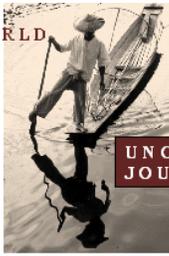


DISCOVER THE WORLD

exploring  
extraordinary cultures  
living in the  
remnants of time



UNCOMMON  
JOURNEYS LLC

*Ethiopia*

January 8 - 25, 2017

## *Journey into the Medieval Past*



The ancient kingdom of Abyssinia, known today as Ethiopia, is a “must visit” for anyone captivated by the medieval past, timeless cultures, religious pageantry and wonders of nature. Churches and palaces reflect the genius of history’s architectural masters, and speak softly of a bygone era. They are enduring monuments to emperors and legends, Christianity and kings. These epic sites shelter priceless relics from a powerful and religious ancient civilization. But that’s not all! The tour coincides with the Timkat (Epiphany) processions and ceremonies of the Ethiopian Orthodox faith. And there’s more! The majestic landscape of the bio diverse Simien Mountain Range is considered to rival the Grand Canyon, whilst the Danakil Depression is a geological marvel where inhabitants wrest a living from salt mining. You must see it to believe it. Then again, we’ve seen it and we *still* can’t believe it!

### **Tour Highlights**

- **Splendid processions of the Timkat (Epiphany) ceremonies**
- **Monolithic hand-carved rock churches of Lalibela**
- **Medieval monasteries of Lake Tana, source of the Blue Nile**
- **Simien Mountains, the most spectacular of the diverse Ethiopian landscapes**
- **Nomadic salt traders and geothermal fields of the Danakil Depression**

### **Tour price, per person, based on double occupancy \***

6 participants:	US\$7,200
7 participants:	US\$7,000
8 participants:	US\$6,800
9 participants:	US\$6,700
10 participants:	US\$6,400
single supplement:	US\$687

\* If you fly Ethiopian Airlines internationally, in accordance with domestic flight pricing, you will receive a US\$310 credit off the tour price. Code share flights are not eligible, so you must book directly with Ethiopian Airlines.

### **Tour Price**

The tour price, based on 8 - 10 participants, includes 17 nights of accommodations, day use room on January 25, all meals beginning with dinner on January 8 through dinner on January 25, domestic airfare, ground transportation, airport transfers, entrance fees, tips of a group nature and the services of an English speaking guide. The tour price does not include international airfare, visa (currently US\$20), beverages, tip to local guide, airport tax (currently US\$20), personal expenses, extra nights or day rooms in Addis Ababa if required due to flight schedules. The extra room charge is US\$190 for a double room or US\$165 for a single room. Extra room charges include taxes and breakfast.

### **Deposit**

A deposit of US\$500 is required to reserve a place on the tour. The balance is due 90 days prior to departure.

### **Cancellation Policy**

In accordance with hotel cancellation policies, the following charges will apply:

- US\$500 deposit fully refundable if Uncommon Journeys cancels the tour
- US\$500 deposit fully refundable if participant cancels before July 8, 2016
- US\$200 cancellation fee if participant cancels between July 8 – September 8, 2016
- US\$500 deposit non-refundable if participant cancels after September 8, 2016

### **Tour Leader**

The tour is organized and led by Debbie Jefkin-Elnekave. Debbie's knowledge of Ethiopia, profound appreciation for the people and customs, and passion for sharing this amazing country, ensure a very rewarding journey. To learn more about Debbie, please visit [www.uncommonimages.biz](http://www.uncommonimages.biz) and click on Video.

### **International Flights**

You must book and purchase your own airline tickets to Addis Ababa. Depending on your point of origin, you may cross the international dateline. Many flights arrive in and depart from Addis Ababa at odd hours; some in the middle of the night. You must arrive in Addis no later than January 8 and depart no sooner than late evening on January 25. Please plan accordingly. Note: Many airlines that service Ethiopia do not offer daily flights.

