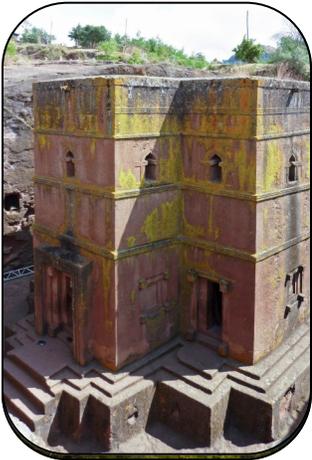


# HIDDEN TREASURES OF ETHIOPIA

September 23, 2016 - 19 Days



a world to experience



## Fares Per Person:

**\$8,125** double/twin

**\$9,175** single



**tour**  
a more intimate travel experience

- > Please add 0.1% GST
- > **Early Bookers:** \$300 discount on first 8 seats; \$150 on next 4
- > **Experience Points:** Earn 160 points from this tour.  
Redeem **160 points** if you book by **June 22.**

## Includes

- Transfers to/from Kelowna Airport
- Flights from Kelowna to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Air transport tax and security fees
- 16 nights accommodation and hotel taxes
- Transfer from airport to Addis Ababa hotel
- Coach transportation in Ethiopia for 16 days
- Knowledgeable multi-lingual guide for 16 days
- Locally-guided tour of Addis Ababa
- National Museum with viewing of ancient skeletons of Lucy and Selam
- Ethnographic Museum
- Flight from Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar
- Boat excursion on Lake Tana
- Entos Monastery or Kibran Gebrael Monastery
- Meskel Eve and Meskel Celebrations
- Blue Nile Falls
- Palace of Emperor Haile Selassie
- Locally-guided tour of Gondar
- Royal Enclosure & Bath of King Fasilides
- Debre Birhan Selassie Church
- Simien Mountains National Park & Tekeze Gorge
- Guided walk among the Axum Obelisks
- Axum Archeological Museum
- Kaleb and Gebremeskel tombs
- Ezana Stone
- Coffee ceremony with a local family
- Flight from Axum to Lalibela
- Guided walk through Lalibela rock churches
- Yemrehane Kristos cave church
- Bet Giorgis rock church
- Flight from Lalibela to Arba Minch
- Wildlife viewing boat excursion on Lake Chamo
- Visits to Dorze and Konso tribes
- Visits to Arbore, Dassenech and Hamar tribes
- Boat trip on Omo River
- Abiyata Shalla National Park
- Farewell Dinner with traditional folkloric dances
- Flights from Addis Ababa to Kelowna
- Gratuities for Ethiopia guide, drivers, local guides
- Luggage handling at hotels
- Wells Gray tour director throughout tour
- **47 meals:** 15 breakfasts, 15 lunches, 17 dinners

Kamloops > 250-374-0831

Kelowna > 250-762-3435

[www.wellsgraytours.com](http://www.wellsgraytours.com)

Penticton > 250-493-1255

Vernon > 250-545-9197

Toll Free > 800-667-9552



## *Experience Ethiopia with Wells Gray Tours!*

Ethiopia is a little off the beaten track for African travellers who may be attracted to more famous countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Morocco, South Africa, and Egypt. In the years ahead, Ethiopia will be "discovered" by tourists, so this is an amazing opportunity to experience this fascinating country while it remains unique and affordable. This journey features Bahir Dar to witness the Meskel Celebration; Lake Tana with its island monasteries; the awesome Blue Nile Falls; Gondar, the Camelot of Africa with its 16<sup>th</sup> century castles and churches; Simien Mountains National Park, home to many endemic mammals and birds; the ancient city of Axum, famous for its obelisks and the legendary Ark of the Covenant; Lalibela with 11 rock-hewn churches, still active places of worship centuries later; and the South Omo Valley, home of colourful tribes and ethnic groups with traditional cultures that have changed little in a thousand years.

Fraser Neave, Wells Gray Tours' Director of Product Development, was invited by the Ethiopian Government to tour the country in fall 2014 and he was so impressed that he created this tour. "Visiting Ethiopia was certainly everything and nothing that I expected it to be. Each day provided new intuition into the magic that the people, culture, history, and traditions offer to the traveller. The country is absolutely foreign but so unique that it is strangely familiar and welcoming. A 'wow' moment or three every day, such as the view from my mountaintop hotel room in Lalibela after a day exploring the incredible monolithic rock-cut churches of the area; or our visit to the Konso tribe in the South where we took part in traditional ceremonies for the children who were coming of age. I loved being here right from the start and I knew that there would be so many others from Canada looking for these kind of unique travel experiences that are so memorable you can't wait to return to see more."

