



# ANCIENT ETHIOPIA & THE RIFT VALLEY, (AGM)

Gondar to Arba Minch 35 Days, departing 15th December 2020



## TRIP OVERVIEW

**Trip Style:** Overlanding

**Route:** Gondar to Arba Minch

**Duration:** 35 Days

**Transport:** Overland Expedition Vehicle, Boat

**Accommodation:** Comfortable Hotel 19 nights  
Camping without facilities 5 nights  
Basic Hotel 3 nights  
Guesthouse 3 nights  
Multishare Hostel 3 nights  
Camping 1 night

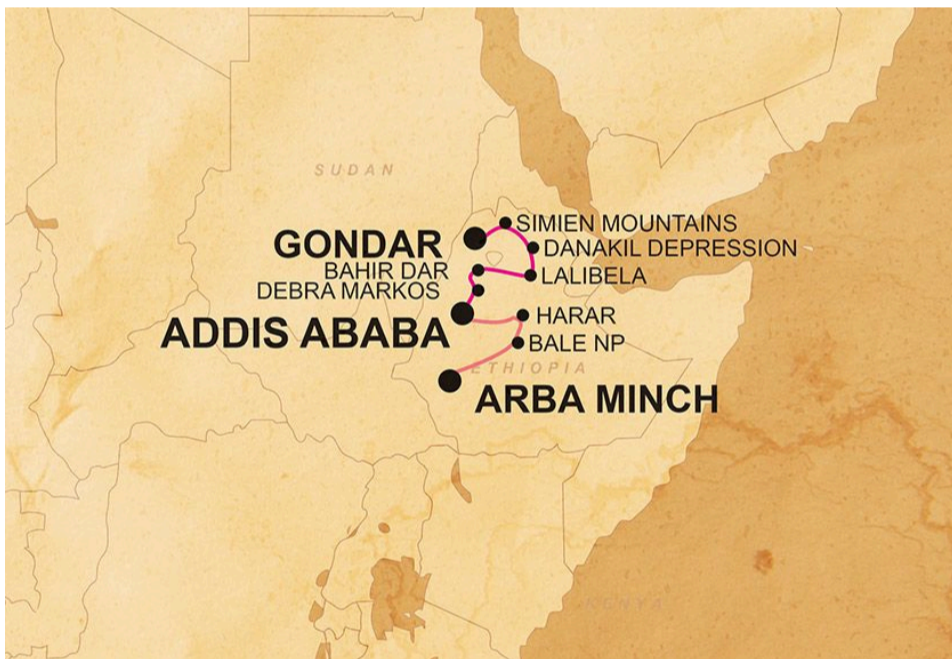
**Meals:** Breakfasts x 33, Lunches x 9, Dinners x 9

**Physical Challenge:** ● ● ● ○ ○

Depending on the trip, activities may include treks of 3-4 hours at altitude or across hilly terrain, multi-day treks at sea level, horseback riding, canoeing and other adventurous activities. A moderate level of fitness is required.

**Lifestyle Challenge:** ● ● ● ● ●

This is a trip for people with a real sense of adventure. You will be camping for the majority of the trip and the trip will include many long drive days and wild camps. The terrain may be very rough and the roads and facilities may be very basic or non-existent. The itinerary may be very flexible.



# DAILY ITINERARY

## Day 1 - Gondar (15th December 2020)

**Border Information:** if joining in Gondar, you will most likely enter Ethiopia at Gondar Atse Tewodros Airport (IATA code: GDQ).

There will be a group meeting at the joining hotel at 6:00pm. Please look out for a note from your tour leader at the reception when you arrive giving more details about this important meeting. If you are continuing to Kenya or beyond, your leader will need to check the validity dates of your Ethiopian visa.

Accommodation: Hotel Lammergeyer A""

## Day 2 - Gondar (16th December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast

Today, we will have an included half day guided tour of the historical sites of Gondar, including Gondar Castle, the King Fasilades' Baths and the Debre Birhan Selassie church.

