

**Journey to the Kingdom of Saba
15 days – 14 nights**

**Addis Ababa, Bahar Dar, Gondar, Debarq, Simien Park, Aksum, Mekele, Lalibela, Dessie, Bati
Religion, Archeology, Culture, History**

**This program may be operated for individuals or for groups
This is a suggested itinerary**

This trip will allow you to discover the treasures of the main cities of the Northern Ethiopia and especially the holy city of Lalibela, famous for its 11 churches dug in the rock, and Aksum, the cradle of one of the most important civilizations in Ethiopian history. You will also discover the imperial palaces of the walled city of Gondar, Bahar Dar and the nearby Blue Nile Falls. The Tigray region, with its some 120 churches, hosts an essential part of the Ethiopian religious heritage. Direct ascent in majestic natural settings with the discovery of architectural monuments as unexpected as they are successful both in terms of sculptures and paintings.

Day 1: Addis Ababa

Early arrival at Addis Ababa airport where you'll be met by our representative and transferred to your hotel. Some time to get settled before you start your city tour. In the afternoon visit the national museum, that hosts Lucy's skeleton, the fossilized bones of a 3,200,000-year old hominid found in Ethiopia in 1974. Afterwards, visit the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Mausoleum, memorial, museum and gardens that complete an astonishing architecture. Return to the hotel for dinner and overnight. [D]

Day 2: Addis Ababa, Bahar Dar

After breakfast at your hotel be ready for your 345-mile drive to Bahar Dar. Lunch on the way. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. [B/L/D]

Day 3: Bahar Dar (Dek Island, Blue Nile Falls)

Boat trip on Lake Tana with a stop at Dek Island, where all the inhabitants are priests, to visit Narga Selassi Church and another monastery. Return to Bahar Dar for lunch in town. In the afternoon, take a 1-hour drive (about 16 miles) to Tissisat and visit the Blue Nile falls. Return to Bahar Dar for dinner and overnight at the hotel. [B/L/D]

Day 4: Bahar Dar, Gondar

Leave for Gondar to tour the medieval town, a Unesco listed site, and visit the palace of Fasilidas, the Kuskwam complex discover its superb murals and visit the castle and baths of Fasilidas and the Débré Birhan Sélassié Church (the most famous in Ethiopia). Lunch in town and departure to Debarq for dinner and overnight at the hotel. This evening, enjoy an "azmari bet" (Ethiopian cabaret). [B/L/D]

Day 5: Gondar, Debarq (Simien)

Departure for the Simien to visit the sensational national park. Have lunch on the way during your visit. Like fancy, spectacular landscapes? Simien National Park, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1978, is the perfect place. Formed by significant erosion, this plateau in northern Ethiopia is made up of valleys, peaks and precipices that can reach 4,920-foot deep! There is the highest point in the country: The Ras Dashan at 14,900 feet. Keep your eyes wide open and try to spot the animals inhabiting this incredible space. Perhaps you will have the chance to see some particularly rare species such as the gelada baboon, the Simien fox, the Ethiopian wolf or Walia ibex, a kind of goat that is not found anywhere else! Return to Debarq for dinner and overnight at the hotel. [B/L/D]

Day 6: Debarq, Aksum

Departure for Aksum stopping for lunch on the way. Located in the far north of Ethiopia, the city of Aksum was from the 4th century BC to the 10th century AD, the capital of the Axumite kingdom, one of the most important states of the Horn of Africa at this period in history. It is full of real archaeological

treasures including the unmissable obelisk over 23 meters long, witness to the greatness of the Axumite kingdom at the time. Today, Aksum is considered the religious capital of Ethiopia. Not to be missed around Aksum are the Monastery of Saint Pantalewon, the palace of Dongar and the tombs of the kings Khaled and Gebremeskel. Dinner and overnight at the hotel [B/L/D]

