

North / the Historic Route

Ethiopia has a wealth of historic sites - from Addis Ababa “The Gate of Africa” to Axum “Lands of Legends”, Yeha “The Cradle of Civilization”, Lalibella “The Replica of Jerusalem”, Gondar “African Camelot”, Bahir Dar “The Source of Blue Nile”, and Harar “The Land of Emirs”.

{mospagebreak title=Addis Ababa}

ADDIS ABABA

“The Get of Africa”, wide tree-lined, fine architecture, and glorious weather make Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, a delightful place. It is a city of surprise characterized by remarkable diversity and contrasts. Dominated by the 3000m high Entoto Mountains to the north from which one can obtain a breathtaking view of the city. Addis Ababa is growing at an astonishing speed since it was founded in 1887. It is the home of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)Covering 250 square kilometers, Addis Ababa rambles pleasantly across many wooded hillsides and gullies cut through with fast-flowing streams. Despite its proximity to the equator, the lofty altitude of the world's third-highest capital enjoys a mild, Afro-alpine climate. From its inception, Addis Ababa was clustered around two main centers: the palaces to the east and the market, with Saint George's church, to the west. Together they generated so much activity that the capital grew and developed rapidly.

{mospagebreak title=Yeha Temple}

YEHA TEMPLE

“The Cradle of Civilization” Ethiopian's historic route begins with a glance at the tantalizing remains of Yeha temple- the center of the earliest civilization in northern part of Ethiopia. The journey takes you on rough tracks through the dramatic highland hamlet. Yellow limestone ruins of the “Temple of the Moon - Seba Noba” date back to the 500BC. The edifice with precise-fitting blocks of stone was built by the Sabeen civilization. Yeha is famous for their inscriptions are fine objects of bronze and other artifacts which have been excavated over the past century.

{mospagebreak title=Axum}

AXUM

“Lands of Legends” Axum is the sight of Ethiopian’s most ancient city and renowned for its cathedral of St. Mary of Zion where, it is claimed, the Ark of the Covenant is housed. Axum is famous for its mysterious and ancient monolithic obelisk, all hewn from single pieces of granite, some of which are carved with imagines of doors and windows. The biggest, 33 meters long and weighting over 500 tones, was the largest monolith in the world, but fell at some remote period in the past. The Obelisk of Axum - preserves an ancient history of the era of the Axumite powerful empire having trade links as far as India and China. Visitors will enjoy the sites of these monolithic obelisks and many more wonders surrounding their history, notably the Bath of the Legendary Queen of Sheba and archeological findings that depict the way of life of the Axumite period that reigned from pre Christ times up until the 11th century AD.

{mospagebreak title=Debre Damo}

DEBRE DAMO

“Splendid Church” Debre Damo is the name of a flat-topped mountain, and a 6th century monastery in northern Ethiopia. The mountain is steeply raising plateau of trapezoidal shape, about 1000 by 400 meters in dimension, and an elevation of 2216 meters above sea level, and located west of Adigrat in Tigray region. The monastery, accessible only by rope up a sheer cliff, is known for its collection of manuscripts, and having the earliest existing church in Ethiopia. Tradition claims the monastery was founded in the sixth century by Abuna Aregawi.

{mospagebreak title=Bahr Dar}

BAHIR DAR

“The Source of Blue Nile” Restorative work explains the Gonderian character of some of the paintings

found in the remarkable monasteries and churches on the island of Lake Tana. The thirty-eight island of Lake Tana shelter twenty monasteries surviving remnants of an old, contemplating tradition. The starting point of the Blue Nile Falls, or to the Island of Lake Tana, is the bustling market town of Bahr Dar the wide, palm-lined avenues and gardens overflowing with tropical vegetation, and the variety of handcrafts and weaving centers, makes it a comfortable base for excursion either by land or by water. The Blue Nile Falls locally known as Tiss-Issat, meaning 'water that smokes' presents a spectacular water fall with an intense gas from more than forty-five meters (150feet) peak, producing rainbows across the gorge. The area is also inhabited with fascinating wild lives and birds.

{mospagebreak title=Lalibella}

LALIBELLA

“The Replica of Jerusalem” medieval capital, unofficial eighth wonder of the world. UNESCO has considered the rock-hewn churches of Lalibella as the 8th wonders of the world. Lalibella is legendary city carved from solid rock. It is just as remarkable close up as it is at a distance. It is the camouflaged, chameleon quality; however that gives the remote underground settlement its special and lasting place in the life of the highland. Here some 800 years ago, safe from prying eyes and plundering hands of hostile interloper’s noble king fashioned a secret marvel. Lalibella previously known as Roha is named after king and presents the site of a chain of rock carved out 12th century churches with astonishing architectural designs and interior decorations. Legend says that a historical myth narrates king Lalibella; on his own (with the help of angels) completed the construction of the churches. After his death the king has been designated as an Ethiopian saint.

{mospagebreak title=Gondar}

GONDAR

African Camelot” The graceful city of Gondar was founded by Emperor Fasiledas around 1635, famous for its many medieval castles and the design and decoration of its churches. Flanked by twin mountains streams, Gondar retains an atmosphere of antique charm with aura of mystery. The city was once a vigorous and vital center of religious learning and art. For more than two hundred years skilled instruction in painting, music, dance, poetry and many other disciplines thrived in it. Fasiledas and his successors saw their elegant capital as a phoenix. The so-called bathing palace of emperor Fasiledas is filled with water every year for the TIMKET ceremony. The Castles of Gondar- built in the mid 17th century together with the surrounding centuries-old churches depict yet another sophisticated architectural wonders. The Castles are found in the city of Gondar, which has been the seat of government following Axum and Lalibella.

{mospagebreak title=Harar}

HARAR

“The Land of Emirs” No journey along Ethiopia’s fabled historic route would be complete without a visit to the medieval walled city of Harar which stands amid green mountains on the east wall of the Great Ethiopian Rift Valley. Harar has managed to retain the charm of the medieval character and past glory. The culture diversity is best expressed in the old market and Grand Mosque of (Al-Jami), which dominates the center of the city. Near the mosque stands the imposing octagonal cathedral of Medhane-Alem, which contains a gallery of traditional religious works. Harar is a city where tall, graceful, maidens in long, extravagantly flowing colored dresses come to barter and buy amongst the elegant Moorish archways. The Walls of Harar - built in the early 16th century, the walls are designated after the city of Harar. The Walls have 5 arched gates inviting to the city’s popular basket works, variety of fruits and colorfully decorated costumes of Hararie women. The city of Harar is considered as the 4th holy city of Islam.