### Daily Activities

#### Included Activities

Learn all about medieval Ethiopia on a half-day guided tour of the castles churches and baths of Gondar

Included

#### Optional Activities

Enjoy a tour of the local Dashen brewery in Gondar

Tour: 8 USD

## Day 3 - Simien Mountains NP (17th December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today marks the start of our 3-day excursion into the Simien Mountains NP. We will first drive to Debark, where we will have a briefing from our local mountain guide explaining the various trekking options we will have during our excursion, before heading into the NP.

The area is home to some of Africa's most jaw-dropping mountain scenery and is a great opportunity to enjoy some incredibly beautiful treks and breathtaking views!

The area is also home many indigenous animals, and during our time here we hope to spot Lammargeyer vultures, geladas, Walia ibex, and (if we are very lucky) klipspringers and Ethiopian wolves.

We will spend 3 nights in the incredible Simien Mountains NP. On each day we aim to provide an option for a long trek (of 5-8 hours), a short trek (2-5 hours) or no trekking.

On our first day, we aim to wild camp at the area of Sankaber. On our second and third days, we aim to wild camp at the area of Chenek (underneath Ras Bwahit, the second-highest mountain in the Simiens, which we hope to get the opportunity to summit).

*Please note that we must keep a flexible itinerary in the Simien Mountains, as our options will largely be determined by the weather.*

*Please also note that the camping areas in the NP are very basic, and are essentially wild camps with long drop toilets. Please also note that the food and provisions available in Debark and the NP are very limited, and it is also likely to be very cold at night (often dropping below freezing), so please be prepared! You will need to bring a suitable sleeping bag and mat with you from home to ensure you are ready for this environment.*

### Daily Activities

#### Included Activities

2 days of guided treks in the Simien Mountains National Park

Included

## Day 4 - Simien Mountains NP (18th December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we once again have the choice between joining a short trek or a long trek. Each one will have a guide and a superb route showing off the best the Simiens have to offer.

## Day 5 - Simien Mountains NP (19th December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

This is our final day of trekking in the National Park. Once again there will be a choice between short and long routes as we soak in the final moments of the mountains.

## Day 6 - Simien Mountains NP (20th December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast

Today is our final day in the Simien Mountains NP, and we make our way back to Debarq for the night.

## Day 7 - Axum (21st December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast

Leaving Debarq behind us, we continue our journey with a full day of driving through the foothills of the Simien Mountains to reach the ancient town of Axum in the far north of Ethiopia. The roads here are very tough, but we are rewarded with more truly breathtaking scenery!

## Day 8 - Axum (22nd December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast

Today we will have an included half day guided tour of the incredible historical sites of Axum, the capital of the once-mighty Axumite Empire - included in this tour will be seeing the Stelae Field, the Tomb of King Kaleb, and the Palace of the Queen of Sheba.

We will have a free afternoon to have the time to optionally visit other places such as the Church of St. Mary of Zion, the supposed resting place of the Ark of the Covenant.

## Daily Activities

### Included Activities

Guided tour of palaces and temples in historic Axum

Included

### Optional Activities

Visit the Church of St Mary of Zion at Axum

Entrance: 200 ETB

Visit the ancient temple in Yeha, the oldest standing structure in Ethiopia

Entrance: 100 ETB

## Day 9 - Mekele (23rd December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we will continue through the breathtaking mountain scenery of the Adwa mountains and visit one of the famous rock-hewn churches of Tigray (either the Abraha Atsbeha or Wukro Chirkos church) near to Mekele.

## Daily Activities

### Included Activities

Explore the Tigray rock-hewn churches at Mekele

Included

## Day 10 - Danakil Depression (24th December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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After breakfast meet your 4 x 4 vehicles and drive to Hamed Ella. On the way you will pass through the beautiful Tigre Villages and the escarpment of the Afar depression, this is commonly known as the cradle of mankind and is part of the Great East African Rift Valley. Along the way you will see camel caravans going to the traditional salt mine or to the North Eastern highlands of the country, loaded with salt bars in the old traditional way. We will also stop at Brehalle where we will get our permits and scouts for the trip into the Danakil Depression.

