

Southern Ethiopia & Bale Mountains

Cultural South & Bale National Park 16 Days / 15 Nights

Ethiopia has a fascinating ancient history yet it is one of the worlds best kept travel secrets despite having eight world heritage sites. Ethiopia is truly a land of contrasts and extremes; a land of remote and wild places. Some of the highest and most stunning places on the African continent are found here. Ethiopia is old, old beyond all imaginations. As Abyssinia, its culture and traditions date back over 3,000 years. And far earlier than the lived 'Lucy' or 'Dinkenesh', meaning 'thou art wonderful', as she is known to the Ethiopians, whose remains were found in a corner of this country of mystery and contrasts.



Ceremonial body painting of the Karo tribe in the Jinka region

Many people visit Ethiopia because of the remarkable manner in which ancient historical traditions have been preserved. The ceremonies and rituals of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church open a window on the authentic world of the Old Testament. In no other country is it possible to find you so dramatically transported back in time or to participate with such freedom in the sacred rituals of an archaic faith

Bale Mountains National Park

Bale Mountains National Park is 2,400 sq km (1,488 square miles) in area, covering a wide range of habitats and ranging in altitude from 1,500 to 4,377 meters (4,920 to 14,357 feet) and is the highest point in southern Ethiopia.

Bale is less inhabited, on a high-altitude plateau, heather moorlands, and dense juniper forest with an easily seen population of Mountain Nyala and Simien Fox as well as some fabulous birds, many of them endemic.

Mago National Park

Covering an area of 2,162 sq km on the banks of Omo River, the Mago National Park is relatively undeveloped. Sometimes it is possible to find Bushbuck, Dik Dik, Baboons and Colobus Monkeys.

The park rises in the north to Mt Mago (2,528 meters) and is home to 56 species of mammals. Mago National Park mainly consists of grass savannah with some forested dense bush areas around the rivers. The birds are typical of the dry grassland habitat featuring bustards, hornbills, weavers, and starlings. Kingfishers and herons can be seen around the Neri River, which provides an alternative habitat.

The Southern region

The Southern region comprises of more than 40 ethnic groups and in Ethiopia more than 80. The region south of Konso and Yabello is inhabited by the Konso people. This is the cornerstone of Konso culture; however is a highly specialized and successful agricultural economy that through terracing buttressed with stone, enable them to extract a productive living from the none-too-fertile hills and valleys that surround them. The southwest's Omo region has been called 'Africa's last great wilderness', and is home not just to Ethiopia's few remaining large mammals including lion and elephant but also its last isolated tribes, including the famous Mursi lip stretchers and body-painting Karo.

Trip Overview	Highlights
Day 1 Addis Ababa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addis Ababa • The cultural dinner, tribal dancing and music • Bale & Mago National Parks • Mursi & Hamar villages • Chench • Colourful markets at Eluwaya, Turmi & Chench • Giant Lobelias • wildlife • Ethiopian Woolf • Mountain Nyala • Boat trip on Lake Chamo • Horse riding
Day 2 Wondo Genet	
Day 3 Bale National Park	
Day 4 Dinsho to Ahbera - trekking	
Day 5 Ahbera – Wasama - trekking	
Day 6 Wasama – Garba Gurcha - trekking	
Day 7 Garba Gurcha – Negele Borena	
Day 8 Negele Borena - Yabello	
Day 9 Yabello - Jinka	
Day 10 Jinka – Mago National Park - Jinka	
Day 11 Jinka - Turmi	
Day 12 Turmi – Hamer Village – Turmi	
Day 13 Turmi – Arba Minch	
Day 14 Arba Minch – Chench – Arba Minch	
Day 15 Arba Minch – Addis Ababa	
Day 16 Addis Ababa	

Daily Trip Schedule

(Times quoted are actual trekking times)

Day 1: Addis Ababa (The capital of Ethiopia - 2,300 metres above sea level)

There will be a meeting at 5pm for group introductions and a trek briefing.

Following the meeting we will depart in the early evening for a traditional Ethiopian cultural evening including tribal dancing, ancient musical instruments and a traditional meal (Meal included).

