

ADVENTUREX

WITHOUT ADVENTURE... WHAT IS LIFE?

Ethiopia The Omo River

The fabled 'hidden empire' is renowned for its extraordinary history, Coptic Christian chanting priests, rock-hewn churches, Medieval castles and its breathtaking natural scenery. High plateau and deep forested gorges hold one of the natural world's best kept secrets, the Omo River - a wild and beautiful immersion into an almost prehistoric world where we encounter deepest, darkest Africa's remote wilderness and some of the most remarkable tribal people on Earth. We drift down the Upper Omo into a series of dramatic canyon gorges, crash through the dancing rapids into serene pools where crocodiles bask on the banks and baboons peer inquisitively at us from the cliff tops. The wildlife is prolific from the troops of Colobus Monkeys to the African fish eagles and colourful birds overhead and the ever-present sounds of the hippopotami across the river.

On the way down to the Lower Omo we relax on sandy beaches beneath the moon and as the river broadens we begin to encounter the near stone-age Qwegu and Mursi tribes. The Omo leads us to the heart of one of the most remote areas on the African continent, a breathtaking wilderness and home to our earliest ancestors.

Your Itinerary

Day 1:

Fly into Addis Ababa. You will be met by one of our guides, who will escort you to your hotel to make sure that you get settled in and comfy. The remainder of the day is yours to explore or to relax. We will dine at a restaurant for dinner, specialising in Ethiopian cuisine, Tej (a mead wine) and traditional dancing. The food is fantastic and the dancing is an eye-opener!
(No Meals included)

Day 2:

Breakfast at hotel. Drive to Weliso, overnight in hotel.

Day 3:

Drive to our start point near Albelti and begin our whitewater rafting adventure.

Days 4 to 11:

The Upper Omo has more whitewater than the lower section, with mostly grade 2-3 rapids and a few grade 4 rapids. The river is smaller, steeper and faster than the lower river. We will float through deep gorges, open savannah grasslands and dense jungle. At night we camp in groves of trees and on high sandy beaches lulled to sleep by the sound of hippos in the river. This is another world totally, and you will be more relaxed than you could ever imagine!

Day 12:

Rendezvous with our support vehicles at Bele Bridge and load up with fresh food, drink and supplies.

Days 13 to 22:

The Lower Omo sees the river larger and more remote, with the wildlife increasing in species and numbers. We will strategically navigate our way through pods of hippos in the pools, view waterbuck and hippo grazing at the river bank, glimpse the white and black flashes of Colobus monkeys swinging through the trees and hear the cries of the majestic fish eagles soaring overhead. On the last four days we begin to pass the villages of the Qwegu and Mursi

tribes. These tribal people live their lives almost unchanged from their stone age past. The interaction between our group and the tribe's people is a phenomenal experience for both parties.

Days 23 to 24:

Four-wheel drive through Mago National Park to Jinka. Fly from Jinka to Addis Ababa in a light plane. Return to your hotel. Enjoy our post trip meal at a restaurant together.

Day 25:

Fly home.

Holiday Options

So you have finished the trip of a lifetime and don't want to return to life in the UK just yet? Don't panic as you are in an amazing country with many diverse cultures and a rich history. Ethiopia is the only traditionally Christian country in Africa and is the only country in Africa to escape European colonisation. Because of this Ethiopians have suffered no cultural separation from their historic traditions. This makes for one of the most unique and enchanting places in the world to visit.

We can help to organise internal flights and tours to the historical sites of Lalibela, Gondar and Axum.

Lalibela

Lalibela is an amazing place with ancient cross-shaped rock hewn churches, carved 70 feet straight down out of a solid rock escarpment. Legend has it that King Lalibela himself traveled to Jerusalem and so wondered at the buildings he saw there that he was determined to create an Ethiopian Jerusalem high in the Lasta Mountains. These amazing churches attest to an epoch in Ethiopian history, which must have known immense technical skill and competence, yet of which we have almost no written record. Tradition tells us that the world's greatest craftsmen toiled during the day to create these monuments while bands of angels took over to continue the work by night!

Gondar

Ethiopia was in need of a strong emperor and found one in Emperor Fasiledes who took over from his father Susenyos in 1632 and, in 1636, founded his new capital in Gondar near Lake Tana. The city of Gondar was the first permanent capital and was to flourish until the early 19th century. At this site you could easily be forgiven for thinking that you are castle spotting in Europe. Emperor Fasiledes was to bring a period of stability to Ethiopia and Gondar was to become a sophisticated and artistic city with its central Royal Enclosure of magnificent castles started by Fasiledes and continued by ensuing monarchs.

Axum

The north of Ethiopia was to be of world importance as an influential trading centre during the first seven centuries after the birth of Christ. Centering on the city of Axum, today an important city on the Historic Route, and strategically situated near to the bottom of the Red Sea, it was a vital commercial crossroads between Egypt and the Mediterranean and the eastern countries of India and Ceylon. Exotic trade flourished in this richly fertile and agricultural area.

Today the ruins of Axum is dominated by huge intricately carved stelae (obelisks). 119 granite stelae such as these survive, which mark burial catacombs. The largest Axumite stela is over 100 feet long. It was the largest single stone ever quarried in the ancient world.