## Daily Activities

### Included Activities

Journey out on an incredible 2 day/1 night excursion to the Danakil Depression

Included

## Day 11 - Mekele (25th December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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On the second day we drive to Dallol. Here in Dallol you will visit the beautiful land covered by salt, sulfur and different minerals that gives the area a spectacular colour. We will then continue on to Lake Asale to witness the beautiful salt flats.

This is an extremely intense environment and a very adventurous three days, certainly a once in a lifetime experience. However, if you feel like your personal fitness can not withstand this pressure then there is a chance this may not be the trip for you.

Today we will make our way back to Mekele ending our time in the stunning Danakil Depression.

## Day 12 - Lalibela (26th December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we will have a full day drive to the town of Lalibela.

## Day 13 - Lalibela (27th December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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On our first day in Lalibela, we will have an included full-day guided tour of its world-famous 13th-century rock churches. Our guide will be able to explain the fascinating history of Lalibela and its churches, and there will be plenty of time to explore, absorb the haunting atmosphere inside the churches, and take plenty of photographs of the incredible architecture and the religious rituals within.

## Daily Activities

### Included Activities

Guided tour of the ancient rock churches and monasteries at Lalibela

Included

## Day 14 - Lalibela (28th December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast

On our second day, we will have a free day for further exploration or optional activities. We will have opportunity to hike up the nearby mountains to the Asheten Monastery, visit the Yemrehana Kristos cave church outside the town, or freely explore the Lalibela churches again at your own pace.

### Daily Activities

#### Optional Activities

Explore the highlands of Lalibela on foot possibly walking to the nearby Asheten Monastery

Mule, Guide and Entrance: 500 ETB

Take a tour to visit Yemrehana Krestos, an 11th-century stone and wood church, built in the Axumite style

Entrance: 300 ETB

Guiding for half day (cost per group): 100 ETB

Transport: 300 ETB

## Day 15 - Awra Amba (29th December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we will drive to the ideological village of Awra Amba. Run by the infamous Zumra Nuru the village operates with the belief that everyone is equal and should have a say in how their home is run. We will take a tour of the village and camp on the outskirts.

### Daily Activities

#### Included Activities

Visit the Utopian village or Awra Amba and see a place where all people are seen as equal

Included

## Day 16 - Bahir Dar (30th December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast

Today we will drive to Bahir Dar, a small town on Lake Tana, the source of the mighty Blue Nile.

## Day 17 - Bahir Dar (31st December 2020)

**Meals:** Breakfast

On our first day in Bahir Dar, we will have an included boat trip on Lake Tana to visit the famous old monastery of Gabriel Ure Kideth and to visit the spot where the lake outflows into the start of the Blue Nile.



## Daily Activities

### Included Activities

Boat trip on Lake Tana from Bahir Dar to visit the monasteries

Included

## Day 18 - Bahir Dar (1st January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

On our second full day, we will head off in the truck to visit the Blue Nile Falls and take a short walk around the area to the historic Portuguese Bridge. We will have some free time in the afternoon to visit some other spots around Bahir Dar such as the 'Hippo bridge' and the Tigray war memorial.

## Daily Activities

### Included Activities

Explore the stunning Blue Nile Falls just downstream of Bahir Dar

Included

## Day 19 - Debre Markos (2nd January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

Today we will continue our journey south towards Addis Ababa. We will break the journey with a nightstop in a basic local hotel in the small town of Debre Markos en route.

## Day 20 - Addis Ababa (3rd January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

Today we will complete our journey to the bustling Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. En route we will drive to the bottom of the dramatic Blue Nile Gorge and up the other side!

## Day 21 - Addis Ababa (4th January 2021)

**Border Information:** If joining in Addis Ababa, you will most likely enter Ethiopia at Addis Ababa Bole International Airport (IATA code: ADD).

There will be a group meeting at the joining hotel at 6:00pm. Please look out for a note from your tour leader at the reception when you arrive giving more details about this important meeting.

The rest of the day before this meeting will be free to explore Addis Ababa and visit the city's many museums - we recommend that you arrive early (or the night before) if you would like the chance to fully explore the sights of Addis Ababa. Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Addis Ababa before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Addis Ababa.

