



TRAVEL THE UNKNOWN

TAKE THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

WESTERN OMO EXPLORER

14 days



Countries visited

Ethiopia

Tour Highlights

- Meet Lucy, the world's oldest humanoid
- Visit coffee farms
- Tribes of the Omo Valley
- Visit the settlement of the Surma people
- Tribal cultures of the Western Omo
- Spot incredible wildlife in Chebera Churchura National Park
- Enjoy the hot springs of Wondo Genet
- Chance to spot endemic Ethiopian wolf and mountain nyala in Bale Mountains

Places visited

Addis Ababa • Omo Valley • Jimma • Mizan Teferi • Tulgit • Bonga • Kaffa • Chebera Churchura National Park
• Shashemene • Wondo Genet • Bale Mountains • Lake Langano • Lake Abijata- Shala

What's included

- Arrival & departure transfers
- Ground transport with driver

- Accommodation (camping in places)
- Meals (full board)
- English-speaking guides
- Entrance fees to sites & parks

What's not included

- Drinks
- Visa fees
- Tipping
- Camera / video camera fees
- Personal items (laundry, telephone, etc.)
- Medical expenses
- Any services not mentioned in itinerary

All accommodation subject to availability. Final accommodation choices will be confirmed after booking.

Your Itinerary Map



Your Itinerary Explained

Date	Place visited	Meals
	<p>The first part of the text in each day is the itinerary schedule and will explain what you will normally see/do during this day of your itinerary.</p> <p>---</p> <p><i>The part of the day's text in italics (and comes after the three dashes "---") is background information on the places or sites on that day of your itinerary. It is not part of your itinerary and may mention places that will not be visited on your itinerary. If you have any questions please ask us. Travel times where noted are only meant as a guideline.</i></p>	<p>B: Breakfast</p> <p>L: Lunch</p> <p>D: Dinner</p>

Tour Itinerary

Day 1	Arrival in Addis Ababa	Meals
	<p>Upon arrival, you will be met by our Travel The Unknown representative and transferred to your hotel in the heart of Addis Ababa. After checking-in to your hotel, you will enjoy an afternoon of sightseeing in Addis Ababa. The rest of the day will be free for you to relax. Overnight in Addis Ababa.</p> <p>---</p> <p><i>The St. George Church was established in 1982 to preserve and promote Ethiopian Orthodox clergy. It is a small octagonal building that was the site of Emperor Haile Selassie's coronation.</i></p> <p><i>The National Museum in Addis Ababa holds an interesting collection of artefacts from Ethiopia's illustrious past. The undoubted star is Lucy, a skeleton of a female <i>Australopithecus afarensis</i>, named from the Afar region of Ethiopia where she was found. Discovered in 1974, Lucy is 3.2 million years old and shares traits with apes (her skull) and with humans (walking upright), leading to claims of the 'missing link' having been discovered. Sometimes the museum exhibits a replica when Lucy is on tour overseas.</i></p> <p><i>Addis Ababa is Africa's fourth largest city, with an area of 250sq/km, and is located at an altitude of 2,300m above sea level. It is a vast place with a thriving population of over 2,750,000 people. There is a wide range of visitor attractions, including many museums and educational institutions. It has most recently become known as the 'spa city of Africa'.</i></p> <p><i>Overnight in Saro-Maria, Addis Ababa</i></p>	<p>L D</p>

Day 2

Addis Ababa - Jimma

Meals



Omo Valley

After breakfast, you will drive to Jimma. En route, you will visit the Gurage people in the town of Welkite and stop off to admire the stunning Ghibe Gorge.

B L D

Upon arrival in Jimma, check in at hotel. You will then drive to the “Choche” coffee farm, which is believed to be the place where coffee was founded. Here, you'll explore the grounds of the coffee farm and visit the nearby coffee gene bank where 4898 species of coffee trees are preserved.

Later, drive back to Jimma.

***Jimma** is the largest city in southwestern Ethiopia, pitched at an altitude of 5840 feet above sea level. This bustling city is around 50sq/km and has a population of over 207,500 people. It offers a range of attractions to visitors including the palace of Abba Jifar, Ghibe Gorge, wild coffee plantations and fascinating tribal villages.*

Overnight in Honey Land Hotel, Jimma

Day 3

Jimma - Mizan Teferi

Meals



Mizan Teferi

After breakfast, drive from Jimma to Mizan Teferi. You will spend the day at one of Mizan Teferi's famous coffee farms, exploring the grounds and learning about the fascinating history behind Ethiopia's coffee production.

