



DISCOVER ETHIOPIA

OCTOBER 11-28, 2020

Discover Ethiopia, a country of striking natural beauty and rich history. Begin in Addis Ababa with a briefing at the U.S. embassy. Fly north to the majestic Blue Nile, whose source is considered sacred by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and watch the waters plunge down towering cliffs at Tis Issat Falls. Walk among gelada baboons in the breathtaking Simien Mountains. Visit Gondar, Ethiopia's 17th-century capital, and Axum, the center of the legendary empire of the Queen of Sheba. Marvel at the remarkable rock-hewn churches in Lalibela, then travel to the southern Omo region, where more than two dozen indigenous tribes have lived isolated from the outside world for millennia.

GROUP SIZE: Up to 14 guests

PRICING: \$9,995 per person, double occupancy / \$11,685 per person, single occupancy

STUDY LEADER: **David Foster** is an ecologist and has been a faculty member in Organismic and Evolutionary Biology at Harvard since 1983 and Director of the Harvard Forest, the University's 4000-acre ecological laboratory and classroom in central Massachusetts since 1990. David is the Principal Investigator for the Harvard Forest Long Term Ecological Research program, sponsored by the National Science Foundation, in which more than 100 scientists and students investigate the dynamics of New England landscape as a consequence of climate change, human activity, and natural disturbance. At Harvard University David teaches courses on forest ecology, conservation, and environmental change and directs the graduate program in forest biology.

David has a Ph.D. in ecology from the University of Minnesota and has conducted studies in the boreal forests of Labrador, Sweden and Norway and the forests of Puerto Rico, the Yucatan, and Patagonia in addition to his primary research on landscape dynamics in New England. His interests focus on understanding the changes in forest ecosystems that result from human and natural disturbance and applying these results to the conservation and management of natural and cultural landscapes. He currently serves on the boards of The Trustees of Reservations, Martha's Vineyard Museum, Choate Rosemary Hall and Highstead Foundation. As part of his conservation work David and colleagues developed [Wildlands and Woodlands – A Vision for the New England Landscape](#), which lays out an ambitious plan for the protection and conservation of forest and farmland across the region. David is also the author of [Hemlock: A Forest Giant on the Edge](#) (2014), and [A Meeting of Land and Sea: Nature and the Future of Martha's Vineyard](#) (2017) among many others.

SCHEDULE BY DAY

B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner, R=Reception

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11

DEPART U.S.

Depart the U.S. on Ethiopian Airlines from one of their US gateways including Chicago, Los Angeles, Newark, or Washington/Dulles.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12

ADDIS ABABA

Arrive in Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia, this morning and transfer to your hotel. We have requested early check-in, which is subject to availability (check-in time is 3:00pm. If you wish to guarantee your room will be available, we are happy to arrange for the room to be reserved the previous night for an additional charge).

In the afternoon, enjoy an orientation tour of Ethiopia's capital. Here, tall office buildings, elegant villas and marble theaters vie for our attention alongside traditional homes formed of "wattle and daub." Visit the Holy Trinity Cathedral (Selassie Cathedral), which is the largest Orthodox Church in Ethiopia, and Africa Hall, the permanent headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

Enjoy a welcome dinner at a local Ethiopian restaurant, Yod Abyssinia, where there will be a chance to sample Ethiopian cuisine as well as watch several Ethiopian dances.

Overnight: *Hyatt Regency Addis Ababa* (D)

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13

ADDIS ABABA

Today visit Mt. Entoto, part of the Entoto Mountain chain, reaching 10,500 feet above sea level and offering spectacular views of Addis Ababa in all directions. See the Maryam Church and the remains of the emperor's palace.

Return to Addis, stopping en route at Entoto Beth Artisan, an Ethiopian social business dedicated to providing fair-wage employment to over 100 local women.

Have lunch at the Lucy Restaurant.

Next, visit the National Museum to see a replica of the skull of Lucy, a woman who would have lived in Hadar in Eastern Ethiopia about 3.5 million years ago.

Spend the afternoon at the bustling Mercato, the capital's largest shopping area, where grain, spices, clothes, ironware, and baskets are sold. End your day with a briefing at the U.S. Embassy

Have a traditional dinner this evening at the private home of Eyerusalem Gedlu, a member of the Ethiopian diaspora who at age 17 fled from the Derg to Washington, D.C. and has now reclaimed a huge villa in Addis as her ancestral home.

Overnight: *Hyatt Regency Addis Ababa* (B, L, D)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14

LAKE TANA

Depart this morning on a flight to Bahir Dar, a town located at the southern shore of Lake Tana, the source of the Blue Nile and the largest lake in Ethiopia.

Upon arrival, board a local boat for a cruise on the lake. See papyrus growing on the shore and admire the many papyrus boats that sail on the lake. During the cruise, stop to visit the Ura Kidane Mehret Church on the Zeghe Peninsula.

After lunch at a local restaurant, visit the market where there will be many local people selling a variety of goods.

