The Best of Ethiopia

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1  Depart London for Addis
Day 2  Arrive Addis, fly Bahar Dar
Day 3  Bahar Dar
Day 4  Gondar
Day 5/7  Simien Mountains
Day 8  Gondar
Day 9  Fly Addis, drive Awash National Park
Day 10/11  Awash National Park
Day 12  Lake Awassa
Day 13/15  Bale Mountains
Day 16/17  Lake Langano
Day 18  Drive Addis
Day 19  Depart Addis, arrive London

Departs
February and October / November

Focus
Birds and mammals plus a little local culture and history

Grading
Primarily Grade A/B with a combination of walking and wildlife viewing from our vehicle, however, owing to the high altitude in the Simiens, this section of the tour can be considered B/C. There will also be some long travel days.

Dates and Prices
Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code ETH05) or brochure

From top: Ethiopian Wolf, Malachite Kingfisher, Gelada Baboons (Dani Free)
Introduction

Ethiopia is a fascinating and welcoming country that boosts some of the most spectacular mountain scenery in all Africa. With two mountain ranges – the Simiens and the Bale Mountains – the magnificent Blue Nile gorge country, a string of spectacular Rift Valley Lakes, and endless dry acacia woodland and well-kept villages of pretty little thatched huts, this lavish and often luxuriant landscape is far from the drought-stricken land often portrayed by the media. The country’s climate is warm and comfortable all year round and its birdlife is exceptional. Over 830 birds have been recorded – 29 of them endemic – whilst 80 species of larger mammals survive, albeit with mixed fortunes, seven of which are endemic.

Ethiopia is, for the most part, a self-sufficient country. It produces its own power (from the many lakes), grows its own crops and keeps a great number of cattle. The pretty traditionally-robed ponies and their riders seen along the moorlands, plus the donkeys carrying their mixed cargoes all around the country, provide an interesting cultural backdrop to a holiday that offers sensational mammal and birdwatching. There is no shortage of culture and history too, and many fascinating sites can be added to your itinerary if you would like to extend your holiday to further explore this captivating country. This, after all, is a land of myth and legend – the earliest home to man, and later to Prester John, and a dynasty originating from Queen Sheba and concluding with the Emperor Haile Sellassie in 1974. It is a land of mixed race and mixed religion, of countless elegant tribes and even more languages, mingled and matured by time and history.

It is worth stressing that whilst the tourist infrastructure in Ethiopia is improving, some of the hotels are still relatively basic in nature and not comparable in standard to other east African destinations like Kenya and Tanzania. However, equipped with a sense of adventure, you are sure to enjoy the fascinating mammals, birds, culture and landscapes of this unique and beautiful African country. This tour will focus on both the mammals and birds, but will include some stunning scenery along the way.

Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

In Flight

We leave from London Heathrow on Ethiopian Airlines' scheduled evening flight to Addis Ababa.

Day 2

Bahar Dar

Arriving in Addis at approximately 0630 hours (local time) we take a short trip into the city for breakfast and the chance to freshen up ahead of our flight north. The first birds we are likely to

We will transfer by plane north to Bahar Dar, the flight taking just one hour. This northern town is situated at 5,700 feet on the southern shores of Lake Tana, the largest upland lake in Africa and the source of the Blue Nile. Beginning here, and meeting the White Nile in Khartoum, this great river makes a 3,500-mile journey to the Mediterranean. Arriving in Bahar Dar mid-afternoon, we will transfer to our hotel near the shores of Lake Tana where we spend the next two nights. A late afternoon walk along the lakeshore could provide us with our first views of the stunning White-cheeked Turaco or possibly an impressive Giant Kingfisher.

**Day 3 Bahar Dar**

Today, we will enjoy a morning visit to the Blue Nile Falls and the surrounding area. The distance may only be short, approximately 30kms, but our journey time is unlikely to reflect this as we stop to enjoy the wonders of Ethiopia’s birdlife! Northern Carmine Bee-eaters grace overhead lines, Long-crested Eagles adorn telegraph poles and Yellow-mantled Widowbirds perch atop small bushes. A stop on route at a local rubbish dump is likely to yield White-backed, Hooded and Egyptian Vultures, as well as dozens of scavenging Maribou Storks.

