

WILD FRONTIERS



A Wild Walk in the Simien Mountains Ethiopia

The Simien Mountains of northern Ethiopia are quite simply among the most spectacular sites the continent has to offer. Formed millions of years ago by river systems cutting through the sandstone rock, they are bounded on the north and east by a massive escarpment, in places over 1000 metres high, from which the views stretch endlessly over the vast plains towards Eritrea. At their foot are the remnants of ancient hills, now eroded into hundreds of pinnacles and buttresses. Aside from stunning scenery, the park is home to an impressive array of wildlife and because most of the walk is along the escarpment, the trek - though thoroughly impressive - is not overly technical. Add to this the cultural sites of Gonder and Lalibela (which together with the Simien Mountains makes 3 UNESCO World Heritage sites in a week!) and this trip is perfect for anyone with a passion for walking and culture, looking for a short holiday.

'I don't know how to express my gratitude for everything Wild Frontiers did to make my holiday to Ethiopia something I shall think about for the rest of my life.' *Flippy Kaye*

HIGHLIGHTS

- A spectacular trek through the Simien Mountains
- The castles of Gonder
- The rock-cut churches of Lalibela
- Enjoying the hospitality of the Ethiopian people
- Sampling injera & tej

Duration: 8 Days

Average group size: 5 - 12

Start: Sat 27 Oct 12

Finish: Sat 3 Nov 12



Why Wild Frontiers?

As a young, innovative company, Wild Frontiers is delighted to have been voted one of the 'Top 10 Tour Operators' by the readers of both Wanderlust and National Geographic Adventure. We are frequently asked what makes us different from other tour operators, and feel that the factors below answer this important question.

The Traveller's Ethos: WF is a company that has been set up by travellers for travellers, and our ethos is to help adventurous souls get to incredible and inaccessible places in safety and as much comfort as local conditions allow. We are firm believers that travelling is all about the experience and it's the details that make the trip - we specialise in drawing on our own extensive local knowledge and array of contacts to give our clients the very best experience possible.

Personal Service: Our London office is manned by experienced expedition leaders and every trip we run stems from their extensive knowledge - in short, we run the kind of trips that as passionate travellers, we like to do ourselves! When you ring our office, you can be guaranteed to chat to someone that knows the trips and the terrain, and is able to offer sound and practical advice.

Authentic Experiences: Our unique, original itineraries allow our clients to take journeys that venture beneath the surface of the region. Unlike the plethora of 'world specialists' out there who purport to know a hundred destinations, we concentrate on the locations we know and love. We don't run the same tour over and over, thus running the risk of creating a 'tourist circuit' and spoiling untouched regions. Instead, we rarely run any tour more than a couple of times a year and they are on routes we have discovered for ourselves, meaning we are able to give a truly authentic, off-the-beaten-track experience.

Be the First: Our style of travel is all about exploration, and nothing excites us more than opening up new routes to genuine travellers. We keep abreast of new destinations and are often the first to return to places that have vanished from the tourist map. We were the first back into Pakistan after 9/11, the first to return to Kashmir after a decade of tourist isolation, and the first to run a commercial travel trip to Afghanistan for almost 30 years. Since then we have helped bring Colombia, Yemen and Georgia back into the tourist fold, specialising in groundbreaking reconnaissance trips and imaginative expeditions.

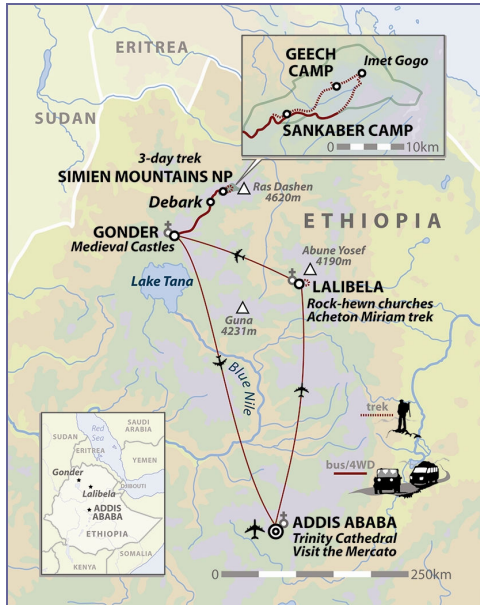
Small Group Size: We believe it is imperative to keep the group sizes small. Most trips are limited to a maximum of approximately 12 travellers, thus giving you more access to fragile cultures, better opportunities to interact with local people, and the knowledge you are making less of an impact while there.