The Details

What Is Included:

- Transfers to and from Addis Ababa International Airport to the hotel. If you provide us with your arrival details we will meet you at the airport. We request that you are there on Day 1, the day before your rafting trip departs (as described above).
- Accommodation the nights before and after the river trip in a tourist hotel. This will be on a share twin basis with somebody else on the trip
- All transfers to the river.
- All meals from breakfast on Day 2 to lunch on the day we return to Addis Ababa. We can cater for any dietary requests, just let us know.
- All rafting equipment, including the best in buoyancy aids, helmets and spray jackets.
- Tented accommodation whilst on the river.
- All camping equipment including Thermarest style mattresses and chairs (sleeping bags excluded).
- Qualified and experienced guides. We have guides who are extremely professional and are some of the most experienced guides in the world. These guys and girls make every effort to make your trip memorable and fun for you whilst at the same time ensuring your safety. They all hold advanced first aid qualifications and in the unlikely event of an injury they have the expertise and professionalism to deal with it
- All necessary permits and licenses.
- A very cool AdventureX T-shirt!

Please Note: Not included are flights, visas, departure taxes, travel insurance, inoculations, sleeping bags, video or dvd of your trip, alcohol, personal items or gratuities. You will also need to budget for meals in town which are not included in the price and any extra accommodation outside what is provided.

Getting There:

If you have any queries or need a hand arranging your flight to and from Addis Ababa, please give us a shout. We will give you advice on the best deal around to tie in with your trip and help with your booking.

Visa Requirements:

All passport holders apart from Kenyan Nationals require Visas. These are available from the London Ethiopian Embassy – either in person, by post or the internet. The standard visa is the 'visitors' single entry visa'. This costs approx £12 (at the time of print) and is valid for 1 month. However please note that it is valid from the date of issue by the embassy, not the date you enter Ethiopia – therefore if you are going on the full 25 day Omo River trip you will need one for longer. Please call us with your plans or questions and we will help you – it is all straight forward. Your passport must also be valid for at least 6 months.

Jabs:

We would recommend consulting your GP or specialist vaccination centre as they may suggest that you get inoculated against Hepatitis A, Polio, Tetanus, Typhoid and Meningitis. Those travellers arriving from infected areas require certificates of Inoculation for Cholera and Yellow Fever (Yellow Fever injection is compulsory). The biggest precaution you should take is a course of anti-malaria prophylactics. These are available from your specialist vaccination centre. For those of you not wishing to have hallucinogenic dreams, Lariam is not recommended for long periods of time – speak to your doctor. Bottled water is generally no problem to drink in all the major towns.

Exchange Rates:

Ethiopia remains quite good value for tourists. We recommend Travellers Cheques and Cash as Credit Card facilities are almost non-existent. Meals in towns remain good value at around GBP £2. Unit of Currency is the Ethiopian Birr and Current Exchange Rates at Time of printing are:

USD\$1 = 8.73 Ethiopian Birr

GBP£1 = 16.04 Ethiopian Birr

Transport Services:

There are taxis everywhere in Addis Ababa, so getting around town is no problem. For tours to the sites of Axum, Gondar and Lalibela we recommend that you take an internal flight as Ethiopia is a big place and the roads are bumpy at best.

Climate:

Addis Ababa lies at the altitude of 3000ft, so the temperature is much more temperate than you would expect for Africa. The days are between late 20's to early 30's centigrade, dropping down to the low teens at night.

Fitness And Safety:

There are no special fitness requirements for the Omo River; the main thing recommended is a sense of adventure! Just to recap what is mentioned in the brochure: The minimum age for the trip is 16 years and there is no upper age limit providing that you are in reasonable physical shape and you are aware of the rigors of a wilderness expedition in a foreign country. Please make a point of telling us if you have any medical condition or are on any medication that you think we should be aware of. Any known allergies are also useful before you turn 3 shades of blue! Safety is our foremost consideration at all times whether on or off the river. We are out there for a great time on the river and we want you to feel comfortable in your new environment. Addis Ababa is quite a wild town as are most capital cities in Africa. You will definitely be noticed by the locals as a tourist and will be addressed by the locals with resounding cries of "You." It's sensible to stay off back streets and the dark alleyways at night and keep your valuables safely out of sight. We've never had any problems, but it's better to be safe & sure.

Dress Code:

The dress code in and around Addis, remains fairly casual. Lightweight casual clothes are recommended during the day. On the river you require little more than a bathing costume, thermal top and a pair of shorts. We also recommend a pair of sandals that will stay attached to your feet should you make an untimely exit from your raft!

Personal Equipment:

After years on the river the guides have found exactly what is necessary to feel comfortable on the raft by day, cosy around the camp at night and totally in style in town before and after the trip. Therefore our equipment list will mean that you will be perfectly attired and outfitted for your whole trip and well under the baggage allowance. A full list of what we recommend will be sent to you after booking confirmation. We find that most people already have in their possession what is needed for a rafting trip and very little if anything in specialised equipment is needed. Perhaps the only thing that we specifically recommend for Ethiopia is PLENTY of sunscreen.

Finally...

Please remember that things do change, prices go up and down, activities stop running or change format and weather can send the best laid plans out the door. AdventureX will do its best to provide what is described above but please take into consideration the nature of the journey that you are embarking on and the country that you are travelling in and understand that a certain degree of flexibility is necessary!

The Omo River is a classic wilderness trip that really offers an experience of a lifetime - See You There!