

welcome to **Ethiopia, Djibouti & Somaliland**



A Land-Lover's Dream

Ethiopia's landscape impresses in both scale and beauty. Travellers are thrilled by the amazing backdrop of canyons, chasms, lakes, savannah plains and high plateaus – not to mention the mesmerisingly desolate Danakil Depression, peppered with an astonishing 25% of Africa's active volcanoes. Lying at the convergence of three tectonic plates, Djibouti offers a unique geological landscape. The vast salt lake of Lac Assal and the bizarre lunar landscape of Lac Abbé are strangely unforgettable. Somaliland wows visitors with its natural beauty, from the superscenic Daallo Escarpment to the seemingly endless beaches that are strung along the coast.

Outdoor Adventures

These countries beg outdoor escapades with their larger-than-life, hallucinatory landscapes. Hiking and trekking in Ethiopia's Simien and Bale Mountains or Djibouti's Goda Mountains are obvious choices. Then there are those must-do-before-you-die moments, such as swimming with whale sharks in Djibouti's Gulf of Tadjoura or diving amid coral-encrusted wrecks off Djibouti City. Last but not least, Ethiopia and Somaliland rank among Africa's best birdwatching destinations, with plenty of endemic species. One thing is sure: you'll be rewarded with memorable experiences.



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In Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somaliland, you'd be hard-pressed to find a better combination of nature and culture. The best part: there'll be no crowds to hinder the experience.

(left) Simien Mountains (p87)
(below) Karo (p163) woman and child



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Peoples with Proud Traditions

Peopling these landscapes is a wide variety of African peoples, including the Afar, the Mursi, the Karo, the Hamar, the Nuer and the Anuak, whose ancient customs and traditions have remained almost entirely intact. Staying with these communities is a great introduction to a way of life once followed by all of humankind. A highlight of any trip to the Horn is witnessing one of the many ceremonies and festivals that are an integral part of traditional culture in the region. They may be Christian, Islamic or animist festivals, or village events, such as a wedding, a rite-of-passage celebration or a local market day.

Historical Wonders

Ethiopia, almost the only African country to have escaped European colonialism, has retained much of its cultural identity. Its sovereign story has left its wide-ranging and fertile highlands laden with historical treasures ranging from ancient Aksumite tombs and obelisks to 17th-century castles. And it's not dubbed the Cradle of Humanity for nothing; archaeologically speaking, Ethiopia is to sub-Saharan Africa what Egypt is to North Africa. In neighbouring Somaliland, you'll have the chance to marvel at the fantastic site of Las Geel, replete with exceptionally well-preserved rock paintings. Djibouti also boasts superb rock engravings hidden in the mountains.