Cost of Tours: We believe in an honest, upfront pricing system so you know exactly what the tour will cost before you book. We avoid local payments, 'optional extras' or forcing our clients to split every meal bill. Our tours are provided on a predominantly full board basis, with mineral water, government permits, entrance fees and transport all included.

Added Value: We aim to give our clients the very best (not the least expensive) experience through whatever facilities are available to us. We always try to provide accommodation that is interesting, characterful and convenient, and transport - another important part of any tour - that is as varied and comfortable as possible.

Our clients: Your companions can make or break a trip, and it's lucky therefore that our clients are our greatest asset. Travelling to remote regions is not for everyone, and as such we tend to attract open-minded travellers looking for genuine experiences, and a desire to reach those hard to get to places.

Responsible Travel: Awarded 5 star status by AITO (Association of Independent Tour operators), responsible tourism has always been an integral part of our company ethos and our adventures are designed with the local people, culture and eco-system in mind. For further details please refer to the RT section on this dossier.



Day 1: Addis Ababa: We will start this tour by meeting at our hotel late morning. We then head out for lunch in town before taking a city tour, visiting the National Museum where Lucy (the 3.5 million year old humanoid) is found along with many other curious artefacts, followed by a visit to the Trinity Cathedral built by the last emperor Haile Selassie. Later we will pass by the bustling Mercato, the biggest open-air market in Africa. We'll have an early dinner at an excellent local restaurant tasting traditional food and absorbing the city's atmosphere.

Hotel (L, D)

Day 2: Addis Ababa - Lalibela: An early start sees us flying to Lalibela and checking into our hotel, before taking the morning to relax. In the afternoon we will visit the first cluster of the amazing rock-hewn churches, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that will simply stagger you, including the famous church of St. George, carved in the shape of a cross from red basalt rock.

Hotel (B, L, D)

Day 3: Lalibela: This morning we will take an acclimatisation trek up to the mountain monastery of Acheton Mariam. This 4-5 hour trek is a real highlight and should not be missed as the views from the ridge are simply breathtaking. After a late lunch we will visit the second cluster of churches, surprisingly different from those visited previously. Our visit to

Lalibela will be rounded off with an evening visit to a *tej* house to sample the local honey liquor.

Hotel (B, L, D)

Day 4: Lalibela - Gonder: A midday flight takes us to Gonder. After checking into our hotel and a late lunch, we will visit the castle compound (UNESCO WHS), and then move on to the Debre Birhan Selassie church (Light of Trinity) which has wonderful murals, and King Fasilidas' Bath.

Hotel (B, L, D)

Day 5: Gonder - Simien National Park: In the morning we shall drive through Debark to the Simien Mountains. En route we'll stop for picnic lunch on escarpment, admiring the wonderful views of the highest chain in Africa - hopefully we will get to see Lammergeyer vultures, Gelada Baboons and bushbuck. After lunch, we'll take a short introductory trek through the high Simiens to Sankaber Camp whilst our bus continues with our luggage to camp. Our handlers will set up our tents and cook for us. Our days in the Simiens will be spent walking between the altitudes of 3500m & 4000m.

Approx 2-3hrs walking

Camp (B, L, D)

Day 6: Simien National Park: Today's trek takes us from Sankaber to Geech Camp along the edge of the escarpment passing through Amhara villages, stopping to admire their way of life. If we are lucky, we may get to spot the rare Walya Ibex and the endemic Gelada Baboons. Today and tomorrow mules will carry our entire luggage and those too tired to walk!

Approx 6-7 hrs walking

Camp (B, L, D)

Day 7: Simien National Park - Gonder: Today we trek from Geech Camp along the escarpment, via the breathtaking Imet Gogo viewpoint, where we will meet our transport back at the road. Returning to Gonder we'll check back into our hotel for a well earned rest!

