



**Ethiopian**  
Holidays



**EXOTIC AND TIMELESS**  
4<sup>TH</sup> EDITION

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## 1. NATURAL ATTRACTION

### WONCHI CRATER

Wonchi Crater is an extinct volcano with a vividly beautiful blue lake. The lake is surrounded by Afro Alpine moorland amidst lush green forestry. The densely cultivated caldera surrounds the beautiful lake and the island monastery of Wonchi Chirkos, which was founded in the 13th century by Saint Tekle Haymanot. It is an easy day trip from Addis, and visitors can also enjoy hot mineral springs, waterfalls, picturesque valleys and fertile farmland.

In addition to using a boat to across the monastery on the lake, there are also a number of guided day hikes and mule treks ranging in length from 4 km to 16 km.

Wonchi Crater Lake is around 10,000 feet above sea level and is located around 155 kilometers from Addis Ababa between the towns of Ambo and Wolliso.





## SOF OMAR CAVES

The spectacular and extensive Sof Omar Caves are located near the Bale Mountains; the River Weib from the mountains penetrate the caves all year long vanishing into a giant underground world with arched portals, high eroded ceilings, and deep, vaulted echoing chambers. Sof Omar offers an extraordinary natural phenomenon of breathtaking beauty and at 15.1 kilometres it is also the longest cave in Ethiopia. The caves were named after a 12th century Sheik Sof Omar Ahmed who took refuge there and it remains an important pilgrimage site for Ethiopian Muslims'. The large central hall of Sof Omar, the 'Chamber of Columns' is one of the highest of the cave system. Inside the caves, the only living creatures are bats, fish, and crustaceans.

**S**of Omar did not become a tourist attraction until after the late 1960s when the Ethiopian Tourist Board published a brochure about the caves around 1976. Holqa Sof Omar is a well preserved sacred place of worship, which has helped the preservation of the indigenous forest environment of the area and a natural habitat of the surrounding wildlife which includes dik-dik and kudu, serval cat, rock hyrax, giant tortoises, snakes, and lizards as well as more than one hundred species of birds.

The caves are profoundly important for their classic features of underground geomorphology, demonstrating an evolutionary history of millions of years. Caves and krasts are important as store houses of past climates, vegetation, fauna and human cultures, and the same is true for Sof Omar cave system.





## GHERALTA

The amazing Gheralta cluster of Tigray rock churches must be seen to be believed. You will visit the extraordinary Churches of Abuna Yemata and Mariam Korkor. Abuna Yemata is situated on a spectacular cliff edge and to access the church you must bravely attempt a precarious ledge but guides will assist you as needed even by pulling with ropes. Mariam Korkor is an impressive cross shaped church renowned for its architectural features and is one of the largest churches of the area. There is a steep but less arduous one-hour ascent to reach this church. Gheralta is home to a quarter of the rock hewn churches in Ethiopia, famous for their stone workmanship, ancient paintings and manuscripts as well as magnificent views that many offer once you achieve the steep ascent climb to reach them

The Gheralta Mountain range in Eastern Tigray, has always been revered for stupendous mountains and a cluster of remarkable and incredible ancient churches (around 120). Intrepid travelers are keen to scale the heights to visit the ultimate destination; some ancient churches (some dating back to the 4th century) built into the sheer face of mountains with exquisite ecclesiastical wall paintings and religious serenity. An amazing clip from the BBC Earth's Natural Wonders "Surviving Against the Odds" series recently went viral showing villagers climbing a huge, vertiginous mountainside to reach their church (Abuna Yemata Guh) for the baptism of baby Dawit. The villagers believe that it is vital and beneficial for their children to be baptized





#### NATURAL ATTRACTION

here, despite the seemingly obvious dangers (to western eyes). Just 40 days after giving birth, Orthodox tradition dictates that Ngisti must climb 400 meters to have her baby son baptized.

If scaling vertical heights is simply beyond your physical capability, rest assured that there are plenty of other activities to see and do within the region. The geography of the plateau terrain is spectacular in its own right and offers great hiking (with a local guide) including exploration of plateau churches. Giorgis Maikado is one such church, it is a well-preserved 4th century caves church near Hawzen village. The terrain around the church is gorgeous including ancient forests, aloe vera bushes/trees and traditional golden stone house villages scattered across the dramatic landscape. Many church walls and ceilings still bear the black burn marks as a reminder of attacks against the church by 10th century rebel Queen Yodit/Gudit - there are varied oral history accounts about this formidable woman and her origin. Many church artifacts were completely destroyed during her wave of destruction.

