



Northern Ethiopia

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Best of Culture

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Best of Nature

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Why Go?

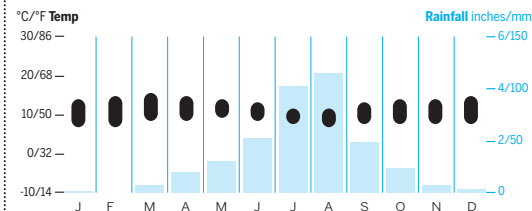
For most visitors to Ethiopia, it's all about the north. Unlike anywhere else on Earth, northern Ethiopia has the ability to wow you day after day after day.

Known as the Historical Circuit, there are over two millennia's worth of ancient treasures scattered about, from giant obelisks and hidden tombs at Aksum to a collection of castles in and around Gonder, to unique churches in Lalibela, Tigray, Lake Tana and many other places. Not to be outdone by human mastery, Mother Nature really let her creative juices flow here. The Danakil Depression, an esteemed destination among adventure travellers, features a permanent lava lake and a bright-yellow sulphuric plain, while canyons and peaks wrinkle the land just about everywhere else.

Though you can hit the highlights in a couple of weeks, there is so much to see and do here it takes three or four weeks for proper exploration. No matter how long you stay, the northern circuit is so mesmerising that you'll probably find yourself still wanting a few more days.

When to Go

Gonder



Jan Time for Timkat, the festival celebrating Jesus' baptism.

May–Sep The rainy season doesn't stop travel, but it makes trekking tough.

Oct The best time to travel. The rain's mostly gone, but the land remains green and gorgeous.

Northern Ethiopia Highlights

1 Immerse yourself in Christianity in its most raw and powerful form in the mind-blowing rock-hewn churches in **Lalibela** (p119)

2 Smell the sulphur, see the lava and stare in disbelief at the thermometer in the **Danakil Depression** (p117)

3 Get far away from urban life and very close to the locals on a **community trek** around Lalibela (p125) or Tigray (p111)

4 Roam the hallowed halls of the royal retreats in **Gonder** (p77)

5 Don't lose your balance as you trek along the endless Abyssinian abysses in the **Simien Mountains** (p87)

6 Explore the magnificent rock-hewn churches of **Tigray** (p108)

7 See an Ethiopian wolf in pristine habitat at the **Menz-Guassa Community Conservation Area** (p130)

8 Dream of hidden treasure in the dank gloom of ancient Aksumite tombs beneath the stelae of **Aksum** (p93)

9 Don't look down while climbing up to **Debre Damo** (p106) monastery