Approx 7 hrs walking

Hotel (B, L, D)

Day 8: Gonder - Addis Ababa: After a free morning, we take a flight back to Addis and check into our Hotel, where we

will be holding wash and change rooms. Dinner will be offered by our hosts at a traditional restaurant with folk dancing and singing from the different Ethiopian regions. The tour concludes after our final trip dinner.

(B, L, D) - please note no accommodation is booked for this evening.

Wild Extensions:

Arrive early to adjust to a new time zone or just to get a feel for the country before your tour starts. Explore the country after your tour on a bespoke Wild Extension or just allow a few days to relax afterwards. Maybe choose all of the above and get cheaper flights mid-week?

Harar: For a completely different side of Ethiopia, why not visit the walled city of Harar - Islam's 4th holiest city. This fascinating city is famous for its *qat* market, ornately decorated traditional houses, vibrant mix of local people (including Afars & Somalis), historical links with Richard Burton, and the "hyena man" who feeds wild hyenas outside the city walls each night - this extension is the perfect complement to a trip to the predominantly Christian northern highlands! 3-4 night extension possible.

The Great African Rift Valley: For nature lovers, this extension to one of Africa's predominant geological features gives you the opportunity for some great bird watching and relaxing on the shores of beautiful Lake Langano. 3-4 days.

Omo Valley: Visit one of the most culturally diverse regions in Ethiopia, home to several unique and fascinating tribes. 12-15 days.

TESFA village trek: Still want some more trekking? Why not undertake a 3-4 day village trek through the highlands, easily accessible pre-tour from Lalibela or post-tour from Gondar.

Axum & Tigray: Travel north from Gondar along a stunning road or by air to Axum, the capital of the once mighty Axumite Empire and then continue to the Tigray region for some off-beat exploration or a TESFA village trek.

Contact the office for extension specifics.

TOUR DETAILS

Tour Code: WWE/A

Tour price: All our tours are priced on a LAND ONLY basis, giving you maximum flexibility when deciding how to get to and from your tour.

Single Supplements: These are NOT compulsory for any Wild Frontiers tour. Where single supplements are available please note that a single room cannot always be guaranteed for every night of the tour as depending on the destination, rooms may be limited. On this tour we are happy to offer an optional single supplement that will cover you for all nights of the tour.

NB: for those nights when we are camping you will get a single tent.

Flights: If you would like us to send you a quote for the suggested tour flight (see GETTING THERE) or on any alternative flight that may suit you better, please let us know.

In all cases, for the latest prices, please refer to our website or contact the office.

Please remember that all Wild Frontiers tour prices mean NO hidden extras, NO local payments or kitty and NO compulsory single supplements.

WHAT IS INCLUDED?

- Full services of a Wild Frontiers Tour Leader with local guides and drivers.
- Meal plan as detailed in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner) with mineral water as required.
- All transport as outlined in the itinerary.
- All accommodation
- All entrance fees, as per itinerary.

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED?

- Visas
- Local airport taxes
- Tips
- Beverages & any costs of a personal nature.
- International Flights

- Airport transfers (unless booking suggested flights through WF office)

GETTING THERE

For this trip our suggested flight (subject to change) is:

26OCT ET701 LHR-ADD 21:05-06:50+1
04NOV ET710 ADD-LHR 02:15/08:25

Key :

LHR - London Heathrow

ADD - Addis Ababa

ET - Ethiopian Airlines

NB If you wish to arrange your own flights you are completely free to do so and in this case we can arrange any transfers or supplementary accommodation that you may require.

Please note that if you are making your own flight arrangements, we recommend that you only purchase flights that are totally flexible and refundable as due to the nature of adventure travel, itineraries can change at any time. For more information, please refer to our booking conditions.

PRACTICALITIES

Accommodation: For this trip the hotels have en-suite facilities and all have the best locations in town. However, these are still fairly basic and would only amount to 2/3 star hotels in Europe. While trekking, you will be camping in two-man mountain tents, and will be provided with mattresses. Fixed toilet facilities are available at the campsites.

Any accommodation mentioned in the itinerary is subject to availability and if not available substitutes will be of a similar quality.

Transport depending on group size and local conditions this trip uses planes, coasters, minibuses and/or 4WDs

Trip Grading:

Adventure Rating ❖❖❖❖❖

Comfort Grade ❖❖❖❖❖

Fitness Level ❖❖❖❖❖

Cultural Interest ❖❖❖❖❖

Please note that this grading is an indication only and should you have any concerns please contact the office.