Known in Amharic as Tississat - “the water that smokes” - due to the permanent fine spray that envelops the vicinity, the magnificent Blue Nile Falls span nearly half a mile and drop 150 feet from black basalt cliffs. Passing first through dense riverine woodland before crossing a 17th century stone bridge, we join a path that snakes up into the hillside before following a route parallel to the gorge. Arriving at the falls we are able to enjoy the refreshing spray, a welcome relief from the morning sun, before venturing on through an area of rough grassland and scattered mature trees that could yield such delights as Broad-billed Barbet, Bearded Woodpecker and Abyssinian Oriole.

NB: Due to the implementation of a hydroelectric scheme, we cannot guarantee that the Falls will be in full flow. A better idea of the conditions may be known nearer the time.
Returning to a lakeside restaurant in Bahar Dar for lunch, in the afternoon we take to the water and venture out onto Lake Tana, past islands shrouded in forest – a popular haunt for African Fish Eagles and Yellow-billed Kites, to visit a fascinating medieval monastery on the Zege Peninsula, built here by the Coptic Church in the 14th Century. Leaving the islands behind, we journey east to the point where the Blue Nile leaves the lake, a veritable oasis for water birds where we are able to watch the sun set and enjoy the plethora of water birds flying in to roost. The area is also an excellent spot for Hippos and we will hope to catch a glimpse of these giants of the lake as they leave their watery daytime refuges to graze in nearby meadows.

Day 4

Gondar

This morning we will experience some of the rural roads of Ethiopia on a drive to Gondar which is situated at the northern end of Lake Tana, not far from the spectacular Simien Mountains. The drive north will take us through the vast flooded grasslands of the Fogera Plains, an important site for wintering Common Cranes, which, with luck will be arriving from their European breeding grounds. Leaving the lowlands behind, we will begin our ascent into the foothills of the Simien Mountains, passing an imposing pillar of rock known as the ‘Devils Nose’ that supports mixed colonies of vultures. With the increasing altitude the terrain becomes more mountainous and we begin to encounter a different array of species that include; Blue Rock Thrush and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting.

Gondar was founded by Emperor Fasildas in 1635 and served as the imperial capital for 250 years prior to the rise of Emperor Tewodros and the subsequent shift of power to Showa. Arriving in time for lunch, we will spend the afternoon exploring the Fasil Ghebbi (Royal Enclosure), a tranquil walled compound of 17th Century Castles and outbuildings before venturing slightly further afield to Fasilida’s Pool, an important ceremonial building set on the outskirts of the city that is also a popular roost site for Greyish Eagle Owls.

Days 5 – 7

Simien Mountains

Today, we drive for approximately three hours to the park headquarters of the Simien Mountains where we will stop to pick up a local scout and arrange the necessary permits, before driving a further 20kms into the National Park to the Simien Lodge, our base for the next 3 nights. With two full days to explore this stunning landscape, we will have ample time to take in the magnificent views and hopefully meet some of the Simien’s famed wildlife inhabitants.
The Best of Ethiopia

Tour Itinerary

The Simien Mountains are home to some of the most breath-taking scenery in Africa and also harbour many of Ethiopia's most iconic mammals. At least a dozen of its peaks rise above 4000m, with the highest; Mount Ras Dashen, scaling 4,620m, making it the highest point in Ethiopia and the fourth highest on the continent. The mountain range is comprised of several major plateaux divided by a network of river valleys that span for miles, however, it is only the western side of the range that has been designated a National Park and it is here that we will focus our attention. A single dirt road runs through the Park from our lodge to Bwahit Pass, allowing us to access the most scenic and rewarding sites around Sankober and Chenek, where we will be on the lookout for three of Ethiopia's largest endemic mammals.

