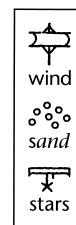


# Wind Sand & Stars

Specialists in the Sinai & Desert Environments



## Hidden Ethiopia 16<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> April 2012

Discover Ethiopia's myriad historical sites on this twelve-day journey through Africa's oldest nation. We explore the extensive rock-hewn churches of the Tigre Region with their exquisite designs. The contrast of architecture within the region is astounding, from the grand splendour of the geometrically designed Debre Selam church to the ancient ruins of the Queen of Sheba's palace. Accompanied by our experienced guides, Ethiopia's rich history is matched by its spectacular scenery and warm hospitality.

### Itinerary

#### Day 1 Fly to Addis Ababa

We are met on arrival by our guide and transferred to our comfortable hotel for the night. *O/n simple hotel*

#### Day 2 Addis Ababa to Dessie

We depart mid-morning and leave the bustling capital behind. Lunch will be taken en-route at the scenic town of Debre Sinar, with some spectacular views of the Rift Valley and you may also glimpse the endemic Gelada Baboon. We can visit the local market if time, before heading onwards for our overnight stay in Dessie. *O/n simple hotel*

#### Day 3 Dessie to Lalibela

Situated 120km north of Dessie, Hayk is a rural town that offers wonderful views of Lake Hayk, sitting at 2030m. Offering calmness and the chance to absorb the wildlife, the lake is of great interest owing to the Hayk Istafanos monastery, located on a wooded peninsula. Local priests believe the church's founder, St Kala Selama, arrived from Jerusalem in AD862 with Hayk Istafanos, becoming the most powerful monastery in Ethiopia from the 13<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> century. Late afternoon we arrive in the town well known for its monolithic churches - Lalibela! *O/n simple hotel*

#### Day 4 Exploration of Lalibela's Churches

Lalibela's monolithic churches were built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, carved out of the pink tufa volcanic rock. They are listed on the UNESCO World Heritage Site, each with its own unique architectural style and well-preserved paintings. Today we'll take our time to explore the historical context of the churches and learn how they still are the spiritual centre of this community, some 800 years on. Described by some as a sculpture to the glory of God, the origins of this captivating town are clouded in fascinating legend. *O/n simple hotel*

#### Day 5 Lalibela to Mekele

A day of wonderful views travelling into the Tigrayan capital, Mekele. The legendary market of Mekele is also the trading centre of the traditional salt caravan route from the harsh Danakil Desert. Slabs of salt carried by camel from Atsbi to Mekele can take up to a week to arrive, delivered by the Arhotai people. Mekele is an easy place to explore and absorb the contrasting modern and traditional lives of Mekele people. *O/n simple hotel*

#### Days 6 - 8 Mekele – Gheralta & Exploration

In the morning we can visit the Mekele Museum to view some of the fantastic triptychs recently returned from France. From here it is a short drive into the Gheralta where we will set up camp. The Gheralta is said to have the finest collection of churches situated anywhere in Ethiopia. Scattered across the beautiful landscape, exploring the hidden churches requires a basic level of fitness as there are some demanding but scenic walks to the magnificently concealed buildings, which our knowledgeable guide will help us to find and interpret. It may also be possible to arrange a visit to the local community and learn of their way of life in this harsh landscape. Their culture has remained unchanged for centuries, they are famously stoic and yet incredibly hospitable. *O/n camping, with basic to no facilities*

#### Day 9 Gheralta to Axum via Yeha

Driving towards the ancient kingdom of Axum, our journey takes us through dramatic highland scenery to Yeha. Said to have been built in Sabaean Times around 700BC, the ruins of Yeha's Temple of the Moon is a rectangular edifice and is the oldest structure in Ethiopia. Here we will have time to absorb and learn the significance of this incredibly well preserved construction. *o/n simple hotel*

#### Day 10 Axum

Once the most powerful state between Eastern Roman Empire and Persia, Axum has an incredible number of sites to see. These include the monolithic steles, the tombs of King Kaleb and King Gebre Meskal and the legendary Bath of the Queen of Sheba. Visiting the Cathedral of St Mary of Zion is a visit to the holiest church in Ethiopia as it is said to house the original Ark of the Covenant. Please be aware that some of the sites have restricted access to females. *O/n simple hotel*

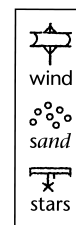
#### Day 11 Fly Axum – Addis Ababa

A morning flight returning to the world's third highest capital city, time permitting, there will be a chance to purchase some last minute gifts and savour your last fresh cup of Ethiopian coffee before a farewell evening meal accompanied by traditional music and dance. *O/n 4\* hotel*

#### Day 12 Fly Addis Ababa – London

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## Costs

<b>Land arrangements</b>	£1,995
<b>Flight</b>	£500 – 750 (depending upon time of booking)

### Cost Includes

- All local transport, including an internal flight
- All accommodation
- Full board (including bottled drinking water)
- Qualified leader and local guides
- Museum entrance fees
- Permits
- Comprehensive travel insurance

### Cost excludes

- Ethiopian Visa (£14, please see separate note)
- Gratuities £50 (invoiced)
- Single Supplement £90 per person (invoiced)
- Soft drinks and any other personal expenses
- Additional transport and accommodation for separate arrival or onward travel outside the main itinerary

### Visa

Please note an Ethiopian visa is required. Full details are given on the Ethiopian Consulate website: [www.ethioembassy.org.uk/consular\\_services/visa.htm](http://www.ethioembassy.org.uk/consular_services/visa.htm) and you can download a visa application form from here. If you have any questions, please contact the office.

### ATOL protection

The air holidays and flights in this brochure are ATOL Protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 5474. For further information, visit the ATOL website at [www.atol.org.uk](http://www.atol.org.uk).



### British Standard BS 8848 compliance

The operating procedures and controls that govern overseas ventures provided by Wind Sand & Stars Limited conform to BS8848 (*Specification for the provision of visits, fieldwork, expeditions and adventurous activities outside the United Kingdom*). ENDORSED BY THE YOUNG EXPLORERS TRUST (declared).

**Please note all Itineraries are subject to change.**