## Daily Activities

### Optional Activities

Visit Africa Hall - a symbol of African independence and optimism

Entrance: Free

Explore the fascinating Ethnological Museum one of the best museums in Africa set in a former palace of Haile Selassie

Entrance: 100 ETB

Visit the Menelik Mausoleum, built to serve as the tombs of emperors and princes

Entrance: Free

Stroll through the Addis Ababa Mercato - one of the largest markets in Africa

Entrance: Free

Visit "Lucy" one of the oldest complete hominid skeletons ever found at the National Museum

Entrance: 10 ETB

Visit the St. George's Cathedral (Giorgis Cathedral), built to commemorate Ethiopia's victory over the Italians in 1896

Entrance: 100 ETB

## Day 22 - Addis Ababa (5th January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

Today we have a free day in Addis Ababa and will organise an included guided tour of the city including visiting St. George's Cathedral, The Menelik Mausoleum, The National Museum and the colourful city market.

### Daily Activities

#### Included Activities

Enjoy a full day city tour of Addis Ababa

Included

## Day 23 - Harar (6th January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

Today we will leave Addis Ababa and we will have a long drive east through the mountains to the ancient trading city of Harar. We will stay in a charming small hotel in the old city itself.

## Day 24 - Harar (7th January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

Today we have a free day in ancient Harar and will have an included guided city tour of the walled city of Harar (Harar Jugol). Enjoy its colourful markets, mosques and shrines. In the evening you can visit the Hyena Men who feed the hyenas every night just outside the walls of the city.

### Daily Activities

#### Included Activities

Take a guided tour for half of the day through the winding streets of this ancient city.

Included

Witness Harar's tradition of feeding wild Hyenas by hand each evening just outside the city walls

Included

## Day 25 - Harar (8th January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

Today we have a free day to explore this amazing city on your own. It is one of the most important historic sites in Ethiopia.

## Day 26 - Awash NP (9th January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

Today we will drive to Awash and overnight in the lovely Awash Falls Lodge. Who said luxury was not part of overlanding! This is a stunning place to experience a great little NP.

### Daily Activities

#### Included Activities

Head out with a scout to explore the trails of this National Park.

Included

## Day 27 - Lake Ziway (10th January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

In the morning we will take a park scout out with us to explore the Awash NP and to try to find game or just to enjoy the stunning scenery of this lovely National Park.

Then we will head to Lake Ziway for the night.

## Day 28 - Lake Ziway (11th January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

Today, we will take an optional boat trip across Lake Ziway to Tulu Gudo Island, where we will have a short guided tour of the ancient monastery there and view some of the old religious manuscripts.

### Daily Activities

#### Optional Activities

Take a boat trip across Lake Ziway to Tulu Gudo Island and explore the old Coptic monastery on the island

Tulo Gudo Island trip (price per 10 pax): 3,700 ETB

Monastery entrance: 1,000 ETB

## Day 29 - Bale Mountains NP (12th January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we will leave Ziway and drive to the stunning Bale Mountains NP.

We will enjoy 2 full days to explore the NP.

## Day 30 - Bale Mountains NP (13th January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

We will keep today completely free to head out for optional guided walks - there are several possibilities for routes, including highland routes up the hills and moorlands searching for mountain nyalas, or lowland walks through the forest areas to look for Bale monkeys!



## Daily Activities

### Included Activities

Horse/mule treks or guided hikes through Bale Mountain National Park

Included

## Day 31 - Bale Mountains NP (14th January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we will drive in the truck up to the Sanetti Plateau, all the way to the fourth-highest point in Ethiopia (the 4359m summit of Tulu Dimtu) to explore the primeval landscape and search for Ethiopian wolves.

## Daily Activities

### Included Activities

Head up to the incredible Sanetti Plateau on a day trip with our overland truck stopping to explore the area on foot and search for Ethiopian Wolves

Included

## Day 32 - Awasa (15th January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we will head north to the small town of Awasa, where we can visit the local fish market.

After our visit we will head to Wendo Genet, a small town in the hills above Awasa, where we will stay for the night.