With an estimated population of over 7,000 individuals, the Simien Mountains is considered a stronghold for the Gelada; a magnificent beast, possessed of an imposing golden mane and distinctive heart-shaped red chest. Unique amongst primates, the Gelada feeds almost exclusively on grass and is considered the most sociable of African monkeys, with a harem-based social structure that is widely regarded to be second in complexity only to humans. With enormous canines and a maned coat, not unlike a Lion, one could be forgiven for thinking that you would need to give them a very wide berth. However, they are in fact remarkably tolerant of their human cousins and if you sit quietly and allow them to move around you, they will often approach to within just a few metres, providing superb photographic opportunities. Social units typically number around 30-50 individuals, however, in the late afternoon as dusk approaches, the baboons retreat to the safety of the escarpment edge and will often come together in mega-herds of over 500 animals. Set against a magnificent backdrop of vast plains and isolated pinnacles, this has to be one of Africa’s most impressive wildlife spectacles.

Restricted entirely to the Simien Mountains, the endangered Walia Ibex is considered to be Ethiopia's rarest endemic mammal, with the population believed to be in the region of 500 individuals. Favouring very steep, rocky cliff areas between 2,500m and 4,500m high, and with its chocolate-brown coloration, it can prove remarkably well camouflaged when set against the dark cliffs! Males can weigh as much as 125kg (180-280lb) and have very large horns which curve backwards, reaching lengths up to 110cm (43in). Whilst the females are smaller and lighter in colour, the males have a
distinguished black beard that lengthens and thickens with age, setting them apart from the females.

Walia Ibex are prolific grazers and will feed on a diverse range of vegetation, from scrub and herbs to lichens, and are particularly active first thing in the morning when they frequently ascend the escarpment cliffs to graze on the plateau. The area around Chenek not only holds some of the most spectacular scenery in the Park, but is also something of a hotspot for the species and we will certainly try our luck here.

Sadly, following a rabies epidemic several years ago, the Ethiopian Wolf, the last of the 'Simien Big Three,' is also the rarest, with the Simien population now believed to be as low as 40 individuals. Nevertheless, Ethiopian Wolves have been seen and heard in the Simiens on this tour and we will always be on the lookout. If we aren’t lucky here though, we do have an excellent chance of seeing this beautiful canid later on in the tour in the Bale Mountains.

Less well known for its birds, the Simien Mountains still has some very interesting prospects, with over 180 species having been recorded in the range. Endemic White-billed Starlings cling to rocky gorges, whilst White-winged Black tit and Abyssinian Catbird prefer the dense cove of Juniper Forest. The drab Moorland Chat is one of the most common birds in the area and will be a constant companion throughout our stay, whilst picnic lunches are likely to attract the attention of inquisitive endemic Thick-billed Ravens. Lanner Falcon and Augur Buzzard are frequently seen on the plateau and with a little luck we should have some excellent opportunities to view Lammergeier at close quarters.

Day 8

After our three nights on the Simiens we retrace our steps back to Debark and then on to Gondar where we overnight in a city hotel.

Day 9

This morning we catch a flight back to the capital, Addis Ababa from where we begin our drive south to Awash National Park. Leaving the city behind, we will soon see a marked difference in the style of the houses and the surrounding habitat, compared to the northern historical area. Out on very good tarmac road, we soon reach Awash National Park for our three night stay. The beauty of this classical east African National Park is that visitors can explore it on foot, for it is free from typical East African Park restrictions, and of most dangerous mammals. Spanning 350 square miles, the Awash became the first of Ethiopia's National Parks in 1966. It is situated on the Awash River, with
its spectacular gorges, and is made up of acacia and scrub-bound plains, with hills and the volcano, Mount Fantalle, in its northern quarter. Beisa Oryx, Greater and Lesser Kudu, Defassa Waterbuck, Soemmering’s Gazelle, Warthog, Salt’s Dik-dik, and Hamadryas Baboon are amongst the mammals we are likely to encounter, though carnivores, including Lion and Leopard, are possibilities. The birdlife is exceptional. We should see 150 species in the Park, including Buff-crested, White-bellied and Kori bustards, Lichtenstein’s and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Rosy-patched and other shrikes, plus many species of hornbills, weavers, woodpeckers, vultures, doves, pigeons, guinea fowl, glossy starlings, parrots, bee-eaters, barbets, mousebirds and finches...to name but a few! We will stay at a comfortable lodge inside the Park.

