Welcome to Ethiopia, Djibouti & Somaliland...
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The combina-
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f-a-kind
The amazing backdrop of canyons, chas-
ses, Djibouti o
Danakil Depression, peppered with an as-

Welcome to Ethiopia, Djibouti & Somaliland...

COUNTRY & REGIONAL
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USA
150 Linden Street, Oakland, CA 94607
510 230 6400, toll free 800 275 8555, fax 510 893 8572
US Media Centre, 201 Wood Lane, London W12 7TQ
020 8433 1333, fax 020 8702 0112

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“All you’ve got to do is decide to go and the hardest part is over. So go!”
TONY WHEELER, COFOUNDER – LONELY PLANET
As long as you stay up to date with your vaccinations and take some basic preventive measures, you’d have to be pretty unlucky to succumb to most of the health hazards covered in chapter. Africa certainly offers an impressive selection of diseases on offer, much more likely to be diarrhoea (count on it), a mosquito ease...

Insurance
Medical insurance is common but policies differ. Check that the policy includes all the activities you want to do. Some specifically exclude ‘dangerous activities’ such as white-water rafting, rock climbing and motorcycling. Sometimes even trekking is excluded. Also find out whether your insurance will make payments directly to providers or will reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures (in Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somaliland expect payment in cash).

Ensure that your travel insurance will cover the emergency transport required to get you to a hospital in a major city, to better medical facilities elsewhere in Africa, or all the way home, by air and with a medical attendant.

If you need medical help, your insurance company might be able to help locate the nearest hospital or clinic, or you can ask at your hotel. In an emergency, contact your insurance company directly.
Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first

Look out for these icons:

- **TOP** Our author’s top recommendation
- **A green or sustainable option**
- **FREE** No payment required

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An open-air gallery of prehistoric art (p326)

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A city with a palpable historical aura (p184)

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The international boundaries on this map serve as indications only. The Ethiopia–Eritrea border awaits formal UN demarcation. The self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland is currently an internationally unrecognised but de facto sovereign state.
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 Melbourne, London, Oakland 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
Coordinating Author; Plan Your Trip, Djibouti, Somaliland
A Paris-based journalist and photographer, Jean-Bernard is a die-hard Africa lover who never misses an opportunity to explore the continent. He has travelled the breadth and length of Africa for more than two decades now and has been thoroughly enlightened by 23 of its amazing countries. Highlights researching for this edition included exploring the far-flung provinces of Somaliland, drinking fresh camel milk with Somali friends in the bush around Hargeisa, getting up close and personal with a massive guitar shark off Moucha Island and following the steps of archaeologists in northern Djibouti. Jean-Bernard’s wanderlust has taken him to six continents, inspiring numerous articles and some 30 guidebooks, including Lonely Planet’s Africa and West Africa.

Tim Bewer
Northern Ethiopia, Southern Ethiopia, Eastern Ethiopia
Growing up, Tim didn’t travel much except for the obligatory pilgrimage to Disney World and an annual lake-side summer week. He’s spent most of his adult life making up for this, and has since visited over 80 countries. After university he worked as a legislative assistant before quitting capitol life to backpack around West Africa. During this trip the idea of becoming a travel writer/photographer was hatched, and he’s been at it ever since, returning to Africa 10 times in the process. When he isn’t shouldering a backpack somewhere for work or pleasure, he lives in Khon Kaen, Thailand, where he runs a tour company.

Stuart Butler
Addis Ababa, Western Ethiopia, Understand Ethiopia, Ethiopia Directory A–Z, Ethiopia Transport
Stuart first visited Ethiopia in the early 1990s shortly after the fall of the Derg. He was utterly infatuated with what he saw and has returned to Ethiopia many times since; each time the country has woven its spell on him a little more. Stuart’s travels, both for Lonely Planet and various surf magazines, have taken him beyond Ethiopia, from the coastal deserts of Pakistan to the jungles of Colombia. He now lives in southwest France with his wife and young son. Find Stuart at www.stuartbutlerjournalist.com.

Read more about Tim at: lonelyplanet.com/members/timbewer
Read more about Stuart at: lonelyplanet.com/members/stuartbutler
itineraries

Whether you’ve got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.

Lac Abbé
Djibouti City

Addis Ababa
Awash National Park

Harar
Jijiga
Hargeisa
Las Geel
Berbera
Goda Mountains

ÉÉ
É
É

#–
#–
#–

R
ERITREA
DJIBOUTI
YEMEN
RED SEA

ETHIOPIA
SOMALILAND

Lac Assal
Togo-Wuchale

ÉÉ
É

Stop for a night on the island of Moucha before flying back to Addis Ababa.

Three Weeks
The Grand Tour

Start by spending two full days in fascinating Addis Ababa. Once you’ve had your fill of Addis’ joys, forge east to Awash National Park for some great wildlife watching. Spend a day in the park and continue on to the eastern belle of Harar, whose attractive architecture, active markets and unique and unforgettable ambience deserve at least two days. You might make a half-day stop in Jijiga to recharge the batteries before hopping on a bus to Togo-Wuchale, at the border with Somaliland. From the border it’s an easy taxi ride to Hargeisa. After a day or two recuperating in the laid-back capital of Somaliland, arrange for a car and driver to take you to the fantastic archaeological site of Las Geel and the atmosphere-laden coastal town of Berbera – you’ll need at least two days to do the area justice. Back in Hargeisa, fly to Djibouti City, which merits at least several days for relaxing and exploring. Sign up for a three-day tour taking in Lac Abbé, Lac Assal and the Goda Mountains. Stop for a night on the island of Moucha before flying back to Addis Ababa.
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. 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 good chance to spot gargantuan crocodiles, zebras, Swaine’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 for a look at the ‘House of Salt’ and a ‘singing well’ at El Sod 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 capital Addis Ababa.
(above) Aqeligil (goat-skin lunch boxes) for sale, Bahir Dar (p68)
(left) Marabou storks, Lake Ziway (p135)
Two Weeks
Historical Circuit

The historical sights along this loop north of Addis Ababa are monumental in both scale and detail. After a few days reveling 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 crenulated 17th-century castles in Gonder. Looming 100km north, the Simien Mountains are one of Ethiopia’s most stunning national parks – spend a couple of days trekking in this sensational massif and spotting wildlife.

Push on to Aksum where pre-Christian tombs underlie splendid 1800-year-old steleae (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 11 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.

12 Days
The Wild West

A journey out into the lush, green west is one for trail blazers. Leaving Addis it’s a short and easy drive to Mt Wenchi where a crater lake and a beautiful day walk awaits. Next head past fields of golden tef (an indigenous grass cultivated as a cereal) and sunshine-bright meskel flowers to the bustling town of Jimma where you can soak up some culture in the museums. A long day’s driving will take you deep into Surma country and the village of Kibish. After a few days of swapping stories with Surmi warriors, head up to the Bebeka Coffee Plantation where you’ll probably be happy to just relax and watch tropical birds in the guesthouse gardens. Drive along misty mountain ridges, and through dense forests and descend into the steamy lowlands to fascinating Gambela, home of the Nuer and Anuak peoples as well as herds of antelopes. From Gambela you have two options – complete the loop by heading back to Addis via the low-key towns of Nekemte and Ambo, which makes for a scenic ride blessed with superb mountain vistas, or flying back to Addis from Gambela.