



adventure  
peaks

Treks

## Ethiopia's Simien Mountains



### TREK OVERVIEW

Trekking in the scenic landscape Simien Mountains really does seem out of this world. A short flight from Addis takes us to the historic city of Gondar, renowned for its castles and churches. As we drive north towards the Simien Mountains the surprisingly green land just gets greener. Monolithic pinnacles and towers emerge out of the ground, backed by cliffs tumbling 1000's of vertical metres to the verdant valleys below. We trek for ten full days through this protected wilderness, gradually sinking into the primeval rhythms of this serene world. Following the tops of the precipices, we cross plateaux and rivers and after an ascent of RasDashen (4620m), Ethiopia's highest peak, we descend to lower, warmer levels stopping at some stunningly gorgeous campsites to emerge from the mountains on the north side at AdiArkay.

During the trek we can expect to see many Gelada Baboons, the endemic Walia Ibex and if we are lucky the rare Simien Fox. A trek through this region will remain vivid in one's memory for ever as there really is nowhere else in the world with comparable atmosphere and scenery.

### Participation Statement

Adventure Peaks recognises that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

### Adventure Travel – Accuracy of Itinerary

Although it is our intention to operate this itinerary as printed, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops and the duration of the day may vary from those outlined. You should be aware that some events are beyond our control and we would ask for your patience.

## PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE/FITNESS

If you are used to regular multi day hill walking you will have the right level of fitness to fully enjoy your time on this trek. Previous walking experience is recommended and will help you get the most out of this trip. Non hill walkers must come with a high degree of fitness and stamina. Most days involve 5 - 8 hours walking plus plenty of rest stops, and a lot of the time you are walking at over 3000m.



## GROUP AND LEADERS

A fully qualified UK leader will accompany all groups of six or more passengers. He/she will be assisted by an experienced local leader. Smaller or private groups will be led by an English speaking local guide. This trip is exclusive to Adventure Peaks.

## WEATHER

Ethiopia experiences one wet season each year which runs from June to September. However the rains don't always start and stop exactly 'when they should'! Travelling after the wet season you can expect lush green vegetation and terraces full of crops. Towards the end of the dry season it will be dry and dusty and the rivers will be low or dry. Temperatures on the majority of trek will be around 15°C to 20°C during the day, but hotter on the last few days when we descend to lower altitudes. At night it can easily drop below freezing. Walkers should realize however that weather in the high mountains is unpredictable and should be prepared for this.

## WHAT TO CARRY

This trek is fully supported by a team of ponies which will transport your main baggage. You will only need to carry a light daypack at the very most. A 35l rucksack is a useful size to comfortably fit in essential items such as water bottle, camera, wet-weather gear and extra layers etc.

## CATERING ARRANGEMENTS

Our cooks pride themselves on their cooking, and ensure all food on the trek is freshly prepared using local ingredients and there is plenty for everyone. Injera is flat 'sourdough' bread made from Tef, a tiny grain grown in the highlands. Injera is used to eat Wat, a spicy stew of whatever ingredients are handy at the time. Western dishes will also be served. A typical menu on this trip would be:

**Breakfast:** A 'western' breakfast offering porridge, cereals, toast, eggs, tea, coffee, hot chocolate and hot milk.

**Lunch:** On trek either a pack lunch will be prepared for you and given to you to carry with you in your back pack, or a hot meal will be served.

**Dinner:** A hot meal is served every night consisting of soup, traditional and western main course with plenty of fresh vegetables and a desert.

## ACCOMMODATION

In Addis and Gondar we use good clean 3\* hotels, within walking distance of the town centres. On trek you will be in two-person tents. Toilet tents, and/or 'long drop' loos, are provided at camps. Warm washing water will be supplied.

## LANGUAGE AND TIME

**Language:** There are more than 70 languages in Ethiopia, the main one being Amharic in this area. However English is widely spoken.

**Time:** GMT+3 hours. No daylight saving time at present.

## HEALTH

All our UK leaders hold first aid certificates and carry a fully equipped first aid kit for medical emergencies. However you should bring your own supplies of plasters, blister prevention pads (Compeed), Paracetamol etc. and any medication you are taking. There are no mandatory immunisations for this trip. The following vaccinations are usually recommended: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Polio, and Typhoid. Other possible vaccines are Rabies, Meningitis Yellow Fever and Diphtheria, and possibly a malaria prophylaxis; but please consult your GP for professional advice. You can also refer to: [www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk) for information. Tap or stream water should never be drunk without first sterilizing with chlorine dioxide tablets or by boiling.

## INSURANCE

Insurance which covers mountain rescue, evacuation and medical expenses is **essential**. There are no official mountain rescue services in Ethiopia and any evacuation in the event of a serious medical emergency to the nearest hospital is likely to be by land rather than helicopter. We will require a copy of your insurance prior to departure. Please also ensure your insurance covers you for walking above 4000m (some will exclude this option).

## ALTITUDE

If you are new to altitude you may have concerns about the effects. Don't worry because our itineraries allow sufficient time to acclimatise, and altitude rarely causes anyone any problems on this trip. The best way to avoid such symptoms is to walk at a gentle steady pace and drink plenty of fluid.