### **Passport and Visa Requirements**

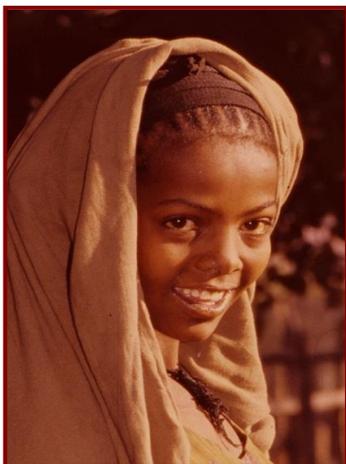
A passport with 6 months validity and a visa are required to enter Ethiopia. You may obtain the visa upon arrival.

### **Waiver of Liability**

Uncommon Journeys assumes no responsibility for accidents or injury to individuals participating in the tour. You will be required to read, accept and sign an agreement, which releases Uncommon Journeys from any responsibility of liability.

### **Preserving the Ethiopian Culture**

Much of the world has been taught by well-intentioned tourists to beg for money, candy, pens, toys, lipstick and trinkets. This type of giving belittles the people, erodes the local culture, perpetuates a negative stereotype of patronizing foreigners, and creates reliance on begging. It also encourages parents to exploit their children by sending them out to beg from tourists instead of going to school. In order to preserve the local culture, we enforce a strict policy against this type of giving. Instead, we encourage you to focus on cultural interactions by smiling, making friends, and learning a few basic phrases in the Amharic language. You are also encouraged to support the local economy by purchasing handicrafts in the markets and from privately-owned shops. By following these suggestions, our presence in this wonderful place will not endanger their culture and traditions. If you feel that it would be difficult to comply with this policy, you should reconsider before signing up for the tour.



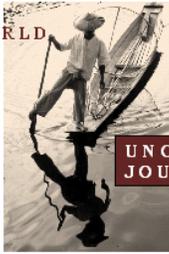
### **The Fine Print**

The rewards of travel are great when we venture off the beaten path and explore remote regions. Please note...

- Our accommodations are the best available, but some are very basic by Western standards.
- There is one night of very basic camping with cots and an open air "toilet." We may or may not have igloo tents.
- There are several days of long drives over rough terrain in air-conditioned Land Cruisers.
- The walk to the Blue Nile Falls takes one hour over rocky, hilly terrain.
- Ethiopia is dusty!

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## *Ethiopia: Journey into the Medieval Past*

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### ITINERARY

#### **Day 1: Sunday, January 8 Arrive in Addis Ababa**

Our traditional dinner, complete with music and dance, is the perfect introduction to the rich cultural heritage of Ethiopia.

#### **Day 2: Monday, January 9 Addis Ababa → Bahir Dar**

We fly to Bahir Dar, capital of the northwestern Amhara Region. It rose to importance in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, with the arrival of Jesuit missionaries, and it has remained a place of economic and commercial importance.



#### **Day 3: Tuesday, January 10 Bahir Dar**

Today we visit the Blue Nile Falls, a miracle of nature and vision of grandeur. Note: If the dam is closed, we will not be able to view the falls.

#### **Day 4: Wednesday, January 11 Bahir Dar**

We cross Lake Tana to explore Zege Island, which shelters medieval churches and monasteries.



#### **Day 5: Thursday, January 12 Bahir Dar → Gondar**

We drive 4 hours to Gondar, the “Camelot of Africa.” Once the capital of the Ethiopian Empire, it contains important architectural structures marked by Hindu, Arab and Baroque influences.

#### **Day 6: Friday, January 13 Gondar**

Our sightseeing includes the local market, 17<sup>th</sup> century palace of Emperor Fasilidas, the castle of Emperor Iyasu I and the library of Emperor Yohannes I.



#### **Day 7: Saturday, January 14 Gondar → Kosoye**

We drive only 1 hour, but end up a world away, for our first glimpse of the imposing Simien Mountains. Of this bio diverse, geological marvel, Rosita Forbes once wrote, “A thousand thousand years ago the old gods must have played chess with those stupendous crags, for we saw bishops, castles, an emerald knight, and far, far away a king, crowned with sapphire and guarded by a row of pawns.”

