PIONEER EXPEDITIONS

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Simien Mountain Trek • Ethiopia
14 Days • £2195 (ex Addis Ababa)

Highlights

- Trek through remote rural communities of this ancient land
- Reach Ethiopia's highest peak of Ras Dejen (4563m)
- See fascinating wildlife such as the lion like Gelada Baboon
- Visit centuries old Churches on Lake Tana and Lalibela

Ethiopia remains an enigma to many. It is an ancient land with history going back 3000 years. Its society is rich with colorful culture, of secret societies and centuries old Churches. Ethiopia retains the Julian Calendar of 13 months in a year and is said to be home of the Holy Grail of the Old Testament.
The northern and central regions of the country boast some of the most magnificent mountain ranges in all of Africa. In this region alone there are over 20, 4000m peaks. These ancient ranges are dramatic, with enormous gorges being gouged out by torrents of water over the millennia. They are the home of the beautiful lion like Gelada Baboon and the highest peak of Ethiopia, Ras Dejen (4563m).

Overview

Your expedition will take you through this amazing country, from the fertile lowlands and rural communities to the summit of Ras Dejen. We will visit the island Churches of Lake Tana and through remote villages of the Simien region. We will also visit the awesome excavated Churches of Lalibela. Ethiopia is still one of the world's best kept secrets. Join us on this unbelievable and unforgettable expedition.

DATES

28th Oct – 10th Nov 2010
27th Nov – 10th Dec 2010
27th Dec 2010 – 9th Jan 2011

If these dates don't suit, we can also organize private expeditions for 2 or more people , please contact us for further information

EXPEDITION GRADE – Difficult

Reasonably demanding trekking at altitudes up to 4,000m/13,000ft with side trips to higher elevations. Some treks included here will, in part, be well away from villages on ill- defined mountain trails. The Simien Mountains can be a difficult and challenging expedition.

Itinerary

Day 1: Addis Ababa

Arrive in Addis Ababa and welcomed by our representative for transfer to Hotel.

Day 2: Gondar

After breakfast we head back to the airport for the internal flight to Gondar, the former capital of Ethiopia. On arrival, transfer to the Goha Hotel for lunch. This afternoon we will visit the walled Royal enclosure which contains several well preserved and medieval looking castles, dating from as early as 1650. Gondar is well placed, watered by mountain torrents and sitting at an altitude of 2300 meters. There are views from the city, which extend across the surrounding farmland to Lake Tana, 35kilometers to the south. This is a historic settlement with an atmosphere of mystery. Overnight at the Goha Hotel, which is situated on a hill overlooking the
Town

Day 3: Debark- Sankaber

In the cool of the morning, we will make the 2 to 3 hour drive from Gondar to Debark. This is a small market town at an altitude of 2700 meters close to the boundary of the Simien Mountains National Park. Here, an armed scout-one of the park regulations joins you. Then we drive towards Sankaber where you walk the last couple of hours of the day to your camp for the night.

Day 4: Sankaber – Geech

Today we will meet the muleteers and the trek equipment is loaded on to their mules. Starting out, you descend in the Michwahtis valley and begin the climb up the other side, making a short diversion to see one of the most impressive sights in the Simien Mountains, where the Jinbar River plummets into the Geech Abyss.

Day 5: Geech – Chenek

The route today takes us along the edge of the escarpment to the promontory and a small peak known as Imetgogo. From here you descend into an open, grassy valley filled with 3 and 4-meter tall giant Lobelias. The Chenek campsite offers superb views across to the opposite escarpment and the prominent peak of Imetgogo.

Day 6: Chenek – Ambiquo

To reach the village of Ambiquo at the foot of Ras Dejen, you must initially climb up above your camp towards Amba Bhawit (4477m.), the second highest mountain in the range. At 4200m you pass through Bhauit pass. Here, you will also get your first sighting of the Ras Dashen (4620m), the highest point in a wall of cliffs and peaks on the skyline. Crossing the Meshawa River after more than 1000 meters of descent, you climb steeply to the village of Ambiquo, where we will camp for night.

Day 7: Ambiquo – Summit Day

Today's climb to the highest point in Ethiopia, the summit of Ras Dejen, requires a dawn start. You climb slowly and steadily through giant Lobelia forests, passing the tiny, perched village of Mizma and gaining an area of open pasture where there are herds of cattle and goats with their attendant herdsmen. The triple-summited bulk of Ras Dejen looms above and it is far from obvious which of these is the highest. Finally, after 5 hours of ascent, you reach steeper, rocky ground and a short scramble to the cairned summit. We usually take an hours rest on top to enjoy the views that, in clear weather, extend to North of Ethiopia. A 3 hour descent takes you back to the campsite in Ambiquo.