Overnight: Jupiter International Hotel - (Dinner included)

Day 2 Addis Ababa – Wondo Genet (approximately 270 kms drive)

After having breakfast we drive to the rift valleys via Debre Zeyit, Ziway, Langano and Shashemene. En route it's possible to see one or two Lakes at Debre Zeyit, drive to Meki then proceed to Ziway. Lake Ziway is the largest of the northern group of Rift Valley Lakes. It lies about 1.5 km east of the town of Ziway, it is best known for its bird life. From Lake Ziway continue to Lake Langano. It is also a base to visit the nearby Lake Abiata-shala National Park, twin lakes of Abiata and Shala which form part of the 887sq km Lake Abiata-shala National Park.

After passing Langano we start to climb, leaving the drier acacia forest for the greener areas around Shashamene turning east for about 13 km. This leads to the mountain and spa resort of Wondo Genet which is surrounded by dense forest and best known for its abundant bird life. These surroundings are 'A place of heaven', with the hot water gushing out of the rocks, one can stand underneath to get a natural hydro massage.

Overnight: Gobe Wabe Shebelle Hotel - (Breakfast included)

Day 3 Wondo Genet – Bale Mountains (Approximately 160 kms drive)

We leave Wondo Genet behind this morning and drive to the Bale Mountains National park, a journey that is both scenic and exciting. Climbing through forests, fields, little villages and banana groves we reach open grassy upland where Blue-winged Geese, Rouget's Rails and Abyssinian Longclaws introduce us to the long list of Ethiopian endemic birds found in this area. Approaching the park, the scenery becomes increasingly spectacular.

Overnight: Wabe Shebelle hotel - (Breakfast included)

Day 4 Dinsho – Finch Ahbera - trekking (4 hours) 3,100 – 3,300 metres

Today is a walk through beautiful landscapes and different bird life including the endemic Rougets Rail, Wattled Ibis, Tick billed Raven and Chough. We will see the Finch Ahbera waterfall before reaching our campsite at 3,300 metres. The waterfall has carved a deep cave under its ledge leading to even deeper narrow caves some distance underground.

Overnight: Camping at Ahbera - (Breakfast, lunch and dinner included)

Day 5 Ahbera – Wasama – trekking (5 -6 hours) 4,000 metres

We will be meeting colourfully dressed local people on our walk today and also entering the region of red hot pokers, the orange flowered lenontis, colourful sunbirds and tacazze. We may also see the Ethiopian Wolf, Tawny Eagle, Augur Buzzard and the Endemic Lammergeier. There are a number of alpine lakes along the trek offering some great photo opportunities.

Overnight: camping at Wasama - (Breakfast, lunch and dinner included)

Day 6 Wasama – Garba Gurcha – trekking (5 - 6 hours) 4,100 metres

While trekking from Wasama Garba Gurcha we cross Mt Batu at 4,203 metres which is the second highest peak of the Bale Mountains National Park. The view over lake Garba Gurcha, ('Black lake') and the lowlands beyond is magnificent. Here at the head of the lake and above the swamp there is our campsite with a spring nearby. The lake has no fish but is rich in invertebrate fauna and the Giant Lobelia, blue winged goose and giant rat mole are also found. Tullu Deemtu is also situated in this area.

Overnight: camping at Garba Gurcha - (Breakfast, lunch and dinner included)

Day 7 Garba Gurcha – Senatti - Negele Borena (2 hours trekking)

We leave Garba Gurcha and travel via the Senatti (Meaning 'The strong wind blows') plateau an area reaching over 4,377m above sea level and entirely different flora. It is one of the world's largest expanses of Afro-alpine vegetation. Endemic Ethiopian Wolf and birds can be seen. A car will pick us up and drive to the second highest mountain in Ethiopia - Mt Tullu Deemtu (the red mountain), then onto Negele Borena via Haremma forest Dola Mena and Bitata.

En route we visit the spectacular Haremma Escarpment, giving some remarkable views over the lowland forest 2,000m below.

Overnight: Green Hotel - (Breakfast included)

Day 8 Negele Borena – Hudet – Wachile – Yabello (330 k's drive)

We have a long drive too Yabello via Hudet and Wachile, however we are rewarded by passing through a wildlife park and having the opportunity to view ancient farming lifestyles and changing scenery as we drop to the lowlands and coffee plantations.