The road between Wukro and Megab village, follows the curves of the majestic Gheralta range and off which you will find paths to the most well-known mountain churches. The red stone 10th century cave church of Abraha We Atsbeha (twin kings) is regarded by many as one of the finest Tigray churches. The cross shaped Maryam Korkor is one of the largest open area churches to visit; it does involve a climb but not nearly as strenuous as Abuna Yemata Guh! A pleasant path from the village gradually evolves into a steep final one-hour ascent to reach the church.



## 2. HISTORICAL ATTRACTION

### YEHA TEMPLE

**N**ow a sleepy village of traditional stone houses centred on a 6th century church founded by Abba Aftse, Yeha is actually a major Bronze Age site of huge importance and was once the capital of a well-organized pre-Aksumite trade empire whose influence stretched across the Red Sea to Yemen.

The temple compound is towered over by Ethiopia's oldest standing structure: a 2,700-year-old, 12-metre high sacrificial stone dedicated to a mysterious deity called Almaqah. The temple is a wonderful treasure house of ancient manuscripts, paintings and crowns, and its exterior is inset with engravings of stylized ibexes lifted from the older Almaqah temple. The Temple of Yeha is also known as the Almaqah Temple because it was dedicated to Almaqah, the moon god of the Saba's kingdom. The temple is surrounded by a cemetery and enclosed by a double wall.





## HISTORICAL ATTRACTION



## UNITY PARK

“Unity Park symbolizes our ability to come together for a common goal and cross the finish line by creating exquisite lasting prints of our collective worth,” stated the office of the Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. In 2019 Prime Minister Abiy arranged a 5-million-birr dinner as part of fund raising for the project ‘Beautification of Addis Ababa’. The total land coverage of the grand palace is an expansive 40 acres and it contains myriads of historical buildings and plants that date back to the time of emperor Menelik II, the founder of the Grand Palace.

Menelik Palace Complex refers to the octagonal structure and other collection of historical buildings that were built at the time of Emperor Menelik II in 1887. This Complex includes the private prayer room of Emperor Menelik II, the Emperor’s watching tower, Emperor Menelik II’s bedroom and Reception Room. The first telephone for the entire country was also installed to this building

Emperor Menelik II and his wife Empress Taytu selected this “higher ground” site due to its proximity to the Fin Fine hot water springs. The Palace has hosted numerous national and international events over the past 130 years. Exploring this building will enable the visitor to really reflect on history over the years. The Banquet Hall or commonly called ‘Gibir adarash’ had a capacity to entertain almost 8000 guests at a time. Emperor Menelik used to organize feasts three times a week. In 1963 following the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Emperor Haile Selassie had organized a feast for the founding fathers of OAU in this same Hall.

The “Throne Hall” is where Ethiopia’s monarchs would meet with the provincial lords of aristocratic backgrounds and royal lineage to discuss local issues and make important decisions on subjects such as land tax. On special occasions, the space was also used to welcome nobles and foreign dignitaries and distinguished world leaders during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie. It takes its name from the large, golden throne displayed in the center. There are plinths featuring the Star of David, the symbol of the Solomonic Dynasty, at the base of the columns supporting the canopy holding the crown. Currently, the “Throne Hall” houses the main exhibition of Unity Park museum which celebrates the history and culture of Ethiopia tracing Ethiopia’s evolution through legends, cultural beliefs, various governments, and historical events.

There is certainly much to do and see within Unity Park and it is geared for families as well as individuals; there are six sites to explore within Unity Park.



#### HISTORICAL ATTRACTION

The Black Lion Cave is where Black Maned Lions can be seen wandering around a magnificent purpose built cave as well as a separate zoo on site which is dedicated to the preservation and exhibit of diverse types of fauna and flora of the country as well as twenty species of animals and plantations as parts of this extraordinary zoo with 46 different types and 312 species of African wildlife including a giraffe, cheetah and various exotic birds.

