

EXTRA DEPARTURE DATE RELEASED DUE TO POPULAR DEMAND

ETHIOPIA

THE CRADLE OF CIVILISATION

An escorted tour of the Northern Historical Route

2nd to 15th November 2019
& 1st to 14th November 2020

NOBLE CALEDONIA



Ethiopia offers the most ancient cultural heritage of all sub-Saharan Africa. With a recorded history which began in the 6th century BC with the dawning of the Axumite civilisation, there sprang a line of emperors who ruled with few interruptions until the death of Haile Selassie. During our twelve night tour we will travel the northern historical route and our visit will include their palaces in the old capital of Gondar and in Addis Ababa.

Christianity reached Ethiopia some 200 years before it arrived in Britain. On our visit to Lalibela we will see the amazing 12th century church, hewn from the rock. We will visit the island monasteries of Lake Tana and the spectacular Blue Nile waterfalls. A highlight of the tour will be the visit to the Simien Mountains National Park, which has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The region includes many summits above 4000 metres and culminates in the highest point in Ethiopia, Ras Dejen, at 4620 metres, the fourth highest mountain in Africa. The mountains are a must for all those interested in wildlife, scenery and spectacular landscapes.

Despite having more UNESCO World Heritage Sites than any other African country, tourism is still in its infancy in Ethiopia and, whilst the infrastructure is developing rapidly and we have selected the finest accommodations available, travellers should not expect the same facilities as that of Africa's top visited destinations. What you can expect, however, is a warm welcome and a unique and rewarding travel experience in a profoundly beautiful land.

THE ITINERARY

Day 1 London to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Fly by scheduled flight. On arrival meet our local agents and transfer to the Golden Tulip Hotel for a two night stay. Addis Ababa was founded by Emperor Menelik II in 1887, who selected the site because of its location within the Entoto hills and today it is Africa's diplomatic capital with headquarters for the Organization of African Union and the United Nation Economic Commissions for Africa.

Day 2 Addis Ababa. Spend the day in Ethiopia's capital city where we will visit the Trinity Cathedral, built to commemorate the country's liberation from Italian rule, the National Museum and the Ethnographic Museum which showcases Ethiopia's rich ethnic diversity. We will also drive out to the Entoto Mountain offering wonderful views over the city and the location of Menelik's former palace, which now contains a small

museum, and the Entoto Mariam Church the site of his coronation in 1882. After lunch we will make our way to the city's market. The "Merkato", located in western Addis Ababa is the largest open-air market in Africa, offering an array of colours, aromas, costumes, produce and jewellery. After some free time to relax we will meet this evening for dinner.

Day 3 Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar. After an early breakfast in the hotel we will transfer to the airport for our flight to Bahir Dar. On arrival, transfer to Kuriftu Resort & Spa, our base for the next two nights, before making our way to the Blue Nile Falls. Known locally as Tissiat, meaning "The Smoking Water", the falls are 328 feet wide and the water plunges some 150 feet, giving rise to picturesque stream clouds and rainbows. After lunch we will make our way to the local market where we find typical hand-woven capes and scarves before visiting the

former palace of Emperor Haile Selassie at Bizeit, with great views of the town and located where the Blue Nile flows out of the lake.

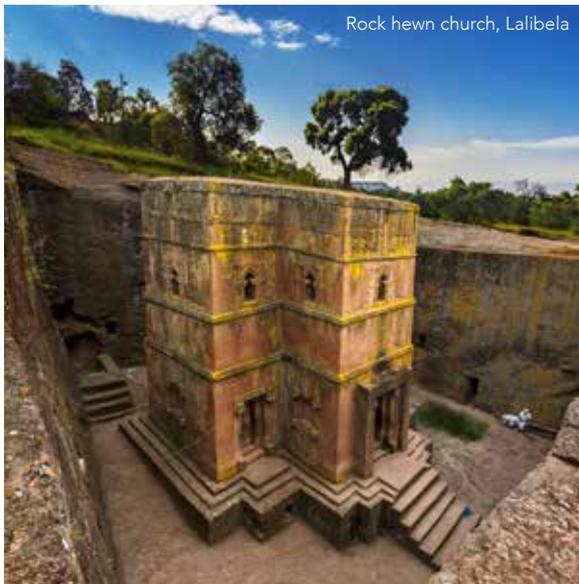
Day 4 Bahir Dar. Today we will take a boat ride on Lake Tana, the origin of the Blue Nile, to visit two of the renowned Island Monasteries of the Lake. Located on the bird rich, wooded Zege Peninsula, the 16th century Ura Kidane Mihret and Azua Mariam monasteries both have wonderful paintings and murals which depict scenes from the Old and the New Testaments on their walls. Return to the hotel for lunch and a free afternoon to relax at the hotel before meeting for dinner this evening.

Day 5 Simien Mountains National Park. This morning we will drive to the Simien Mountains National Park, an area of highland in the northern part of Ethiopia consisting of some spectacular mountain scenery. The National Park covers



190 square kilometres and was added to the World Heritage Site list in 1978. It has 57 tree species, a variety of herbaceous plants and 35 mammal and about 180 bird species have been recorded here including Walia ibex, Ethiopian wolf, Menelik's bushbuck and the Gelada baboon which are endemic. Arrive at the Limalimo Lodge for our two night stay and enjoy a free afternoon to enjoy the views or take some short walks near the property.

Day 6 Simien Mountains National Park. After breakfast we drive to Chenek, a spectacular site with



Rock hewn church, Lalibela



Simien Mountains National Park



Megalith stela field, Axum



Merkato Market, Addis Ababa



Gelada baboon

impressive escarpment, super viewpoints and a variety of plant and animal species including the endemic Walia ibexes. On a series of walks we will take in the beautiful landscape and keep an eye out for Gelada baboons, also called bleeding-heart monkeys, and the lion monkeys.

