



hidden places in a small world



Tour Notes

Ethiopia - Omo Valley Explorer

Tour Duration – 14 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●○○ | Culture ●●●●● | History ●●○○○ | Wildlife ●●●○○

Tour Pace

Busy

Tour Highlights

- ✓ The national parks with their many species of birds and endemic mammals
- ✓ The lively markets which act as a meeting place for people from miles around
- ✓ The chance to observe the many tribes with their enduring traditions and ways of life
- ✓ The beautiful settlement of the Karo people at Koricho above the Omo River



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Tour Map

Ethiopia - Omo Valley Explorer



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Mix of comfortable hotels and lodges
Included Meals: Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary.
Group Size: Maximum of 12
Start Point: Addis Ababa
End Point: Addis Ababa
Transport: Mini-vans or 4WD or private buses
Countries: Ethiopia



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Ethiopia - Omo Valley Explorer

Ethiopia's Omo Valley is one of the most culturally diverse regions in all of Africa, a land where tribal traditions still take precedence and where modernity is kept largely at bay. On this trip we use comfortable mini-vans and 4WD vehicles to head into the villages of the various tribes that make up this kaleidoscope of ethnicity, including the Mursi, Karo, Hamar and Konso. We learn about their complex customs and experience a way of life very far removed from the rest of Ethiopia. Where possible we try to visit local markets, one of the best ways to experience life in the Omo Valley. This is a cultural discovery that can rarely be equalled, visiting some of the most remote people in the world, and to spend time among them is an amazing privilege.

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

Itinerary

Day 1 – 28th April- Arrive Addis Ababa

Arrive in Addis Ababa and transfer to your hotel. This afternoon visit some of the capital's key sights including the Entoto Mountains, with great views over the city, the Ethnological Museum and Holy Trinity Cathedral. Overnight stay at Jupiter Hotel or similar.

Addis Ababa

Addis Ababa was founded in 1887 by Emperor Menelik II, and its name means 'new flower' in Amharic. A large city, it is the third highest capital in the world sitting at an altitude of 2400m. It hosts East Africa's largest market, the Mercato, a sprawling mass of stalls where one can find just about anything for sale, including the much favoured national drug qat, and is well endowed with other sights. Churches such as St George's Cathedral and the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity give a great insight into Ethiopia's particular brand of Christianity. The Cathedral of St George, named after Ethiopia's patron saint (the famed dragon slayer who also serves as patron saint for England) was built by Emperor Menelik to commemorate his victory over Italian forces at Adwa, and houses a small museum with a collection of important religious paintings, books and artefacts. A good National Museum holds an interesting selection of artefacts from Ethiopia's wide and varied history. Ethiopia was the only African nation never to be fully colonised, although the



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Italians occupied parts of it for a while in the first half of the twentieth century, and it is still possible to see remnants of their legacy in Addis, particularly in the Piazza area which is a great place to walk around and soak up the atmosphere.

Day 2 – 29th April- Addis - Bale Mountains National Park (400km, approx. 8-9 hrs driving)

This morning we will drive to the Bale Mt. National Park, travelling through the southeast part of the country, where fertile land is cultivated by the Oromo people. We arrive at Dinsho Park Headquarters in the afternoon and will take a trek to search for endemic mammals and bird species. Later on we continue our drive to Goba. Overnight stay at Goba Wabe Shebele Hotel or similar. (BLD)

Bale Mountains National Park

Located 400km southeast of Addis Ababa, Bale Mountains National Park contains a spectacularly diverse landscape. The high altitude, afro-montane Sanetti Plateau rises to over 4,000m and includes the highest peak in the southern Ethiopia highlands. This undulating plateau is marked by numerous glacial lakes and swamps and surrounded by higher volcanic ridges and peaks. The southern slopes are covered by the lush and largely unexplored Haremma Forest. The forest is also a home for different pig species, lions, leopards, spotted hyenas and African hunting dogs among others. Moreover the Bale Mountains are home to 16 endemic bird species. It is one of the best sites to spot the endangered Ethiopian Wolf, especially on the spectacular Sanetti Plateau, as the sun rises.