**Days 10 – 11  **

Awash National Park

We now have two full days to explore Awash National Park, through a mix of game drives and walks. We will also have the opportunity to visit the Hyena caves at the foot of Mount Feantelle, a dormant volcano located in the northern area of the park. The surrounding lava fields are a favourite haunt of mixed colonies of Rock and Bush Hyraxes and we have a chance of sighting these distant relatives of the Elephant, whilst on route to the caves. Approaching the caves on foot, we take up position approximately 20 yards from the entrance and await the Hyenas emergence in silence. Though well habituated to living alongside mankind and of little threat, the experience of sitting in close proximity to such a powerful predator is sure to get the adrenaline running. Incredibly, over 50 Hyenas have been recorded emerging from the cave in a single evening and as dusk approaches, with luck we will be able to observe these unfounded villains of the animal kingdom, emerging from the daytime slumber and setting off on their nightly rounds. The surrounding fissures are also home to thousands of roosting bats and with the onset of dusk, we are treated to a spectacular aerial display as they too emerge from the daytime roosts.

During our time in Awash we will aim to undertake a night drive and these have the potential to throw up a wide range of species. Bat-eared Foxes, Common Genet and Golden Jackal are frequently seen, whilst such gems as Wild Cat, Caracal, Aardwolf and Striped Hyena have all been seen on previous tours.
Day 12

Lake Awassa

Heading west we return back to the busy junction town of Mojo, from where we turn south on a journey that will take us past several of the Great Rift Valley Lakes. Roadside birding offers the chance to see such bushland and acacia loving birds as Lilac-breasted and Abyssinian Rollers, Wood Hoopoes, Speckled and Blue-naped Mousebirds, Abyssinian Ground Hornbills, Augur Buzzards and many colourful Starlings.

Lake Awassa, is a beautiful freshwater lake, set amongst hills and a luxuriant vegetation, quite unlike the alkaline lakes to the north. Amongst the lilies and great reedbeds that encompass the lake we should find Black, Goliath and other herons, the ugly Marabou Stork, Hamerkops, Hadeda Ibis, a variety of egrets, dainty African Pygmy Geese, Fulvous and White-faced Whistling Ducks, Knob-billed Duck, Black Crakes, African Jacanas, Three-banded Plovers, Whiskered and White-winged Black Terns and both Pied and Malachite Kingfishers. During our visit we will take a lakeside walk to watch the Sidamo fishermen as they land their catches of Tilapia and catfish, and gut and fillet them by the lake. Here the air is alive with birds, their relationship with these fishermen being entirely harmonious.

Nearby, in mature acacia woodland, a host of landbirds complements this spectacle. Here we shall search for Grey-headed and Woodland Kingfishers, Red-breasted Wrynecks, Green Wood-hoopoes, Sulphur-breasted Bush shrikes, White-browed Robin Chats, African Thrushes, Rufous Chatterers, Swamp Warblers, Red-faced Crombecs, Wattle-eyes, Puffbacks, Spotted Creepers, and many other colourful species. Birds are so very plentiful here that little energy is required in finding them. Later, if time permits, we shall visit an area of riverine forest close to the Lake where we can expect a different variety of birds, and hopefully get some good views of the beautiful Black-and-white Colobus Monkeys.
Day 13

Bale Mountains

For those keen to be up and about early (and the Colobus Monkeys with their noisy dawn chorus make a great alarm call!), a pre-breakfast bird walk by the nearby lake is available at dawn.

After breakfast we will then embark on the long drive to the Bale Mountains National Park, a scenic journey that should take about three to four hours. Climbing through forests, fields, little villages and banana groves, we reach open grassy uplands where Blue-winged Geese, Rouget’s Rails and Abyssinian Longclaws introduce us to the long list of Ethiopian endemic birds to be found in the area. Approaching the park, the scenery becomes increasingly spectacular. Magnificent forests cling to the sides of deep valleys, high peaks, rocky outcrops, pinnacles and ridges pierce horizons, and moorlands, grasslands and peaty pools sit in plains and hollows. Entering the park we hope to encounter the first of the region’s mammals, including the endemic Mountain Nyala (a magnificent antelope unique to these hills), Common Duiker, Bohor Reedbuck, Menelik’s Bushbuck and Warthog, all of which may be seen along the forest margins. As well as the mammals, in the juniper forest we will look for a few more of the endemic birds such as Abyssinian Long-eared Owl, White-backed Black Tit, Abyssinian Catbird, Black-winged Lovebird, Golden-backed Woodpecker and, if very fortunate, maybe even Black-headed Siskin. We will spend our three nights in the park at the Wabe Shebelle Hotel in Goba, which is basic but functional.

