

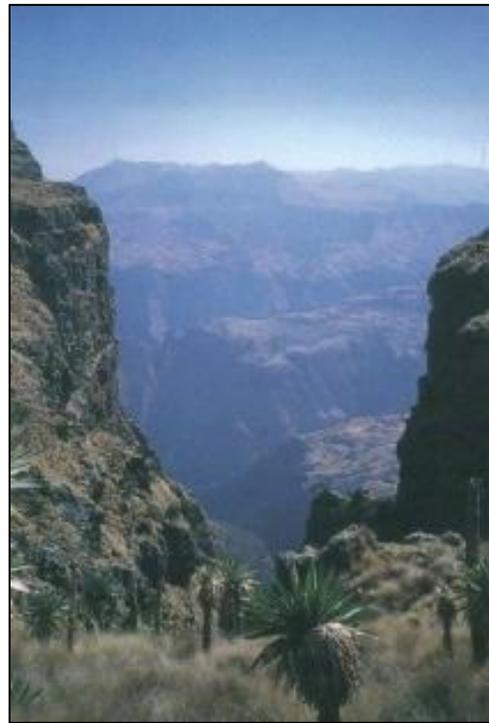
Simien Mountains Standard Trek and Historic Route

Simiens and Ras Deshen, Gondar, Lalibela, and Addis Ababa

Overview

The Simien Mountains Massif is one of the major highlands of Africa. Its highest point, Ras Deshen (4,543m) – the fifth tallest peak on the African continent – is situated in the north-western corner of Ethiopia. Our itinerary will take you to its summit, in what is a challenging but also rewarding climb.

The Simiens are among the most scenic mountain ranges in all of Africa. The West Plateau, where we trek, is bounded on the north and east by a massive escarpment, many kilometres long and over 1,000m high in places, and cut along its length by steep gorges. It is stunning. The Simiens are also a major wildlife sanctuary for several endangered species, such as the Gelada Baboon, which gather in huge troops on the escarpment, and the Walia Ibex, which are much more difficult to find.



Before the trek you will fly to Gondar, which was once the capital of Ethiopia. Here you will have the chance to explore the castles of Gondar, powerful symbols of seventeenth century wealth in a country that is unfortunately now so poor. Following the trek there will be time to visit the ancient historic towns of Axum and Lalibela – perhaps the most interesting historic sites on the continent of Africa.

Please note the trekking component of this itinerary is intended to be tough, particularly if you encounter poor weather. However, we can easily tailor a programme to your level of fitness, including more or less time in the Simiens.

Your Financial Protection

All monies paid by you for the air holiday package shown [or flights if appropriate] are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 3145.

For more information see our booking terms and conditions.

Day 01 Arrive Addis Ababa, overnight Addis hotel HB

Arrive Addis Ababa early morning, and transfer to the Saro Maria Hotel for dinner, bed & breakfast. Please contact us about the option to upgrade to a more up-market hotel, such as the Sheraton.

Founded in 1886 by Menelik II, Addis is located at 2,500 metres above sea level in one of the highest parts of the Entoto mountain chain, where it enjoys an excellent year-round climate, with an average temperature of 25°C. It's a pleasant city, with wide avenues of jacaranda trees, interesting museums and one of the largest open-air markets in Africa. If arriving this afternoon, we will arrange a short tour, taking in Ethiopia's National Museum, the Holy Trinity Cathedral, and the central market.

Day 02 Fly to Gondar, overnight Goha Hotel HB

Morning flight from Addis Ababa to Gondar, where you will be met on arrival by your guide and transferred to the Goha Hotel for one night. This afternoon, embark on a guided tour of Gondar.

Gondar was the first capital city of the Ethiopian empire, founded in 1635 during the reign of Emperor Fasilides. Over the ensuing 250 years, successive emperors would add to the city, building new churches and places of worship, but its standout feature remains Fasilides' Castle, built towards the end of his rule.

You'll have the opportunity to explore the castle, along with several other sights of interest, during your guided tour. Starting with the palaces, residences and baths of Fasilides, your tour will then continue to the church of Debre Berhan Selassie (Light of the Trinity), which sits at the summit of a hill, surrounded by fortified walls, its interior decorated with beautiful frescoes.



Dinner and overnight at your hotel, the Goha.