In the afternoon, enjoy an excursion to the spectacularly beautiful Tis Isat (Blue Nile) Falls where the Blue Nile plunges over a 150 foot rock face to form one of Africa's most spectacular waterfalls.

End the day with a drive to the Kuriftu Resort and Spa for dinner and overnight.

Overnight: *Kuriftu Resort and Spa* (B, L, D)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

GONDAR

This morning drive to Gondar, where you will enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.

After lunch begin exploring. Gondar was founded in 1635 by Emperor Fasil in the aftermath of a tumultuous century in Ethiopian history during which the Christian Empire virtually collapsed under the onslaught of the Muslim leader.

Tour the vast Royal Enclosure where high stone walls encircle five castles, a complex of connecting tunnels and raised walkways, and several smaller buildings at the heart of the city.

Next visit the small Debre Berhan Selassie Church, famous for its beautiful art.

End the day meeting with Nigisti Gebreselassie, the young and dynamic director of Yenege Tesfa (Hope for Tomorrow), an organization that works with the street children of Gondar to provide shelter and education.

Continue to the Goha Hotel where you will dine this evening.

Overnight: *Goha Hotel*(B, L, D)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16

GONDAR

Depart this morning for a full day excursion to the Simien Mountains National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Drive through the dramatic highland scenery composed of jagged peaks, or *ambas*.

Stop en route at Ploughshare Women Crafts and Training Center where 40 local women are producing wonderful ceramics and crafts. The group will be met by Tesfalem Abera, the general manager.

Upon arrival at the park, enjoy a walk of 1.5 miles along a ridge offering superb views of the mountains. This will be a gentle walk with an opportunity to see Lammergeyer Vultures, Gelada Baboons, and bushbuck.

Today's lunch will be a picnic served outside in the mountains.

Return to the hotel for dinner and overnight.

Overnight: *Goha Hotel*(B, L, D)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17

AXUM

Depart this morning on a flight to Axum. Upon arrival transfer to the Sabean Hotel in time for lunch.

Visit the 17th century Church of St. Mary standing near the ruins of an earlier 4th century church which is the country's oldest and holiest Christian shrine. Another small sanctuary is said to be the last resting place of the original Ark of the Covenant, admittedly one of the most precious relics of Judeo-Christian tradition.

Continue on to the Axumite Heritage Foundation. Once the residence of the governor of Axum, it is now a research center and library.

There will be some free time for independent exploration this afternoon.

Enjoy dinner at the hotel restaurant.

Overnight: *Sabean Hotel*(B, L, D)

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18

AXUM

After breakfast, depart the hotel to see a number of famous granite obelisks, or monolithic stelae, thought to be the markers for underground burial chambers. The largest surviving one (over 65 feet high) is by legend the work of King Ezana, the first monarch of Axum to embrace the faith of Christianity.

End the morning at the Axum Museum, whose fine collection includes a display of tablets inscribed in a variety of languages and an array of Axumite household artifacts.

After lunch at the hotel, drive to King Ezana's inscription. Housed in a small shack, this is an Ethiopian version of the Rosetta stone.

Continue on to visit the tombs of King Kaleb and Gebre Meskel.

Return to the hotel and enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight: *Sabean Hotel* (B, L, D)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 19

LALIBELA

Depart on a flight this morning to Lalibela. Upon arrival transfer to the Maribela Hotel where you will have lunch.

Begin exploring Lalibela's wonderful churches. The churches are divided into eastern and western clusters, separated by the Jordan River. We will focus on the eastern cluster this afternoon where the churches are mostly excavated from below the ground and are surrounded by courtyards and trenches. Several of these are monoliths or three-quarter monoliths (free from the surrounding rock on three of four sides).

Dinner this evening is at the hotel.

Overnight: *Maribela Hotel* (B, L, D)

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20

LALIBELA

Today, wander through the churches in the western cluster. These churches are similar to many of those in Tigre in that most of them were excavated from a vertical rock face by exploiting existing caves or cracks in the rock.

Bet Gebriel-Rufael is a strange church surrounded by a rock trench of perhaps fifteen feet in depth. In effect, this trench is rather like a dry moat and it must be crossed on a rickety wooden walkway. Bet Emmanuel is considered by art historians to be the finest and most precisely worked church in Lalibela, possibly because it was the private church of the royal family.

Lunch will be served at a local restaurant.

This afternoon, visit the isolated monolith of Bet Giorgis. Like the churches of the eastern cluster, it is excavated below ground level in a

sunken courtyard enclosed by precipitous walls. The most remarkable feature of this church is that it is carved in the shape of a symmetrical cruciform tower.

Enjoy dinner this evening at the Ben Abeba Restaurant, which offers stunning architecture and views.

Overnight: *Maribela Hotel* (B, L, D)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21

AWASSA

This morning, take a return flight to Addis. Have lunch upon arrival before boarding four-wheel drive Toyota Land Cruisers to begin the drive to Awassa, the capital of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (one of the nine ethnic divisions of Ethiopia).

