

## Preparing For Your Journey: Ethiopia

**Entry Requirements:** Visas are required for all visitors. Passengers in transit in Ethiopia, holding confirmed onward bookings within 72 hours, can obtain transit visas. Tourist Visas are available upon arrival for many countries, including the US.

**For visas in advance:** Visa fee payment must be by money order, cashier's check or certified bank check payable to 'Embassy of Ethiopia.' To apply for a visa via the Ethiopian Embassy, you will need: 1) A Passport valid for at least 6 months, 2) One Recent Color Passport Sized photo, 3) Completed Application Form: [http://www.ethiopianembassy.org/pdf/Visa\\_Application\\_form.pdf](http://www.ethiopianembassy.org/pdf/Visa_Application_form.pdf), 4) A self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage (suggest fedx or express mail). **Visa Processing time:** at least 5 working days provided all above requirements are complete. The visa is valid for entry within 90 days from the date of issue. The fee for a Tourist Visa for US citizens is \$70.00 US for a multiple/single entry for up to 2 years as of November 2009.

**For visas on arrival:** This is a very easy option and the one all our clients have been using. The information online and in books says visitors will need to present two recent passport-sized photographs and the visa fee is \$50.00 for US/CAN/EU/AUS citizens. Recent reports from travellers, including myself, is that the fee is \$20 payable in cash only and the passport photo not required. I would still take a photo with me to be safe. The line is not long and it moves quickly.

**All travellers should double-check visa requirements** with the embassy or consulate before departure, and carry a printout of the relevant pages from the embassy website.

**Time:** Ethiopia is 3 hours ahead of GMT. However, apart from a different calendar, Ethiopia reckons the day in two 12-hour cycles (as in much of East Africa). Therefore, midday could be 6 o'clock. Ethiopia follows the Julian calendar, which has 12 months of 30 days and a 13th month of five or six days. New Year starts on September 11th. The Ethiopian calendar is 7 years and 8 months behind the Gregorian calendar, hence our motto: 'Come to Ethiopia and be 7 years younger'!

**Communications:** Telephone & fax facilities are available in most main towns. The IDD code for Ethiopia is +251.

**Electricity:** Electrical supply is generally 220 volts 50 cycles AC. Bring adaptors for Europe and UK.

**Vaccinations:** No vaccinations are required for US citizens. However, if you are coming from yellow fever areas a certificate of vaccination is required for yellow fever. Hepatitis, cholera and malaria precautions are recommended.

The Passport Health web site has a wealth of information and you can find a travel clinic near you for immunizations. You can do a search by destination and time of year of your trip. The site gives comprehensive information on all travel diseases, types of medications, prevention tips, current health alerts. <http://www.passporthealthusa.com/>

**Customs:** Personal effects are admitted free, and a duty-free allowance of 1 liter of alcohol, 200 cigarettes and '2 bottles of perfume' is permitted. Cameras, computers and major electrical items must be declared on arrival. Ethiopian customs authority does not allow tourists to come with professional cameras. Special filming permit is required for professional cameras.

Video cameras with mark HD (high definition), VHD, MINI DIVI, 3CCD, are generally categorized as professional cameras. Each tourist is allowed to come with only one Photo camera.

Tape recorders require special customs permits.

**Declaring Foreign Currency:** Every traveler to Ethiopia, except a diplomat, is required to declare the amount of currency bringing to the country if \$3000 or more. There is a foreign currency declaration form provided upon arrival. You fill out essential information together with the amount of foreign currency that you are taking into the Ethiopia. Declaration is not needed if you are bringing less than USD 3000. Since all meals are included and souvenirs will not be costly, there is no need to bring such a large amount of money.

**Currency:** The Ethiopian Birr is the national currency. Birr, which is made up of 100 cents. Notes are issued in denominations of 1,5,10, 50 and 100 Birr and each denomination is a different color and size. Coins are 1, 5, 10, 25 and 50 cents. Credit cards are not widely accepted outside the major establishments.