Day 8: Ambiquo – Arkwaziye

Rather than retracing your trek to Sankaber (which is the usual Simien Mountains trek) we have chosen to extend the itinerary and make the return towards Gondar through the lowlands, which will give you the chance to see a greater range of the Ethiopian countryside. Descending from your camp at Ambiquo for an hour, you then have an easy 3-hour stroll, heading back westwards to the camping place in Arkwaziye (3600m.).

Day 9: Arkwaziye – Loma

A day of descent, as you head for the village of Makarabia in the region known as Lamo. You are leaving behind the high plateau and your route crosses several major ridges before dropping 1000meters alongside Ansiya River to the rarely visited lowlands. It becomes progressively warmer as you descend to the camp at Loma (2000m,).

Day 10: Mulit

An easy day, contouring far below the escarpment on a trail, which passes through scrub and stands of palm trees. You have plenty of opportunity to interact with the local people and learn a little about their way of life. Set beneath towering rock pinnacles. The campsite faces across the valley to a circle of mountains with Amba Tsion in the center.

Day 11: Adi Arkai – Gondar

A final short stroll of a little over 2-hours takes you to the market town of Adi Arkai (1700m.). Here you say goodbye to your trek crew, have a look around the bazaar and then board the car for the drive back to Gondar. Overnight at the Goha Hotel.

Day 12: Gondar – Lalibela

After a relaxing morning, transfer to Gondar Airport to leave for Lalibela which used to be called Roha until the end of 12th century. Today the little town of Lalibela is home to the remarkably excavated 12th century rock hewn churches. Once you have checked into your hotel we will start visiting the first group (consisting of 6 churches) of churches that symbolizes the New Jerusalem. Overnight Roha Hotel.

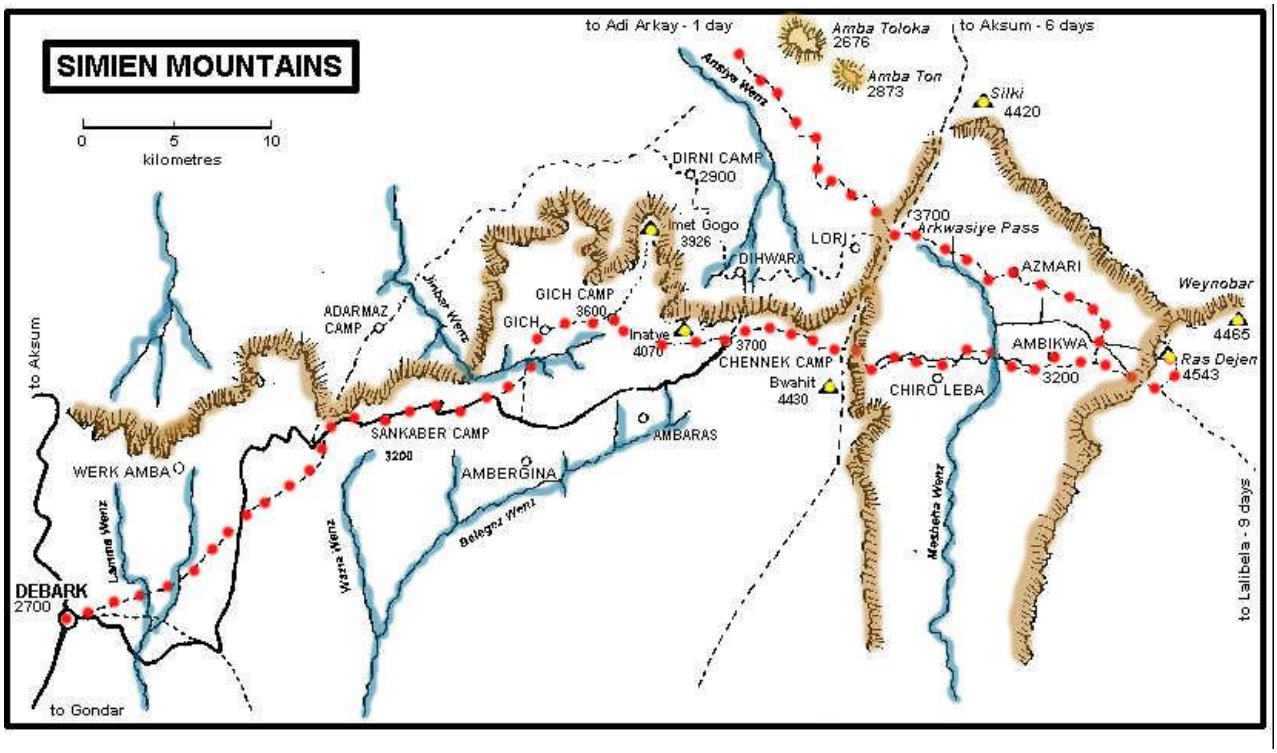
NB. While entering each church, you are kindly requested to take off shoes and dress modestly. This should be applied to all the churches in Ethiopia.