The Bale Mountains, lying between 9,500 feet and 14,360 feet, contain the largest tract of high moorland in Africa. Virtually uninhabited, they are entirely unspoilt and were set aside as a national park in order to protect the Mountain Nyala which is found nowhere else in the world. Of volcanic origin like the more famous Simiens in the north, the Bale Mountains may not be quite as spectacular, but they do possess an exceptional beauty and charm which can be likened to that of the Scottish Highlands. They are green and spacious, decorated with rocky peaks and crags, numerous small lakes, extensive heathland, magnificent cloud forests and bogs! Within the park is Mount Batu, which, at 14,360 feet, is one of the highest mountains in Ethiopia. The flora is fascinating and so is the fauna.

The beautiful Ethiopian Wolf roams the park in small groups and is regularly seen, whilst Klippspringers, the endemic Stark’s Hare, Warthogs, Rock Hyrax, the peculiar endemic Giant Mole-rat and the verminous but characterful Grass Rats and Swamp Rats (the main prey of the Ethiopian
Wolf) are to be added to those species already mentioned. Amongst an interesting collection of upland birds we are likely to see eleven of Ethiopia’s 29 endemics: Blue-winged Goose, Rouget’s Rail, Spot-breasted Plover, White-collared Pigeon, Black-winged Lovebird, Golden-backed Woodpecker, Abyssinian Longclaw, Abyssinian Catbird, White-backed Tit, Black-headed Siskin and Thick-billed Raven!

Day 14 Bale Mountains

Today we will make best use of our time in the Bale Mountains National Park by driving through it and focusing on the high altitude Sanetti Plateau, and later, if the weather (so notoriously fickle here) is favourable, on the edge of the magnificent Harenna Escarpment.

As we enter the park, and start to climb up through the fine Hagenia forest, we will look out for Chestnut-naped Francolins on the road, and Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawks and Mountain Buzzards in the air. Then, ascending onto an open moorland plateau where little lakes, extensive grasslands and the weird spikes of primeval-looking Giant Lobelias and Red-hot Pokers provide a wonderful Afro-alpine habitat, we look for the Grass and Swamp Rats and the numerous other small rodents in this area. These represent the main prey of the Ethiopian Wolf, and also attract many species of birds of prey that include wintering Spotted, Imperial and other Aquila eagles, as well as almost all of Ethiopia’s vulture species. Wattled Crane and Montane Francolin are two resident specialities, as are the endemic Rouget’s Rail, Spot-breasted Plover and Blue-winged Goose which may all be found here. Our main aim, however, will be a sighting (or sightings) of the endangered Ethiopian Wolf or bizarre Giant Mole Rat – two of Ethiopia’s most special mammalian endemics. With a population of just 500 Ethiopian Wolves now left, most of them in the Bale Mountains, this is one of the most critically endangered of larger mammals in the world, and certainly in Africa. Interbreeding with local dogs, and diseases caught from them including rabies and canine distemper, have all caused the recent decline of this unique mammal of Ethiopia’s ‘highland islands’.

After spending the morning on the Plateau (and if the weather permits), we will drive to the spectacular Harenna Escarpment where we will have our picnic lunch and enjoy some remarkable views. If the weather is dry and the road conditions favourable, we might even try to descend a part of the escarpment to look at the fabulous forests it supports. This outstanding feature, on the southern side of the national park, presents a fascinating environment and, provided that the weather is clear, some quite amazing scenery. Lions, Hunting Dogs, Red Duiker and Giant Forest Hogs have all been encountered in this wonderful forest, though our chances of seeing any of these rare mammals is somewhat remote! It will be more realistic to set our sights on such primates as the Eastern Black-and-white Colobus and the rare Bale Monkey, as well as such endemic birds as
White-backed Black Tit, Abyssinian Catbird, Black-winged Lovebird, Golden-backed Woodpecker and Black-headed Siskin. Returning across the plateau and back down to the town of Goba, we will turn our focus once again to wolf-watching.

