

# Ethiopia: Journey into the Medieval Past

January 9 – 24, 2024



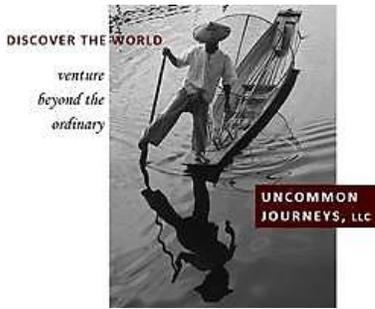
The Kingdom of Abyssinia, known today as Ethiopia, is a “must visit” for anyone intrigued by the medieval past, captivated by timeless cultures, and inspired by religious pageantry. Churches and palaces reflect the genius of history’s architectural masters, and speak softly of a bygone era. These epic sites, enduring monuments to emperors and legends, shelter priceless relics from a powerful, devout, ancient civilization. But that’s not all! The tour coincides with the Timket (Epiphany) processions and ceremonies of the Ethiopian Orthodox faith. And there’s more! The majestic landscape of the bio diverse Simien Mountain Range rivals the Grand Canyon. You must see Ethiopia to believe it. Then again, we’ve seen it and we *still* can’t believe it!

## Tour Highlights

- Medieval monasteries of Lake Tana, source of the Blue Nile
- Simien Mountains, the most spectacular of the diverse Ethiopian landscapes
- Monolithic hand-carved rock churches of Lalibela
- Splendid processions of the Timket (Epiphany) ceremonies

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

8 participants:	US\$8,400
9 participants:	US\$8,000
10 – 11 participants:	US\$7,700
12 + participants:	US\$7,500
single supplement:	US\$1,469



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## **Tour Price**

The tour price is based on a minimum of 8 participants. It includes 15 nights of accommodations (including January 9, to accommodate early morning arrival on January 10), all meals from breakfast on January 10 through breakfast on January 24, domestic airfares, ground transportation, airport transfers, entrance fees, gratuities, and the services of a tour director and local guide. The tour price does not include international airfare, visa or alcoholic beverages.

## **Payments and Cancellation Policy**

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

In accordance with hotel, supplier and airline policies, cancellation fees apply. Travel insurance is recommended.

- All payments are fully refundable if Uncommon Journeys cancels the tour.
- All payments are fully refundable before September 9, 2023.
- US\$200 cancellation fee if participant cancels between September 9 - October 9, 2023.
- All payments are non-refundable after October 9, 2023.

## **Tour Director**

The tour is organized and led by Debbie Jefkin-Elnekave. Her knowledge of Ethiopia, profound appreciation for the people and customs, and passion for sharing this amazing country, ensure a very rewarding journey.

## **International Flights**

You must book and purchase your own airline tickets to Addis Ababa. | 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 the morning of January 10 and depart no sooner than the morning of January 24. | Depending on your point of origin, you may cross the international dateline, so please plan accordingly. | Many airlines that service Ethiopia do not offer daily flights.

## **Passport and Visa Requirements**

A passport with 6 months validity and a visa-on-arrival are required to enter Ethiopia.

## **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.



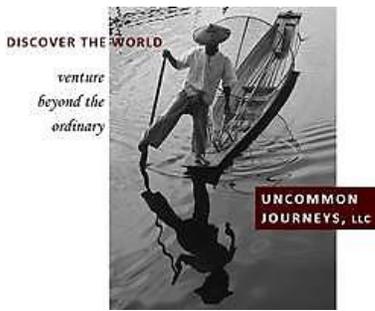
## **Preserving the Ethiopian Culture**

Much of the world has been taught by well-intentioned but misguided tourists to beg for money, candy, pens, toys, lipstick and trinkets. These handouts belittle the people, erode the local culture, perpetuate a negative stereotype of patronizing foreigners, and create reliance on begging. They also encourage parents to exploit their children by sending them out to beg from tourists instead of to school. We are determined that our presence will not endanger the gracious Ethiopian way of life. In order to preserve the culture and dignity of the people, we enforce a strict policy against handouts. If you feel it would be difficult to comply with our policy, you should reconsider before signing up for the tour. On the other hand, if you share our philosophy of sustainable tourism and our commitment to preserving this gentle culture and dignified way of life, we look forward to sharing our love of Ethiopia and the trip of a lifetime with you.

## **The Fine Print**

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

- Our accommodations are the best available, but some are basic by Western standards.
- Our destinations lie at altitudes of 2,300 to 4,000 meters (7,700 to 13,000 feet).
- There are several days of 3 - 4 hour driving in air conditioned 4 x 4 vehicles.
- There are several days of low and moderate intensity walking, sometimes on rocky, hilly terrain.
- Ethiopia is dusty!



