

6 days itinerary for the Historic routs

Day 1: Fly from Addis Ababa to Lalibela

Lalibela is located at an altitude of 2,600 meters above sea level. The city contains 11 monolithic churches that were built in the twelfth century and are carved out of the pink granite rock (the town was designated a World Heritage Site in 1996.) Each church has a unique architectural style; all are superbly carved and most of them are decorated with well-preserved paintings. The entire city may be described as a sculpture dedicated to the glory of God. This afternoon is dedicated to visiting the first group of churches and the city itself.

Day 2: Lalibela - Gondar

Morning walking tour of various rock-churches outside the city. Lalibela's 11 Orthodox churches are some of the world's greatest architectural marvels. Each church was carved out of a solid piece of red volcanic rock in the 1100s. The largest, Medhane Alem, measures an incredible 100-ft-/30-m-long, 77-ft-/24-m-wide and 37-ft-/11-m-high. Beta Giorgis (the Church of St. George) is shaped like a cross and surrounded by a 40-ft-/12-m-deep trench. Historians say that the churches were commissioned by King Lalibela, who claimed to have been instructed by God in a dream to build the most beautiful places of worship on Earth. Legend says that the churches were completed in 24 years with the help of angels. (Historians believe it was 100 years and some Egyptians.) The churches have beautifully painted facades, tunnels and a cloth (in the Pillar of Light Church) upon which Christ was said to have leaned when appearing to King Lalibela in a dream. The churches are accessible through carved ravines and eerie subterranean passageways lined with grottoes containing the bones of past clergy.

In the Afternoon, fly to Gondar. Pick up from Gondar airport and continue driving to the Semien Mountain

Day 3: Semien Mountain

Full day excursion to Simien National Park. The road to the National Park of the Simien Mountains, passes over mountainous areas of wild beauty, drawing close to the national park of the Simien massif. In Amharic, 'Simien' means north. These mountains consist of volcanic masses that have been eroded away by centuries of rain. Today they have amethyst-colored peaks and deep gullies, which have been further deepened by rivers. The crevices play host to the Walya, the ibex of the Simien Mountains. Overnight camping in the National Park.

Day 4: Gondar - Bahirdar

On the return trip from Semien Mountain, you will visit the village of the “Felasha” – who are famous for their wonderful ceramics and continue driving to Gondar. Gondar has distinctive castles and cathedrals, incorporating medieval European and southern-Arabian influences. Visit the Castle of the King Fasilides, the Monastery of Kusquam, the House of Kusquam (Queen Mintiwab's palace) and other ruins. Gondar has dozens of churches, the most important being Debre Berhan Selassie (Trinity Church of the Mountain of Light), which has an impressive hilltop location. The yellow-robed priest there will explain the story of the many paintings and carvings inside the church.

Late afternoon we will continue driving to Bahir Dar. (170 kms)

Day 5: Bahir Dar

Bahir Dar is a pleasant city located at 1,800 meters above sea level on the shores of lake Tana, the largest lake in Ethiopia. Later this morning, drive south to the 140-ft-/45-m-high Tississat (Smoke of Fire) Falls. You will have the option to descend to the base of the falls, climb back up the other side and cross the Nile in a papyrus boat (locally known as “Tankwas.”)

Return to Bahir Dar and boat excursion on Lake Tana. There are 37 islands on Lake Tana, of which 30 have churches and monasteries of considerable historical and cultural interest. Enjoy visits to the monastery churches of Ura Kidane Mihiret.

Day 6: Bahir Dar – Addis Ababa

Early in the morning start driving back to Addis passing through Debre Markos and the great gorge of the Blue Nile.