the mammals and birdlife along the nearby shores of Lakes Shalla and Abiata in Shalla-Abiata National Park.

Spend another night at this favourite weekend getaway spot for many Addis Ababa based professionals.

Drive time for 10 km to Shalla – Abiata National Park : 20 Minutes

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## **Day 16 – Drive to Addis Ababa via prehistoric sites**

Drive back to Addis via the mysteriously chiselled standing stones at Tiya UNESCO World Heritage site and the fascinating outdoor archaeological museum at Melka Kunture. Research digs here, since the 1960s, have uncovered stone tools up to 1.8 m years old. This night's accommodation in Addis Ababa is included in the tour cost.

Drive time for 200 km from Lake Langano to Addis Ababa: 4 Hours

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Contact us today to join a travel group with  
Ethiopian Adventure Tours  
P O Box 68709 Newton  
Auckland, New Zealand 1010

[Sam@EthiopianAdventureTours.com](mailto:Sam@EthiopianAdventureTours.com)

Phone Sam on [+64 21 608 084](tel:+6421608084)