

# Gane & Marshall

## Ethiopian Journey

17th April to 28th April 2014

The Historic Route

*Tigrai, Axum, Lalibela, Lake Tana*

The Simien Mountains

Addis Ababa

*Designed for The Temple Church Group*





# CHRISTIANITY IN ETHIOPIA

*“There is nothing in sub-Saharan Africa – in a sense, nothing else in the world – that prepares the visitor for the wealth of historical and cultural treasures, both ancient and living, contained in northern Ethiopia.”* Philip Briggs, Bradt Guide to Ethiopia.



The history of the Christian church in Ethiopia begins in and around Axum in the first half of the 4th century AD, the era of Constantine, with the establishment of Christianity as a state religion by Ezana the Great (320-360), leader of the Aksumite kingdom and one of the world's first Christian rulers. In the course of the following centuries the Ethiopian, or Tewahedo, Church, would develop a highly unique form of Christianity, far removed from the Catholic Church in Rome, with which it is roughly contemporary, and the Coptic church in Egypt, to which it was ostensibly attached.

The 5th and 6th centuries saw the development of the physical and organisational structures of the Ethiopian Church (priesthood, places of worship, rituals) and its gradual spread across northern Ethiopia. These early Church structures were likely

heavily influenced by, if not built upon, the existing Judaic structures that we know were present in Ethiopia from as early as the 10th-century BC; it is assumed that many of the first Christian places of worship, including the famous temple at Yeha, were converted former Sabaeen temples.

The primary building period for the rock-hewn churches for which Ethiopia is famous was the 8th to 13th centuries AD. It is during these five centuries that we see the construction of churches and sacred buildings in Axum, Tigray and later Lalibela. For much of this period (the dates are inexact) Ethiopia was ruled by the important Zagwe Dynasty, under whose guidance Ethiopia would become the most important centre of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa.

Although legend has suggested that some of the Tigray churches were built in the 4th and 5th centuries, archaeologists now claim that they were mainly built in the 10th, 11th and 12th centuries (David Buxton, “The Abyssinians”, 1970). The rock hewn churches in Tigray are mainly “vertical” – that is to say they were hewn from vertical rock faces, this being in contrast with the monoliths of Lalibela, which were dug and carved down into horizontal rock. In Tigray we see the prevalent cruciform design coming into fashion in the 11th century. Wukro Cherkos and Abreha and Atsbeha, all present on your itinerary, reveal this style.

The Tigray churches today number over 120, of which approximately 100 are still in use! They are rarely visited by tourists. Religious rites there still mirror the archaic, evangelical nature of the very early Christian church in the Middle East and Europe. The Tigray rock hewn churches pre-date the Lalibela churches and perhaps influenced the cruciform style of much of the Lalibela architecture.

During the 12th century, with Ethiopia still governed by the Zagwe dynasty, the centre of power moved to Roha, later to be named Lalibela in honour of the most famous of the Zagwe rulers. Here in Lalibela we



see the pinnacle of rock church architecture. The eleven monolithic churches of Lalibela are indeed a wonder of the world. It will be possible during the itinerary to see most of these churches.

As Ethiopian rulers extended their power base southwards beautiful churches and monasteries were built on the islands of Lake Tana, the source of the Blue Nile and an ancient “connection” with the Egyptian civilisation. The Lake Tana sacred buildings were mainly built between the 14th and the 17th centuries. In this period Lake Tana became the spiritual centre of Christianity in Ethiopia, particularly for the monastic communities that continued to thrive in Ethiopia long after the decline of their European counterparts. These monasteries would retain their high religious status into the 17th-century when the Emperor Fasil of the Solomonic dynasty founded the new capital of Gondar alongside Lake Tana (during the programme visits to Gondar Castle and the 14th-century monasteries Ura Kidanemihret and Debre Mariam on Lake Tana are arranged).

Christianity is not the full story of religious faith in Ethiopia and during your itinerary there will be time to learn more about pre-Axumite society, the legends of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, the popular belief that the Ark of the Covenant resides in Axum, and the arrival and development of Islam.

**Some recommended reading:**

*Ethiopia Bradt Guide* written by Philip Briggs revised 2012

*Under Ethiopian Skies* By Hancock, Pankhurst and superb photos by Duncan Willets, 1983

*The Abyssinians* by David Buxton, 1970

*In Ethiopia with a Mule* Dervla Murphy, 1969

*The Sign and the Seal* Graham Hancock, 1992





# KEY POINTS



## GENERAL INFORMATION & PACKING LIST~

*NB Please read in conjunction with our full Ethiopia Information File.*

### Passports/Visas

A full passport, valid for at least 6 months from the date of arrival in Ethiopia, is essential. The visa can be obtained on arrival in Addis Ababa. However it is better to obtain your visa in advance.

