

Ethiopia Trek

Trek the isolated splendour of the Simien Mountains



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Simien Mountain Trek

Ethiopia

Ethiopia is little known and little visited but it is an extraordinary country with a unique culture, complex history and superb scenery.

Ethiopia is a land of extraordinary natural contrasts, from the rugged Simien Mountains in the north to the depths of the Denakil depression which, at 120 metres below sea level is one of the lowest dry land regions on earth. Indeed, the Simiens have been recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site for their incredible natural beauty, and with some 25 peaks rising above 4,000 metres (the highest is Ras Dashen at 4,543 metres) are known as the roof of Africa.



This superb trek is designed to showcase the isolated splendour of the Simiens. Approaching from the south the gradient is fairly gentle, but as you head further north, rolling plateau come into view and sheer cliffs plunge almost vertically for 1,000 metres to the plains below. The massif itself has been sculpted by 30 million years of up thrust and erosion in to a wonderland of jagged ridges, pinnacles, strangely cropped conical mountains and heart-stopping precipices where you feel that you are at the very edge of the world!

Our challenge is to trek for six tough days to summit the mighty Ras Deshen at 4,543 metres. A unique and inspiring adventure awaits!



Detailed itinerary

13 October: Depart London

Depart London on an overnight flight to Addis Ababa.

14 October: Arrive Addis, flight to Gondar

Arrive into Addis Ababa early morning, where you will transfer to a different terminal for your flight to Gondar. On arrival in to Gondar meet the guides and be transferred to the hotel. After dinner there will be a full briefing about the challenge ahead.

15 October: Drive to Debark 2,600m trek to Sankaber (3240m)

3-4hrs trekking

Met and transferred by vehicle 4hrs to the road head at Buyit Ras and the entrance to the National Park. From here, it is about a 10km trek along the escarpment to the first night's campsite at Sankaber - situated on an impressive spur between the northern escarpment and the southern Wazia ravine. You will most certainly encounter troops of the Gelada baboon. Endemic to Ethiopia, the Gelada is often referred to as the 'bleeding heart baboon' or the 'lion monkey' because its coat is shaggy and its chest has a marked red patch.

16 October: Trek Sankaber to Ayenameda (3600m)

4hrs trekking

Today we walk along the escarpment, enjoying great views across the lowlands and the Simien plateau. As we continue our trek heads towards Ayenameda (3600m) where we come across a stunning waterfall falling 500m to the bottom of the gorge. Overnight Avenameda camp.

17 October: Trek Ayenameda to Chenek via Imetgogo and Enatiye Escarpment

8hrs trekking

A spectacular day! In the morning we walk to Imetgogo (3926m) which is situated at the end of a long ridge, which disappears on either side to the lowlands below, there are outstanding views of the gorge and mountain range and it is easy to understand why the striking formations have been described as 'the chess pieces of the Gods'. We should get our first glimpse of Ras Dashen from here. If we haven't already encountered them, there is a good chance of seeing the indigenous Gelada. The Gelada is in fact neither baboon or monkey but the last remaining species of a branch of high altitude, grass eating primates that have all but vanished. We then walk to the edge of the escarpment which we follow to the top of Enatye (4070m). The dramatic views continue all the way down to our camp at Chenek.

18 October: Trek Chenek to Ambiko (3,100m)

9-10hrs trekking

A hard but memorable day's trek across the 4,200 metre Bwahit Pass to Ambiko. From the top of the pass, there is the option to continue on to the summit of Bwahit at 4,430 metres before the big drop down via the village of Chiro Leba to the Mesheha River at 2,850 metres.

A final ascent of around 350 metres brings you to camp at Ambiko.

Birdlife is particularly good en-route, Groundscraper thrush, siskin, falcon and kestrel can all be seen - and you have every chance of a rare sighting of the endangered Walia ibex, a species that can only be found in the Simien National Park.



Detailed itinerary

19 October: Ascent of Ras Dasha Peak (4543m) 10-11hrs trekking

The climb to the summit of Ras Dasha involves an ascent of more than 1400 vertical metres and will take you up to eleven hours for the round trip of 16km from Ambiko Camp. The path climbs steeply at first through fields of barley before clearing the vegetation zone and reaching the mountain steppe at an altitude of around 3700 metres. Here the gradient eases as you traverse the ridges in the shadow of Ras Dasha.

Just below the Dasha Pass at 4250m there is an impressive moraine that was formed some 15,000 years ago during the last ice age when the Simien peaks had small ice caps. The final stretch to the summit involves an exciting scramble up and over large boulders. There will be time to enjoy the panoramic summit views before retracing your steps down to Ambiko for a second night.

20 October: Ambiko to Gondar

After breakfast in camp, you will trek out to meet your vehicles for our transfer to Gondar and our hotel. Tonight we celebrate our incredible achievements with a special dinner.

21 October Jewish morning tour of Gondar. Depart Gondar to Addis Ababa to London

In the morning we will visit the Jewish community of Gondar: it has around 8,000 members, who moved to the town from the surrounding villages in order to register for Aliyah to Israel. Some have been waiting decades for their chance to emigrate. We shall find out more about their history, culture and way of life. This will include a visit to the synagogue, the local after-school club and meeting members of the local community.

We will then be transferred to the airport for our afternoon flight back to Addis Ababa and then onward flight to London.

22 October: Arrive London

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This itinerary is complex and subject to change

Challenge grade

Moderate to tough