B L D

***Mizan Teferi** is located in southern Ethiopia and is the largest town in the Bench Maji Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region. The area is home to 34,000 people and two of Ethiopia's major tribes. Many of the people of Mizan Teferi make a living by working in the regions state/private owned tea and coffee farms. Bebeke, one of the biggest former state farms, is also located within this zone. It covers 6,537 hectares of land and produces more than 15,000 quintals of Arabica coffee each year, making it Ethiopia's main producer.*

Overnight in Coffee Plantation Guest House, Mizan Teferi

Day 4

Mizan Teferi - Tulgit

Meals



Tulgit

After breakfast, you will drive from Mizan Teferi to Tulgit.

B L D

Upon arrival in Tulgit, you will take a trip to the settlement of the Surma tribe. During your visit, there will be a rare opportunity to witness Ethiopia's tribal culture and learn about the Surma's fascinating history in Ethiopia.

You will spend the night in tented accommodation.

Tulgit is the settlement of the Surma people. The Surma women are well known for their culture of lip-plating, which is undoubtedly painful. Once a girl reaches a certain age, her lower incisors are knocked out and her bottom lip is pierced and stretched until it can hold a clay plate. No-one knows why lip plates were first introduced, although one theory is that they were meant to discourage slavers from taking Surma women. The Surma men are famous for their stick fighting ceremony, "Donga". "Donga" is a ceremony for the initiation of children to adulthood, but is presently banned by the regional government as it is considered harmful practice.

Each household in Tulgit is run by a woman, who have their own fields and are allowed to dispose of the profits as they wish. The money they make from selling beer and grain is used to buy goats, which they can then trade for cattle. Cattle are enormously important to the Surma and symbolise status. In fact, when two Surma meet they'll ask each other how many cows they own. The Surma herd their highly prized cattle in the plains of south-western Ethiopia, where competition for land is very fierce. Consequently, the Surma pride themselves on the scars they carry from the battle for land.

Their animals aren't generally sold or killed for meat and though they are slaughtered for certain ceremonies, they are treated with a deep respect. Fires are lit to keep them warm and they are covered with ash to protect them from insect bites. At a young age, every boy in the village is given a young bull to look after and it is common for his friends to call him the name of his bull. The cow is so important to the Surma that they sing songs in praise of their cattle and mourn them when they die. When it comes to religious beliefs, there is no real veneration of the earth or earth spirits. The Surma have a sky God, Tuma, who is an abstract divine force.

Day 5

Tulgit - Kibish

Meals



Tulgit

After breakfast, you will visit another nearby settlement of the Surma tribe, Kibish. Upon arrival, you will be given the chance to explore the village of Kibish and witness more of traditional tribal life in Ethiopia.

B L D

You will spend the night in tented accommodation.

Day 6	Kibish - Mizan Teferi	Meals
 <p data-bbox="105 517 272 551">Mizan Teferi</p>	<p data-bbox="312 300 1409 371">After breakfast, you will drive back to Mizan Teferi. En route, enjoy stunning scenery and mountainous landscapes.</p> <p data-bbox="312 412 1401 445">Upon arrival in Mizan Teferi, the rest of the day will be free for you to spend as you please.</p> <p data-bbox="312 486 799 519"><i>Overnight in Salayish Hotel, Mizan Teferi</i></p>	B L D
Day 7	Mizan Teferi - Bonga	Meals
 <p data-bbox="105 972 229 1005">Bonga</p>	<p data-bbox="312 754 1326 788">Today, you will drive from Kibish to Bonga, which is in the heart of the Kaffa region.</p> <p data-bbox="312 828 683 862">Upon arrival, check-in to hotel.</p> <p data-bbox="312 902 1054 936">The rest of the day will be free for you to spend as you please.</p> <p data-bbox="312 947 341 969">---</p> <p data-bbox="312 976 1409 1229"><i>As the name indicates, the area of Kaffa represents the cradle of the coffee plant, in particular the highland variety "arabica". The cloud forests in the Kaffa region form the habitat of the last remaining populations of wild-growing Coffea Arabica and are considered to be the original source of this species. In Kaffa, centuries of wild growth and mostly undisturbed evolution have produced around 5000 varieties of coffee. Coffee plants are a part of the delicately balanced forest ecosystem in Kaffa and have always been used by the local inhabitants, being picked both for personal use and for sale at local markets.</i></p> <p data-bbox="312 1270 1409 1559"><i>The area enjoys an abundance of rainfall and is also home to Ethiopia's most important reserve of rain forest. However, timber processing, fuel wood consumption and general population increases with growing demands for arable land have led to deforestation. The main food crops include Enset ("false banana") and maize, which the staple foods as well as wheat and barley. Food production in this zone is sufficient to support the population of an estimated one million. While the majority of the population is composed of the ethnic groups Shekicha and Keficho, some Amharas, Oromos and Tigreans have also settled in the zone, particularly in urban areas.</i></p> <p data-bbox="312 1637 1409 1850"><i>Bonga is located within the upper Barta Valley meaning that it is bursting with incredible scenery and is known as one of the greenest areas in Ethiopia. This bustling town is the administrative centre of Kaffa, the birthplace of coffee. In addition to coffee, this area is also famous for its honey and is home to an array of incredible wildlife, including colobus monkeys. Hot springs, caves, waterfalls and a bamboo forest which is endemic to Ethiopia can also be found within Bonga's surrounding areas.</i></p> <p data-bbox="312 1890 772 1924"><i>Overnight in Coffee Land Hotel, Bonga</i></p>	B L D

