



MARCO POLO JOURNEYS

## Ethiopia: Historic Route & Simien Mountains 2020

11 days from \$7,495

Limited to 18 guests

Reveal the secrets of this enchanting country as you discover the source of the Blue Nile, examine the groundbreaking Lucy skeleton, spot the Simien Mountains' distinctive gelada baboons and explore extraordinary rock-hewn churches such as Bet Giyorgis (the Church of St. George).

### A&K Advantages

Discover the stunning jewels of Ethiopia, revealing the threads of ancient culture, religion, architecture and natural beauty that make this diverse nation's tapestry so rich

Gain privileged access to the National Museum's authentic, 3.2-million-year-old Lucy skeleton, skipping the representational reproduction displayed to the public

Trace the glory of past empires among the ruins of palaces and monuments in Axum

Explore the vivid frescoes of Lalibela's rock-hewn churches

Set out on a drive through Simien Mountains National Park in search of exotic wildlife

Roam the medieval castles and churches of Gondar, revealing the secrets of Africa's Camelot

Cruise Lake Tana, source of the Blue Nile, and hike out to see the breathtaking Blue Nile Falls

# Itinerary

## DAY 1 ARRIVE ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

Upon arrival in Addis Ababa, you are met and transferred to your hotel. Known as Ethiopia's "new flower," Addis Ababa is your gateway to this amazing adventure.

Sheraton Addis

## DAY 2 ADDIS ABABA | A RICH HISTORY OF DIVERSITY

Hit the streets of Ethiopia's sprawling capital for a closer look at this nation's gripping history. Begin your exploration of Addis Ababa at the Holy Trinity Cathedral, a monument to the country's liberation from Italian occupation during World War II and final resting place of Emperor Haile Selassie. Next, dive deeper into Ethiopia's rich cultural diversity at the Ethnographical Museum. Conclude your excursion at the National Museum, seeing the authentic Lucy skeleton, a significant anthropological revelation. Later, gather for a welcome dinner at your hotel and get acquainted with your fellow travellers.

Sheraton Addis | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 3 AXUM | ECHOES OF A GLORIOUS EMPIRE

This morning, fly to Axum, a small town whose placid appearance belies its grand past as a seat of an empire extending across the Red Sea to Arabia. Begin unearthing Axum's storied past at Stelae Park, a field of roughly 120 carved outcroppings ranging from small, roughly hewn stones to finely engraved obelisks towering 10 stories high. The site is also home to what are likely the three tallest stelae ever erected in ancient times. Continue on to get a glimpse of the advanced technologies that drove this empire at the Axum Museum. Next, tour the Cathedral of Maryam TSION. Once a pagan shrine, the site was home to Ethiopia's first church and is rumored to have once housed the sacred Ark of the Covenant. Conclude your excursion at Dongar Palace. Local legend holds that the Queen of Sheba once held court in this, the grandest of Axum's palaces.

Sabeian International Hotel | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 4 LALIBELA | ETHIOPIA'S NEW JERUSALEM

Fly to Lalibela, a holy city and Ethiopian center of pilgrimage. Known as "New Jerusalem," this UNESCO World Heritage Site is home to several monolithic rock-cut churches. Begin your exploration of this hallowed ground with a visit to Lalibela's northwest cluster of six churches and Bet Giyorgis (also known as the Church of St. George), the largest rock-hewn church in the world. Carved below ground level, the monolithic churches are ringed by trenches, courtyards, graves and hermit cells, connected by a tangled maze of tunnels and passageways.

Mezena Lodge | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 5 LALIBELA | HEWN BY THE ANGELS

After breakfast, head to the outskirts of town to visit the Monastery of Nakuta La'ab. Named after King Lalibela's successor (and nephew) who commissioned it, this medieval monastery abuts a simple church hewn from a shallow cave. See the church's spring-fed holy water basins and other sacred relics. Continue on to explore Lalibela's southeast cluster of five churches. Older and more timeworn than the churches of the northwest, some of the structures predate the reign of King Lalibela by five centuries. According to legend, the southeastern church of Bet Abba Libanos was built by just one woman in only one night, along with some heavenly intervention from a group of angels. Cap off your excursion with a time-honored coffee ceremony, observing traditional roasting and brewing techniques featuring a customary *jebena* (clay kettle).

Mezena Lodge | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 6 SIMIEN MOUNTAINS | WILD RETREAT IN THE HEAVENS

This morning, fly to Gondar, pausing for a traditional Ethiopian lunch at a local restaurant upon your arrival. Continue on to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Debre Berhan Selassie Church to take in its vividly painted scenes of biblical lore and medieval history. Continue four hours overland to Simien Mountains National Park, a sprawling, bio-diverse wilderness set in the heart of one of Africa's largest mountain ranges. Marvel as you pass in the shadows of towering peaks, some exceeding 13,000 feet. The range also boasts Ethiopia's highest mountain, Ras Dashen, a broad-shouldered goliath topping out at a dizzying 14,928 feet. Home to some of Africa's most striking wildlife, the park is inhabited by the gelada baboon, walia ibex and the exceedingly rare Ethiopian wolf. Settle into your lodge, joining in a presentation focused on the advanced social behaviors of the gelada baboon.

