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### SPECIAL FEATURES

- Top Experiences: 8
- Ethiopian Culture: 245
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If you only have two weeks but want to see the best that Ethiopia has to offer, this is the itinerary for you, with a good mix of historical sites and towns, fabulous landscapes and wildlife, with some high-altitude trekking thrown in.

Spend a full day in Addis Ababa, long enough to sample its museums and fine restaurants, then fly to Gonder, one of the country’s most monument-rich historic towns. Then it’s on to Simien Mountains National Park for Ethiopia’s best trekking and fine wildlife-watching. It’s another short flight to Lalibela, then plan on a minimum of two days exploring the rock-hewn church masterpieces for which Lalibela is known. Then head north to Mekele, en route to a couple of nights in the Danakil Depression. Fly from Mekele back to Addis, where you may have to stay overnight, then fly east to Dire Dawa and stay long enough to catch onward transport to Harar, one of Ethiopia’s most intriguing cities. With a few days still up your sleeve, return to Dire Dawa for a flight to Djibouti City and a three-day tour of Lac Abbé, Lac Assal and the Goda Mountains. Finish with a flight back to Addis.
While most visitors come to Ethiopia because of what’s on offer in the north, it’s just as rewarding to point your compass south with its fine landscapes and rich cultures.

You could start with the impressive rock-hewn church of Adadi Maryam. Then head south to World Heritage–listed Tiya, one of southern Ethiopia’s most important stelae fields. Little is known about their significance; some of them are engraved with enigmatic symbols, which adds to the sense of mystery. Next stop: Lake Hare Sheitan, some 50km south of Tiya. It’s a circular crater lake filled with deep-green waters – very photogenic.

Southwestern Ethiopia’s largest city, Arba Minch is a good base if you want to explore the nearby Nechisar National Park, where you’ll have a good chance to spot gargantuan crocodiles, zebras, Swayne’s hartebeest and the odd Abyssinian lion. From Arba Minch you can also detour up the mountains to see the woven houses and traditional lifestyle in a Dorze village and then continue south and visit the amazing, fortresslike Konso villages, at the gateway to the cultural riches of the Lower Omo Valley.

In Omo, visits to ethnic villages such as those of the Mursi above Mago National Park, the Karo northwest of Turmi and the Daasanach along the mighty Omo River at Omorate will transport you to another world; as will the important markets in Jinka, Dimeka and Key Afar. If you’re lucky, a Jumping of the Bulls ceremony will be happening during your visit.

Slip east before turning north for a night lakeside in modern and orderly Awasa. Then it’s time for some remote trekking amid Ethiopian wolves and superb scenery in Bale Mountains National Park and around Dodola.

See the hot springs and flamingo flocks in Abiata-Shala Lakes National Park before unwinding in a lakeside resort and doing a bit or birdwatching at Lake Langano. Stop at Lake Ziway to see hippos, birdlife and island monasteries. You could spend another night on a lake at Debre Zeyit before returning to the chaos of Addis Ababa.
The historical sights along this loop north of Addis Ababa are monumental in both scale and detail.

After a few days revelling in the chaos of Addis Ababa, head north to palm-fringed Bahir Dar for a day. Spend the next day at Lake Tana exploring some of the lake’s centuries-old island monasteries. Next wander the extensive ruins of 17th-century castles in Gonder. Looming 100km north, the Simien Mountains are one of Ethiopia’s most stunning national parks.

Push on to Aksum where pre-Christian tombs underlie splendid 1800-year-old stelae (obelisks). After two days, venture to the 3000-year-old ruins of Ethiopia’s first capital, Yeha, and to the cliff-top monastery of Debre Damo. Then head south and search out Tigray’s precarious and stunning rock-hewn churches. A short hop to the south is Mekele, which is the obvious launching pad for the desolate expanses of the Danakil. Back in Mekele, drive south to Lalibela. Its astounding rock-hewn churches and myriad tunnels have poignantly frozen 12th- and 13th-century Ethiopia in stone. After three or so days here, it’s back to Addis Ababa.
Top: Surmi with body painting (p169), Ethiopia.
Bottom: View of the ‘Bridge of God’ (p156) between lakes Chamo and Abaya, Nechisar National Park, Ethiopia.
Map Legend

Sights
- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours
- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping
- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating
- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife
- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment
- Entertainment

Shopping
- Shopping

Information
- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic
- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population
- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport
- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book

Routes
- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries
- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography
- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas
- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove
OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that’s all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they’d sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony’s belief that ‘a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse’.

OUR WRITERS

Jean-Bernard Carillet
Southern Ethiopia, Eastern Ethiopia, Djibouti

Jean-Bernard is a Paris-based freelance writer and photographer who specialises in Africa, France, Turkey, the Indian Ocean, the Caribbean and the Pacific. He loves adventure, remote places, islands, outdoors, archaeological sites and food. His insatiable wanderlust has taken him to 114 countries across six continents, and it shows no sign of waning. It has inspired lots of articles and photos for travel magazines and some 70 Lonely Planet guidebooks, both in English and in French. One of his favourite continents is Africa, which he has travelled the length and breadth of for more than two decades and been thoroughly enlightened by 24 of its amazing countries. Jean-Bernard also researched the Understand Ethiopia section.

Anthony Ham
Addis Ababa, Northern Ethiopia, Western Ethiopia

Anthony is a freelance writer and photographer who specialises in Spain, East and Southern Africa, the Arctic and the Middle East. When he’s not writing for Lonely Planet, Anthony writes about and photographs Spain, Africa and the Middle East for newspapers and magazines in Australia, the UK and US. In 2001, after years of wandering the world, Anthony finally found his spiritual home when he fell irrevocably in love with Madrid on his first visit to the city. Less than a year later, he arrived there on a one-way ticket, with not a word of Spanish and not knowing a single person in the city. When he finally left Madrid 10 years later, Anthony spoke Spanish with a Madrid accent, was married to a local and Madrid had become his second home. Now back in Australia, he continues to travel the world in search of stories. Anthony also researched the Plan Your Trip, Survival Guide and Health sections.