



Ethiopia – Sample Itinerary

Day One

Day One We land in Addis Ababa and transfer immediately to our flight to Gondar in Northern Ethiopia. The greater Gondar area is where the majority of the Jews in Ethiopia lived for centuries until they made Aliyah to Israel. We will visit the Beta Israel Compound and see how these Jews lived, hear their stories, and see their school. We will start to understand the amazing story of Ethiopian Jewry and its mass Aliyah to Israel. For the rest of the day we will start to discover the city of Gondar. Many picturesque ruins lie in the royal enclosure like the fairytale castles dating back to the 17th century. The castles reflect the glory of Gonderine kings and are characterized by lime-mortar style. We will visit the Fasiladas pool, in which pilgrims still take a plunge during the Timket (Epiphany) celebrations. We will also visit Debre Birhan Trinity Church, rewarding for its magnificent murals adorning the roof and the walls of the church. In the evening, we will have a dinner of authentic local cuisine and enjoy live Ethiopian music.

Day Two

On the second day, we will visit the Falasha village of Wolleka, where we will visit the Jewish Cemetery and a mud-hut synagogue and again understand what Jewish life was like in Ethiopia. We will then continue onto the Semien National Park, one of the most spectacular landscapes in the world and listed by UNESCO as a world heritage site. The Semien chain of mountains is the steepest and most precipitous on the continent and is often compared to the Grand Canyon of Arizona. Its highest peak, Ras Dejen is 4,543m above sea level, which makes it the fourth-highest mountain in Africa. We'll have a nature walk/drive and enjoy the dramatic scenery along with the inhabitants of the area including the gelada baboon and a staggering number of bird species.

Day Three

On this day, we will leave Gondar and fly to Lalibela. We'll spend the day discovering one of Ethiopia's most special sites – the city of Lalibela/ancient city of Roha. The civilization of the past is still alive in the form of strange and beautiful monuments and ruins. The 11th-century rock-hewn churches of Lalibela reveal a marvelous and skillful architectural knowledge of the past. These incredible edifices remain places of living worship to this day and no one visiting here can fail to be stunned and awed by the remarkable human achievements that the churches represent. We will start the day from Bet Medhane Alem, one of the largest monolithic rock-hewn churches. Bet Maryam, is



thought to have been the first church built in Lalibela and features elaborate carvings. We'll work our way around the site and in the afternoon we will explore the local open market. We'll then watch the sunset, before heading to our hotel for dinner, which will include traditional food, a folk show, and a coffee ceremony.

Day Four

We'll fly to Addis Ababa in the morning and begin to discover the city. Founded in 1886 by Menelik II, Addis Ababa in Amharic means "new flower," and it is a pleasant city with wide avenues of jacaranda trees and one of the largest open-air markets in Africa, known as the "Merkato." We'll visit the major sites, including Lucy – the earliest known humanoid skeleton housed at the National Museum. In the evening, we'll experience some traditional Ethiopian dancing and then hit a modern club.

Day Five

On our final day, we'll visit the Israeli Embassy and meet the Ambassador, Belyanesh Zevadia, who is the first Ethiopian-Israeli diplomat to represent Israel in any of its missions. She'll tell her personal story and talk about Israel's relationship with Ethiopia. We'll also meet the Director of Mashav projects there. Mashav is Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mashav is responsible for the design, coordination, and implementation of Israel's worldwide development and cooperation programs in developing countries. MASHAV believes that its greatest possible contribution to developing countries can be made in fields where Israel has relevant expertise accumulated during its own development experience as a young country facing similar challenges. We'll hear all about the projects Israel has in Ethiopia and how it is contributing. Finally, we'll spend the afternoon with Dr. Rick Hodes, a Jewish American doctor who has worked in Ethiopia for the last 30 years. He is also the father of Dejene, an Aardvark Israel Alum, whom you will meet as well. Dr. Hodes was the main medical consultant during the mass Aliyah of the Jews from Ethiopia and he will share his experience of those amazing events, whilst also sharing his own story. He is a truly remarkable man and was selected as a CNN Hero a few years ago. HBO also made a documentary about him, entitled "Making the Crooked Straight".