

DRIFTWOOD ADVENTURES NORTHERN ETHIOPIA TREK

Dates TBD 2021



Imagine staying in the remote village of Seheta for Timkat, a three-day festival dedicated to celebrating the anniversary of the baptism of Jesus Christ.

This is such a special time to be in Ethiopia, a time to share the true magic of their culture. In the bigger cities, especially Addis, the Timkat festival is jam packed with tourists. Being able to stay in Seheta will give us a rare, authentic opportunity to celebrate with locals, a true cultural immersion.

We will be trekking with my dear friend and photography guide, Sum Sum. He speaks fluent english and has worked with many photographers such as Steve McCurry, Hans Silvester, BBC and National Geographic. His understanding of lighting, location and portraiture is invaluable! Get your cameras ready!

I want to thank Tesfa Tours for creating this itinerary!

They have been promoting community tourism in this region since 2010. They believe community tourism means holidays that support local communities, and that are sustainable, but they also believe that holidays must give their guests a wonderful time.

True community tourism is a sustainable partnership between philanthropic businesses and community run enterprises. This partnership enables local communities to generate sustainable improvements in their livelihood through the development of their own tourism related enterprises.

I can't be more excited to be partnering with them!

Check out the itinerary below. The cost is \$2895. I will need a \$500 deposit by Dec 1, 2019 latest to reserve our lodges, cars and guides.

Jan 17- 18 Fly into Addis

City tour and welcome dinner. Stay in Marcen Addis hotel

Jan 18 Fly to Mekele with Ethiopian Airlines

Meet the driver waiting for your pick up outside the terminal. We will visit one church, stop in Wukro , have lunch then the car will drop us off at Idega Arbi. That afternoon we will trek from IdagaArbi to the guesthouse takes around 2 and a half hours to Shimbrety community guest house, where we will stay the night. We can visit around the guesthouse as well as the farm houses at this spectacular location.

Jan 19 Half Day Trek - Shimbrety to Seheta

4 hour trek through the valleys to Seheta. Visit a rock tunnel that connect farmers on the western side of the escarpment and the lovely church of Mariam Buzuhan. If time allows see Mariam Bahara on the way. We will have a picnic lunch at Bahara, followed by Free Time - Seheta . Today is the Timkat Eve. Join in the celebrations About 4pm there will be processions processing the Mikael taking the tabots from their church to a special camping place. We will stay overnight at Seheta community guest house.

Jan 20 Seheta

Join in the with Timkat ceremony in the morning as water is blessed and splashed over participants. Join in as the Tabots are processed back to their churches. we will have a local lunch Ethiopian in Seheta. After lunch we will take a short walk to local churches where we will spend the afternoon with the community celebrating their big festival, dancing and drumming will be a big focus. Overnight at the guest house.

Jan 21 Half Day Trek - Seheta - Enaf

Its Mikael festival this morning. See the celebrations from the local Mikael church and the procession. Lunch with the Seheta community. Afternoon we will trek 4-5 hours up the escarpment to Enaf community guest house.

Jan 22 Half Day Trek - Enaf to Half Day Trek

3 hour and 30 minutes to the end of the trailhead. Have coffee and local lunch at the 'Megeb beyt' there. We will meet our jeep in Haloqa, then drive about 2 hours through the mountains past Adwa to Axum. In Axum we will enjoy a short tour of some sites: Obelisks & Khalids tombs. We will see the archeological sight with the massive obelisks, and one of the tombs that employed massive stone architecture and the obelisk field to the west of the town. That night we will stay in the Sabean Hotel.

Jan 23 Full Day!

Early morning visit the church compound - Tsion Mariam

A church of some form has stood here since the earliest days of Ethiopian Christianity and although the original church is long gone there are stones Ethiopia from ancient times remaining with Sabean script. The complex includes the new church, old church, museum and the chapel said to house the Ark of the Covenant.

After we will drive from Axum to Simiens North mountains national park where we will spend night in Walyia Lodge - simple lodge on edge of Debar / Simien Park.

Jan 24 Another full day!

Day trip into the park as far as Chenek. Drive into park, visit the main view points looking for wildlife and birds. Take short walks from the vehicle, enjoy a picnic with a view, spend time with the photogenic Geladas; see around Chenek. Return to Gondar for evening

Jan 25 Gondar Full City Tour

Gondar City visit - The castle compound, 16/17th C.- a fortress-city & residence of the Emperor Fasilidas & successors. Surrounded by a 900-m- long wall, contains palaces & castles. The ceremonial bath complex, with a rectangular pool in which stands a 3 story stone building. Roots of trees grow through the walls -the place is peaceful & beautiful. Debre Berhan Selassie -the oldest surviving church in Gondar 1693. The painted interior is stunning, the compound is peaceful showing the older foundations of a circular church. If time allows visit the ruined Kusquam Palace on a hill overlooking the city. It was Empress Mentawab's 18th century residence, and has a very romantic feel . The remains of the Empress are buried in the adjacent Mariam church (which you may enter). Stay the overnight at Goha hotel with great views over Gondar

Jan 26-27 Lalibela

Fly to Lalibela in the morning. Visit the first group, starting with Medhan Alem & Mariam, maybe the side chapels of Meskal and Danagil, Mikael and Golgota (where K.Lalibela is buried - men only). If time allows see Giyorgis. Free time to work on street photography is also an option!

The 27th AM we will have an opportunity to see Rufael & Gabriel, with what appears like a draw bridge & moat, pass through tunnels and pop up at Merkorios - (don't miss the gorgeous canvas painting of Christ) & Bethlehem where bread for mass was baked. Pop out of a tunnel to see Emmanuel - a lovely & different design. Then explore round the back and come to Abba Libanos. After emerge on top on a hill called Debre Zeit and enjoy the view back across the landscape. More town photography followed by an aiming dinner.

Jan 28 Addis

Fly to Addis. Store baggage and spend day shopping, sight seeing and having dinner at the best restaurant in town, before heading to the airport.

Included:

- Guide and entrance charge, Axum visit, Gondar city tour, Simien park and Lalibela
- Overnight, reservations in each of 1 night at Marcen Hotel (Addis) Sabean Hotel (Axum) Walya Lodge (Debark) Goha Hotel (Gondar), 2 nights Tukul village hotel (Lalibela) with breakfast next morning based on 6 people - 2 singles 2 twins. Farewell dinner on last night.
- 4-nights on Tesfa trek in Tigray over Timkat staying at community guest houses including bed, meals ,guide and pack animal to carry your luggage based on 6 people
- Transportation: Addis airport pick up and city tour, Mekele to trek, Trek to Axum + tour, Axum to Simien park, Simien tour, Debark lodge to Gondar, Gondar tour, Gondar airport drop of, Lalibela airport pick up & drop of (Some transport in Lalibela); Addis pick up afternoon service and drop for flight.
- Local flights based upon your holding international tickets with Ethiopian Airlines (that entitles a large discount on domestic ticket prices)

Not Included:

- Meal and bottled drink outside the trek or our community guest houses (during trekking) Meals in Ethiopia are very cheap and fun to explore
- Entry fee to churches in Tigray, about \$5 USD
- International flights
- Tips for guides and drivers