Day 8

Bonga - Mankira - Chebera Churchura Park

Meals



Chebera
Churchura
National Park

Early in the morning, you will head to Mankira. Here, you will spend time in the jungle and learn about the birthplace of coffee.

B L D

Coffee was discovered in Ethiopia between the 3rd and 10th centuries. Today, many rumours and tales exist about how coffee's energizing properties were discovered. However, the following story is a popularly accepted account in Ethiopia.

"A young herdsman called Kaldi first observed the stimulating properties of wild coffee when his goats became hyperactive after eating the leaves and berries. Kaldi swallowed some of the berries himself and found that he too became abnormally excited. He ran to a nearby monastery to share his discovery. Initially, the monks did not share the young goatherd's enthusiasm, but instead chastised him for bringing evil stimulants to their monastery and threw the offending berries into the fire. But then, seduced by the aromatic smell of the roasting berries, the monks decided to give them a try and found that they were unusually alert during their nocturnal prayers. Soon, it became accepted practice throughout Christian Ethiopia to chew coffee beans before lengthy prayer sessions, a custom that still persists today."

After your visit to Mankira, there will be an evening trip to Chebera Churchura Park. You will enjoy a game drive on the lookout for Ethiopia's endemic birds and incredible wildlife, admiring the scenery along the way.

You will spend the night in tented accommodation.

Chebera Churchura National Park is a stunning natural area located about 330km southwest of Hawassa and 460km of Addis Ababa. It spans an area of 1215km² that ranges in altitude from 700 to 2450m above sea level. The Park is fortunate in possessing numerous rivers and streams, along with four small crater lakes which facilitate much of the rich wildlife resources of the area. Zigina River rises from the north-east highlands of the area; it crosses the central part of the park and feeds the Omo River. Shoshuma River rises from the north-western highlands of the Konta area highlands. The river crosses the north-eastern part of the park and meets the Zigina River inside the park, which come together to feed the Omo River.

The White-Crowned Cliff Chat, Banded-Barbet, Wattled Ibis, Black-Headed Forest Oriole and Thick Billed Raven are just some of Ethiopia's native birds which can be found in the park. Along with some of Africa's common mammals which include the African Elephant, Hippopotamus, Cape Buffalo, Lion and Leopard. Currently, Chebera Churchura National Park appears to be the least disturbed and reliable ecosystem for the African Elephant and Buffalo.

Day 9

Chebera Churchura Park

Meals



Chebera
Churchura
National Park

Today, you will enjoy a full day safari in Chebera Churchura National Park. You'll be given the chance to spot herds of North African Elephants, Lions, Cape Buffalo and an array of birds endemic to Ethiopia.

You will stay overnight in tented accommodation.

B L D

Day 10

Chebera Churchura National Park - Shashemene

Meals



Shashemene

Early in the morning, you will drive from Chebera Churchura National Park to Shashemene. En route, enjoy the hot springs of Wondo Genet or explore its stunning forested hills via one of the area's hiking trails.

Upon arrival in Shashemene, check-in to hotel.

