

# Country Info: Ethiopia

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This information is provided by Encompass Africa as a guideline to the country you will be visiting. Further information is available to you on <http://www.tourismethiopia.org>

## TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Passports are required by all foreign visitors and must be valid for 6 months after the intended length of stay. Please ensure that there are two blank pages per country to be visited. It is imperative to check visa requirements with the country embassies/consulates as it may vary according to your nationality.

A visa is attainable on arrival for US\$30 per person in US\$ only. And we recommend small denominations of dollars as officials are not in the position to give change.

If you do not have an Australian passport, please contact us for further information. We must emphasise that you are responsible for ensuring that your travel documents (passport/visas) are in order.

## TAXES

Departure taxes are included in all international airline tickets by law.

## CURRENCY & CREDIT CARDS

The currency in Ethiopia is called the birr, which is not easily purchased, outside the country. We recommend you book and pay for as many of the activities you wish to experience as possible to avoid carrying excess local currency, which is often difficult to exchange back into Australian dollars.

Diners Club and MasterCard are the main credit cards that are accepted at only a very few outlets in Addis Ababa. It is not normally possible to get currency advances against a credit card either.

We recommend you travel with adequate supply of hard currency or travellers-cheques in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling that you can change into Birr on arrival into Ethiopia. At the international airport you will have access to ATM's, which you can place US Dollars into and it exchanges into Birr.

**Bank Hours:** Mon – Thu 08h00 – 15h00  
Friday 08h00 – 11h00 and 13h30 – 15h00  
Sat 08h30 – 11h00

General Use: Credit card companies, if not forewarned, are blocking transactions that take place in foreign countries – more often than not after multiple transactions. Please ensure you contact your credit card companies prior to departure, to advise them that you will be using your cards in the specific countries relevant to your safari holiday itinerary.

#### VAT & DUTY FREE

VAT is charged on most goods and services.

#### LANGUAGE

The official language in Ethiopia is Amharic. It belongs to the Afro-Asiatic language family which includes Arabic and Hebrew. English is spoken in tourism areas.

#### TIME

Ethiopia is 3 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (MGT).

#### ELECTRICITY

Voltage in Ethiopia is 220 with frequency of 50 hz. In Ethiopia the power sockets used are of type C / E / F and L.



Type F: This socket also works with plug C and E



Type C: This socket also works with plug E and F



Type E: This socket also works with plug C. Plug F will also do, but only with an additional pinhole.



Type L: This socket works with plug C

### HEALTH PRECAUTIONS

Ethiopia is known as a malaria country and visitors should take necessary precautions. In addition, Yellow Fever vaccination is essential and we recommend discussing your visit with a GP or travel doctor. Other vaccinations may be recommended including Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Polio, Meningococcus and Tetanus.

The most common travel related ailment is diarrhea and altitude sickness.

### FOOD & DRINKS

Ethiopian cuisine characteristically consists of vegetables and often spicy meat dishes in the form of a thick stew called 'wat'. It is often served with injera, a large sourdough flatbread.

Ethiopia always has a 'fasting' option which means animal free, so it's great for vegetarians.

Shiro is a chickpea powder-based dish that is slow cooked with a spicy red sauce.

Atkilt wot is a vegetable combo of cabbage, carrots and potatoes simmered in a light sauce.

Azifa is a green lentil salad that is perfect on its own or mixed with injera.

Gomen is made of collard greens and spices.

Inguday tibs are mushrooms sautéed with onions.

Mesir wot is a combination of split red lentils simmered in spicy sauce.

Fasolia are string beans, often sautéed with carrots and caramelized onions.

Kik alicha is a split pea stew dish often cooked with turmeric. There are different kinds depending on the spices and consistency of lentils.

Beet Salad is a tangy marinated beet dish with spices, potatoes and carrots.

Buticha is a chickpea dip mixed with lemon juice.

Chechebsa or kita firfir is eaten at breakfast and is a rare dish in Ethiopia. It is made of lightly fried injera in berbere sauce and served with honey.