Day 03 Drive to Debark, Trek to Sankaber (3,230m) FB

After breakfast at your hotel, depart Gondar for the market town of Debark, in the Simien Mountains – a drive of approx. 3-4 hours through spectacular countryside.

A former trading post on the caravan route between Gondar and Axum, Debarq (2,700m) serves as the gateway to the Simien Mountains National Park. You'll make a short stop here, enjoying an early lunch at a town hotel, before meeting with the muleteers who will accompany you on your trek. Once the provisions have been checked, and the mules loaded, you'll be ready to depart on foot into the mountains.

Leaving town, you follow an undulating path up and down spurs, across the Lamma Wenz (river), and through welcoming villages. You then round Aman Amba while keeping close to the edge of the escarpment – from where you can look down onto Adarmaz Camp in the valley below – before reaching your camp for the first night, Sankaber, at an altitude of 3,230m.

Total trekking time today will be approx. 4 hours.

Day 04 Sankaber to Gich

FB

Today will see you trek from Sankaber to Gich Camp (3,630m). Start by descending to the escarpment near the head of the Wazla Wenz, from where there is a dramatic view of the Jinbar Wenz waterfall cascading down into the Geech Abyss. From here, it is a steep trek up to Gich Village, where you camp for the night.

It's likely that you will begin to feel the effects of altitude today, so keep to a steady pace and drink lots of water to ensure you stay hydrated.

Overall altitude gain 400m. Trek time 7/8 hours.



Day 05 Gich via Imet Gogo (3,926m) to Chenek (3,600m)

FB

Today will see you take the periphery route – with its majestic and awe-inspiring views from the escarpment – via Imet Gogo to Chenek. The day starts with an easy trek across the gently rising plateau to the famous viewpoint at Imet Gogo (3,926m). Here you may be lucky to see the rare Walia Ibex on the crags far below, so do approach Imet Gogo quietly. From Imet Gogo, continue south-east via Inatye to Chenek along mostly level terrain.

Today's walk is a gentle hike with relatively little altitude gain. Trek time 7/8 hours.



Day 06 Chenek to Ambiko (3,600m)

FB

A long but interesting walk from Chenek (3,600m) to Ambiko (3,100m), with optional climb to Bwahit summit.

Today's walk will see you explore a region of the Simiens noted for its wildlife – with Walia Ibex and Gelada baboon both present in the area, along with several endemic birds. (Unfortunately, the Simien Wolf has disappeared from this area, and other species are continually being pushed away from their usual habitat). This is a sensitive area, and so vehicle support will be reserved for emergencies.

There will also be the option today of trekking to the summit of the Simiens' second highest peak, Bwahit (4,430m), before descending steeply towards the village of Chiro Liba, where we usually lunch. From Chiro Liba, you continue the descent to the Mesheha River Valley (2,850m) and up the other side to Ambiko camp at 3,100m. Note that the Bwahit climb is optional, and so if you prefer to reserve your energy for tomorrow's summit attempt, you can instead trek direct to Ambiko via Chiro Liba, taking today at a more leisurely pace.



Camp at Ambiko at low altitude of 3,100m. Trek time approx 9/10 hours.



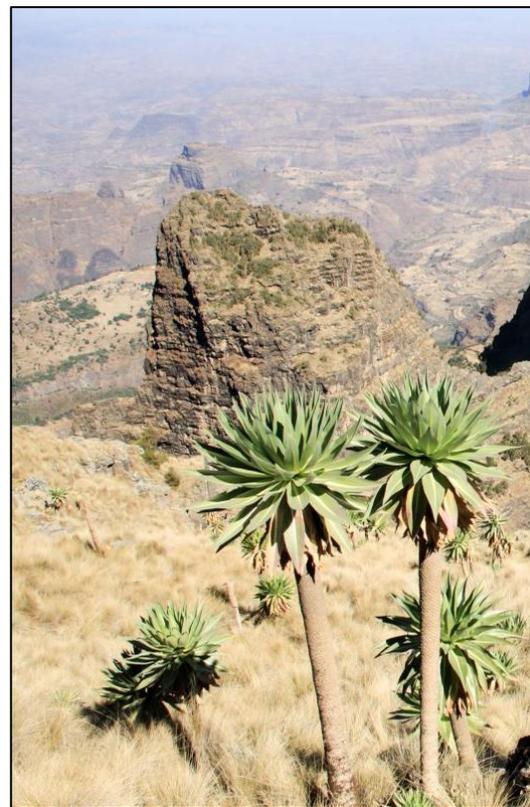
Day 07 Ras Deshen Summit (4,543m) and back to Ambiko

FB

The toughest day of your journey, today will see you ascend to the summit of Ras Dejen, the tallest peak in the Simiens. Waking early, you begin by trekking to the head of the Mesheha Valley and the village of Mizma, where you will get your first view of your imposing goal. To reach it you will contour round a number of steep gullies, ascending all the time, until you find yourself on a rocky plateau, which is dominated by the three peaks.