Day 7: Aksum

Visit stelae, museums, tombs and churches of Aksum. Oral tradition makes it the capital of the Queen of Sheba. Discover the park of the stelea and the complex of the Our Lady of Zion Cathedral (access prohibited to women) with "the Ark of the Covenant". Lunch in town. Finally, visit the ruins of the palace of the Queen of Sheba, the most important architectural vestige of the kingdom of Aksum. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. [B/L/D]

Day 8: Aksum, Mekele

Departure for Mekele via Yeha, the 1st capital of Abyssinia, and visit the church dedicated to Abuna Aftse, one of the nine saints who introduced Christianity to the kingdom of Abyssinia. Stop in the village of Sinkata to visit the church of Arbuta Ensessa, hanging on the side of the mountain. Lunch on the way. Then, visit to the Abraha Atséba Church, also called Debra Negast "Monastery of Kings" and the most impressive church in the province of Tigray, is located in the Gualta region, 11 miles from the village of Wukro. Access to this semi-monolithic church, one of the largest in the region, is via a wide stone staircase. The interior has a basilica plan and houses sumptuous frescoes depicting scenes from the Gospel. Those who wish may hike and reach the church of Myriam Korkor, from where the panorama on the plain of Gheralta is superb. Dinner and overnight in Mekele. [B/L/D]

Day 9: Mekele, Lalibela

Today we have a long drive (around 7 hours) in the mountains, crossing the Agaw country. We'll stop on the way to have lunch and reach Lalibela in time for dinner. Overnight at the hotel. B/L/D]

Lalibela is located at an altitude of more than 8,500 feet and, along with Axum, remains one of the two major holy cities for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church because of its amazing churches dug out of rock in the 12th century. The churches were built by King Lalibela, of the Zagoué dynasty, who seized power after the fall of the illustrious Aksumite empire. Churches were dug out of pink granite in forty years, according to legend, with the help of the Angels in order to become a new Jerusalem in Africa. They resisted and survived the vagaries of the turbulent history of Abyssinia. Today they are almost intact. The churches are divided in two and are located on either side of the river called Jordan (or Yordanos in Amharic). Most of the churches are connected to each other by several narrow passages that contribute to the special atmosphere of the site. In these passages, it is not uncommon to spot priests and monks reading the Bible or praying. Each church has its own architectural style and they are very different. Most of them have very beautiful murals and statues.

Day 10: Lalibela

Today will be dedicated to the north section of "Black Jerusalem" as Lalibela is sometimes known. This group, North of the "Jordan" river, includes Bet Medhani Alem ("the house of the Savior of the world"), Bet Mariam ("the house of Mary"), Bet Maskal ("the house of the Cross"). A brief stop to have lunch in town. In the afternoon continue with Bet Denagel ("the house of the virgins ") and Bet Golgotha Mikael (" the house of Golgotha-Mikael "). With the rest of the day free. to relax. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. [B/L/D]

Day 11: Lalibela

After breakfast we head to the South Group that includes Bet Amanuel ("Emmanuel's house"), Bet Qeddus Mercoreos ("the house of Saint Mercorius"), Bet Abba Libanos ("the house of Father Libanos"), Bet Gabriel Rafael (" the house of Gabriel-Raphaël "). Stop for lunch in town. In the afternoon visit Bete Lehem (" the house of the holy Pain ") and the eleventh church, Bet Ghiorgis ("the house of Saint George") that is separated from the others although connected by the system of trenches. This is the most majestic. carved into the shape of a Greek Orthodox cross. And, undoubtedly, the most

photographed and the best known of all the churches. Return to the hotel for dinner and overnight. [B/L/D]

Day 12: Lalibela, Dessie

Departure for Dessie with a stop en route for lunch. In Hayk, visit the Estifanos Monastery, located on a serene peninsula that welcomes a community of around thirty monks and as many nuns, in separate spaces. In 1240 the Estifanos Monastery was founded, under the auspices of Saint Iyasus Mo'a, who was to make it one of the most renowned centers for teaching monastic doctrine in the country. He actively participated in the restoration of the Solomon dynasty towards the end of the 13th century. It was from here that Takla Haymanot, one of the most revered saints of the Orthodox liturgy, left to found the monastery of Dabra Libanos, after years of study under the direction of his spiritual father. Not far from the church, a small hut, serving as a museum, shelters precious manuscripts, the sacrificial stone which would have received the pagan offerings, as well as heavy cross-shaped stones carried by the monks as a sign of selflessness during their long prayers. Continue to Dessie for dinner and overnight at the hotel. [B/L/D]