### Health

Vaccinations are recommended for yellow fever, typhoid, diphtheria, polio, tetanus, and hepatitis A. Doctors may recommend meningitis jabs for certain areas. We do also recommend that you take preventative treatment for malaria which, although not widespread, is found in some areas of the country. You should start obtaining your immunisations at least 4 weeks before travel if possible. Travel insurance is essential.

### Clothing from a cultural perspective

Choose respectful clothing, especially in the area of the churches and in villages. Women should not expose their legs, shoulders or stomachs and in a church they should have their hair in a shawl or hat. In churches men should not wear shorts or old and tatty clothes.

### Photography

This can be a sensitive subject. Photographing strategic sites and airports may arouse suspicion whilst photographing people may be intrusive. In some areas people may expect to be paid to have their photograph taken. As a rule, it is best to ask permission.

### Electricity/water

Electricity voltage is 220. Two-pin plugs are the norm.

### Money & Security

The unit of currency is the birr and local currency cannot be brought into or taken out of the country. Foreign exchange bureaux are best for changing currency (Hilton and Sheraton in Addis have foreign exchange bureaux). Rates are similar to banks but there is less paperwork. Very few small hotels accept credit cards and we recommend that visitors take mainly cash and perhaps some travellers' cheques as a secure backup fund. Addis Airport has 2 ATM machines. Smaller towns may not even have a bank so plan your currency exchange carefully.

Security is good in Ethiopia. However basic precautions should be taken.

### What to bring

Sunglasses, sun protection, lip salve, insect repellent, sun hat, dried fruit/sweets, pencils/pens, walking shoes, comfortable clothes, sweater or jacket for evenings which may be cool, torch, water flask, towel bath plug, small first aid kit to include anti-malarials, rehydration salts and personal meds. You will be provided a full kit list with your main pack.

*For Tipping Guidelines and Full Packing List please refer to your Confirmation and Travel Pack.*



*Photos by Rachel at [www.morelime.co.uk](http://www.morelime.co.uk)*

# ETHIOPIA

## Itinerary Summary

DATE	SERVICE	TYPE	
Thu 17 Apr	<i>Fly out from Heathrow 2015-0610+1)</i>	Flight	flt
Fri 18 Apr	<i>Arrive Addis 0730AM. Saro Maria Hotel. After lunch St Trinity Cathedral Church/Market/Museum</i>	trns/std twin	FB
Sat 19 Apr	<i>Fly to Mekele, drive to Hawzen, for o/nt Gheralta Lodge, Hawzen or similar. En route visit Wukro Cherkos, Selassie Dugum, and Mariam Barakit</i>	flt/std twin/dble	FB
Sun 20 Apr	<i>Easter Day (Fasika) Early morning drive to church of Abreha Atsbeha. View end of Easter Fast. Then to private place for own Easter Mass. Drive on to Axum for o/nt Sabean Hotel</i>	std twin/dble	FB
Mon 21 Apr	<i>Full day Axum. See stone stellae, tombs of King Kaleb and his son; Queen of Sheba's Palace and Swimming Pool, the Church of Zion. Sabean Hotel</i>	std twin/dble	FB
Tue 22 Apr	<i>Fly Axum - Lalibela. (0830 or 0930). Tukul Village. See first group Rock Churches.</i>	std twin/dble	FB
Wed 23 Apr	<i>Full day Lalibela. See second group Rock Churches. Tukul Village.</i>	std twin/dble	FB
Thu 24 Apr	<i>Fly to Gondar. Taye Belay Hotel. Visit the complex of royal palaces, King Fasilida's Bath, and Debre Sellassie Church.</i>	std twin/dble	FB
Fri 25 Apr	<i>Early AM start to drive to Simiens, breakfast on route, 3-4 hrs in Simiens before returning to Gondar. Taye Belay Hotel.</i>	std twin/dble	FB
Sat 26 Apr	<i>Drive to Bahir Dar - 3-4hrs. check in Jacaranda Hotel. PM boat trip Lake Tana. See Azua and Ura Kidane.</i>	std twin/dble	FB
Sun 27 Apr	<i>Early Morning Church Service in Bahir Dar St Georges Then drive to Blue Nile Falls, private mass, then fly back to Addis (1400-1500). Option for Traditional Ethiopian dinner. Saro Maria Hotel.</i>	std twin/dble	FB
Mon 28 Apr	<i>Airport transfer and fly to London. (1100-1700)</i>	Flight	trns/flt



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