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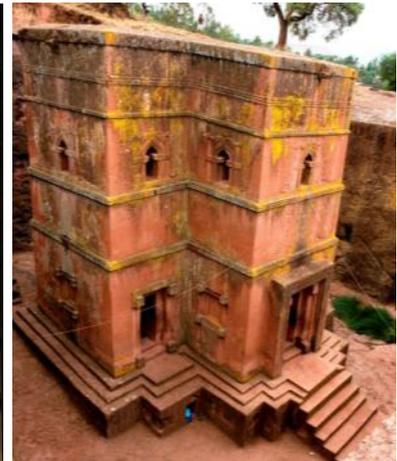
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AAT-1135

CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE TOUR: BAHIR DAR, GONDAR, AXUM, LALIBELA

Duration: 12 Days / 11 Nights



Tour Highlights:

- Experience Ethiopia's lived religion, unchanged for thousands of years
- Walk the path of pilgrims between the amazing rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Boat trip on Lake Tana to visit some of its many ancient island monasteries
- Visit St. Mary of Zion Church in Axum, the resting place of the original Arc of the Covenant
- Visit many of Ethiopia's rock-hewn churches and monasteries which are still serving their original function
- Traditional Ethiopian farewell dinner with "coffee ceremony"
- Best accommodations available in Ethiopia

Travel date:

Every day departure with a minimum of two participants.

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Day 1: Arrival in Addis Ababa

WELCOME TO ETHIOPIA. On arrival in Addis Ababa our representative will meet you at the airport. After transfer to your hotel an overview of the program will be given. The rest of the day visit historical sites in Addis Ababa including the Holy Trinity Cathedral, Be'ata Maryam Church, St. George Cathedral and the Entoto Maryam Church on Mount Entoto, which rises up to an altitude of 3200 meters and offers a panoramic view of the metropolis. Overnight in 4-star hotel.



Day 2: Debre Libanos Monastery

After breakfast drive to Debre Libanos and visit the 13th century monastery. Ca. 100 kilometres north of Addis Ababa, a right hand turn leads to the ancient monastery of Debre Libanos. This is the beginning of the gorge landscape for which the central highlands are renowned: breath-taking views over chasms with a depth of 2,000 ft. or more. The old monastery itself is situated behind the new church on a cliff high above.



The founder of the monastery was Tekle Haymanot (1260 A.D.), who was the titular head of the monastery and has always been regarded as the premier monk of the land. The new church, standing on the edge of the gorge, has beautiful stained glass windows and before you enter, it is worth noting the mosaic figures on the façade. Stop and set up a

picnic lunch halfway between the turn off and the church. Gelada Baboons peer curiously at the visitor while birds of prey soar overhead. Drive back to Addis for overnight stay in 4-star hotel.



Day 3: Bahir Dar's ancient island monasteries

After breakfast transfer to the airport for your flight to Bahir Dar, a small town on the southern shore of Lake Tana. The lake is the source of the Blue Nile and the largest lake in Ethiopia. Thirty of its thirty-seven islands host churches and monasteries of considerable



historical and cultural interest. After refreshment, take a boat trip on Lake Tana to visit Ura Kidane Mehret and Azwa Maryam, Narga Silassie and Dega Istifanos, which still serve their original function.

Day 4: Visit The Blue Nile falls

After breakfast visit the impressive Blue Nile Falls, locally known as Tiss Isat or 'Smoke of Fire'. Four hundred meters wide when in flood and 45 meters deep, the falls throws up a continuous spray of water droplets, which drench onlookers up to a kilometer away. The area around the river is extremely fertile and the Amhara people who live here farm wheat, sorghum and teff from which injera is made.



Day 5: Gondar and its monasteries

After breakfast fly to Gondar which was founded in 1636 by Emperor Fasiladas. It was the royal capital of Ethiopia. Visit the monastery of Qusquam and the fascinating Debre Birhan Selassie Church, termed by the UNESCO as one of the World's heritage sights. Its walls and ceilings decorated with scenes of biblical lore and medieval

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history. Visit the castles built by emperor Fassiledes and his descendants, also known as Africa's Camelot and stop at the Falasha village to visit the remaining Ethiopian Jews.

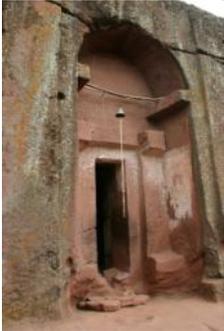
Day 6: Fly Lalibela

After breakfast fly to Lalibela. The town of Lalibela, lies among the Lasta Mountains at 2630 m above sea level and remains until today a place of pilgrim and devotion for Ethiopian Christians.