**Money Exchange:** At Bole Airport, hotels and in towns, there are banks where you can exchange money. The only town that does not have a bank is in Turmi. The exchange rate is the same at all banks including at the airport and hotels. There is an ATM only in Addis Ababa at the Sheraton Hotel.

**How Much to Bring:** Since meals are included, you only need for tips, camera fees in Omo Valley (approx 5 birr/ 25 cents per photo per person photographed) and souvenirs if you are a shopper. For the full tour suggest exchange \$100 at the airport to start. You can get more when you return to Addis before continuing to Omo Valley, if needed. If you are booked on only one half of the

tour, start with \$60. Customs regulations do not allow travelers to leave the country with more than 200 Birr (approx \$10) and Birr cannot be exchanged back into dollars.

**Suggested tipping per person:** The total tour is 19 days, 10 in the north and 9 in the south. For the full tour, approx. \$100 to the accompanying guide. In addition to our accompanying guide, we have local guides in Bahir Dar, Gondar, Lalibela, Axum, Arbaminch, Karo, Dassenech, Konso and Hammer villages. Suggest \$2 per guide per day. We will have a driver for each city in the north and several vehicles/drivers in the south depending on the group size. Suggest \$3 per day drivers (\$60 total for full tour). If you would like to give a contribution to a village you are visiting, a small amount 20-50 birr is fine. You would give it to your guide who will give it to the head of the village. As a rough summary, \$200 for all the tips should suffice. Slice in half for ½ tour.

**Shopping:** Ethiopia is famous for its coffee and Organic Forest Coffee is the best thing to buy in Addis Ababa. In addition, handmade cotton scarves are also favored by most women. Shops at Piazza in Addis Ababa (usually referred to as “The Gold Street”) offer gold and silver jewelry. Hand crafts and leather products are also common. Silver and amber jewelry and paintings on bark made by the locals are offered all along the walk towards the monastery churches on Zeghe Peninsula (Bahir Dar).

If you are shopping in Ethiopia, please make sure that the items you are buying are allowed to be taken out of the country. Antiquities, works of art and manuscripts other than those offered for sale in **souvenir** shops may **not be taken out** of Ethiopia. In some cases, even for those items offered for sale in souvenir shops a special permission from National Museum is required.

**Gifts:** Many people ask about this. We suggest bringing soaps, shampoos and lotions from your hotels. The women especially appreciate this in Omo Valley. For men, you can bring disposable razors. If you wish, you can bring school supplies that can be given in Omo Valley or in Lalibella schools. For those wishing to give financial gifts, please let us know in advance as we can arrange the donation to schools and orphanages.

**Medical Facilities:** While both doctors and dentists are available throughout many areas of the country, the major hospitals are located in the main towns. We recommend that visitors bring sufficient supplies of any medications that they need regularly. Bring them in the original bottles and pack in your carry-on luggage. It will be extremely difficult to replace these medications if lost.

**Climate:** Ethiopia has two main seasons, the dry season from October through to April, and the rainy season from May to September. Mid-March-April, it can rain overnight and early morning. Temperatures will depend on altitude, though it's never very cold.

**What to wear:** Ethiopians are fairly conservative in their dress, suits and ties are standard in offices. For tourists, light cotton clothing, sunglasses and a hat will be required in the warm lowlands, while in the highlands light or medium-weight clothing is appropriate. A sweater and/or a light jacket for chilly evenings. The sun can be very strong at high altitudes, so a strong sunscreen is important. **Please Note:** there are steep steps to get into the cave churches in Lalibella. They are without railings and the stones can be slick. Wear shoes with good grip and support.

**Packing list:** flashlight, binoculars, snacks for the road, supportive comfortable walking shoes (no need for heavy hiking shoes; lightweight tennis or teva sandals); lightweight/quick dry pants (the new eco fabrics are great!), women wear tank or short sleeve light fabric tops with a lightweight long sleeve button down shirt as an over layer (there are ones with ventilated flaps, breast and zippered side pockets), sports bra suggested for the rough roads in Omo Valley; safari type hat (has a brim all around for protection of the face and neck but not too large); loose fitted ankle length dress or skirt if you enjoy getting out of the daytime practical long pants, for dinner. Men: light-weight trouser, button down short sleeve shirts, knee or Capri length shorts can be ok. Swimsuit: a few hotels have pools.