Day 13- Lalibela – Addis Ababa

In the morning, we will visit the second group of churches (consisting of 4 churches) and the third group consisting of only one but possibly the most beautiful and monolithic of the all, the church of St. George. It is said to symbolize Noah's Arc. In the afternoon we will take a flight to Addis. That night we will have a farewell dinner for all. Hotel

Day 14: Addis Ababa / Departure

Transfer to airport for return home End of Expedition!!



EXPEDITION INCLUSIONS

- Hotel accommodation (double room sharing)
- Internal airfares
- All the 3 meals of the day according to the itinerary.
- All transfers and city tours
- All entrance fees
- Ground transportation
- Camping gear (Tent, mattress, sheets etc)
- Experienced Guide
- Experienced cook/chef and porters

EXPEDITION EXCLUSIONS

- International air transport & embarkation fee
- Domestic airport tax
- Telephone, laundry, any payable drink and porters for luggage
- Tips and any other personal interest, which is not specified in the itinerary.

EXPEDITION EXTENSIONS

Ethiopia is an awesome and huge country, diverse in both its terrain and culture. After the Simien Expedition, why note see another side of Ethiopia by heading south into Omo River region where we will see both fascinating wildlife and colourful and fascinating cultures such as the Hammer, Karo and Dassanech tribes. Contact us for further information

GENERAL INFORMATION

The regions visited in this trip are located at altitudes ranging from 1,800 to 4,563 metres above sea level. In the Simien Mountains, temperatures vary during the day from 18° to 20°C, at night they drop below zero. It is therefore recommended that you bring warm clothes like a jacket, a pullover and a good sleeping bag and strong hiking shoes. During the day, it is quite warm on the mountain plateau, with an average temperature of 25°C. The best period to visit these regions is from September to April, after the rainy season, the area is all green with myriad of flowers. In December, the barley is ripe and golden; it is harvested in January, after which it is threshed.

Full board is provided throughout the trip: breakfast and dinner in a hotel, lunch of salad and fruit. During the treks, breakfast and dinner is prepared at the camp. The food served is mostly European. However there are opportunities to taste the local fare and Ethiopian cuisine. While trekking, we sleep in tents and sleeping mats are provided. The group will be accompanied by a professional guide and cook and is run in with our partners No Roads.

It is useful to bring some medication with you, such as a broad-spectrum antibiotic, milk enzymes, eye-drops and sun-block lotion for mountains. We don't recommend that anti-malaria measures be taken, because the only place where malaria is present is Bahir Dar, but only during the rainy season (June to August). We do however advise that you bring mosquito repellent with you

Food
The food and drink of Ethiopia reflects the many different cultures found there. A typical dish is Wot, a hot spicy stew of meat or vegetables, seasoned with a blend of Berbere (chillie powder). It is made with Doro (chicken), and normally served with Injera, the traditional spongy pancake made from a fermented Teff flour batter.

Ethiopia produces its own wines; Dukam and Gouder are fine reds, while Axumite is sweeter. Crystals is a dry white wine. The famous honey wine or Tej is found all over the country as is Tela, a local beer, and Katikala, distillated liquor.

Religion
Christianity and Islam are the two main religions in Ethiopia making up 45% of the population each with other religions making up the rest. Most of the Christians belong to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Visas
Visas are required for any foreign visitor to Ethiopia except Kenya and Djibouti. This can be secured from Ethiopian Diplomatic and consular missions abroad. In addition visitors from many countries Australia, the U.S, U.K and many European Union nations can obtain a visa on arrival at Bole International Airport (Addis Ababa) the cost is around US$20.

Health Requirements
Prior to entry, visitors should be in possession of a valid health certificate for yellow fever. Vaccination against cholera is also required for any person who has visited or transited a cholera-infected area within six days prior to his/her arrival in Ethiopia.