During our stay here we may have time to explore the region, go on an optional walk to some nearby waterfalls, or take a dip in the nearby hot springs.

## Daily Activities

### Included Activities

Experience the true local culture at this fish market. If you would like to try the soup make sure you bring your own bowl!

Included

## Day 33 - Arba Minch (16th January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

Today we will travel to the town of Arba Minch, a small town overlooking Lake Chamo.

## Day 34 - Arba Minch (17th January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

Today we will have a free day to relax and explore the scenic area, or to take an optional boat trip on Lake Chamo to view the crocodiles that reside there, known locally as the crocodile market.

## Daily Activities

### Optional Activities

Hire bicycles to explore the stunning surrounds of Arba Minch

Hire, Guide and Park fee: 400 ETB

Visit the fascinating village of Chincha to learn all about the culture of the Dorze people

Entrance: 300 ETB

Guide cost (per group): 200 ETB

## Day 35 - Arba Minch (18th January 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

If you are leaving in Arba Minch, you will most likely exit Ethiopia at Arba Minch Airport (IATA code: AMH).

Today is the end day for passengers finishing their trip in Arba Minch. Please note there is no accommodation included on the trip tonight

Accommodation:

## ITINERARY DISCLAIMER

The routes, activities and places visited described in these notes are intentions and are meant as a rough guide only. By their very nature, overland itineraries need to be flexible and the regions that we are travelling through are often unpredictable. We intend to follow the planned route but exact night stops and inclusions cannot be guaranteed and it sometimes happens that we decide to make a change to our planned itinerary. This may be for a variety of reasons; climatic, road or bureaucratic conditions may demand it. Changes to the itinerary may occur with little notice so please be prepared for modifications to your trip.

### Drive Times

Drive times are listed in the day-to-day itinerary. These are the approximate number of hours that the vehicle will be in motion, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors.

### Accommodation and Meals Included

The type of accommodation and included meals are listed for each day of the itinerary. These listings show our intention and on most departures the listings will be accurate. However due to the flexible nature of overland itineraries, climatic, bureaucratic or road conditions may demand changes to our listed intentions or groups may simply decide to amend the plans from time to time.

### Optional Activities

A selection of optional activities is listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This list is designed to be a helpful guide as to what is commonly available in each location, and is neither an exhaustive list, a guarantee that the activity is available, or an endorsement or recommendation. Certain activities may not be available on your particular visit and it may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination. It is recommended to give yourself extra time in your joining or ending city if you would like to participate in some optional activities there. Prices listed are for entrance only and do not include transport costs to and from the sites or local guides unless indicated. The prices are displayed according to our latest information and in the best faith, but prices do fluctuate due to exchange rates, season, numbers of participants, and simple increases from the operator, and therefore any prices listed are a guide only and cannot be guaranteed. If you partake in any optional activities, you do so at your own risk and it must be clearly understood that your participation is your own decision and does not form part of your contract with Dragoman. You may be required to sign/complete a waiver form or optional activity form for some optional activities. For more information around activity safety and insurance, please see the Essential Information document.

## EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

In the event of a real emergency once you have left your home country, please contact us on our out of office hours number. If you cannot get through on the phone, please leave a message with your name, reference number, contact details and a message with the help that you need and we will get back to you. Please bear in mind that real progress or action may not be possible until normal office hours, depending on the issue.

If your flight is delayed, please inform us as soon as you can and then make your way to the joining hotel as instructed in the Joining Point section of these notes.

**Out of hours Number: +44 (0) 7985 106564**

## A FEW RULES

We expect all group members to act respectfully towards our staff and other group members. Bullying will not be tolerated.

Engaging in commercial or exploitative sexual activities, committing acts of violence or threatening violence towards local people, other group members or any member of our staff is not allowed. Any customer engaging in such activities will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

You must at all times comply with the laws, customs, foreign exchange and drug regulations of all countries visited and conduct yourself in accordance with our responsible travel policy. Any customer found contravening such laws or regulations will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

Although we are aware that in some parts of the world taking, carrying or selling drugs, or carrying weapons may be legal, it is not acceptable for Dragoman customers and our tour leaders have the right to ask you to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price if you are found to be engaging in such activities.