Scrambling up, you will notice that there are 2 distinct hog-back rock summits, the first being the highest. Once in sight, it is a relatively easy scramble to the top of one of Africa's highest mountains. This is it! Ras Dejen, at 15,157ft/4,543m, is Africa's fifth highest mountain and the highest in Ethiopia. After refreshments and rest at the top, you will retrace your steps to Ambiko camp.

A tough day, with an overall altitude gain of 1,343m from Ambiko to the summit of Ras Dejen. Trek time approx 11/12 hours – maybe even longer depending on weather conditions.



Day 08 Ambiko to Chenek

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Depart Ambiko this morning and retrace your steps back to Chenek, for your last night under canvas. Tomorrow, you return to Gondar.

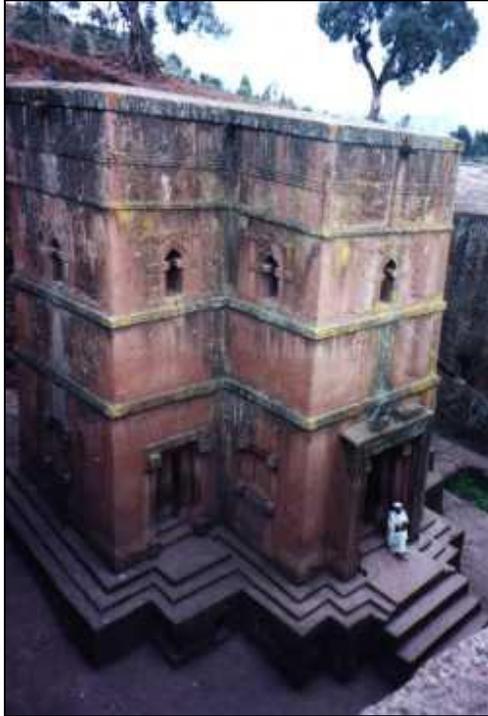
Day 09 Chenek to Gondar, Goha Hotel

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A vehicle will be waiting to take you back to Gondar (4-5 hour drive) for dinner and overnight at the Goha Hotel.

Day 10 Fly to Lalibela

HB



Morning flight to Lalibela. On arrival at Lalibela airport you will be met by your guide and transferred to the centre of town, where you stay at either the Mount View or Tukul Village Hotel. After check-in, embark on a tour of the ancient site, visiting the first group of rock churches.

Lalibela is the one place in Ethiopia that no visitor should miss. Indeed, were it virtually anywhere but in Ethiopia, Lalibela would rightly be celebrated as one of the wonders of the world.

Situated at an altitude of 2,600m, among wild, craggy mountains, there is a stark grandeur to Lalibela. Formerly called Roha, before adopting the name of the 11th-Century King Lalibela of the Zagwe Dynasty, the town has a long and storied history, which you'll learn more of during your tour.

Dinner and overnight at Mount View or Tukul Village.

Day 11 Lalibela

HB

Start the day with a visit to Asheton Mariam Monastery, a 2-3 hour walk from the main Lalibela complex. Noted for its stunning location, Asheton Mariam has been carved into the cliff face and stands out as one of the highest monasteries in Ethiopia. Return to Lalibela in time for lunch.

The rest of the day will be spent exploring the second group of rock churches, including the famous Bet Giyorgis.

Overnight in Lalibela.

Day 12 Addis Ababa

B

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight to Addis, where you will be met on arrival and transferred to the Saro Maria Hotel. The rest of the afternoon at leisure.

Dinner tonight is at the Hilltop, an Ethiopian-Italian restaurant with splendid views over the city below—the perfect way to mark your last night in Ethiopia!

Day 13 Departure

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Check out after breakfast and transfer to Addis Ababa International Airport for your return flight home.