Fitness...

Anyone in a reasonable level of fitness will enjoy this trip. As with any trekking, the fitter you are the more you will enjoy it. On the trek we can provide mules to help out and the gradient is never that steep, although you are at altitude which can make it more challenging. One should also bear in mind that facilities in Ethiopia are not always of the highest standard!

It may sound obvious but...

Wild Frontiers tours are not always for everyone and it is important to us that the tour you choose is the most suitable. Please therefore take time to read the dossier carefully. All our tours are graded to give an overall picture of the trip but these are only guidelines and you should check the daily itinerary. Should you have any concerns about your ability to partake in any aspect of the tour then please contact the office.

Insurance: Insurance that provides cover for emergency repatriation in case of a medical emergency is compulsory for all tours. You should be aware that many standard insurance policies may not cover you adequately for all aspects of a Wild Frontiers trip and so we strongly recommend that you purchase a suitably designed insurance policy. One such policy is the "Wild Frontiers" policy underwritten by Travel & General Insurance Company plc, which is available to UK and Republic of Ireland residents through our website or via the insurance company direct on 0845 408 0583. Under this policy there are two different levels of cover available and for this trip the minimum requirement would be the Standard policy.

Cover explained:

Standard policy: a comprehensive travel insurance policy that provides cover for all Wild Frontiers activities, including trekking up to 6,000m. This policy does not provide cover for travel to areas where the FCO is advising against all or all but essential travel.

Elite policy: provides the same comprehensive level of cover as the standard policy. In addition the Elite policy also provides cover for travel to areas where the FCO is advising against all or all but essential travel. The policy will not provide cover for any claims arising from or relating to the reasons why the FCO is advising against travel.

If purchasing the Elite policy you also have the option to **extend the cover** provided by the policy to include cover for claims arising from a terrorist act in an area where the FCO is advising against travel. You can add this cover to your policy when purchasing online or over the telephone.

These policies are only available to those travelling on a Wild Frontiers holiday.

For more information and to purchase your policy online please visit the Insurance section of our website.

The cover is underwritten by the International Insurance Company of Hannover Limited (IICH), who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority (FSA). Wild Frontiers Limited is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Travel & General Insurance Company plc, details of which can be found at the FSA's website www.fsa.gov.uk.

If you do decide to purchase alternative insurance, then you must ensure that it covers you for every aspect of this trip. Please pay particular attention to ensuring that you are covered for trekking at altitudes of up to 4000m.

Visas: Visas are necessary for many of the destinations we travel to and while we aim to provide you with the most up-to-date information, requirements frequently change and as such we advise that you check with the relevant embassies or contact our recommended visa agency, Travcour (020 7223 5295) www.travcour.com for the latest advice.

For this tour, UK passport holders currently require a visa for Ethiopia.

Non-UK passport holders should contact the relevant embassies for individual requirements.

Further details will be sent out to you on booking, however ensuring that correct and valid visas are obtained remains the sole responsibility of the client.

Responsible Travel: Responsible travel and sustainable tourism are fundamental ideas that Wild Frontiers has been committed to since our birth. It is our strong belief that these words should not be simply 'tagged on' to dossiers and websites but should be at the very core of each trip, and our adventures are therefore designed with the local people, culture and eco-system in mind. We believe that a successful trip not only delivers a unique and unsurpassable journey for our clients, but that it also benefits the peoples whose lands we are privileged to visit.

The Wild Frontiers Foundation: In order to facilitate an enduring support structure for the communities we visit, and to show a commitment to these values, Wild Frontiers has set up a charitable foundation through which we can channel funds to both existing NGOs and our own development projects. In addition to organising ethically sensitive tours, having our own charitable foundation allows us to raise money - through the cost of our tours, charity trips and fund raising events - which can then be used to fund various projects in education, sanitation, reforestation and a number of other important issues facing developing communities. Wherever possible we are happy for our clients to visit these projects to see for themselves where and how this money is being spent. For a full list of partner NGOs please visit our website. Should you wish to donate to the foundation please contact the office for details.

The Environment: Trying to do our bit for the environment, in 2005 we were among the first UK-based travel companies to automatically offset every client's international flight (if booked with us) with a payment to Carbon Clear to help promote sustainable energy.