Day 13: Dessie (Bati)

After early breakfast at the hotel we drive to Bati to visit the local market that happens every Monday. The event is divided in two parts: one location for animals and another for general products. On the animal side, it is around 8:30 am that the excitement begins! Camels, oxen, sheep, donkeys arrive on both sides on the market located in a large bowl, surrounded by mountains. The other large market is where it busy with the sellers of chickens (mainly), salt, spices, eggs, oranges, tomatoes, incense ... which mix with shoes, plastic basins or wood. Enjoy the dynamic, the colors and the sounds but don't even look for any touristic object because you'll find none. But your camera will click all the time as you'll find Afar men and women hairdos phenomenal and the colors will fill your camera screen without the need to look too far. After lunch a Bati or Kombolcha head back to Dessie. Rest of the day free. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. [B/L/D]

Note: To take advantage of the main market you must schedule your trip to be a Monday in Dessie.

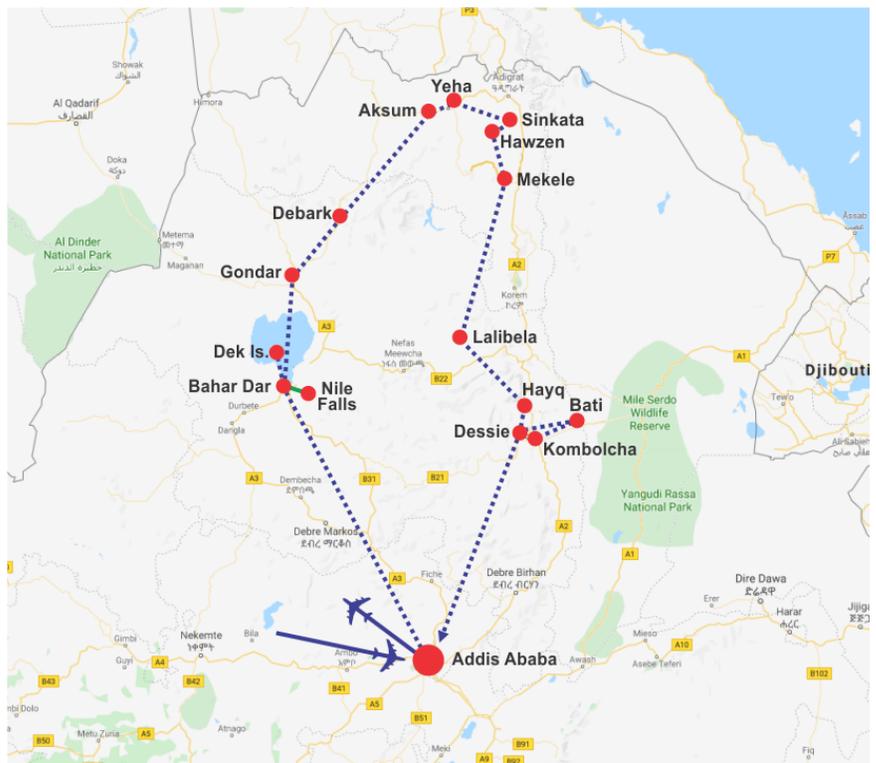
Day 14: Dessie, Addis Ababa

Departure for Addis Ababa stopping for lunch on the way on the way. Some time to freshen-up before a farewell dinner at a traditional restaurant and discover the typical Ethiopian songs and dances. [B/L/D]

Day 15: Addis Ababa, USA

Breakfast at the hotel and free time to continue exploring Addis Ababa on your own depending on your flight schedule. At the appointed time you'll be picked-up at your hotel and transferred to the airport to board your flight back to the USA. [B]