Limalimo Lodge | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

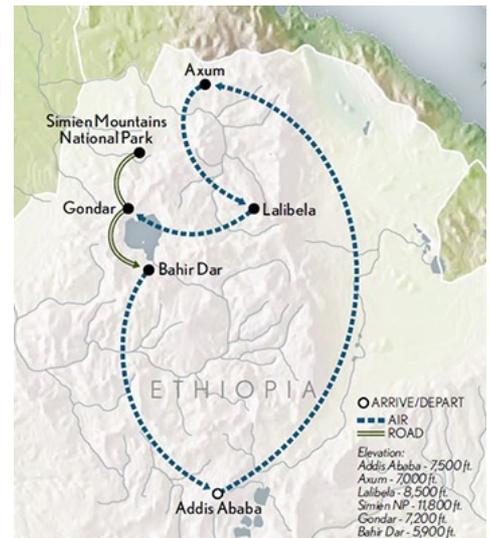
## DAY 7 SIMIEN MOUNTAINS | SAFARI IN THE CLOUDS

Set out on a scenic morning drive through the mountains, stopping in Chennek, a remote village perched some 11,800 feet above sea level. Continue on through giant lobelias and Afro-Alpine scrub, keeping a lookout for walia ibex, klipspringers and bushbucks. Pause for a picnic overlooking the vast mountain landscape. Next, pass through some of Ethiopia's most stunning mountain scenery, stopping to encounter a group of gelada baboons. Continue a short ways on foot, pausing to take in the mists of a secluded waterfall.

Limalimo Lodge | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 8 GONDAR | CAMELOT OF AFRICA

Embark on a morning drive to Gondar, a storied town of medieval castles and churches. Dubbed the "Camelot of Africa," Gondar was founded in 1636 by Emperor Fasiladas as the royal capital of Ethiopia. After settling in at your lodge, step out to explore the town. Begin at Fasiladas Palace, believed to be the former home of legendary explorer James Bruce. Continue on to Fasiladas Pool, a cavernous bathing pool once used by the former emperor. Enclosed by towering stone walls and guarded by six turrets, the pool is still filled every January 19th for the local Timkat ceremony.



Gondar Hills Resort | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

#### DAY 9 BAHIR DAR | LAKE TANA CRUISE

This morning, depart overland three hours to Bahir Dar, a former Jesuit outpost known for its wide avenues lined with palms and flowers. After checking in to your resort, embark on a leisurely cruise of Lake Tana, the source of the Blue Nile. Discover why, even today, the papyrus *tankwa* that sail the lake bear a striking resemblance to the boats of ancient Egypt. Disembark on an island to explore two of the lake's secluded monasteries, Ura Kidane Mihret and Azuwa Maryam — both known for their manuscripts, iconography and paintings.

Kuriftu Resort & Spa | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

#### DAY 10 BAHIR DAR | MAJESTY OF THE FALLS

Set out on an hour-long hike to the majestic Blue Nile Falls. Marvel as the currents of the Blue Nile crash 140 feet to the roiling rapids below, flowing on to its long journey out to the Mediterranean. After you take in the falls, enjoy the remainder of the afternoon at your leisure. Gather in the evening for a farewell dinner with your fellow travellers.

Kuriftu Resort & Spa | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

#### DAY 11 DEPART ADDIS ABABA

In the morning, visit Bahir Dar's bustling markets, browsing handwoven capes and scarves made from local cotton. Continue on to Weyto village, stopping to witness boatbuilders crafting *tankwa*, small papyrus vessels that have ferried people and livestock across Lake Tana for centuries. Later, fly back to Addis Ababa and transfer to your hotel dayroom. This evening, return to the airport for your international flight home.

Sheraton Addis (dayroom) | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## Extensions



### Explore Dubai: Stopover Package

3 days from \$1,795  
Single Supplement from \$1,195

Take advantage of an incredible opportunity to spend two nights in Dubai before or after your journey.

#### Hotel Options:

Park Hyatt Dubai, from \$1,795 | Single Supplement from \$1,195  
Taj Dubai, from \$1,895 | Single Supplement from \$1,195  
Mandarin Oriental Jumeira, Dubai, from \$2,195 | Single Supplement from \$1,495

*International air not included.*

3 Days

Fly to Dubai and check in to your luxury hotel. Discover the best of this dazzling city, viewing its remarkable architecture, visiting the Spice Market and colorful shops at the Deira Gold Souk, and ascending the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest skyscraper. On the last day, continue on to your journey or board your flight home.

Park Hyatt Dubai or Taj Dubai or Mandarin Oriental Jumeira, Dubai | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch (Day 2); Breakfast (Day 3)

# Dates & Prices

Prices are in USD, per person, based on double occupancy.

Dates	Prices	Single Supplement	Internal Air (From)	Availability
Feb 13 - Feb 23, 2020	\$7,495	\$1,395	\$795	Limited Availability
Oct 17 - Oct 27, 2020	\$7,495	\$1,395	\$795	Available

## Journey Details

Internal Air: Economy class from \$795  
Addis Ababa/Axum/Lalibela/Gondar; Bahir Dar/Addis Ababa

This journey contains some active elements.

Minimum age is 10 years.

First group event: welcome briefing at 10:00 a.m. on Day 2.

Last group event: hotel transfer at 2:00 p.m. on Day 11.

Departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 2 guests.

**Program Note:** Travel in this remote region entails lodging in basic accommodations; visiting sites with limited accessibility for those with mobility challenges; and active elements such as walking over steep, uneven terrain.

Prices are per person based on double occupancy. Internal and international air not included. See complete terms and conditions [here](#).