## ISSUES ON THE TRIP

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip, it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local partner straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction. If this is the case please contact our customer relations department on [customer-relations@dragoman.co.uk](mailto:customer-relations@dragoman.co.uk).

You may also choose to provide details in your feedback questionnaire which we ask you to complete at the end of your trip, but we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

## IMPORTANT NOTES

### OVERLANDING LIFESTYLE

Dragoman was founded in 1981, and has had many years of experience of leading overland trips across 4 continents. Overlanding is all about sharing a great travelling experience with like-minded people. On your trip you'll travel in one of Dragoman's purpose-built iconic expedition vehicles on an off-the-beaten-track adventure along rugged roads, experiencing the sights, sounds and smells of the world up-close. Your journey will be overland, sometimes across vast distances, so some long days spent driving are inevitable - but these will be interspersed with breaks of a day or two at a destination or activity.

On an overland journey, you are more than just a passenger and everyone gets involved setting up camp - we supply the tent but it's up to you to pitch it! As part of your trip, you will be assigned a truck job which could be collecting firewood or water, luggage loading, organising food, stores, etc. Like all great adventures, the more you put in the more you'll get out! For more details of how an overlanding trip works, please see the Essential Information document.

### SAFETY STANDARDS

We run adventure journeys in off the beaten track areas, which often have poor infrastructure. You should expect that some of these areas do not adhere to 'Western' safety standards. For more information, please see the Essential Information document

### MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN REMOTE AREAS

We will be travelling to areas in remote locations where medical assistance will not be available, and communications may be sparse. We do not carry satellite phones on our regular trips. Therefore, if you have a medical condition such as a heart condition that would put you at risk, we would suggest that this is not the trip for you. Also, please be aware that should an emergency occur, there is likely to be a considerable delay in accessing medical care, and by joining our trip you accept this risk.

### VISAS, HEALTH, INSURANCE & MONEY

Before you travel there are vital things to consider such as:

- Any visas needed for your trip
- Any vaccinations needed (please consult your GP or travel clinic)
- Organising your local payment (the kitty)
- Buying travel insurance (insurance is compulsory to be allowed to join our trips)

For more information on these topics, please see the Essential Information Document.

# ALTITUDE WARNING

## **Warning - this trip goes above 2800m.**

Please note that this trip spends time above 2800 metres/9200 feet where it is possible for travellers to experience some adverse effects on your health due to the altitude, potentially including Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE) and High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE). Because of this it is very important that you make yourself aware of the cause and effects of travelling at altitude and monitor your health during this trip.

For further information please [download our AMS information sheet](#) or refer to the following website: [www.high-altitude-medicine.com](http://www.high-altitude-medicine.com). If you are starting your trip in a destination above 2800m/9200ft we strongly advise reading this information prior to arrival. Your leader will also hand you a copy of the AMS information sheet during your trip as well as holding a short meeting prior to travelling to altitudes above 2800m/9200ft for the first time.

**Some travel insurance companies will stipulate a maximum altitude limit. Please ensure that you are covered and if necessary pay the additional premium of extended cover.**

## ETHIOPIA NOTES

### ETHIOPIA NOTE

Please note that accommodation prices in Ethiopia may significantly increase during late December and January due to several national holidays surrounding Coptic Christmas; this may push the price of the kitty up an extra **USD50** per person. We will endeavour to negotiate and save money on the ground where possible, but please be aware that we are likely to need extra money in the kitty for trips over this time.

Please also note that we must keep a flexible itinerary in the Simien Mountains, as our options will largely be determined by the weather. The camping areas in the Simien Mountains National Park are very basic, and are essentially wild camps with long drop toilets. The food and provisions available in Debark and the National Park are very limited, and it is also likely to be very cold at night (often dropping below freezing), so please be prepared by bringing suitably warm clothes, and a 4-season sleeping bag and sleeping mat.

Please ensure you have an up to date version of these notes. **These notes were printed on the 22nd September 2020**