#### **Day 8: Sunday, January 15 Kosoye → Buhit Ras**

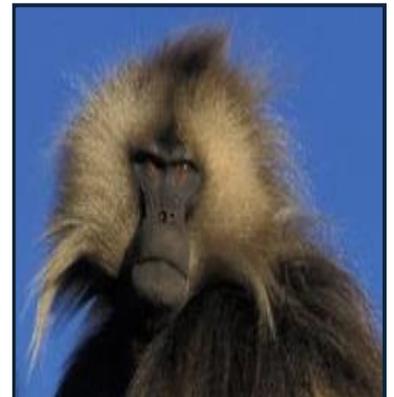
Three hours away, Buhit Ras is a nature lover’s paradise. Home to 57 species of flora, 35 species of fauna, and 180 endemic birds, it is considered the most spectacular of all the diverse Ethiopian landscapes.

#### **Day 9: Monday, January 16 Buhit Ras**

If we’re lucky in our exploration today, we’ll observe gelada baboons, which are unique to the Ethiopian highlands.

#### **Day 10: Tuesday, January 17 Buhit Ras → Axum**

An 8 hour drive takes us to Axum, seat of a kingdom that began in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and thrived for 2000 years. It is also home of the legendary Queen of Sheba. Her son, Menelik I, reputedly brought the Ark of the Covenant to Axum from his father, King Solomon of Jerusalem. It is said to be sheltered here, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Cathedral of St. Mary of Zion.





**Day 11: Wednesday, January 18 Axum**

Ketera marks the beginning of Timkat, or Epiphany celebrations. The festivities begin with a procession of priests bearing sacred icons, manuscripts and crosses. They converge onto the ceremonial grounds for several hours of holy mass, kinetic dancing, chanting, drumming and trilling ululations.

**Day 12: Thursday, January 19 Axum**

The ceremonial grounds are filled to capacity on Timkat morning, and yesterday's chaos is transformed to a peaceful calm, as if someone has waved a magic wand over the town. Following mass, the worshippers are anointed with holy water to commemorate Christ's baptism, and the treasured icons are returned to the churches for safekeeping, under the watchful protection of the priests and deacons. The last worshippers depart, marking the end of Timkat, and the dust settles once again across Axum and across the delicate surface of history.

**Day 13: Friday, January 20 Axum → Lalibela**

If you thought the Timket processions were fantastic, wait until you see the pageantry of the Feast of Saint Michael! The priests, resplendent in fine brocade vestments, are like icons from a medieval past. After the ceremonies we fly to Lalibela.

**Day 14: Saturday, January 21 Lalibela**

Lalibela is the former capital of a 12<sup>th</sup> century dynasty, and important religious pilgrimage site. We start the day with a traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony, then visit Bete Denegal, Bete Meskal, Bete Medha Alem and Bete Mariam, monolithic rock-hewn churches believed to be a representation of Jerusalem.



**Day 15: Sunday, January 22 Lalibela → Mekele**

Today we drive 8 hours to Mekele, our base for visiting the Afar region of the Danakil Depression.



**Day 16: Monday, January 23 Mekele → Ahmed Ela**

What could compel us to drive 5 hours (in air conditioned Land Cruisers, of course!), to the remotest corner of the furthest reaches of the hottest inhabited place on the planet, which National Geographic dubbed "the cruelest place on earth?" Just wait and see.



**Day 17: Tuesday, January 24  
Ahmed Ela → Dalol → Mekele**

If ever there was a place that left us jaw in hand, spellbound, speechless, stunned and amazed, that place is Dalol. We've taken a million photos of the hypothermal field, but they don't do justice. We've tried to write about the salt extraction village and salt caravans, but they defy description. They must be seen to be believed. Then again, we've seen them and we still don't believe them.

**Day 18: Wednesday, January 25**

**Mekele → Addis Ababa → onward destinations**

*"We depart from Abyssinia, the richer for a host of memories,  
The poorer for the little bit of oneself that  
One leaves behind on every journey." ~ Rosita Forbes*