

ETHIOPIA

GENERAL INFORMATION

Ethiopia occupies a unique position in Africa. The northern regions are a curious mix of medieval history with stone castles and Christian churches that predate the crusades, with a history that goes back 2000 years. The history and art found in these unique buildings is found nowhere else in the world!

In the south however, exotic African tribesmen still paint their lithe bodies with ash and paint, wear feathers on their cropped and shaved heads, and their women adorn themselves with beaded cowrie-shells, worked skins and wear ceremonial neck rings of seniority or caps of gourds, depending on the tribes concerned. Yet, the capital, Addis Ababa is a mix of squalor and the utmost elegance and has modern buildings and facilities too. Bole International Airport is located here too.

The country since the rule of Haile Selassie was subject to a radical Lenin style revolution under the 'Derg's' despotic rule. Now that is gone and it is now emerging as a democratic progressive republic with a modern infrastructure and an increasing awareness of the value of tourism as a way to employ and train people. Conservation is slow to be understood, but is improving.

GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

The country is divided by the Great Rift valley which bisects the country north to south. The north is dominated by the rugged Simien mountains which have created a temperate moist climate that is fairly constant. The plateau has more than forty peaks over 12000 feet!

The south is dry, and rugged country with more typical Acacia bushland and scrub. This part is more arid sub-tropical, with erratic rains and very few perennial rivers apart from the Omo river itself. There are a few natural lakes.

WILDLIFE EXPERIENCES

The north of the country is focused primarily on the history of the towns and villages. The wildlife experiences here are highly specialized and unique. There are two temperate species found here, namely the Abyssinian or Simien wolf and the wailia ibex. The other specialities are the gelada baboon, northern sitatunga and mountain nyala. The Danakil Valley has a population of Ethiopian wild ass, Grevy's zebra and Sommering's gazelle. There are a number of endemic bird species as well, and these are proving to be available to keen birders willing to make the extra effort.

The south of the country has more typically African mammals like elephant, lion, buffalo and smaller antelope too. The wildlife is not easily found and tends to be really wild. The result of decades of persecution and minimal understanding!

So, the focus here for most folk is the tribesmen and women who are colourful, exotic and shocking for some. On the whole they are friendly and will pose for photographs for a small fee, of course.



T: +27 11 658 0111 M: +27 82 414 9566 F: +27 86 672 0287 E: info@africainscribed.com

P.O. Box 328, Fourways North, 2086, South Africa

Visit www.africainscribed.com

ETHIOPIA

There are nine national parks in Ethiopia, and although these were demarcated in the 1960's or 70's, they have yet to be formally gazette. Several new 'Protected Areas' are also part of the parks system and are becoming crucial to the survival of a number of endangered species. The Senkele Game Reserve is one of these.

The highland parks are the Simien Mountains National Park and the Bale Mountains National Park. These two parks are very important because they were formed around the two highest systems and therefore have significance for the species found there. Fewer than 600 wolves remain today.

SIMIEN MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

This park is best known to trekkers who are safe to wander around enjoying the scenery and incredible vistas. The Walia ibex, Ethiopian wolf and gelada (baboon) occur here, but the last listed is the most easily seen.

BALE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

This is a more wildlife oriented park and Ethiopian wolf, and Mountain nyala are common. A rare endemic is the Bale monkey, found around the bamboo in Harena region. Meneliks' bushbuck, an endemic race may be seen here as well.

The Rift valley has four parks, namely Yangudi Rassa near the Somali border, the Awash National Park, Abiata Shala National Park and the Nechisar National Park respectively.

YANGUDI RASSA

This park was established to protect the last population of Ethiopian wild ass.

THE AWASH NATIONAL PARK

This park is a few hours drive east of Addis and protects a small selection of mammals and good birds. The gureza monkey or Black and white colobus is commonly seen here. Both species of kudu are found here, with the Beisa oryx.

THE ABIATA – SHALA AND NECHISAR NATIONAL PARKS

The last two are formed around lakes in the south protecting the birdlife, and numbers of hippo, crocodiles, some zebra and various antelope species too. Powell's bushbuck and both Greater and Lesser kudu occur here, together with Grants gazelle.

The Omo and Mago National Parks are the most important ones for large mammals of interest to most travelers. These two border each other and contain elephant, lion, buffalo, zebra, lion and a variety of antelope species including the gerenuk and Guenther's dikdik.



T: +27 11 658 0111 M: +27 82 414 9566 F: +27 86 672 0287 E: info@africainscribed.com

P.O. Box 328, Fourways North, 2086, South Africa

Visit www.africainscribed.com

ETHIOPIA

GAMBELLA NATIONAL PARK

This is the far south-western marshes near the town of Gambella, and is vital to the Nile lechwe, White-eared kob, Defassa waterbuck and tiang, to name but a few unique species.

THE SENKELE GAME RESERVE

The main surviving population of Swayne's hartebeest.

BIRDS

I have included a special note on the birds of Ethiopia because so many of the species that are found here are endemic and unique to this diverse country. It is recorded that almost 40% of Ethiopia's tourism travelers are birders!

Urban & Brown's Checklist of species lists about 800 species of which nearly 660 are resident or presumed to be resident.

Due to political issues in the past, the birding fauna of the country is still subject to scrutiny and new species are very likely waiting to be recorded.

This page is not designed to produce an endless list of birds, suffice to say that birding company's now produce ten to fourteen day itineraries that cover the best spots in the country, which include the Awash, Mago and Omo National Parks in the south and Ankober and Aliya Ambu in the north for two particular species the Ankober and Yellow-throated serin. The Jemma Valley is the one reliable spot for Harwood's francolin but consider that four other endemics could be encountered along the way, namely White winged cliff chat, Ruppell's black chat, White-billed starling and White-throated serin.

The skies and woodlands, marshes and grasslands of this amazing country have many secrets to unfold and take joy in.



T: +27 11 658 0111 M: +27 82 414 9566 F: +27 86 672 0287 E: info@africainscribed.com

P.O. Box 328, Fourways North, 2086, South Africa

Visit www.africainscribed.com