The Indigenous Plant area is complete with traditional mud huts and pleasant walkways and a series of interesting Pavilions of the Regions highlighting the natural, cultural and historical riches of each region of the country.



### 3. CULTURAL ATTRACTION

#### MURSI

The Mursi practicing pastoralists way of life inhabits the lower Omo valley in the Southern part of Ethiopia. Surrounded by mountains between the Omo River and its tributary the Mago, the home of the Mursi is considered one of the most isolated regions in the country. Due to the climate, the ethnic group moves twice a year between the winter and summer months. They herd cattle and grow crops along the banks of the Omo River. The Mursi ethnic group have always been dedicated to grazing livestock but they have had to supplement food sources by cultivating sorghum and corn and also practicing bee keeping. Hunting was once an important resource as the Mursi supplied other ethnic groups with wild animal skins which continued until the region around the Mago River was declared a national park and wildlife reserve.

The Mursi speak their own language and only a few Mursi know how to speak Amharic.

**M**ursi women are most famous for wearing lip-plates, which are made of clay. Girls' lower lips are pierced at the age of 15 or 16. A small incision is made in the lower lip and ear lobes of a young Mursi girl during initiation rituals when a small wooden or ceramic disc is inserted into the lip and gradually replaced by larger discs until the full sized disc can be worn.

The plates are made from mud (reddish or black) or wood. There are different sizes and shapes (circular and trapezoidal), and they may be decorated with cuts or incisions on the wood or mud. It is considered to be a distinguishing trait that ensures a Mursi girl is not mistaken for a member of neighboring rival ethnic group and is considered to be fashionable and beautiful.

Like most Omo rival ethnic group, the Mursi are regarded as fierce warriors. They go into ceremonious battle, armed only with a two-metre long wooden stick called a donga, duelling with men from other villages. Sometimes blood is shed and sometimes the battle can last for days. To achieve the right appearance, the men give themselves decorative scars. For the Mursi people, becoming a living work of art (using white chalk paint) is an important part of their development and identity.







## 4. FESTIVALS

### FICHEE CHAMBALLALA

**F**ichee Chamballala is the New Year celebration of the Sidama people and is celebrated for two full weeks. According to Sidama's traditional calendar, New Year's Day is determined astronomically by observing position of the moon and stars. Elders in every locality begin fasting for fifteen days, and on the day the fasting breaks, the Sofote

Qetela (blessings and traditional dance) are performed. Adults and youths also perform traditional dances known as Adiha Qetela (true Qetela) on all market days until the actual fiche is celebrated.

The next day of fiche is called Chamballala. On this day the family head wears traditional clothes and spends the whole day feeding and looking after his cattle while children come together and go from house to house declaring "Ayde Chamballala" (Happy New Year) in the Sidama language. Families serve children in the neighborhood delicious food Bursame and rub butter on their heads. On the day after Chamballala, there are colorful



## FESTIVALS

celebrations at Gudumale with chanting, dancing and blessings. On the evening of Fiche, each family head makes Hulluqa (arch) from freshly cut wood in front of their house, under which they pass (including their cattle), to welcome in the New Year. During the evening, there is more visiting and socializing with elderly people being visited first before other family members. During the night, more food/Bursame is eaten communally from house to house. Meat is never consumed on fiche days however. This unique New Year (Fichee Chamballa) celebration was registered by UNESCO as world intangible heritage in December 2015.





## 5. EXCLUSIVE EXPERIENCE

### ENDEMIC WILDLIFE OF ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia is endowed with a variety of animals and birds many of which are endemic to Ethiopia. 28 of 242 listed mammal species, are endemic to Ethiopia. The most notable of these endemic animals are the Gelada Baboon, the Walia ibex, Menelik's Bushbuck, Mountain Nyala, Swayne's Hartebeest and the Ethiopian Wolf

The endangered Ethiopian Wolf is highly adapted to life in the Ethiopian Highlands also considered the "Roof of Africa". Their tight social bonds help them to protect their precious family territories from competitors.

Menelik's bushbuck is plentiful throughout the Bale and Simien Mountain ranges. Swayne's hartebeest can be found in the Awash and Nechisar National Parks. Unfortunately, less than 500 Walia Ibex (with their very distinctive long horns) remain in the steepest mountain ranges of the Simien Mountain National Park. The Walia is also the rarest of the endemic animals in Ethiopia. Its principal area of habitat is on the Simien Mountains where it can only be seen high up on the steepest mountain edges.