Overnight: Mobil Motel - (Breakfast included)

Day 9 Yabello – Jinka (250 km drive)

Jinka is our destination today crossing the territory of Ari, Tsemay, Bena and Konso people.

The scenery becomes drier and the vegetation scrubbier. You are given the chance to stop and meet the local farmers to experience the typical Ethiopian rural lifestyle. In between Yabello and Konso you will have the chance of attending the colorful market of Borena pastoralists from miles around at a small village, Eluwaya.

Overnight: Jinka Resort - (Breakfast included)

Day 10 Jinka – Mago National Park (40km drive)

Today is an excursion to Mago National Park to the Mursi's villages. The Mursi traditions include body scarification (among the women) and the wearing of lip plates. The larger the lip plate a female can wear the greater her value when she is married. The farming of this area shows the diverse intricately terraced hillside in adverse conditions and the local Mursi people are also noted for their carved burial headstones /totems. The park is home to, Bushbuck, Dik Dik, baboons, Colobus Monkeys.

Overnight: Jinka Resort - (Breakfast included)

Day 11 Jinka – Turmi (280 km drive)

Drive to Key Afer and Dimeka which has a full and colourful market held every Saturday and Tuesday. Dimeka is situated south of the Bera territory and even though they are of similar appearance, they are very advanced in agriculture methods. There are some great market shopping opportunities for arm and leg bracelets in Dimeka. It is possible (as optional extra) to arrange an evening camp fire and traditional local Evangadi dance 'dance of the Hamer people' upon request.

Overnight: Buska Lodge - (Breakfast and dinner included)

Day 12 Turmi - Hamer Villages – Turmi

We visit the Hamer villages who are fine looking men and women that take great pride in their appearance by shaving and colouring their hair, oiling their bodies and covering themselves with beads and bracelets on their arms and legs. The Hamer village also has a very colourful market – great for buying gifts to take home. It is also a day where we get the opportunity to visit rural homes and see how they survive in this very dry landscape. There is also the option of taking a two hour drive to Kolcho village to visit Karo people who are well known for their face and body painting.

Overnight: Buska Lodge (Breakfast and dinner included)

Day 13 Turmi – Abore - Arba Minch (280 km drive)

Today is a long drive back to Arba Minch via Abore and Konso village. Arba Minch is known for the forty springs that are situated on the forest lowlands beneath the town.

Overnight: Paradise lodge - (Breakfast included)

Day 14 Arba Minch - Chench - Arba Minch

Today we visit Chench, and the homes of the colourful market of the Dorze people, renowned cotton weavers whose bamboo and tall beehive-like dwellings are among the most distinctive traditional structures to be seen anywhere in Africa. The 'Shamma' cloth produced around Chench is regarded to be the finest in Ethiopia – plain white gabbi robes and brightly coloured scarf like netalas are sold along the road side. Late afternoon we will enjoy a boat trip on Lake Chamo (part of the Nechisar National Park) is among the best in Ethiopia.. An attraction on the boat trip includes viewing of hippos and crocodiles from a very close range. Known as 'Azo Gebeya' meaning Crocodile market.

Overnight: Paradise lodge - (Breakfast included)

Day 15 Arba Minch – Wolayta - Addis Ababa (425 km drive)

This will be the last night to enjoy the rural Ethiopian countryside on our drive back to Addis Ababa. En route we will visit Tiya prehistoric site, classified by UNESCO as a World Heritage site, where we can see the northern most example of a engraved standing stelae which stretches across southern Ethiopia. These stelae are believed to have been erected between the 12th and 14th centuries and are believed to be grave markers. Recent excavations at Tiya have revealed the remains of young people buried in foetal positions.

Today is a long day viewing changing environments and stopping at places of interest.

Overnight: Biruk guest house - (Breakfast included)

Day 16 Addis Ababa

After breakfast and checking out of our hotel, the trip will end. You may wish to stay on an extra few days at Biruk guest house to sit and relax, or visit the many historical sights that Addis Ababa has to offer.

