

## National Parks

Ethiopia is renowned for its diversity of national parks, from the Simien mountains in the north to the Omo National Park of the south. Whatever your interests - from wildlife, to mountains to ethnic groups - you are sure to find what you are seeking.

{mospagebreak title=Semien Mountains National Park}

### Semien Mountains National Park

Located in the northern part of the Amhara Region, its territory covers the Simien Mountains and includes Ras Dashan, the highest point in Ethiopia.

It is home to a number of extremely rare species, including the Ethiopian wolf, Gelada Baboon, and the Walia Ibex, a wild goat found nowhere else in the world.

It was established in 1969, having been set up by Clive Nicol, who wrote about his experiences in *From the Roof of Africa*. It was one of the first sites to be made a World Heritage Site by UNESCO (1978). However, due to serious population declines of the characteristic native species, in 1996 it was also added to the List of World Heritage Sites.

{mospagebreak title=Bale Mountains National Park}

### Bale Mountains National Park

Located in the Oromia Region of southeast Ethiopia. Created in 1970, this park covers about 2,200 square kilometers of the Bale Mountains to the west and southwest of Goba in the Bale Zone. Within its boundaries are some of the highest points in Ethiopia, which include Mount Batu.

Bale Mountains contains three distinct eco-regions: the northern plains, bush and woods; the central Sanetti Plateau with an average elevation of over 4000 meters; and the southern Harena Forest, known for its mammals, amphibians and birds including many endemic species. The central Sanetti Plateau is home to the largest population of the rare and endangered Ethiopian wolves.

{mospagebreak title=Awash National Park}

#### Awash National Park

Located at the southern tip of the Afar Region, this park is 225 kilometers east of Addis Ababa (and a few kilometers west of Awash), with its southern boundary along the Awash River, and covers at least 756 square kilometers of acacia woodland and grassland. The Addis Ababa - Dire Dawa highway passes through this park, separating the Illala Saha Plains to the south from the Kudu Valley to the north.

The Awash National Park was established in 1966, although the act authorizing its existence was not completely passed for another three years. Wildlife in this park includes the East African Oryx, Sommering's Gazelle, Dik-dik, and the lesser and greater Kudus, as well as over 350 species of native birds. In the upper Kudu Valley at Filwoha is hot springs amid groves of palm trees.

{mospagebreak title=Abijata and Shalla National Park}

#### Abijata and Shalla National Park

Located in the Oromia Region 200 kilometers south of Addis Ababa to the east of the Ziway - Shashamane highway, it contains 887 square kilometers including the Rift Valley lakes of Abijatta and Shalla. The two lakes are separated by three kilometers of hilly land.

Besides the two lakes, the primary attraction of this national park are a number of hot springs on the northeast corner of Lake Abijatta, and large numbers of flamingoes on the lake. Care must be exercised in driving vehicles out to the edge of

this lake, as the thin crust of dried mud on the surface can give way without warning.

{mospagebreak title=Mago National Park}

### Mago National Park

Located in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region about 782 kilometers south of Addis Ababa, the 2162 square kilometers of this park are divided by the Mago River, a tributary of the Omo River, into two parts. The park office is 115 kilometers north of Omorate and 26 kilometers southwest of Jinka. All roads to and from the park are unpaved.

The Mago National Park was established in 1979, making it the newest of Ethiopia's several National Parks. Its territory embraces savanna, acacia forest, and the Neri Swamp. Its highest point is Mount Mago. The park's perhaps best known attraction are the Mursi people, who inhabit villages along the Omo, known for piercing their lips and inserting disks made of clay.

{mospagebreak title=Omo National Park}

### Omo National Park

Located in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region on the west bank of the Omo River, the park covers approximately 4,068 square kilometers, about 870 kilometers southwest of Addis Ababa; across the Omo is the Mago National Park. Although an airstrip was recently built near the park headquarters on the Mui River, this park is not easily reachable.

The lower reaches of the Omo River were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980, after the discovery of the earliest known fossil fragments of Homo Sapiens that have been dated circa 195,000 years old. The Mursi, Suri, Nyangatom, Dizi and Me'en are reported in danger of displacement and/or denial of access to their traditional grazing and agricultural land.

{mospagebreak title=Nech Sar National Park}

## Nech Sar National Park

Located in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region immediately to the east of Arba Minch, its 514 square kilometers of territory include the "Bridge of God" (an isthmus between Lakes Abaya and Chamo), and the Nech sar (in English: white grass) plains east of the lakes. Park elevations range between 1108 and 1650 meters above sea level.

Nech Sar National Park was established in 1974. Wildlife in the park includes Plains Zebra, Grant's gazelle, Dik-dik, and the Greater Kudu as well as one of the last three populations of the endangered Swayne's Hartebeest, endemic to Ethiopia. A stretch of the northwest shore of Lake Chamo is known as Crocodile Market, where hundreds of Crocodiles gather to sun themselves.

{mospagebreak title=Gambella National Park}

## Gambella National Park

This remains a proposed National Park. Located in the Gambella Region, its 5061 square kilometers of territory is encroached upon by cotton plantations and refugee camps.

The Gambella Park was established primarily to protect two species of endangered wetland antelopes: the White-eared kob and the Nile Lechwe. Other wildlife reported as living here include populations of elephant, African Buffalo, lion, roan antelope, tiang, Lelwel Hartebeest, olive baboon, and guereza monkey. Several birds only found in this area include the shoebill stork, the Uelle Paradise Whydah and the Red-throated and Green Bee-eaters.

{mospagebreak title=Yangudi Ras Sanctuary}

## Yangudi Ras Sanctuary

Located in the Afar Region, its 4730 square kilometers of territory include Mount Yangudi and the surrounding Rassa Plains, with altitudes from 400 to 1459 meters above sea level.

This national park was proposed in 1977 in specific to protect the African Wild Ass, but the steps needed to officially establish this park have not been completed as of 2002. The park headquarters are in Gewane. Other animals endemic to the park include Beisa Oryx, Soemmering's and Dorcas gazelle, gerenuk and Grevy's zebra. The Awash - Asseb highway crosses the Yangudi Rassa National Park, as does the Awash River.

Senkelle Swayne's Hartebeest Sanctuary: is a protected area in the Oromia Region of Ethiopia, dedicated especially to the protection of the Swayne's Hartebeest.

{mospagebreak title=Babille wildlife Sanctuary}

#### Babille wildlife Sanctuary

This is a protected area in east part of Ethiopia. Encompassing 6,982 square kilometers, the Sanctuary was created to for the conservation of the native elephant sub-species (*Loxodonta Africana oleansie*), and is also home for the black-manned lion