



Ethiopia

POP 102 MILLION / 251

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Why Go?

Ethiopia is truly a world apart. Here there are over two millenniums' worth of ancient treasures scattered about, from the hidden tombs of the legendary Queen of Sheba to castles that would make Camelot jealous and the breathtaking rock-carved churches of Lalibela, the New Jerusalem.

Not to be outdone by human craftspeople, Mother Nature also let her creative juices flow here. East Africa's great Rift Valley has left some of its most memorable signatures in Ethiopia: milky-brown lakes scar the south and deep canyons and steep peaks wrinkle the land...well, just about everywhere.

Though you can hit the highlights in a couple of weeks, it takes three or four for proper exploration. But no matter how long you stay, you'll probably wish for just a few more days.

Best Places to Eat

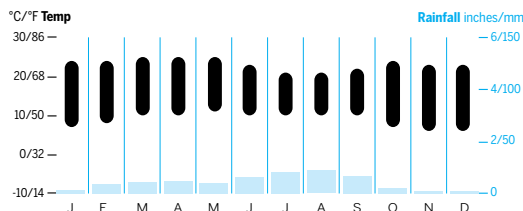
- Four Sisters (p588)
- Yod Abyssinia (p583)
- Kategna (p582)
- Itegue Taitu Hotel (p583)
- Hirut Restaurant (p596)
- Fresh Touch Restaurant (p596)

Best Places to Sleep

- Addissinia Hotel (p582)
- Sheraton Hotel (p582)
- Grand Gato (p596)
- Hotel Maribela (p595)

When to Go

Addis Ababa



Jan-Mar Good for wildlife watching and Ethiopia's most colourful festivals, including Timkat and Leddet.

Oct-Dec The country is green, trekking is great and there are fewer visitors.

Apr-Sep The rainy season in southern Ethiopia with scorching hot temperatures in the lowlands.

ADDIS ABABA

POP 4.5 MILLION

Addis – Africa's fourth-largest city and its diplomatic capital – is a traffic-choked, sprawling city of no discernible beauty that many foreign visitors try to transit as quickly as possible. But take note: by skipping out on the contradictions of this complex city you run the risk of failing to understand Ethiopia altogether. And apart from anything else, Addis is the best place in the country to sample Ethiopian food, and has some wonderful museums and places to stay.

Sights

Most sights are scattered throughout the city centre and Piazza, though there is a concentration of major museums and other sights in the vicinity of Arat Kilo and Siddist Kilo, which sit east of Piazza and north of the city centre.

★ 'Red Terror' Martyrs Memorial Museum

MUSEUM

(ዮቀይ ሽብር ተጠቁሞች ማስታወሻ ሙዚየም; Meskal Sq; by donation; ☉ 8.30am-6.30pm) 'As if I bore them all in one night, they slew them in a single night.' These were the words spoken by the mother of four teenage children all killed on the same day by the Derg, as she officially opened the small but powerful 'Red Terror' Martyrs Memorial Museum in 2010. Over a couple of rooms the museum reveals the fall of Emperor Haile Selassie and the horrors of life under Mengistu's Derg regime.

★ Ethnological Museum

MUSEUM

(ብሔራዊ ሙዚየም; ☎ 011 123 1068; Addis Ababa University, Algeria St; adult/student Birr100/50; ☉ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun) Set within Haile Selassie's former palace, and surrounded by the beautiful gardens and fountains of the university's main campus, is the enthralling Ethnological Museum. Even if you're not a museum fan, this one is worth a bit of your time – it's easily one of the finest museums in Africa, showing the full sweep of Ethiopia's cultural and social history across two floors.

★ National Museum

MUSEUM

(ብሔራዊ ሙዚየም; ☎ 011 111 7150; King George VI St; Birr10; ☉ 8.30am-5.30pm) The collection on show at the National Museum is ranked among the most important in sub-Saharan Africa, but sadly many of its exhibits are poorly labelled, lit and displayed. Far and away the highlight is the palaeontological exhibition in the basement, the home of

world-famous **Lucy**. Her 1974 discovery in the Afar region of northwestern Ethiopia changed our understanding of human origins forever. This section is well labelled in English, so if your time is limited spend most of it here.

★ St George Cathedral & Museum

CHURCH

(ቅዱስጊዮርጊስ ቤተክርስቲያን; Fitawrari Gebeyehu St; museum Birr100; ☉ museum 9am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sun) Commissioned by Emperor Menelik II to commemorate his stunning 1896 defeat of the Italians in Adwa, and dedicated to St George (Ethiopia's patron saint), whose icon was carried into the battle, this Piazza cathedral is one of Addis' most beautiful churches. The grey stone exterior is easily outdone by the interior's flashes of colour and art. Sections of ceiling glow sky-blue and boast gilded stars, while the outer walls of the innermost shrine are covered in paintings and mosaics by the renowned Afewerk Tekle.

Tours

There are no scheduled tours of the city itself; however, if you contact one of Addis Ababa's many travel agencies, most can usually arrange something.

★ Go Addis Tours

TOURS

(☎ 094 307 6240; www.goaddistours.com; per person US\$60-135) This fantastic new kid on the block is your window into the best Addis has to offer. Eliza and Xavier offer a range of city tours, with a particular focus on the capital's best Ethiopian food. Their five-hour Highlights tour is probably our pick with a good mix of sightseeing, a fine lunch stop and good coffee.

Mandril Wenni Tour & Travel

TOURS

(☎ 091 139 3944, 092 794 9257; www.ethiomandril-tour.com; Cameroon St) An excellent and relatively new company offering professionally run tours around Ethiopia.

GETTS Ethiopia

TOURS

(☎ 091 123 3289; www.getts.com.et; off Bole Rd/Africa Ave) Well-regarded and professional operator, with countrywide tours with good drivers, guides and vehicles.

Abeba Tours Ethiopia

TOURS

(☎ 011 557 0881, mobile 092 781 9331; www.abeba-toursethiopia.com; off Democratic Republic Congo St) Friendly and very professional, this operator seems to go the extra mile for its customers. It organises general tours throughout the country and the drivers it uses are