(Breakfast included)

Local Guides:

The guides/scouts/cooks/drivers used are experienced. Each person will have their large pack carried for them by horses when in the Bale mountains, however you will be expected to carry your own day pack which should be large enough to carry all you will need throughout the day e.g. raincoat, water bottle, camera, spare clothing, snack food, etc.

Guide to Tipping:

It is customary to tip the tour leader, local guides and drivers at the end of your trek/tour. The amount is totally discretionary.

Accommodation

All accommodation while on the trek is detailed in this itinerary and are in standard hotels/guest houses or camping. The hotels are on a twin share basis.

Extra accommodation can be reserved for you in Addis Ababa before and after your tour at a discounted price. Please enquire for prices at the time of booking.

Visa:

Prior to departure you may need to obtain certain visas depending on your nationality. Specific information is given to you in your pre departure information. A visa may be obtained at point of entry into Addis Ababa at a cost of approx USD\$20 for thirty day single entry.

Clothing Note:

While there is no technical climbing equipment required, you should take warm clothing and appropriate leather walking boots and sleeping gear etc. The trek in the Bale Mountains region can get very cold in the evenings.

Important Note:

You will need to bring a copy of your passport and travel insurance policy to the briefing to give to tour guide before joining the trip.

Please see separate clothing and equipment list.

Pre departure information

Further to the information provided in this dossier, a pre departure information booklet will be sent to you. This

Pre departure booklet provides you with information regarding visas, joining instructions, what to bring, health requirements, vaccinations, extra hotel accommodation, and training tips for fitness etc.

Please read it carefully to make sure you are fully prepared.

Important note:

The enclosed notes are intended as a guide only, indicating a typical itinerary and series of activities and highlights. While every effort will be made to follow the route published on any departure and the distances travelled, driving time and available activities can vary for a number of reasons, in the event of political problems or natural difficulties which are beyond our control and prevent travelling to a particular area, Trekking 4 Women reserve the right to substitute an alternative activity for that section of the trip. Overnight stops may vary on occasions from those suggested Please note that your leader has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the itinerary if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns The leader will try to ensure that the trip runs according to plan, but please be prepared to be flexible if necessary.

Remember if you do not undertake some training before hand and you are found not be fit enough for the trip, this may jeopardise you being able to remain on the trek.(please read the terms & conditions carefully regarding this).

Cultural South, Bale & Mago National Parks 16 days / 15 nights	
Trip Code: T4W 134	
Grade: Moderate	
Group Size: 8 – 12	
Accommodation: hotels / lodges & camping	
Price: Please check 'Trekking 4 Women's' website for departure dates and prices.	
Start : Addis Ababa	End: Addis Ababa

Price includes	Price does not include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A NZ lead tour guide • Local guide, scout and drivers salaries when in National Parks • Escort local guide service for whole tour • Accommodation as specified in itinerary on a twin/triple share bases • Welcome group cultural dinner (excluding drinks) as indicated in the itinerary including dinner transfers • Full board when camping • All camping & cooking equipment & Cook service during camping • Horse riding at Bale National Park • Excursion to Mursi villages • Excursion to Chench • Boat trip on Lake Chamo • Vat & local taxes • "Trekking 4 Women" Tee Shirt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry visas into Ethiopia • International Flights • International arrival and departure transfers • Any tour entrance fees except where indicated in itinerary • Tips, laundry, alcohol drinks, soft drinks and other items of a personal nature. • Meals except where indicated as per itinerary • All personal gear • Travel Insurance • Evening Camp fire & Evangadi dancing at Turmi

All Trekking 4 Women (T4W) trips will be personally led by Ann Young, (The Director of T4W) or a representative of T4W to ensure you, the client of the best possible experience. Our passion for travel and desired objective is to offer a unique experience, enrich lives, and encourage personal growth which is fun and affordable. The objective will be to provide sustainable active travel adventures that are beneficial for local communities and the mountains of the Ethiopia.

Updated May 2012

Trekking 4 Women, P O Box 5543, Palmerston North 4441, New Zealand.
 Phone: +64 6 356 7043, Fax: +64 6 35 67 044, Mobile: + 64 (027) 356 7043
 Email: ann@trekking4women.co.nz, web: www.trekking4women.co.nz