



Eastern Ethiopia

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Best of Culture

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- » Harar's cultural guest-houses (p190)
- » Koremi (p193)
- » Dire Dawa's markets (p189)

Best of Nature

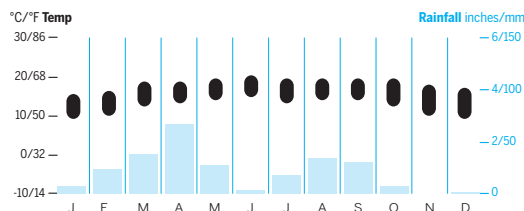
- » Babilie Elephant Sanctuary (p193)
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Why Go?

Most of Eastern Ethiopia is a stark landscape of dust-stained acacia scrub and forgettable towns. But scattered around this cloak of the commonplace are gems of genuine adventure. Undoubtedly, the east's pièce de résistance is the walled city of Harar. There's still a patina of myth about this ancient town, handed down from the days when its markets served as the Horn's commercial hub and attracted powerful merchants, artisans and Islamic scholars. The colonial-rural melange that is the modern city of Dire Dawa delights in its own odd way, while nature lovers can get their kicks at Babilie Elephant Sanctuary and Awash National Park, where the volcanic landscape takes top billing over the wildlife. The truly intrepid can follow the seemingly endless ribbon of asphalt north to the desolate southern Danakil Desert; the territory remains virtually unexplored since legendary adventurer Wilfred Thesiger first thrilled the world with tales of the proud Afar.

When to Go

Harar



May-Sep Rainy and hot season sends lowland temperatures up to 45°C.

Sep The seemingly barren Asaita road is painted yellow by the Meskel flower.

Nov-Jan Driest months; best to see elephants at Babilie and the lakes near Asaita.

i Getting There & Away

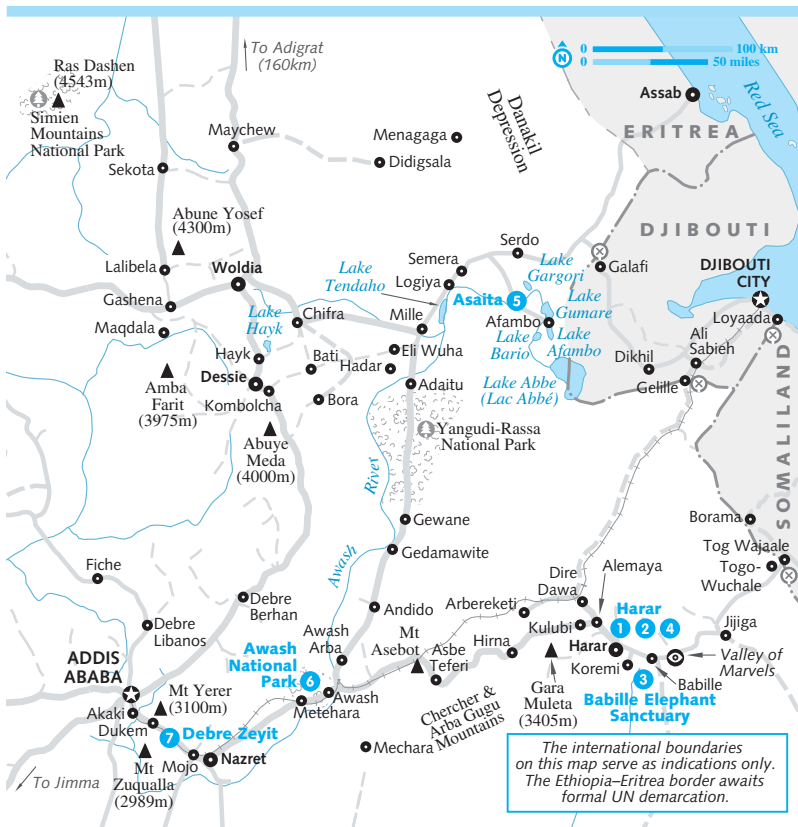
Ethiopian Airlines (www.flyethiopian.com) flies from Addis Ababa to Dire Dawa and Jijiga, and also between Dire Dawa and Djibouti. You can enter eastern Ethiopia overland from Djibouti City by bus and, assuming passenger service resumes as promised, by train to Dire Dawa; by bus-minibus combination from Djibouti City to Logiya; and by connecting minibuses from Hargeisa (Somaliland) to Jijiga. For more information see p288.

i Getting Around

Decent sealed roads connect all main cities, including remote Asaita. Public transport is available on all routes.

ADDIS ABABA TO AWASH

The long stretch of road dropping from Addis Ababa down to Awash offers little to tempt tourists to stop. Debre Zeyit, near the start, has lakeview lodging, and Awash



Eastern Ethiopia Highlights

- 1 Explore the warren of alleyways in Harar's **old walled city** (p185)
- 2 Bite down on a stick wrapped with meat as **hyenas** (p189) pull it from your mouth in Harar
- 3 Get out of the car and track elephants on foot at **Babilie Elephant Sanctuary** (p193)
- 4 Bed down in a piece of living history in an **Adare guesthouse** (p190) in Old Harar
- 5 Follow in the footsteps of Wilfred Thesiger around the lakes near **Asaita** (p180)
- 6 Take a geological safari at **Awash National Park** (p176)
- 7 Decompress at a lakeside resort in **Debre Zeyit** (p174)