The construction of the eleven rock-hewn churches is attributed to King Lalibela of the Zagwe dynasty. Some of the 12th century churches are monolithic, carved from a sloping mass of red volcanic scoria overlaid by dark grey basalt and inter-connected by a maze of tunnels and passages with openings to hermit caves and catacombs. Some are of the basilica type, having archaic features and imitating architectural elements from earlier periods, yet they differ in design and style. The Lalibela churches are included in the World Heritage List since 1978.



Visit the first group of six churches which lie in rock cradles one behind the other: Bet Golgotha, Bet Mika'el, Bet Maryam, Bet Meskel, Bet Danaghel and Bet Medhane Alem. Bet Medhane Alem, the largest one, is built like a Greek temple and its stone floor is so polished by the countless numbers of visitors that it reflects shafts of light. In a corner are three empty graves symbolically dug for biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.



Day 7: In Lalibela

Today we visit the other groups of Lalibelas rock churches. Bet Giyorgis, the most elegant church, lies somewhat isolated in the southwest part of the village on a sloping rock terrace. It can only be reached through a tunnel. The group of four, south of the Jordan River, comprise of Bet Emanuel, Bet Mercurios, Bet Abba Libanos and Bet Gabriel-Rufa'el.



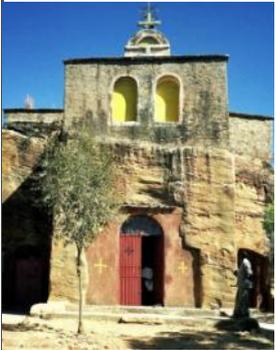
Day 8: In Lalibela

After breakfast take a mule ride to the 13th century rock hewn monastery of Asheten Maryam. The church is situated on the top of a mountain at an altitude of 3150 metres. The roundtrip takes about 4 hours. We return to Lalibela for lunch. In the afternoon drive to Nakuto Le'Abe Monastery. King Nakuto Le'Abe abdicated his throne in 1270 AD and went to this cave to live a hermit's life. The cave, sitting on the edge of a steep cliff, has ever since become a monastery. It houses one of the most interesting collections of ancient crosses, illuminated manuscripts and other icons some of which are attributed to its founder Nakuto Le'Abe.



Day 9: St. Mary of Zion Church in Axum

After breakfast fly to Axum and visit the historical and archaeological sites. The 16th century cathedral St. Mary of Zion, the holiest church in Ethiopia, is

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| <p>said to host the original Ark of the Covenant. The churches and monasteries of Axum are richly endowed with icons and crowns of ancient emperors. The ancient city marks the location of the heart of ancient Ethiopia, when the kingdom of Axum was the most powerful state between the eastern Roman empire and Persia. Visit also the Archaeological Museum, the monolithic steles and obelisks, the tombs of King Kaleb and King Gebre Meskal, the legendary bath of Queen Sheba and the ruins of her palace.</p>  <p>Day 10: Debre Damo monastery After breakfast drive to Debre Damo to visit the 6th century monastery. Proceed to Adigrat for overnight.</p> <p>Day 11: Rock churches en route to Mekele On this day, you drive long to Mekele but the gigantic ups and downs of the landscape are nice to experience as well as the magnificent scenery. En route visit the rock-hewn churches of Medhane Alem, Adi Kesho, Petros and Paulos, Abraha Atsbeha, Wekro Cherkos and the 2500 year old Yeha temple and the close by church of Aba Aftse.</p> <p>Day 12: Fly to Addis Ababa, departure After breakfast fly to Addis Ababa. Souvenir shopping and in the evening fare well dinner party, with dances from different ethnic groups, in a traditional Ethiopian restaurant. Afterwards transfer to the airport for flight home.</p> | | |
| <p>PRICE Price per person (on the basis of 2 travellers) = US \$ 2,500 Price per person (on the basis of 3 travellers) = US \$ 2,134 Single room supplement = US \$ 300</p> | | |
| <p>Price includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Special qualified guide as well as mandatory local guide and scout fees in parks and villages - 4-star hotel in Addis Ababa and the best available hotels outside of Addis Ababa - All accommodation based on twin room occupancy - Meals in Addis, on bed and breakfast basis - Meals out of Addis, on full board basis - Farewell dinner in Addis to enjoy traditional Ethiopian food and music - All entrance fees at sites, churches, parks and villages - All transfers and visits in Addis Ababa using mini-bus according to the itinerary - All ground transportation including insurance, fuel and all costs of the driver - Boat trip - Traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony at a convenient time in the program - Government taxes <p>Price doesn't include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International flights - Lunch and dinner in Addis Ababa - Any kind of drinks, alcoholic or non-alcoholic - Video filming and photographing fees - Incidental meals, snacks and drinks - Tips and items of personal nature like laundry, souvenirs, etc . - All what is not included in the list above | | |