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## **Day 1 | Tuesday, January 9 | Arrive Addis Ababa**

Depending on flight schedule, arrive late on January 9 or in the wee hours of January 10.

## **Day 2 | Wednesday, January 10 | Addis Ababa**

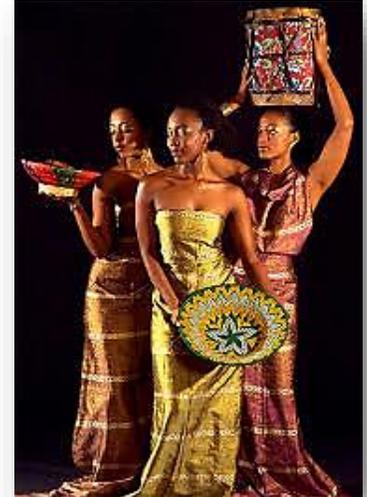
Begin with an afternoon tour of the National Museum and Unity Park, followed by an evening of traditional dinner, music and dance. It's the perfect introduction to Ethiopia's rich cultural heritage.

## **Day 3 | Thursday, January 11 | Fly Addis Ababa → Bahir Dar**

Bahir Dar rose to prominence in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, with the arrival of Jesuit missionaries, and it remains a place of economic and commercial importance.

## **Day 4 | Friday, January 12 | Bahir Dar**

Lake Tana shelters 14<sup>th</sup> century monasteries that contain the remains of emperors and treasures of the Ethiopian Church. Our visits include Ura Kidane Meheret and Azua Mariam.



## **Day 5 | Saturday, January 13 | 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 6 | Sunday, January 14**

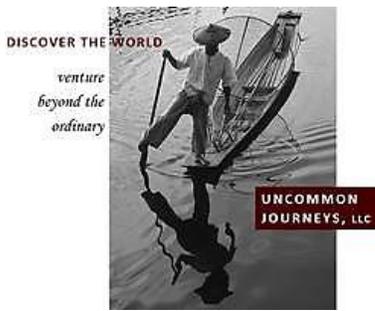
### **Bahir Dar → Gondar**

Awra Amba Village is lauded as a model community, based on egalitarianism and gender equality. Continue to Gondar, "Camelot of Africa." This former capital of the Ethiopian Empire contains architectural structures marked by Hindu, Arab and Baroque influences. Our visits include Emperor Fassiledes's 17<sup>th</sup> century castle and bath.



## **Day 7 | Monday, January 15 | Gondar → Simien Mountains**

The Simien Mountains are only a 3-hour drive away, yet they're a world apart. Of this bio diverse, geological marvel, Rosita Forbes 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."



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**Days 8 & 9 | Tuesday, January 16 & Wednesday, January 17 | Simien Mountains**  
Behold nature's wonders! We'll trek the escarpments in search of gelada baboons, klipspringer, Menelik bushbucks, giant lobelias and more. Non-trekkers will enjoy communing with nature in the environs of our sustainable ecolodge.

**Day 10 | Thursday, January 18 | Simien Mountains → Gondar**  
Drive 3 hours to Gondar and overnight.

**Day 11 | Friday, January 19 | Gondar → Lalibela**  
Our morning flight takes us to Lalibela, the former capital of a 12<sup>th</sup> century dynasty, and important pilgrimage site. Upon arrival we visit Yemrehanna Kristos, one of the best-preserved churches from the 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> century Axumite period.



**Day 12 | Saturday, January 20 | Lalibela**

This morning we visit monolithic rock-hewn churches, believed to be a representation of Jerusalem. This afternoon is Ketera, the eve of Timket, (Epiphany). Priests bearing sacred icons, manuscripts and crosses converge onto the ceremonial grounds for holy mass, kinetic dancing, chanting, drumming and trilling ululations. We end the day with a traditional coffee ceremony.

**Day 13 | Sunday, January 21 | Lalibela**

Yesterday's reverie is transformed to a peaceful calm this Timket morning, as if someone has waved a magic wand over the town. Following mass, 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 priests and deacons. The



last worshippers depart, marking the end of Timket, and the dust settles once again across Lalibela, and across the delicate surface of history.



**Day 14 | Monday, January 22 | Lalibela**

The Feast of Saint Michael celebrates the archangel of mercy., who defeated the devil at God's command.

**Day 14 | Fly Lalibela → Addis Ababa**

**Day 16 | Departure**

*"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*