AFRIQUE UNIE · TRAVEL NOTEBOOK

Ethiopia in 10 days: a day-by-day itinerary

With the great historic route of the north currently out of reach, this ten-day trip focuses on Addis Ababa and the south of the country, flying over the long distances. It links the museums and cafés of the capital, the crater lakes of Bishoftu, the Rift Valley lakes around Arba Minch, the Dorze highlands and the Omo Valley. Lalibela, Gondar and the Simien Mountains, in the Amhara region, as well as Tigray, are formally advised against by France and the UK: they are not part of this trip.

Day by day

Days 1-2 · Addis Ababa, capital of the highlands (night : Addis Ababa)
Perched at over 2,300 metres, Addis Ababa calls for a day of acclimatisation: walk slowly and drink plenty. Start at the National Museum, with its replica of Lucy, the australopithecine found in the Afar, then the Ethnological Museum, set in Haile Selassie's former palace on the university campus. Visit Holy Trinity Cathedral and Unity Park, laid out in the grounds of the imperial palace. The next day, head up into the Entoto hills for the view and the cool air, then dive into the Merkato, a vast market best visited with a guide. Finish with a coffee ceremony and a meal of injera with spicy wots.

Day 3 · The crater lakes of Bishoftu (night : Addis Ababa)
About an hour south-east on the expressway, Bishoftu, also known as Debre Zeyit, is surrounded by crater lakes with green or blue water, set among fields of teff. Walk around Lake Hora, busy at weekends with families from Addis, then Lake Bishoftu or Lake Kuriftu, where you can watch pelicans, kingfishers and ibises. Have lunch on a terrace by the water, then return to the capital in the late afternoon. Every year, at the end of the rainy season, Lake Hora hosts Irreecha, the great Oromo thanksgiving festival: the town is then packed and access conditions may change.

Days 4-6 · Arba Minch, lakes Abaya and Chamo and the Dorze (night : Arba Minch)
The flight to Arba Minch takes about an hour and ten minutes; the town overlooks two large Rift Valley lakes, the reddish Abaya and Chamo. Take a boat trip on Lake Chamo to see hippos and the huge Nile crocodiles basking on the shore, then explore Nechisar National Park, between groundwater forest and zebra savannah. On another day, head up into the Chencha highlands, an hour's drive away, to visit the Dorze, known for their beehive-shaped bamboo huts and their weavers. Hire a local guide and check road conditions before each outing.

Day 7 · Flight to Jinka, gateway to the Omo (night : Jinka)
Rather than the road via Konso, an area some authorities advise against, fly to Jinka, usually via Addis Ababa: the day is taken up by this, depending on flight times. A small green town perched above the valley, Jinka is the gateway to the lower Omo Valley, a mosaic of peoples with very different languages and traditions. In the late afternoon, visit the South Omo Research Center, whose small museum presents the region's cultures, their adornments, rituals and history: a good introduction to the encounters of the following days. Then meet the licensed local guide who will accompany you.

Days 8-9 · The Omo Valley and its markets (night : Jinka)
With your guide and a driver, explore the Ari villages around Jinka, known for their pottery and terraced fields, then the region's weekly markets, such as the one at Key Afer, where several peoples meet; market days vary, so plan your stay around them. Markets are a more natural way to meet people than organised village visits. Mursi territory, the border area and the surroundings of Omorate are subject to official warnings: follow your guide's and the authorities' instructions strictly. Always ask permission before taking photos, and agree in advance on any payment.

Day 10 · Back to Addis Ababa and home (night : Flight home)
Take the flight from Jinka to Addis Ababa, leaving a comfortable margin before your international flight: small domestic planes can be delayed or rescheduled. If you have a few hours, take a last walk around the Piassa district, with its historic cafés and coffee roasters, to bring home some Ethiopian coffee, or visit Shiro Meda market, at the foot of Entoto, for traditional white embroidered fabrics. Travellers arriving on an international flight with the national airline have often been offered reduced fares on domestic flights: check this when booking the whole trip.

Getting around

Distances are immense and roads slow: flying is the best way to link Addis Ababa with Arba Minch and Jinka, on small aircraft that should be booked early. On the ground, you travel with a vehicle and driver, and a local guide is essential in the Omo Valley. Do not drive at night. The Amhara and Tigray regions, part of Oromia and the border areas are advised against, and the situation changes quickly in the south: check your government's official travel advice before you leave, and again before each journey.

When to go

The dry season, from October to March, is the most favourable: clear skies and passable tracks in the Omo Valley. The main rainy season, from June to September, makes some southern tracks impassable, although Addis Ababa can still be visited. In late September, the Meskel and Irreecha festivals enliven the capital and Bishoftu. Thanks to the altitude, Addis Ababa stays cool all year round, while the Omo Valley is hot.

Practical information

Ethiopia

Entry	Depends on your passport: visiterafriqueunie.com/en/visa/ethiopia/
Yellow fever	Certificate required if arriving from a risk country
Malaria	in some areas
Currency	Ethiopian birr (ETB)
Languages	Amharic, Oromo
Plugs	type C, F · dialling code +251 · UTC+3
Emergencies	police 911 · ambulance 907

Departure checklist

Documents

☐ Passport valid for at least six months after your return, with blank pages
☐ Visa or e-visa (printed if required)
☐ International vaccination certificate (yellow fever if required)
☐ Travel insurance certificate and assistance number
☐ Paper and digital copies of your passport and bookings
☐ Tickets, bookings and addresses saved offline
☐ International driving permit if you are hiring a vehicle

Health

☐ Travel consultation done and vaccinations up to date
☐ Malaria tablets if your doctor recommends them
☐ First-aid kit: plasters, antiseptic, anti-diarrhoea tablets, rehydration salts
☐ Mosquito repellent suitable for the tropics
☐ Sunscreen, hat and sunglasses
☐ Personal medication and prescriptions

Money and connectivity

☐ Bank told, Visa or Mastercard (and a backup card)
☐ Cash in euros or dollars, recent notes in good condition
☐ eSIM or local SIM card sorted
☐ Plug adapter for the country
☐ Power bank and cables
☐ Offline maps downloaded
☐ Afrique Unie app installed

In the bag

☐ Light clothes that cover up (sun, mosquitoes, places of worship)
☐ A fleece for evenings, dawn safaris and altitude
☐ Walking shoes and sandals
☐ Head torch
☐ Water bottle (ideally with a filter)
☐ Small daypack and waterproof pouches
☐ Luggage padlock

Before you close the door

☐ Your government's travel advice reread
☐ Trip registered with your consular service (if it offers this)
☐ Itinerary and contacts left with someone close
☐ Online check-in done and baggage allowance checked

Notebook made from visiterafriqueunie.com/en/itineraries/ethiopia-in-10-days/ · information checked in November 2026 against official sources. Entry, health and safety rules change: check them again before you leave (your country's official advice, the embassy of the country you visit).