Climate: The weather in Ethiopia, at least in terms of the heat, is fairly consistent all year round. The only real change is in rainfall, and as all our trips go between the end of the long rains (September) and the beginning of the

short ones (April) this should not be a problem. During the day the temperature hovers around the mid 20's, falling to an overnight low of 6/8 degrees. However, in the Simien Mountains, it can get chilly due to the altitude so be prepared with the odd warm item.

Further information:

When you make a confirmed booking with Wild Frontiers we will send you our confirmation pack with complete pre-departure information giving you details on visas, health and vaccinations, packing lists, suggested reading on the region, insurance, photography and other useful tips to make your trip more enjoyable.

ETHIOPIA - THE FACTS



Addis Ababa: On first impressions - it has to be said - the New Flower - as Addis Ababa translates from local Amharic - is a rather inappropriate name for a town bursting with tatty housing, battered transport and very persistent beggars. But wander around a while and you will soon discover a place, if not exactly exuding charm then certainly interesting and well worth a closer inspection. Perched at an altitude of 2,400 metres - making it the third highest capital in the world - it enjoys clean and clear air, a wonderful temperate climate and some fascinating sights: the mecarto, the Kiddist Selassie Cathedral and the national museum - housing the famous 3½ million-year-old *Homo Afarensis* Lucy - to name but a few...

The Simien Mountains: Climbing to an altitude of 4,620m, stretching 100 miles east to west, the Simien Mountains are

the largest chain in Africa. With their vaulting granite columns, towering escarpments and plummeting valleys, they are also among the most spectacular. Besides the colourful Ahmaric tribes, the Simien Mountains are also home to a vast assortment of wildlife, and it is not unusual to have spotted Gelada Baboons, the Simien fox, bushbuck and the magnificent Lammergeier vulture within minutes of entering the park. But the wonder of the Simiens does not lie so much with the animals or the people that live there, it is simply to watch the sun rise or fall over a land that time forgot.



Bird Watching: With hundreds of different species, both endemic and migratory, Ethiopia is a bird watchers' paradise - particularly in the Simiens where you will be trekking.

Lalibela: The 11 rock-hewn churches of Lalibela simply defy belief. That anyone should have conceived of such an idea, much less acted upon it! King Lalibela completed the job in just 24 years, a difficult feat in modern day terms let alone at the end of the 11th Century!. Legend has it, While 40,000 workers chiselled away during the day, a host of angels toiled at night. Standing inside the gaping nave of the Church of Bet Medhane Alem, the largest of the monolithic chapels, looking up past the perfectly formed arches and tombs to a distant ceiling, it really does have you wondering about the possibilities of divine assistance.

Gonder: Until the beginning of the 17th century Ethiopia had what was locally referred to as a 'mobile capital'. But in 1632 Fasilidas took the throne and proclaimed Gonder as his capital, where it remained for the next 200 years. As king and emperor, Fasilidas not only ushered in a period of relative calm in Abyssinia's turbulent history; he also built

a stupendous fort at this strategic location, added to by his successors, most of which is still perfectly intact today. But what makes the Gonder castle complex important to today's visitors however, is not so much the size and grandeur of the buildings themselves but the symbol they represent. Wandering around the fort's spectacular turreted citadels, vast banqueting halls and bathhouses leaves you in no doubt whatsoever as to the importance of this Christian kingdom 400 years ago.



How to book:

In order to confirm your booking we need to have a completed signed booking form for each client together with a £400 deposit per person. You can either return your booking form to us by post or by booking online at www.wildfrontiers.co.uk

You can contact the office by email to info@wildfrontiers.co.uk or we are very happy to take your call on **020 7736 3968**.

Wild Frontiers is a fully licensed and bonded tour operator and our ATOL number is 5975. You can book your holiday with Wild Frontiers in complete confidence that all monies you pay to us for your tour are fully protected.

We are also bonded with the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO). AITO members comply with the highest standards of consumer protection. Every AITO holiday is backed not only by AITO's Quality Charter but also by full financial protection.

We do recommend that you take out adequate travel insurance at the time of booking in the event that you are no longer able to travel as all deposits are non-refundable - full booking conditions can be found on the booking form and online at our website.