Day 15

Bale Mountains

Depending on the success of yesterday’s excursion, we will either return to the Sanetti Plateau to extend our search for Ethiopian Wolves, or we will head westwards for an hour or so to spend the day exploring the Gaysay and Dinsho regions of the park, possibly taking a walk up the Web Valley, another stronghold of the Ethiopian Wolf.

The Gaysay area offers a habitat of extensive grasslands where grassland bird species and the occasional Serval may be found; the endemic Mountain Nyala is also common here, whilst other mammals include Common Duiker, Bohor Reedbuck, Menelik’s Bushbuck and Warthog, all of which may be seen along the forest margins.

At Dinsho, the juniper forests are favoured by many of the endemic birds, whilst the lakes and moorland to the south hold a range of mammals and birds. We will return to Goba this evening, prior to tomorrow’s journey to Lake Langano.

Days 16 – 17

Lake Langano

From Awassa we continue along the Valley to spend two nights at a comfortable eco-lodge beside picturesque Lake Langano. We will enjoy this evening and the whole of the following day relaxing and exploring the shores of Lake Langano. The lake’s waters are deep and sterile, devoid of birdlife, but the woodland around the lodge makes fine amends! Dark Chanting Goshawks, African Fish Eagles, Hemprich’s and Von der Decken’s Hornbills, Cardinal Woodpeckers, White-bellied Go-away Birds, Red-billed and White-headed Buffalo Weavers, Northern White-crowned Shrikes, Blue-naped Mousebirds, Little Bee-eaters, Mariqua Sunbirds and a variety of colourful finches are all to be found in this dry and thorny habitat. Night walks in the grounds around the lodge, have, in recent years yielded some very exciting finds, including the notoriously shy and elusive Aardvark and Senegal Bushbaby.

Day 18

Lake Langano / transfer Addis
Today, our last morning in Ethiopia, you are free to relax and enjoy this beautifully appointed eco-friendly lodge and the surrounding lake area. Heading back north we will pay a visit to the Abijata-Shalla Lakes National Park. This is a very small park centred around the two neighbouring but entirely different lakes. Lake Abijata is Ethiopia's version of Lake Nakuru. Shallow and saline, it is an enormous lake with enormous numbers of birds. We will enjoy this spectacle of colour, and looking carefully amongst the flamingos, pelicans, cormorants, storks, herons and waders for unusual vagrants. In the distance, to the east and west, loom the great walls of the Rift Valley, then do a bird walk on the high ridge that separates Lakes Shalla and Abijata. Driving out of the Park we may also catch a glimpse of Grant’s Gazelles and perhaps even a Spotted Hyena or Jackal. Later we return to Addis where hotel rooms will be available to freshen up before travelling to the airport.

Day 19

We depart Addis in the early hours, arriving into Heathrow this morning.

Post-tour extension to Lalibela

Our ‘Best of Ethiopia’ tour is heavily focused on the wildlife of Ethiopia, though the country is rightly famed for its archaeology and history too, so you may wish to consider extending your holiday to visit the historic town of Lalibela. This town is famous for its 13 rock-hewn monolithic churches, built in the early 12th century on the order of the Saint and King Lalibela, apparently with the help of angels! These stand in two groups, on either side of the river called Jordan, and are still worshipped in today. Many are richly carved and painted. Their situation is also spectacular, nestling high in the hills, and when not marvelling at the architecture of the churches, you will be able to enjoy some birdwatching on pleasant walks in the area.

We grade our Lalibela extension as ‘B’ - many of the churches around Lalibela have large, uneven steps, and both monasteries that we intend to visit have a walk of between 400m and 1km of slow ascent, with occasional short but steep sections. The walking will be fine for anyone with a reasonable level of fitness, but would be difficult for someone with mobility issues, or with breathing issues given the high altitude (over 2000m).