Sambusa is fried dough pastry filled with meat and lentils. It looks like a spring roll.

Timatim Salata is tomato salad with refreshing mix of berbere or jalapeno pepper sauce and mix of other vegetables like onion and peppers.

Ethiopian pastries are not main stay, but pastries have become part of their cuisine. The cake-ish pastries are not too sweet and range from doughy to dense.

Coffee is a huge part of the country's culture and economy.

We recommend you budget approximately US\$5-US\$10 per person for meals not included in your itinerary.

### SHOPPING

Ethiopia is not known as a shopping mecca in Africa, yet there are certainly some fantastic options.

In Addis Ababa, try Entoto Market for traditional clothing like a shamma (toga style dress), Alert Handicraft Shop for hand made handbags, wall hangings and pillow covers each emblazoned with vibrant embroidery. There is also Haileselassie Alemayehu that sells a wide array of items like paintings, baskets, woodcarvings and traditional clothing.

In Gondar there is the Kindu Trust, a great little charity store that sells locally made baskets, banana art and beads made from recycled magazines. The Restaurant Habesha Kitfo also has a great gift shop as one of the owners is an artist who sells his works in the basement.

For Coffee, we recommend Nure Roasted Hara Coffee in Harar of course! It sells 1 kilogram and 500 gram packets of excellent whole and ground beans and you can watch the sorting, roasting and grinding.

### GEOGRAPHY

Ethiopia is located in the horn of Africa and borders Eritrea to the north, Djibouti and Somalia to the east, Sudan and South Sudan to the west and Kenya to the south. It has a high central plateau that varies from 1,290 to 3,000 metres above sea level, so altitude sickness sometimes kicks in if you are in the high mountain regions. The highest mountain reaches 4,533 metres. There are a number of rivers that cross the plateau, notably the Blue Nile rising from Lake Tana.

### CLIMATE

Ethiopia is in the tropical zone laying between the Equator and the Tropic of Cancer. It has three different climate zones depending on the elevation. Kolla (tropical zone) is below 1,830 metres in elevation with annual average temperature of 27 degrees Celsius with annual rainfall about 510 millimetres. The mountains do get cold and if you go close to the Danakil Dpression, it will get extremely hot, sometimes up to 50 degrees Celsius.

The country's seasons are:

Kiremt or Meher (Summer) - June, July and August are the summer season. Heavy rain falls in these three months.

Belg (Autumn) - September, October and November are the spring season sometime known as the harvest season.

Bega (Winter) - December, January and February are the dry season with frost in morning specially in January.

Tseday (Spring) - March, April and May are the autumn season with occasional showers. May is the hottest month in Ethiopia.

#### LUGGAGE

If you are travelling on light aircraft in Ethiopia, luggage restrictions do apply and it is a maximum of 20 kilograms per person including hand luggage.

#### LAUNDRY

Laundry can be done at most camps and hotels for a fee payable locally.

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

Ethiopia is one of our favourite countries to photograph. The diversity of landscapes, its people and colourful cultures not to mention the fascinating wildlife!

Light can be harsh in the highlands so that early morning and late afternoon are best.

Be respectful of religious services, ceremonies and staff because they may not approve of you taking photographs. Church interiors in Lalibela are very dark so we recommend a tripod!

Be polite and always motion to the camera seeking approval to take a photograph. The problem is getting people to pose naturally as they believe they should stand bolt upright for the photo.

Always bring plenty of memory cards as they can be difficult to obtain and we recommend at least one extra battery just in case you don't have access to power to charge overnight.

#### RECOMMENDED READING

1. A History of Ethiopia – by Harold G. Marcus
2. Ethiopia Culture Smart! – by Sarah Howard
3. Ethiopia: Peoples of the Omo Valley – by Hans Silvester
4. Sign and the Seal: The Quest for the Lost Ark of the Covenant – by Graham Hancock