Day 3 – 30th April- Bale Mountains National Park (240km, approx. 4-5 hrs driving)

After an early breakfast we drive to the Sanetti Plateau through Haremma forest, where we will see Tulu Dimtu, the second highest mountain in the country (4377m). We will explore the area, and if we are lucky we may spot the Ethiopian Wolf. Overnight stay at Goba Wabe Shebele Hotel or similar. (BLD)

Day 4 – 1st May- Bale to Yirgalem (270km, approx. 6 hrs driving)

After breakfast we continue with a drive to Yirgalem. We will pass through a number of coffee plantations and various fruit cultivating towns set in verdant countryside. Our destination is the Aregash Lodge. A natural retreat of astounding beauty and tranquillity, the Bamboo thatched Tukuls complement the traditional Sidama villages nearby. The surrounding forest is home for a diverse range of mammals and birds. A coffee plantation and the nightly visit of hyenas are further attractions to be found in the surrounding area. Overnight stay at Aregash lodge or similar. (BLD)

Day 5 – 2nd May- Konso (340km, approx. 8hrs driving)

Today we will drive to Konso. On the way you will have the opportunity to stop and enjoy the beautiful scenery of coffee plantations and we will stop to visit the Tutu Fella Stelae, prehistoric carved stone monuments that have mystified people for many centuries. Overnight stay at Kanta Lodge or similar. (BLD)

Konso people

The Konso are known for their custom of erecting wooden grave markers, which mark the resting place of important leaders and warriors. These markers are carved with the exaggerated features of the dead person. In a similar fashion, the Konso also erect poles to signify the coming of age of a generation, and these poles can be found in their village squares.

Day 6 – 3rd May- Konso to Jinka (170km, approx. 4hrs driving)

This morning we will visit one of the Konso villages and the Konso museum before continuing our drive to Jinka. We will travel through the lands of the Derase, Tsemay and Benna people. We will be able to see



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these tribal people and also the Ari people up close at the Thursday key Afer market. Overnight stay at Jinka Resort or similar. (BLD)

Tsemay people

The Tsemay are one of the lesser known of Ethiopia's ethnic groups, with numbers not exceeding 10,000 people. Their neighbours include the Konso to the east, the Banna - Bashada group to the west, the Male to the north, and the Arbore to the south.

Jinka

A small mountain town set apart from the rest of the country, Jinka feels both remote and rustic, which is accentuated by the grass airstrip in the middle of town. People come from across South Omo to visit the Saturday market, particularly Ari, Bana, Besheda and Besketo people.

Days 7 – 4th May- Mago National Park (160km, approx. 4 hrs driving)

This morning we will travel to Mago National Park and visit the Mursi people, renowned for their practice of extending their lips with clay plates. This afternoon we visit the Jinka Museum. Overnight stay at Jinka Resort or similar. (BLD)

Mursi people

The Mursi are perhaps the best known of the Omo Valley tribes, due to the distinctive custom among women of wearing clay plates through their lips. When a woman reaches the age of about 20, a small cut is made in the lower lip and a clay plate inserted, which is then extended each year. The Mursi people live in one of the least accessible areas of Ethiopia - when a British anthropologist visited them for the first time in the early 1970s, they had never heard of the country of Ethiopia where they live. They are a relatively small ethnic group, comprising of about 7-10,000 people.

Day 8 – 5th May- Turmi (120km, approx. 3hrs driving)

Today our journey today takes us to Turmi. We travel through the lands of the very colourful Hamar people, renowned for their unusual hairstyles. En route we stop to visit the colourful Dimeka market which is attended by the elegant Hamar and Benna women. Since it borders on Benna territory, the Saturday market attracts locals from both tribes. After taking some time in the market we will drive to Turmi. Later we visit one of the Turmi villages where local people are known for their colourful hair styles and bull jumping traditions during wedding festivities. The ladies are normally adorned in beautifully decorated leather skirts. Overnight stay Turmi Lodge or similar (BLD)

