



Understand Ethiopia

ETHIOPIA TODAY 216

A new prime minister and a new head of the church – great changes are underway in Ethiopia. Learn about them here.

ETHIOPIA'S HISTORY 218

From Lucy to Sheba, the Derg to Prester John, Ethiopia's history reads like a fairy tale.

ETHIOPIAN CULTURE 239

Few countries have a culture as rich and varied as Ethiopia. Get a handle on it with this overview.

ETHIOPIAN CUISINE 259

Learn how to tell your *injera* from your *tibs* in our dedicated chapter on Ethiopia's unique cuisine.

ETHIOPIA'S ENVIRONMENT. 267

From soaring mountain peaks to salt-encrusted deserts, discover Ethiopia's wonderful natural world.



population per sq km



Ethiopia Today

- » Area:
1,104,300
sq km
- » Population:
91 million
- » Life expectancy: 56.56
years
- » GDP per capita: US\$1100
- » Literacy rate:
42.7%
- » Fertility rate:
5.39 per woman
- » Highest point:
Ras Dajen
(4533m)
- » Lowest Point:
Danakil Depression (-125m)

Political Change

The year 2012 will go down in modern Ethiopian history as a year of great change. On 20 August of that year it was announced that Meles Zenawi, the man who had led the country since the overthrow of the Derg regime in 1991, had died. Zenawi had made economic growth and development his number-one priority and during his 21-year rule the country changed for the better, beyond all recognition of the Ethiopia Zenawi had inherited. Today, a new man, Hailemariam Desalegn, stands at the helm as acting prime minister (the next elections are scheduled for 2015). Though the governing Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) is solidly behind him, many observers wonder if he has the political clout to hold together such a diverse country and one that, despite its progress, remains blighted with problems and surrounded by such unstable neighbours as Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan.

Religious Change

The year 2012 wasn't just a year of political change for Ethiopia: it was also a year of religious change. Just four days before the death of Meles Zenawi, the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Abune Paulos, died unexpectedly. Paulos had brought change to the Ethiopian Church and was largely credited with modernising it. Ethiopia had never before lost its political and spiritual leadership in such a short space of time. Paulos' successor, chosen in 2013, will face the challenge of retaining the traditional power of the Church while adapting to a country that, with a new political leader, may well change in unexpected ways.

On Screen

- » *In Search of Myths and Heros*
The first in Michael Wood's sumptuously filmed series seeks the truth behind the Sheba legend.
- » *Lost Kingdoms of Africa*
Dr Gus Casely-Hayford explores ancient Ethiopian cultures and legends.

- » *The Great Rift: Africa's Wild Heart*
A finely crafted portrait of the Rift Valley and its wildlife.
- » *Origins of Us*
Exploring who we are and where we came from, this BBC series starts where it all began – Ethiopia.

Ethiopian Icons

- » Haile Gebrselassie: the world's most famous long-distance runner?
- » Mohammed Hussein Al Amoudi: Ethiopia's richest man.
- » Teddy Afro: Ethiopian singer.
- » Liya Kebede: Ethiopian supermodel.