

# Ethiopia – Timkat Festival

Tour Code ETT

## Departing 17 January 2011

This unique and comprehensive itinerary covers all the major highlights of the northern and eastern regions of Ethiopia. We start the tour in Addis Ababa to witness the famous *Timkat* (Epiphany) religious festival. The Ethiopian Orthodox church with its many ancient traditions and festivals has had a significant influence on the country's way of life for centuries. The festival is celebrated with colourful processions and, when witnessed at close quarters, can be a most unique and memorable experience. Other tour highlights include the remarkable 12th century churches at Lalibela and the rock-cut churches of the Eastern Tigray region and Axum, where Ethiopia's rich history stretches back nearly 3000 years, with famous legends of the Queen of Sheba and the lost Arc of the Covenant. The dramatic mountain terrain of the Simien National Park, the magnificent gorges of the Awash National Park and the picturesque setting of Lake Tana all feature as natural highlights, whilst the medieval walled centre of Harar adds to the country's mysterious and ancient past



Timkat Procession, Addis Ababa  
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## ITINERARY

### Day 1 Fly to Addis Ababa – Monday 17 January

Evening flight from Heathrow Terminal 3 with Ethiopian Airlines direct to Addis Ababa

### Day 2 In Addis Ababa – Tuesday 18 January

Morning arrival and transfer to our hotel for two nights. This afternoon we visit the National Museum that houses the famous remains of 'Lucy' and the magnificent Trinity Cathedral, resting place of Haile Selassie. Welcome dinner in a smart Addis Ababa restaurant overlooking the city (L,D)

### Day 3 In Addis Ababa. Witness *Timkat* Festival – Wednesday 19 January

Today we witness the ancient ceremony of *Timkat*, marking the Ethiopian Orthodox celebration of Epiphany. Ancient traditional music and singing accompany colourful processions of robed priests and deacons making this an unforgettable spectacle (B,L,D)

### Day 4 Visit Awash National Park – Thursday 20 January

We drive into the Rift Valley and visit the Awash National Park. We visit a magnificent 150 m deep gorge carved by the Awash River filled by waterfalls and teeming with endemic birdlife. Overnight hotel lodge (B,L,D)

### Day 5 Drive to Harar – Friday 21 January

We drive through the Hararge Mountains, a region well known for growing one of the best qualities of coffee in the country and colourful Oromo roadside markets. Later, in Harar, we will be able to witness the ancient and bizarre ritual of feeding the town's resident hyenas by mouth! Overnight at the Heritage Plaza hotel (B,L,D)

### Day 6 Visit old Islamic Harar – Saturday 22 January

We have a walking tour within the old walled 15<sup>th</sup> century Islamic city of Harar and enjoy its architectural treasures, historic houses and colourful bustling markets filled with the smell of herbs, spices and coffee for which the area is famous. We drive to Dire Dawa. Two nights at the Selam hotel (B,L,D)

### Day 7 In Dire Dawa – Sunday 23 January

This morning we drive to the recently opened cave painting at Lega Odda dating to 5000 BC before visiting the daily market in town. Later we visit the Ethio - Djibouti railway Transport Company which is the only railway line in Ethiopia, established in 1902 and still using the old diesel locomotives today. We will also visit a coffee processing factory (B,L,D)

### Day 8 Fly to Addis Ababa – Monday 24 January

We fly to Addis Ababa and this afternoon we visit the excellent Ethnographic museum housed in Addis Ababa University. Overnight at the Ghion hotel (B,L,D)

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**Day 9 Fly to Bahar Dar. Visit Lake Tana. Drive to Gondar – Tuesday 25 January**

This morning we fly to Bahar Dar and enjoy a relaxing boat trip on Lake Tana with a stop on Zege peninsula to visit the 17<sup>th</sup> century monastery of Ura Kidane Mehret, beautifully painted with colourful frescoes of biblical scenes. In the late afternoon we journey along the lake road to Gondar. Two nights at the Goha hotel (B,L,D)