Hamar people

The 15,000 to 20,000 members of the Hamar make their living as successful cattle herders and farmers. Once they hunted, but the wild pigs and small antelope have almost disappeared from the lands in which they live; and until 20 years ago, all ploughing was done by hand with digging sticks. Hamar men come of age by leaping over a line of cattle in a ceremony which qualifies them to marry, own cattle and have children. They must leap over the cattle four times – only then are they considered to be men. At this time, the female relatives of the men leaping will line up to be whipped by the maza, a group of men who have performed the leap themselves and live separately to the rest of the tribe. This whipping is said to create a strong bond between the jumper and his female relations, as he now owes them a debt and they can call upon him during times of hardship.



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Day 9 – 6th May- Turmi (140km, approx. 3-4 hrs driving)

We also spend time with the Karo people, known for their body decoration and scarification. We will drive to Koricho, a settlement for the Karo ethnic groups, perhaps the most beautiful, with its lofty views over the Omo River and traditional Karo dwelling. We will also visit another authentic village called Dus. Overnight stay at Turmi Lodge or similar. (BLD)

Karo people

The Karo people are renowned for their painted body and face decorations. This is an elaborate process, which ranges from fine and elaborate details to rough, but striking paintings traced with the palms or fingers. The most beautiful expression is in the facial and chest paintings that combine white (chalk), black (charcoal), yellow, ochre, and red earth, often imitating the spotted plumage of a guinea fowl. Karo women scarify their chests as a sign of beauty, while the scarification of a man's chest indicates that he has killed an enemy or a dangerous animal. The scars are cut with a knife or razor blade and ash is rubbed in to produce a raised effect. The wearing of a grey and ochre clay hair bun also has the same significance.

Day 10 – 7th May- Turmi to Arbaminch (270km, approx. 7 hrs driving)

We will begin the day with a visit to the large and colourful Alduba market, principally attended by the Bena people. After some time observing proceedings you will continue to Arbaminch. Overnight stay at Paradise Lodge or similar. (BLD)

Day 11 – 8th May- Lake Chamo and Dorze

This morning we take a boat trip to view the crocodiles in Lake Chamo. This afternoon we drive to Chencha, to visit the Dorze people, with their unique culture, houses and traditions. Overnight stay at Paradise Lodge or similar. (BLD)

Dorze people

This region is known for the Dorze people, who in turn are known for their unusual beehive shaped houses, constructed from wood and bamboo. These towering, re-locatable structures can reach as high as 12 metres, and last from 60-80 years, so will generally be used by one family for their lifetimes. Traditionally the bamboo that is used as frames for the huts is cut during moonlight. The Dorze are farmers and are also known for weaving fine quality shamas, the shawl type cloths that are worn throughout Ethiopia.

Day 12 – 9th May- Rift Valley Lakes (320km, approx. 7-8 hrs driving)

Drive to the Rift Valley lakes of Shala, Abyata and Langano, admiring wonderful views and the many birds, including pelicans and flamingos. Then relax by the shores of Lake Langano and near to Munessa Forest or choose one of the options of trekking, bird-watching, horse-riding, boat excursions, cycling and more. Overnight stay at Sabanna Beach Resort or similar. (BLD)

Rift Valley Lakes

The cluster of lakes – Shala, Abyata and Langano – that are found in this area are a great spot for birdwatching, with many of Ethiopia's numerous species of birds found here. Langano in particular is also popular with local tourists, as it is the only lake in Ethiopia without bilharzia, making it safe to swim in. The nearby Abyata-Shala National Park incorporates the two Rift Valley lakes it is named after, and borders Lake Langano. The two lakes could not be more different - Shala lies in a crater 265m deep, studded with volcanic islands. Lake Abyata, in contrast, is large and shallow, no deeper than 14m. These lakes are part of the Rift Valley, an enormous fissure that stretches from Syria all the way down to Mozambique, culminating in Lake Malawi and nearly 4000 miles in length. The Rift Valley has been an excellent source of



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well-preserved fossils, exemplified in Ethiopia by the skeletons of human ancestors that have been unearthed within the last fifty years.