The itinerary usually operates as follows:

**Day 1** (final day of group tour prior to flight home): Evening meal before the rest of group transfer to the airport for international flight to London. Overnight Addis.

**Day 2**: Early transfer to the airport for the morning flight to Lalibela (sometimes via Bahar Dar). On arrival, transfer to the local guest house or restaurant for lunch. This afternoon, begin your tour of Lalibela with the two groups of churches. Overnight Lalibela.

**Day 3**: Morning visit to Asheton Mariam, lunch, afternoon visit to Yeremrehane Kristos. Overnight Lalibela.
**Day 4:** Morning transfer to airport for flight back to Addis. Check into hotel (rooms booked on day use), afternoon at leisure. Evening meal and transfer to the airport in time for your late departure back to the UK.

**Day 5:** Flight back in the UK (arriving ~ 0600 hrs)

**Price:** £895 per person (based on minimum 2 participants, full board and guiding).

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**Tour grading and altitude**

We have graded this tour A/B with a combination of walking and wildlife viewing from our vehicle. However, owing to the high altitude in the Simien Mountains, this section of the tour should be considered B/C. Even in the Simiens the walking is not difficult and we will have the support of the tour vehicle during day, but you are likely to feel the impact of the high altitude when walking here. Simien Mountain Lodge is situated at 3300m, so you should look out for signs of altitude sickness and check your travel insurance covers you for activities at this altitude.

There will also be some long travel days, and although roads are improving all the time, some are rough and bumpy at times. Finally, please also note that the accommodation in Ethiopia does not compare with the well-appointed lodges and camps of other East African destinations and most of the places we stay tend to be fairly basic. Rooms are usually very simple with en-suite bathrooms, but in some areas even the best available accommodation can often have problems with a lack of maintenance, so you should be prepared for a few problems like leaky plumbing, lack of hot water, lights not working, slow service in the restaurant, etc.

**Tour focus**

This tour focuses on the best of Ethiopia’s wildlife, including the birds and mammals, plus a little wider natural history. Other taxa beyond birds and mammals are less well documented in Ethiopia and not featured heavily in field guides, so less emphasis will be placed on them, though we will look at and enjoy anything that we are lucky enough to encounter. As birds are the most widespread member of the Ethiopian fauna we will spend plenty of time birdwatching, as well as dedicating time and energy to searching for as many of Ethiopia’s special mammals as possible. It should just be noted that large mammals are not abundant in Ethiopia, and those looking for a mammal-filled holiday to compare with the plains and savannahs of Southern and East Africa should look elsewhere in our brochure for their ideal holiday.

**Entry requirements**

UK citizens require a visa to enter Ethiopia. You can apply and pay for an e-Visa in advance of travel by visiting the Ethiopian e-Visa website: [https://www.evisa.gov.et/#/home](https://www.evisa.gov.et/#/home). The process is quick and easy and saves a little time on arrival in Addis Ababa as you will join a separate e-Visa queue and won’t then need to join a second queue to pay for your visa. You can, however, also obtain and pay
for your visa on arrival at Addis Ababa Bole Airport at a cost of US$50 (or the equivalent amount in British pounds, Euros, Ethiopian Birr and numerous other major currencies which are all accepted). Citizens of other countries should check requirements with their nearest Ethiopian embassy.

You should also take malaria prophylactics and some vaccinations are recommended. Details will be sent with pre-departure information, but you should visit your GP or local travel clinic to discuss your travel plans and ask their advice.

**Additional expenses**

All food and accommodation is included in the price of the tour. In addition to the tour price, you should budget a little extra spending money to cover drinks, local (discretionary) tips, personal purchases such as postcards and souvenirs, and your visa.

**Regional departures**

Connecting flights to and from Heathrow with British Airways (currently from Manchester, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Belfast, Dublin and Jersey) are available from around £185 return. Please contact the Naturetrek office for further information.

**Your safety & security**

You have chosen to travel to Ethiopia. Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – [https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) regularly prior to travel.

**How to book your place**

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.

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