[B] = Breakfast | [D] = Dinner |
[B/L/D] = Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner



Tour includes:

- Arrival and departure private transfers
- 4 nights' accommodation:
 - Addis Ababa 2 nights
 - Bahar Dar 1 night
 - Gondar 1 night
 - Debarke 2 nights
 - Aksum 2 nights
 - Mekele 1 night
 - Lalibela 3 nights
 - Dessie 2 night
- Meals
 - Breakfast daily
 - 13 lunches
 - 14 dinners
- The famous Lucy a turning point in humanity
- The Holy Trinity Church in Addis Ababa
- Narga Selassi Church
- Blue Nile falls
- Palace of Fasilidas
- Kuskwam complex
- Débré Birhan Sélassié Church
- Evening, at an "azmari bet" (Ethiopian cabaret)
- Simien National Park
- Aksum Obelisk
- Monastery of Saint Pantalewon

- Dongar Palace
- Queen of Sheba's Palace ruins
- Church of Arbuta Ensessa
- The 11 churches of Lalibela
- Hayk Estifanos Monastery
- Bati market
- All entrance fees for included sightseeing
- Land transportation as described
- English speaking driver-guide

Tour does not Include:

- International or Domestic airfares
- Any taxes and surcharges relating to airfares
- Travel insurance
- Entry Visa and visa fees
- Wi-Fi at hotels except as indicated
- All alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks except as indicated
- Other meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Extras and gratuities
- Early check-in, late check-out (Most hotels begin check-in around 2:00pm).
- Expenses of personal nature
- Porterage at airport and hotels
- Optional tours and activities
- Any service not specifically listed under "included"

Recommended Hotels in your tour

City	Hotel Name	Tripadvisor
First Class		
Addis Ababa	Addissinia	4.5
Bahar Dar	Blue Nile Resort Hotels	4
Gondar	Mayleko Lodge	4.5
Simien (Debarke)	Limalimo Lodge	5
Aksum	Sabean Hotel	3
Mekele	Planet Hotel	3.5
Lalibela	Sora Lodge Lalibela	4.5
Dessie	Hotel Time	4
Deluxe		
Addis Ababa	Hyatt Regency	4.5
Bahar Dar	Kuriftu Resort & Spa	4
Gondar	Mayleko Lodge	4.5
Simien (Debarke)	Limalimo Lodge	5
Aksum	Sabean Hotel	3
Mekele	Planet Hotel	3.5
Lalibela	Maribela Hotel	4.5
Dessie	Hotel Time	4

Hotels will be confirmed at time of booking
In certain locations we are using the best hotels available

Tour Prices:

These programs can be customized for individuals and groups.

Changes to this program may be requested by phone (1855-55-TOURS) or using the web FIT Quote Request

- **Airfare**

We also be glad to add the necessary airfare from your gateway so you take advantage of our special discounted leisure fares

- **Program**

You may add or remove;

- Trip days
- Cities and sites
- Meals

- **Other options**

- The program was designed with private services, however, we may substitute shared sightseeing where available
- If you prefer deluxe services we may operate this program including private driver, private guide and concierge service.

- **Quotation**

Once we have designed the program the way you want we'll give you a quote within 2 business days.

Tour Code: ET03ADD20ST

Options:

- Lunches and dinners can be arranged for individuals, families and groups at top restaurants or any restaurant requested by you.
- We can revise the itinerary to spend more time and provide more depth in those areas that you are interested on.
- Any other changes to the itinerary will be accommodated depending on the facilities available in the area.

Group Quotations

- If you wish to use these programs for your group or as the basis for a customized journey please either call us (1-855-55-TOURS) or use the web Group Quote Request.
- In either case our specialists will work with to refine all the details and they will get you a quote with 2 business days. Quotes may be obtained for the air and land portions of just for the land journey.
- Booking both air and land with us will represent savings for you because of our buying power and longtime relationship with the airlines.
- We will also may have the choice between regular fares and special leisure fares not available to the public.