This tour flies from Kelowna to Toronto, then by Ethiopian Airlines to Addis Ababa. During the next 17 days, we travel by coach, boat, local airplanes, and foot to see highlights throughout the country. We stay in deluxe 4-star hotels in the cities and comfortable lodges in the backcountry.

The tour will be accompanied from British Columbia by a Wells Gray tour director. A thoroughly experienced multi-lingual guide travels with us throughout Ethiopia. Local guides conduct sightseeing tours in several cities. You will be expertly guided and well looked after!

### **Tour Notes:**

- All meals in Ethiopia except one lunch are included, along with non-alcoholic beverages and tips.
- A passport is required for this tour and must be valid for 6 months after October 11, the tour's return date. A tourist visa is also required and details on applying for it will be provided at final payment.
- Rooms for singles are often a different style or smaller size than twin rooms. Many hotels also limit the number of single rooms allocated to a group, so please book early if you prefer to travel single. Rooms for triples are not available.
- You may need a vaccination. Please visit a travel clinic two or three months before departure. Bring this itinerary and your personal vaccination record for advice.
- This tour is limited to 25 travelers.



**Activity Level:** This tour is rated as Activity Level 3 because tour members should be able to walk up to 3 km at an easy pace, climb many stairs without assistance, or walk on sidewalks or streets with uneven pavement. There are walking tours in the historic districts of some cities and some attractions such as the Lalibela rock churches require a lot of walking to see everything. It is a 20 minute walk on a trail to the Blue Nile Falls. Some hotels or lodges do not have elevators and your room may be up a flight of stairs. There can be longer walks in Toronto and Addis Ababa airports; request a cart in advance if this could be an issue for you. This tour is not appropriate if you depend on a cane or walker. Please consider any mobility issues carefully prior to booking this tour, as you may miss some highlights. Prior to accepting your booking, you will be required to sign a declaration that you are capable of travelling on an Activity Level 3 tour. The tour director, Ethiopian guide, local guides, and drivers have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance.

## Itinerary

### Friday, September 23:

Meals: D

Transfers are provided from Kamloops, Salmon Arm, and many Okanagan points to Kelowna Airport. We fly on Westjet to Toronto, and stay overnight at an airport hotel.

### Saturday, September 24:

Departure is in the morning on **Ethiopian Airlines** non-stop to Addis Ababa. The flight duration is 13 hours and Ethiopia is 10 hours ahead of Pacific Time.

### Sunday, September 25:

Meals: L,D

Our flight lands at **Addis Ababa** International Airport about 7 am and we are met by our Ethiopian guide and driver. Our hotel is the Radisson Blu and early check-in is arranged to provide a rest after the long flight. Addis Ababa is situated where the Great Rift Valley crosses Ethiopia's mountain range at an altitude of 7,000 feet. It is a large sprawling city with a population of more than five million people. At the **National Museum**, we see the skeleton of **Selam**, a female *Australopithecus afarensis*. She was discovered in 2000 in Ethiopia and is 3.3 million years old. She is less famous than Lucy who was discovered nearby in 1974 and lived 150,000 years after Selam. A plastic replica of **Lucy** is also on display and the original skeleton is preserved in the museum. In the afternoon, we visit **Entoto Mountain** and enjoy a panoramic view of Addis Ababa. Here, Emperor Menelek I, founded the city about 950 AD and his descendants ruled Ethiopia for nearly 3,000 years or 225 generations. We visit two churches he built and his palace. Next we tour the **Ethnographic Museum** of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies and view precious pieces of Ethiopian Christian art.

### Monday, September 26:

Meals: B,L,D

It is an hour's flight from Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar. We take a boat trip on **Lake Tana**, the source of the Blue Nile and largest lake in Ethiopia, measuring 84 km long and 66 km wide. It is noted for its many island monasteries including the Ura Kidane Mehret Monastery with its renowned painted maqdas. The boat stops at two islands and due to strict gender regulations governing access, women will visit **Entos Monastery** and men will visit **Kibran Gebrael Monastery**. They date from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Later, we attend the **Meskel Eve Celebration** where tabots (replicas of the Ark of the Covenant) from various churches are carried by their respective high priests to the place where the actual celebration takes place

tomorrow. The procession is very colourful and attended by thousands of local Christian people dressed in traditional white, singing and dancing to accompany the tabots. We stay two nights in **Bahir Dar** at the splendid Khariftu Resort, located on the shore of Lake Tana.