Day 7 Gondar. We leave the mountains today and drive to Gondar, the imperial city where the kings of Ethiopia were based for two centuries. The city was the first capital of the Ethiopian empire, which began in 1632 with the reign of Fasilidas. After checking in to Mayleko Lodge for our overnight stay, we will take the chance to visit some of the sites built by the Gondarine kings including the Debre Birhan Trinity Church, with its magnificent murals, the 17th century castle of King Fasilidas and the Fasilidas pool in which pilgrims still take a plunge during the Timkat festival.

Day 8 Gondar to Lalibela. This morning we transfer to the airport for our short flight to Lalibela and upon arrival transfer to Mezana Lodge, our base for the next two nights. The city is known as the "New Jerusalem", created by King Lalibela in the 12th century who built a number of rock-hewn churches which were considered an "eighth wonder of the world". Visit the churches of Bet Golgotha, Bet Mika-el, Bet Mariam, Bet Meskel, Bet Danaghel and Bet Medhane Alem, the largest, which is built like a Greek temple with three empty graves symbolically dug for the biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Day 9 Lalibela. Today we will visit the second group of the rock churches. The south-east cluster of churches is more irregular in design than the north-western cluster.

Several of the individual churches in this cluster are thought to have been secular in origin, and some predate the reign of King Lalibela by five centuries. The churches in the south-east cluster include Bet Gebriel-Rafael, Bet Abba Libanos, Bet Lehem, Bet Emanuel, and Bet Mercurios. According to legend, Bet Abba Libanos was built overnight by Lalibela's wife, Meskel Kebre, who was assisted by a group of angels. Finally visit Bet Giyorgis, possibly the most elegant and majestic of all the Lalibela churches, which lies somewhat isolated in the southwest part of the village on a sloping rock terrace. After lunch, we will visit the monastery of Nakuto Laab, a simple, yet fascinating example of Lalibela's eastern group of rock-hewn churches. Our day ends at the open market of Lalibela, where we experience Ethiopian hospitality at a traditional coffee ceremony.

Day 10 Axum. Return to the airport this morning for our flight to Axum. In the second century BC it was one of the major trading centres of the region due to its proximity to the Red Sea and the ability to trade with Africa, Arabia and the Roman world. Today it is renowned for its Cathedral of St. Mary Zion, where legend has it the original Ark of the Covenant is housed. Also see the standing monolithic stelae, the great 4th century obelisks which are made of single pieces of granite and rise up to 33 metres in height. Our last call is at the Queen of Sheba's Palace - the site contains the remains of what was once a massive palace with finely mortared stonewalls, deep foundations and its own impressive drainage system and is believed to be the oldest building in Axum. Later this afternoon we transfer to the Sabeian International Hotel for our overnight stay.

Day 11 Gheralta. After a free morning we visit the ruin of Yeha Temple. According to the 19th century German scholar Heinrich Miiller, the temple is thought to date back to 700 BC and is believed to be the oldest standing building in the country. Beside the remarkable temple, a church dedicated to Abba Aftse stands. Abba Aftse was one of the famous nine saints who came to Ethiopia in the 6th century from the east Roman Empire to teach the Gospel. After our visit we drive to Gheralta Lodge in Hawzien and check in for our two night stay. Dinner will be at the lodge this evening.

Day 12 Gheralta. After breakfast, we will visit Dugum Selassie, a church carved into granite outcrop inside the modern church of the same name in the village. Later this afternoon we visit Abraha Atsbeha, the church is supposed to have been constructed in the 4th century by the two kings Abreha and Atsbeha and one of the earliest of the rock churches of Tigray. The upper part of the wall and the ceilings were painted and even though the paintings are fading we can still see the images of cherubim and angels and biblical scenes.

Day 13 Mekelle to Addis Ababa to London. Today after breakfast we will drive to Mekelle. En-route, at the edge of the small town of Wukro on a knoll of red rock, is the rock-cut church of Wukro Cherqos. After our visit we continue to Mekelle airport for our flight to Addis Ababa. On arrival we will transfer to a local restaurant for our farewell dinner including local dancers before transferring to the airport for our scheduled flight to London.

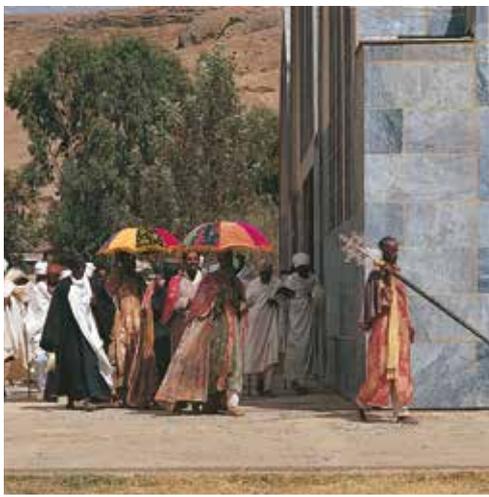
Day 14 London. Arrive this morning.

Please note: To best enjoy your experience in Ethiopia you should be in good physical condition and be able to walk short distances, to and around many ancient sites, over rough or uneven terrain. There will be opportunities for hikes of varied lengths and for most activities a moderate level of exertion is required. Some days may entail early starts and drives of up to six hours, however the vehicles used are modern and comfortable.

PRICES PER PERSON
Based on double occupancy

	2019	2020
Twin	£4595	£4795
Single	£6395	£6695

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • 12 nights hotel accommodation with breakfast as described • Lunch & dinner daily • Excursions • English speaking local guide • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers.
Not included: Travel insurance, visa.
Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 20 participants



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All special offers are subject to availability. Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.
Cover image: Rock hewn church, Lalibela.