B L D

Wondo Genet is a very popular hot-spring resort destination situated among forested hills, which is mainly visited by residents. The resort was originally established during the time of Haile Selase for himself and his family as a private weekend retreat. There are a number of natural attractions in the vicinity, including an outdoor swimming pool which is fed by the hot springs. The surrounding area is an ideal place for bird watchers, a large variety of forest birds can be found including the Abyssinian Woodpecker, Ethiopian Oriole, Yellow Fronted Parrot, Mountain Buzzard and Spotted Creeper Banded Barbet. The compound also supports the Anabas Baboon, Gureza and Grivet Monkey. Alongside this, there are also a number of incredible hiking trails to be found throughout the park.

Overnight in Haile Resort, Shashemene

Day 11**Shashemene - Bale Mountains National Park****Meals**

Shashemene

After breakfast, drive to Bale Mountains National Park.

B L D

Upon arrival in the Bale Mountain's headquarters of Dinsho, you'll be given a chance to explore the area, admire its stunning scenery and spot wild life such as the endemic Minilik Bushbuck, Mountain Nyala and Warthog.

You will spend the night in tented accommodation.

*Grassland areas, waist-high wildflowers and juniper trees make up much of the landscape of **Bale Mountains National Park**, along with dazzling alpine lakes and streams. The Haremma Forest covers almost half of the park, and offers gorgeous lichen-draped giant trees. More endemic animals live in the Bale Mountains than any other terrestrial habitat in the world. The Ethiopian wolf makes his home here, as well as the mountain nyala (a spiral-horned antelope), the Bale monkey and the giant mole rat. Look down from the second highest point in Ethiopia, Tulu Dimtu at 4,377m above sea level, take a deep breath, and smile at all that Ethiopia's unbelievable landscape has to offer.*

Overnight in Goba Webe Shebelle, Bale Mountains

Day 12**Bale Mountains National Park****Meals**

Senetti Plateau

Today, you will enjoy a full day excursion to the Senetti Plateau. You will explore the Senetti Plateau's afro-alpine habitat and diverse landscape via mountain walking or horse trekking. You will also be given the chance to spot some more of Ethiopia's wildlife, including the Mountain Nyala, Simien Fox and an array of birdlife.

B L D

*The Afro-Montane **Senetti 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 which are surrounded by higher volcanic ridges and peaks. The southern slopes are covered by the lush and largely unexplored Haremma Forest. As you ascend into the mountains you will experience changes in the vegetation with the rising altitude, from juniper forests to heather moorlands and alpine meadows which exhibit an abundance of colourful wildflowers. The Senetti Plateau is also home to the largest population of the rare and endangered Ethiopian Wolf.*

Overnight in Goba Webe Shebelle, Bale Mountains

Day 13

Bale Mountains National Park - Langano

Meals



Lake Langano

After breakfast, drive to Lake Langano.

B L D

You will spend time at the lake, enjoying the spectacular mountain scenery and aquatic birdlife. Visitors will also have the chance to swim in Lake Langano, as it is the only fresh body of water in the region free from bilharzia and is therefore safe to enter.

Lake Langano is one of a series of lakes that run south down the Ethiopian Rift Valley and into Kenya. The eastern shore of Lake Langano is a delight to explore on foot or horseback, and is home to a variety of birds and mammals. The forests consist mainly of podocarpus and wild fig trees, are full of Colobus Monkeys and have over 300 species of birds, seven of which are native to Ethiopia. There are also numerous wild mammals there, although their populations are decreasing in size due to the traditional seasonal hunting of the local communities.

Total travel time : 3 hours

Day 14

Langano - Addis Ababa - Departure

Meals



Flight

After breakfast, drive back to Addis Ababa. En route, you will visit Abijata Shala National Park. Here, you will spot aquatic birdlife and visit the parks great twin lakes, Abijata and Shalla. Before departing back to the hotel, there will also be a visit to the shallowest lake of Zeway.

B L D

After a farewell dinner at a traditional Ethiopian restaurant, you will transfer to airport for return flight home.

Lake Abijata- Shala- is located in the Abijata Shala Lake National Park and is a joining river of the Gogessa, Bulbula and Hora Kelo which flow into Lake Abijata. At 14m deep, this lake is very shallow, whereas Lake Shala, which fills the crater of an old volcano, is 266m deep. Environmental problems are beginning to plague the lake; with the water being extracted daily to feed power plants, there has been a drop in water levels and wildlife in and around the lake.