### Tuesday, September 27:

Meals: B,L,D

We attend Meskel which is held annually and celebrated by dancing, feasting and lighting a massive bonfire known in Ethiopian tradition as "Damera". Meskel commemorates the discovery by Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, of the True Cross on which Christ was crucified in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. This afternoon, we drive an hour east of Bahir Dar, then walk 20 minutes on a trail to the impressive **Blue Nile Falls**, locally known as Tis Isat or 'Smoke of Fire'. The falls are 45 m high and up to 400 m wide (in the rainy season). The surrounding area is extremely fertile and the local Amhara people farm wheat, sorghum and teff which Injera, the national bread, is made from. Later, we visit the Market at Bahir Dar and the **Palace of Emperor Hailesilassie**. The palace is built atop a hill and has a splendid view of the Blue Nile and Bahir Dar.

### Wednesday, September 28:

Meals: B,L,D

We drive through fertile, undulating farmlands to the ancient **Imperial city of Gondar**. Founded in 1635, it was the capital of Ethiopia for over two centuries and was a commercial centre for a vast area of east Africa. The city is known for its medieval castles and finely adorned churches, and is nicknamed Camelot of Africa. Upon arrival in Gondar, we visit the Royal Enclosure, the Bath of King Fasilides, and the Debre Birhan Selassie Church with its extensive murals of angels' faces. We stay overnight at the Goha Hotel.

### Thursday, September 29:

Meals: B,L,D

Leaving Gondar, we visit the former Falasha village of **Waleka** to see some examples of their traditional pottery still made by the few Jewish people remaining after the exodus to Israel in 1991. We drive through a breathtaking landscape while ascending into Ethiopia's highlands. Our destination is **Simien Mountains National Park**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site which protects some of Africa's most dramatic scenery: alpine peaks, glaciers, lofty escarpments rising above remote valley settlements, and an abundance of wildlife including the ibex, the endemic bleeding heart baboons, the Simien Wolf, and numerous species

of birds. **Mount Ras Dashen** is seen here, Ethiopia's highest mountain and Africa's 10<sup>th</sup> highest at 4,550 m (15,000 feet). We stay overnight at Simien Lodge in the national park which is the highest hotel in Africa, perched on a spectacular ridge at 3,300 m.

**Friday, September 30:** *Meals: B,D*

The scenic drive continues through the remarkable **Limalimo Mountains and Tekeze Gorge** which reaches depths of 2,000 m and is considered the deepest gorge in Africa. We pass small villages sandwiched between mountain massifs where people eke out an existence in this unforgiving countryside. Our destination is the ancient capital of Axum and we stay two nights at Sabean Hotel.

**Saturday, October 1:** *Meals: B,L,D*

Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, **Axum** is a testament to the rich and glorious past of the mighty Kingdom of Axum which lasted from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to 700 AD. This morning we stroll among Axum's extraordinary **obelisks** which date to 1,600 years ago. The Archaeological Museum is nearby. In the afternoon, we visit the **Kaleb and Gebremeskel tombs**, dating to the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, and the **Ezana Stone** where King Ezana inscribed his conquests between 330 and 356 AD. Tradition has it that the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Ethiopia in the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC by Menelik I and later Ethiopian kings and emperors proclaimed their legitimacy to rule by their lineage to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Today, our guide discusses the development of Christianity in Ethiopia and its relation to the Ark, and also the story of Queen of Sheba. We visit a local home to observe their daily activities and have lunch with the family.

**Sunday, October 2:** *Meals: B,L,D*

We fly from Axum to Lalibela, a quick 40-minute flight. **Lalibela** is a striking town set at 2,500 m in wild, craggy mountains with two-storey stone houses that are quite different to those in the rest of Ethiopia. The town is renowned for its huge 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century **rock churches** carved below ground level and connected by a maze of subterranean passages. Each of the churches is unique and intricately carved, and is in continuous use. Visit some of these unique churches cradled among the rocks – Bet Medhane Alem, Bet Maryam, Bet Mokaël, Bet Danaghel, and Bet Golgotha. They were designated a World Heritage Site in 1978. We stay two nights at Maribela Hotel.

**Monday, October 3:** *Meals: B,L,D*

In the morning, we visit **Yemrehanna Kristos**, undoubtedly the finest church outside of Lalibela. This church is built rather than excavated within a cave. The tomb of Kristos is here, as are the bones of countless pilgrims who chose to be buried here. This afternoon, we explore the most elegant and best preserved of Lalibela's churches, **Bet Giorgis**, located on a sloping rock terrace.

**Tuesday, October 4:** *Meals: B,L,D*

We fly from Lalibela to Addis Ababa, then continue to **Arba Minch**. We stay two nights at Paradise Lodge in cabins.