Make your first stop at Melka Kunture, an important Paleolithic site known for a remarkable prehistoric stone-tool factory discovered in 1963. Enjoy a wonderful view of Lake Ziway, one of the five lakes of the Great Rift Valley. Also make a visit to the town of Shashemene, known today as the unofficial Rastafari capital of Africa.

Arrive at Awassa in the early evening. Dinner and overnight are at the lovely Haile Resort where rooms overlook the Awassa Lake.

Overnight: *Haile Resort* (B, L, D)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22

ARBA MINCH

Early this morning, visit the fish market of Awassa.

Continue on to Arba Minch—a drive of about 5 ½ hours—passing through the wonderful panoramic landscape of the Hadiya and Wolayita people. This is some of the most fertile land in Ethiopia where abundant fruit and cotton are grown.

Stop at Lake Abaya, originally known as Lake Margherita. As a result of a large number of sediments suspended in the water, the lake has a red color.

After lunch, travel along the side of Lake Abaya and arrive at Arba Minch mid-afternoon.

Arba Minch (meaning Forty Springs in Amharic) takes its name from the bubbling streams that spring up amid the undergrowth of the luxuriant forest surrounding the town. The Lower Omo Valley is a spectacularly beautiful area with diverse ecosystems including grasslands, volcanic outcrops, and one of the few remaining 'pristine' riverine forests in semi-arid Africa that supports a wide variety of wildlife.

Upon arrival, transfer to the Haile Resort where you will enjoy dinner this evening.

Overnight: *Haile Resort* (B, L, D)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23 ARBA MINCH

After breakfast, begin learning about the more than two dozen different tribes that inhabit the southern Omo region.

The major tribes are the Hamar, Dorze, Mursi, Karo, Bena, Tsemay, Ari and Surma. These culturally diverse tribes—each with their different languages, customs and dress—continue their traditional lives with little influence from the outside world.

This morning's focus will be on the Dorze people, who live high in the Guge Mountains. The Omotic Dorze people were once fierce warriors and are famous for their beehive shaped huts. Learn how they make fermented, unleavened bread from the fibers of the false banana tree and enjoy a performance of their traditional dance.

After lunch, enjoy a boat trip on the aquamarine waters of Lake Chamo, where hundreds of hippos emerge in the morning and afternoon to graze on the grassy shores. Chamo is also sanctuary for several thousand Nile crocodile, some reaching lengths of up to 23 feet.

Dinner this evening is at your hotel.

Overnight: *Haile Resort* (B, L, D)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24 TURMI

After breakfast, depart for Turmi, stopping en route at Konso for a special visit to the home of Kala Gezahegn, ruler of the Konso people.

After lunch at the Kanta Lodge, proceed to Weyto and visit the Tsemay tribe who live in the semi-arid region of the Omo Valley. The Tsemay are agro-pastoralist and use both livestock herding and agriculture to survive.

Then, if the road conditions allow for it, visit the Arbore people, a small tribe with ancestral and cultural links to the Konso people. They are pastoralists, measuring wealth by the number of cattle owned, and perform many ritual dances while singing, which are said to eliminate negative energy.

End the day with a visit to a traditional Hamar village. The Hamar make their living as successful cattle herders and farmers.

Proceed to Turmi and the Buska Lodge for dinner and overnight.

Overnight: *Buska Lodge* (B, L, D)

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25 TURMI

This morning, take an excursion to Omorate to visit the semi-nomadic pastoral Dassanech people who live on the banks of the Omo River. Board a narrow and low dug-out canoe to ride across the Omo River to visit a Dassanech village on the other side.

Return to the Buska Lodge for lunch before visiting a Karo village. The Karo (or Kara) are a small tribe with an estimated population of fewer than 2,000 people.

Drive back to the Buska Lodge for dinner and overnight.

Overnight: *Buska Lodge* (B, L, D)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 26

JINKA

After breakfast, drive through Dimeka to Jinka.

Stop in Key Afer to visit the villages of the Bena people, who are neighbors with the Hamar tribe. It is believed that the Bena actually originated from them centuries ago. Today is market day!

En route to Jinka, visit the village of Yetnebarsh, home of the hospitable Ari people, to sample *areke*, their own liquor made from sorghum, garlic and maize.

Continue on to Jinka and the Eco-Omo Lodge for dinner and overnight.

Overnight: *Eco-Omo Lodge* (B, L, D)

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27

ADDIS ABABA

This morning visit Omo Child Ethiopia which provides a safe, nurturing home and quality education for rescued Mingi children living in the Omo Valley.

After drive to Mago National Park to visit with the Mursi tribe, a pastoralist ethnic tribe. The Mursi live in a UNESCO World Heritage site, 62 miles north of the Kenyan border.

After lunch, visit the South-Omo Museum and Research Center focusing on the region's ethnic groups and preserving aspects of traditional tribal life.

Depart Jinka on a late afternoon flight to Addis. Upon arrival, transfer to the Hyatt Regency Addis Ababa.

Enjoy a farewell dinner at the Makush Art Gallery and Restaurant.

Overnight: *Hyatt Regency* (B, L, D)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28

DEPART FOR U.S.

Transfer to the airport early this morning for flights back to the U.S.