Day 13 – 10th May- Addis Ababa

The morning will be at leisure to relax and swim by the beach. This afternoon, we continue our drive back to Addis for the night. En route we will have a stop at Lake Ziway for some bird watching. In the evening, there is a traditional dinner where you will experience live cultural music and dance. Overnight stay at Jupiter Hotel or similar. (BLD)

Day 14 – 11th May- City Tour and Departure

After breakfast, depending on the time of your flight, there may be time for some last minute exploration. Visit will include St George's Cathedral, the National Museum and the Merkato, reputedly the biggest open air market in Africa. The tour concludes with a transfer to Bole International Airport (BL)

Inclusions and Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers
All accommodation
Transport in private vehicles
Services of English speaking guide / tour leader
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded:

International flights
Video/camera charges
Any airport taxes
Travel Insurance
Visas
Drinks (although water is provided with each meal)

Important Information

Foreign Office Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At the time of writing the Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not advise against travel to any of the areas within Ethiopia that we visit on our tours. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or if you would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.





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It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

Accommodation Standards

At Undiscovered Destinations we know our travellers prefer to stay in comfortable, mid-range accommodation. On this tour you can expect rooms to be en-suite, with private bathroom and when necessary air-conditioning will be provided. You will find that your hotel has a restaurant and/or bar.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Food & Drinks

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; Breakfast (B), Lunch (L) and Dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

The tribespeople of the Omo Valley allow photos to be taken of them but expect payment in return. While there are one or two villages that will allow the guide to pay a fee which includes unlimited photos, in most of the villages and in the markets, a payment of 5 Birr (approx. £0.12) will be expected for each one taken,

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch and Dinner £8-£10



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Drinks

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Bottle of Beer (Imported) £1.30

Bottle of Water (large) £1

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is common practise in Africa. If your local guide has been helpful then you could think about tipping. The amount is up to you but on the group tour \$3 per day for the driver and \$5 per day for the guide is a guideline.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: There are a growing number of ATM machines across the country but we recommend that you bring cash.

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards are not widely accepted

Local Currency: Birr (ETB)

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Sterling, Euros and US Dollars are all easy to change. However please note that smaller towns often have very limited or no exchange facilities

Where to Exchange: It's relatively easy to exchange money in Ethiopia, either at the airport on arrival or in one of the many banks- your guide will help.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Joining Your Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a free airport transfer, both on arrival and departure. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.



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Visa Information

Most nationals, including those from the UK, EU and US require a visa for entry into Ethiopia. These can be obtained before travel, but it is also now possible to obtain a visa on arrival for many nationalities, at a cost of \$50. The embassy website states that you should take two passport sized photos with you although a photo is taken by Immigration officials in Addis Ababa. Regulations do frequently change though so we advise that you check the current requirements with your nearest embassy.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to the UK.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Vaccinations & Protection

As with travel to most parts of Africa, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis. Anti-malaria medication may also be required and the use of a DEET-containing insect repellent is highly recommended. Please note that the risk of malaria on our Historic Ethiopia tour is minimal.

Preparing for your tour

Climate

Most of Ethiopia is blessed with a fairly pleasant temperature year round, but like much of Africa it has wet and dry seasons. In the north most of the rain falls between June and early October, while in the Omo Valley the rains typically arrive between March and June but climate change is making the weather more difficult to predict. (The improved condition of the roads used in this area means that tours are not affected by this.) The temperature in the south, including the Omo Valley, can be quite hot, while the altitude of the north means that temperatures are typically more moderate and it can be cold in the mountains at night.

Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of waterproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet or windy.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs,



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along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. It is advisable to take a torch, as the electricity supply can be erratic. Honey is a popular purchase in the north of Ethiopia but the containers in which it is sold are not efficiently sealed. If you are considering purchasing some you may wish to take a container with you.

Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Sturdy but comfortable walking shoes/boots are recommended.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 220V/50 Hz and plugs usually have two round pins.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated on 26/09/2017