**Wednesday, October 5:** *Meals: B,L,D*

We take a refreshing boat excursion on **Lake Chamo** where crocodiles bask on the shore and hippos cool themselves in the water. Birdlife is abundant here including weavers, sunbirds, waxbills, and colonies of pelicans. After lunch, there is a short drive to visit the **Dorze tribe** and their village, famed for their beehive-shaped houses and their weaving skills. They are also farmers who prevent soil erosion by ingenious terracing of the mountainsides. Around their huts they have their own little gardens with vegetables, spices, tobacco and enset (false-banana).

**Thursday, October 6:** *Meals: B,L,D*

We visit the **Konso people**, known for their religious traditions and waga sculptures. The nearby fossil beds are a World Heritage Site and excavations have uncovered early hominids. In the village of Arbore, the 4,000 residents subsist as agro pastoralists. Cattle is their most important possession and their agriculture (maize and sorghum), together with animal husbandry, is vital for their subsistence and is maintained by an elaborate irrigation system alongside the River Weyto. The Arbore are expert botanists who can distinguish between 130 different kinds of sorghum. On arrival in **Turmi**, we stay two nights at Buska Lodge.

**Friday, October 7:** *Meals: B,L,D*

In the morning, we visit the colourful **Dassenech tribes** who live just north of Kenya's Lake Turkana. Their neighboring tribe is the Turkana people who were cattle herders, but due to the harsh environment, they have moved south to grow crops and fish. We experience an adventurous crossing of the **Omo River** with a boat. During the return to Turmi, we stop at the Hamer village. These people have remarkable hairstyles made from ochre, water, and binding resin, and are considered to be masters of body decoration.

**Saturday, October 8:***Meals: B,L,D*

We visit the colourful weekly **Dimeka Market**. The Hamar and the culturally-similar Banna people come there from the surrounding countryside to sell their wares, produce and livestock, making this an interesting market to observe. You may also witness the "Jumping of the Bulls" ceremony, where women allegedly "beg" to be whipped to show their love for the male relative in the ceremony. Continuing to **Konso**, we may make impromptu stops for special sights such as meeting tribes on the road and shepherds. We stay overnight at Kanta Lodge in cottages surrounded by delightful gardens.

**Sunday, October 9:***Meals: B,L,D*

We travel north via the tribal village of Alaba whose people are noted for their beautifully painted houses. The village of Wolita is known for cultivation of false banana and its residents wear colourful cotton clothes. In the afternoon, we arrive at **Awassa** and enjoy the splendid lakeside setting of the Lewi Resort for our last night in Ethiopia.

**Monday, October 10:***Meals: B,L,D*

We visit the scenic morning fish market in Awassa where the fishermen sell their fresh tilapia, catfish, and barbus, and pelicans and storks compete for the leftovers. You can also spot black and white colombus monkeys. Leaving Awassa, we take a drive through **Abiyata Shalla National Park**, famous for its flamingos and ostriches. En route to Addis Ababa, we stop at the rift valley lakes of Ziway and Debre Zeit to spot more bird life. Back in the city, tonight's Farewell to Ethiopia dinner is at a superb restaurant where you can enjoy **traditional folkloric dances** and taste a variety of Ethiopian cuisine. Then we head out to the airport for our international flight to Toronto leaving about 11 pm.

**Tuesday, October 11:**

We arrive in Toronto about 8 am, then continue by Westjet to Kelowna. Transfers are provided to our home cities.

**Tour Policies**

**Payments:** A deposit of \$600 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due June 22, 2016.

**Discounts:** Early bookers receive \$300 discount on first 8 seats and \$150 on next 4 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after June 22.

**Cancellation Policy:** Up to May 20, 2016, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$50 per person. From May 21 to June 22, the cancellation charge is \$300 per person. From June 23 to July 22, the cancellation charge is 40% of the tour fare. From July 23 to August 18, the cancellation charge is 70% of the tour fare. After August 18, there is no refund.

**Fare and hotel changes:** Fluctuations of the US dollar, changes to taxes, and surcharges from airlines and other tour suppliers can occur at any time and are beyond the control of Wells Gray Tours, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up until the time of departure. Hotels may also change to equivalent ones.

**Photo Credit:** Lalibela Rock Church (Wikipedia)

**Tour 25:** This is a Tour 25 departure, meaning capacity of tour is limited to 25 participants, a more intimate travel experience.

**Travel Insurance:** A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

**e-points:** This tour earns 160 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until June 22.

**Consumer Protection BC Licence:** Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924