**Day 9 In Gondar – Wednesday 26 January**

We visit the 17<sup>th</sup> century imperial capital of Gondar known as the ‘City of Castles’ picturesquely located beneath the Simien Mountains. We explore the Royal Enclosure with its complex of impressive castles and palaces and the superb church of Debre Birhan Selassie, whose ceilings are covered with paintings of winged angels (B,L,D)

**Day 10 Visit the Simien Mountain National Park – Thursday 27 January**

We journey into Ethiopia’s most scenic highland range with spectacular plateaux and deep gorges; the Simien Mountains. The parks’ stunning scenery and pastoral lifestyle has remained unchanged for centuries and is home to the indigenous Gelada baboon and rare Simien fox. Overnight at the Simien Park eco-lodge (B,L,D)

**Day 11 Drive to Axum – Friday 28 January**

Continuing our journey north winding along steep mountain passes and through dramatic gorges we eventually arrive at Axum, Ethiopia’s spiritual centre and possibly home to one of the world’s most elusive relics; the Arc of the Covenant! Two nights at the Yeha hotel (B,L,D)

**Day 12 In Axum – Saturday 29 January**

This morning we visit the small but interesting Archaeological Museum and the famous giant obelisks, which have puzzled archaeologists for centuries. We will also wander through the towns’ fascinating local market. In the afternoon we visit the restored palace ruins reputed to be those of the Queen of Sheba (B,L,D)

**Day 13 Visit Yeha temple. Drive to Gheralta – Sunday 30 January**

Driving north we visit Yeha temple, the oldest of Ethiopia’s antiquities beautifully set in scenic surroundings, dating back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. We continue our journey into the eastern Tigray, a fascinating region containing many rock-hewn churches dating from the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Overnight at the Gheralta Lodge (B,L,D)

**Day 14 Visit rock cut churches. Drive to Mekele – Monday 31 January**

The rock-cut churches of the region are seen as one of Ethiopia’s greatest heritages yet they are still relatively unvisited. Today we will visit some of them. We overnight at the Mekele Axum hotel (B,L,D)

**Day 15 Drive to Lalibela – Tuesday 1 February**

A long but scenic drive south to Woldia before heading west along a winding road that follows the spectacular canyon of the river Tekeze, one of the main rivers of Ethiopia, to Lalibela. Two nights at the Jerusalem hotel (B,L,D)

**Day 16 In Lalibela – Wednesday 2 February**

Today we visit the remarkable complex of UNESCO listed 12<sup>th</sup> century rock-cut churches. In the late afternoon we will visit a traditional tukul hut and enjoy a traditional coffee ceremony with a local family (B,L,D)

**Day 17 Fly to Addis Ababa – Thursday 3 February**

We return to the capital and have time at leisure perhaps to visit some of the Churchill Road souvenir shops and an historic coffee house. A farewell Ethiopian dinner with a traditional cultural show has been arranged. Transfer to the airport for our direct flight to London. Day rooms at the Ghion hotel (B,L,D)

**Day 18 Fly to London – Friday 4 February**

Ethiopian Airlines flight arrival at Heathrow Terminal 3 in the early morning

**Cost £1995.00** per person in a twin room (excluding international flights) Single supplement charge £300



Local Market, Bahar Dar  
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**Price includes:**

- ▶ Tour accompanied from London by Patrick Syder
- ▶ Led by specialist Ethiopian guide, Samson Tilahun
- ▶ Three domestic Ethiopian Airlines flights
- ▶ All transportation in private minibus exclusive to the group
- ▶ Full sightseeing programme including entrance fees
- ▶ Best available hotels on a full board basis
- ▶ Traditional Addis Ababa restaurant dinners
- ▶ All departure taxes
- ▶ All airport transfers
- ▶ Porter, hotel and restaurant staff gratuities

Not included – visa fee, travel insurance, drinks, guide and driver gratuities, Ethiopian Airlines international flight (cost from £520.00)

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