The Ethiopian Mountain Nyala reside primarily in moorland habitat of Ethiopia's Bale Mountain National Park and the Kuni-Muktar sanctuary.

Gelada Baboons can be found in large numbers throughout the Simien Mountains. They are



#### EXCLUSIVE EXPERIENCE

sometimes called the Bleeding Heart Monkey due to the unique red skin patch on their chests. They are very social animals and congregate in large family groups preferring the habitat of the Simien Mountains. They are used to live with humans and if you respect their space, you can often get quite close to them and observe as they munch on grass or frolic with family members.

Ethiopia also has Elephants and Lions! Babile Elephant Sanctuary is home to Africa's most northerly population of elephants; the sanctuary also provides refuge to thin populations of the localised black-maned Abyssinian lion and cheetah, along with various antelope. An estimated 200 elephants inhabit Babile.



## 6. ETHIOPIAN SKYLIGHT HOTEL

The modern and spacious gleaming white hotel recently opened is only a few minutes away from Bole International Airport and able to provide its arriving guests with immediate comfort and convenience.

The hotel has 373 rooms and 3 restaurants. All tastes are catered for in the hotel with The Grand Café offering the finest quality international cuisine overseen by the German chef and Taichi Chinese Restaurant showcases the finest Cantonese and Sichuan dishes prepared by its Chef from China. Ethiopian Taem' or 'Taste of Ethiopian' is a traditional Ethiopian Cultural Restaurant, featuring Ethiopian Regional Cuisine and accompanied by a Traditional Band and regional dancers. This National restaurant is beautifully and tastefully decorated with exquisite Ethiopian art and interesting artefacts reflecting the diverse culture and history of the country. The hotel also has a lobby café/restaurant as well as a cosy outdoor terrace.

There is a spacious grand ballroom used to host different functions as well as a full service gym, health center and spa. Each bedroom or suite (there are various types of rooms available) is fully equipped including flat screen televisions and rooms offer guests fabulous panoramic views of the city skyline and mountain regions beyond (or a birds eye view of the busy airport on the other side) from full length floor to ceiling windows and balconies. The en suite bathrooms contain full baths with rainfall showers and are separated from the sleeping areas by an attractive clear glass divide adding more light and modernity to the room and giving the name of the hotel particular meaning!

The swimming pool with its inviting aqua water has a particularly appealing and delightful thatched bar that you can swim up to and enjoy a cool beverage whilst seated on a stool still enjoying the cool water of the pool or you can enjoy your drink under the shade of the traditional style bar.

**S**kylight hotel has many excellent amenities to offer its guests and is also just minutes away from the main attractions that the city has to offer. You can step out into the popular Bole Road and find a range of restaurants and shops within a short walking distance away.

Skylight Hotel provides business or tourist guests with ample comfort and ambiance for both business and leisure pursuits.





# HOUST

## 7. DESTINATION HIGHLIGHTS

### HOUSTON

This bustling southern hub in Texas is the USA's fourth largest city attracting visitors all year round. Known for world class arts, thriving businesses, a great center for Sports and excellent cuisine, this city has repeatedly ended up on the "Best of" lists. It is a great and affordable destination for a vacation especially as Houston offers a mild year round temperate climate. A popular attraction is its diverse and professional arts scene with covering ballet, opera, symphony and theatre. The Museum District is the country's fourth largest with 18 cultural venues all located in one area. Twenty-five companies on the Fortune 500 list call Houston home. Aeronautic research is unsurpassed at NASA headquarters –responsible for putting the first man on the moon. Texas Medical Center remains the largest in the world with 47 research and treatment institutions. Houston is proud of its southern hospitality and charm and maintaining its global appeal to visitors and business men and women alike!





# TON





## LISTS OF AVIALABLE STANDARD TOUR PACKAGE



NOSY BE



CAPE TOWN



DUBAI



CHINA



BANGKOK



SINGAPORE



SEYCHELLES



INDIA



ATHENS



CAIRO

DESTINATION HIGHLIGHTS



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ISTANBUL



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