**Baggage Allowance:** We suggest taking one carry-on that doubles as your day bag and one medium size checked luggage. Ethiopian Airlines allows 23kgs for checked baggage and 7kgs for carry-on. This information is to the best of our knowledge and subject to change. **Original World is not responsible for excess luggage charges.** Pack lighter than the guidelines to be sure. Do check with your specific international air carrier if you are not flying Ethiopian Air for your international flight.

**Traditional courtesies:** While Ethiopians are well aware of the form in other countries, they tend to be conservative at home. A handshake greeting is normal, with a pleasant discussion on personal matters before getting down to business. The offer of tea or coffee is normal, and time is not that important. Smoking is not popular amongst traditional people or in front of priests. Shoes are often taken off when entering churches, and always when entering mosques.

**Language:** The official language of is Amharic, with its distinctive alphabet, although over 80 local languages are spoken. English is the second official language and is understood in most hotels and major towns. Arabic, French and Italian are also widely understood.

**Photography:** While the scenic beauty of Ethiopia makes it a photographer's paradise, photographs should not be taken of military or strategic buildings. This includes airports. Before photographing any person, religious festival or rural homestead it is courteous to ask permission. Commercial photographers require a permit from the Ministry of Information.

There are no photo fees in the northern historic route. In the villages of Omo Valley the local inhabitants have come to expect payment for photographing them, approx 5 birr/ 30 cents per person photographed. Unfortunately, they now pose for you and so

it is difficult to get natural slice of life shots. Relate with a friendly smile and communicate via the local village guide if you wish to photograph a person or a family. By making a friendly connection, you can sometimes catch them off guard and get a more candid photo; especially children.

There is a special charge for video cameras in both the north and south.

**Hotels:** The hotels are greatly improved in the past 2-3 years. We have selected the best wonderful hotels with local ambiance. All are clean, with western bathrooms and pleasant landscaping. A few are extra nice such as Kurifu Resort in Bahir Dar, Haile Resort in Hawassa, Sabana Lodge in Langanu and Kanta Lodge in Konso. We consider the hotel in Jinka to be the most basic but it is not terrible. Just small bare-bones clean rooms. The number of rooms are small in Turmi and Jinka, therefore we have an alternate hotel listed in these places.

**Special Notes Omo Valley:** The electricity for a couple of the hotels is by generator and available on a schedule generally 6:30 -10 am and 6:30-10 pm. While traveling in Omo Valley from village to village, bathroom facilities will be “bush stops.” Collect the soaps, shampoos and lotions from your hotels to bring as gifts when visiting the villages. The women really appreciate this.

More detailed information can be found at: <http://www.ethiopianembassy.org/index.html>

### Commonly used Words in Amharic:

Useful Words	
Mr.	Ato
Miss	Weyzerit
Mrs.	Weyzero
I	Ene
Yes (All right)	Eshi
No	Aydelem/ Ayhonem
Excuse me	Yekirta
Thank you	Ameseginalahu
You're welcome	Minim ayidel
Please	Ebakot
Money	Birr / Genzeb
Come	na
I like it	Tesmamtoagnal
Good	Tiru/Melkam
Bad	Metfo
Hotel	Hotel
Beer	Bira
Sugar	Sikuar
Salt	Chow
Coffee	Buna
Tea	Shay
Butter	Kebe

Numbers & Days of the Week	
Two	Hulet
Three	Sost
Four	Arat
Five	Amist
Six	Sidist
Seven	Sebat
Eight	Semmint
Nine	Zetegn
Ten	Assir
Hundred	Meto
Sunday	Ihud
Monday	Segno
Tuesday	Maksegno
Wednesday	Erob
Thursday	Hamus
Friday	Arb
Saturday	Kedame
Meeting and Greeting	
Hello	Selam
Goodbye	Dehna hunu/Chaw
What's your name	Simot Man no?
My country is...	Hagere...