

# ETHIOPIA

## Trek through the Simien Mountains to the Ambaras Village Project.

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10 days / 9 nights

**Depart:** London – Addis Ababa

**Return:** Addis Ababa – London

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### INTRODUCTION

The Simien Mountains form one of Africa's largest mountain ranges and are one of the most spectacular. With many of the peaks rising above 4000m, they make an awesome sight and contain Ethiopia's highest mountain – and the fourth highest in Africa – Ras Dashen, standing majestically at 4620m.

Our trek takes us through the Simien Mountain National Park, an area abundant with flora and fauna, fertile cultivated terraces and vibrant hillside villages. Our goal is the summit of Bwahit standing at 4430m, the second highest peak in Ethiopia. Returning to our camp we head to the village of "Ambaras" where we will have the rare opportunity of mixing with the local villagers and helping put the finishing stages to the Deutsche Bank financed project.

This is a tough and challenging trek but the beauty of the countryside, the diversity of the wildlife and exotic plants, and the friendliness of the local people will be something you will take away with you for a long time to come.

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### ITINERARY

**Day 1:** Leave London Heathrow for Addis Ababa International Airport, approx ten hours' flying time.

**Day 2: Addis Ababa**

We arrive early morning in Addis Ababa. There will be time for a full tour of the city in the day. Later we can relax and meet for dinner in the hotel.

**Day 3: Addis - Gonder**

We take an early morning flight to Gonder which leaves time to explore the medieval castles and churches. We then return back to the hotel to relax and make final preparations for the start of the trek.

**Day 4: Gonder – Buyit Rass – Sankaber (3200m)**

We drive (approx 3 hours) to the bustling town of Debark, and enter the Simien Mountain National Park. Now on foot, we set off around the cliff face high on the plateau and glimpse the spectacular backdrop of the Simien Mountains for the first time. We are likely to encounter gelada baboons, endemic to Ethiopia, and the noisy wattled ibis. Camp Sankaber (3200m).

**Walk approx: 5 hours**

**Day 5: Sankaber – Geech (3600m)**

A hearty breakfast sets us on our way as we head towards Geech abyss and the stunning Jin Bahir Falls. Dropping down to the viewpoint perched on a rocky spur opposite the falls, we enjoy a great view as the Jin Bahir river plunges over the cliff into the 1000m drop below. Leaving the falls, we have a sharp climb to rejoin the road before veering off into the valley and crossing the Jin Bahir River further upstream. The final stage of the day follows well-walked paths through cultivated terraces towards Geech village and our campsite nestled high above the village.

Camp Geech 3600m.

**Walk approx: 6 - 7 hours**

**Day 6: Geech – Mietgogo – Chenek (3600m)**

Leaving camp, we set off on a steady climb across open moorland towards Mietgogo, a rocky outcrop perched high above the canyons. The cliffs drop away 1500m below us, but the 360 degree views of the surrounding area are fabulous! Retracing our steps, we head east and drop down until we are just above the source of the river. We then commence the steady climb to Inatye crest (4090m), following the path over the top and down around the mountain, descending nearly 500m to our campsite. We should be there in time to watch the usually-spectacular sunset over the cliffs around Chenek. Camp Chenek 3600m.

**Walk approx: 9 hours**

**Day 7: Chenek – Bwahit (4430m)**

The cliffs around Chenek are the only known habitat for the walia ibex in the world. The need to protect their environment was the main justification for making this area a protected National Park. Keep your eyes peeled for them as we ascend through the valley from Chenek, to scale Ethiopia's second highest mountain, Bwahit on the edge of the national park. We return to Chenek to celebrate our achievement. Camp Chenek, 3600m.

**Walk approx: 6 hours**

**Day 8: Chenek – Ambaras Village**

A hearty breakfast of porridge sets us on our way to the village of Ambaras about 3 hours away. Here we meet the local village community and will be invited to a special coffee ceremony. The afternoon can be spent visiting the new school and you can choose from a range of activities such as reading to the children, teaching them some English, playing football. Camp at the village.

**Walk approx: 3 hours**

### **Day 9: Ambaras - Gonder**

After saying our final farewells we pack up and are transferred by waiting transport the 6 hour journey back to Debarq and on to Gonder. We are reunited with the luxury of a hot shower and a comfortable bed. There is the opportunity for a bit of last minute shopping before meeting for a well deserved celebration meal. Night hotel.

### **Day 10: Gonder - Addis Ababa**

We make the short 45 minute transfer to the airport at Gonder for the flight back to the capital Addis Ababa where we will take the night flight back to London.

### **Day 11: Flight arrival in London.**

We will arrive early morning into Heathrow.

This itinerary is based on flight schedules with Ethiopian Airlines and may be subject to change if flight schedules change.

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## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Tour Cost**

The tour cost includes all flights and accommodation, private transport to and from the National Park, park entry fees, local porters, guides and cook, and all meals except two dinners and one lunch.

It does not include entry visa (\$37), insurance, meals as above, and international departure tax of \$20. A maximum of £100 – £150 is recommended for personal expenses.

### **Flights**

Group flights leave from London Heathrow and are booked by Discover Adventure Ltd ATOL 5636.

### **Food and Accommodation**

Breakfasts are included when in hotels, and all meals whilst camping. Two dinners and one lunch are not included when you are in towns. The food is good and there is plenty of it.

### **Passport, Visa and Vaccinations**

A valid ten-year passport with at least one year to run is essential. A visa is required for entry into Ethiopia; it currently costs \$37 for a single entry and is available at the airport in Addis Ababa on arrival.

We insist that you have had a tetanus injection in the last ten years and highly recommend protection against polio, hepatitis A and typhoid. A yellow fever vaccination is also recommended and you may be asked to produce proof of your vaccination on entry. Malaria is not found in Addis Ababa or at the elevations we trek at in the mountains, so we do not recommend protection against malaria unless you are planning to extend your stay in Ethiopia. However you should always contact your GP or travel clinic for the latest information as world health situations do frequently change.

### **Weather**

October – December is the best time to visit the Simien Mountains: it is drier but slightly cooler. June – September is rainy season; when it ends the flowers are spectacular. At other times the weather is equatorial and very pleasant, but nights can be chilly at the higher campsites. In the mountains the weather can change frequently and you should be prepared. Altitude has a great effect on temperatures and it will get cooler as you climb higher. It will also be cold at night, sometimes below freezing.

Min/max temperatures and average number of rainy days per month in Addis Ababa:

Oct – Dec:	5 – 24°C; 3
Jan – Feb:	6 – 24°C; 5
March:	9 – 25°C; 9

## **TREKKING INFORMATION**

**This is a challenging trek!** You will need a good standard of equipment and clothing to enjoy this trek.

This trek is tough mainly because of the altitude at which we are trekking. It is impossible to predict who will be affected by altitude and how it will affect them. Early symptoms include headaches, nausea, suppression of appetite and general lethargy. Where someone is suffering from more serious symptoms it may be necessary to walk them back down the mountain.

Terrain is varied with trekking along well trodden local paths, steep escarpments, rocky trails and light scrambling in places. Most of the walking is rough underfoot.

Vehicles take the group to the start of the trek and pick us up at the end. Mules will carry all the luggage, food, water and camping equipment. You will need a good daypack for items required during the day.

This is an adventurous trek in a remote area. Discover Adventure reserve the right to change the route in cases such as adverse weather conditions, wildlife movements, park restrictions and the ability of the group.

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Please phone with any questions.

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