## USEFUL TIPS

Just in case your main luggage goes missing en route, it is a good idea to wear your boots on the plane. Most other things can be replaced but comfortable, well worn-in boots cannot. Pack important items in strong plastic bags.

## EQUIPMENT

A detailed equipment list is provided on booking but normal summerwalking equipment, with extra warm clothes for the higher parts of the trek is all that is required. Sleeping mattresses are provided on trek, but we still recommend that you bring your own insulated mattress for extra comfort. For equipment purchases Adventure Peaks offers a 15% discount off the RRP from their shop in Ambleside or online.

## BAGGAGE

For your own comfort travel light. Normally airlines restrict baggage to 20kg and on trek the weight for ponies should be kept to 15kg, (you will be wearing boots and one set of trekking clothes). Some items can be left at the hotel in Gondar for your return.



## VISAS AND PERMITS

Visas for entry into Ethiopia are required by all nationalities (except Kenya and Djibouti). Information, prices and application forms can be found on the website below. Visas can be obtained on arrival but to avoid queues we prefer that you obtain yours in advance.

[www.ethioembassy.org.uk/consular\\_services/visa.htm](http://www.ethioembassy.org.uk/consular_services/visa.htm)

## LOCAL COSTS

All accommodation and most meals are included; please see the itinerary page for full details. Additional costs



would include any drinks or snacks outside of mealtimes, tips for local staff and personal spending.

## CURRENCY

The currency in Ethiopia is the Birr (ETB). ATMs are **not** commonplace in Ethiopia. Change bureaux are available in the arrivals hall at Addis Ababa airport and in Addis and Gondar. Birr cannot also be obtained in advance in the UK, or exported. We advise you **NOT** to rely on getting all your money from ATM's – take cash - Sterling, Euro or clean US\$, (Dollars must be dated after 2001). Please ensure you obtain a good supply of small denomination Birr notes.

## TIPPING

Tipping is very much an accepted part of life in Ethiopia. We generally tip our local trekking staff as a whole and would recommend around US\$80-100 per person. Tipping at meals and in hotels is also normal practice.

## ADVENTURE PEAKS KITBAG

All Adventure Peaks clients who reside in the UK will receive a **FREE** kitbag for any treks outside the UK. The bag will be posted to you approx. 3 weeks prior to your departure. If you have travelled with us before or reside outside the UK, we will send an alternative gift.

## FLIGHTS AND JOINING ARRANGEMENTS

Flights to and from Addis are **NOT** included as part of this holiday, but the Addis – Gondar – Addis flights are included. Adventure Peaks would be delighted to arrange your flights for you. The earlier you book, the better price we can obtain for flights. The cost of flights will be quoted to you separately and will vary with departure and booking date. There are a number of routes and airlines from the UK to Delhi to choose from. Our preferred airline is Ethiopian Airlines whose flights arrive in Addis early morning on Day 2. Our group transfer to the hotel will leave Addis airport at around 0800 to coincide with these flights. If you arrive at any other time you will need to take a taxi to the hotel.

**The rendezvous for this trip is the ARRIVALS HALL AT ADDIS AIRPORT at 0800 on the morning on Day 2, or the hotel in Addis if you arrive separately.**

Return flights can be booked for anytime on Day 15. Ethiopian Airlines flights leave just after midnight and get you back to the UK for breakfast. The group transfer to the airport will be timed to suit the Ethiopian Airlines flight.

**PLEASE ENSURE YOU DO NOT PURCHASE YOUR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL (FLIGHTS OR OTHER) UNTIL WE HAVE GUARANTEED YOUR TRIP IS RUNNING.**

## EXTENSION

- **The Rock Hewn Churches of Lalibella).** Price £595 per person (minimum 2 people)

## ETHIOPIA'S SIMIEN MOUNTAINS ITINERARY

No	Day	Today we...	We stay at...	Accommodation...	Meals...
1	Sat	Depart UK	Plane	Plane	
2	Sun	Arrive Addis	Addis	Hotel Ghion	
3	Mon	Fly to Gondar	Gondar	Hotel Goha or similar	BLD
4	Tue	Drive and trek 1	Sankaber(3200m)	Camp	BLD
5	Wed	Trek 2	Geech(3600m)	Camp	BLD
6	Thu	Trek 3	Geech(3600m)	Camp	BLD
7	Fri	Trek 4	Chenek(3700m)	Camp	BLD
8	Sat	Trek 5	Ambiko(3200m)	Camp	BLD
9	Sun	Trek 6	Ambiko(3200m)	Camp	BLD
10	Mon	Trek 7	Sona	Camp	BLD
11	Tue	Trek 8	Mekarbya	Camp	BLD
12	Wed	Trek 9	Mullet	Camp	BLD
13	Thu	Trek 10, return to Gondar	Gondar	Hotel Goha or similar	BLD
14	Fri	Fly to Addis	Addis	Hotel Ghion	BD
15	Sat	Fly home	Home	Own bed!	B

**Days 1/2** Depart UK and arrive Addis the following morning. Transfer to the hotel. In the afternoon you will be given a tour of the city.

**Day 3** A short morning flight takes us over the rugged Ethiopian plateau to the historic town of Gondar, famous for its 17th and 18th century castles and churches - truly bizarre sights here in the centre of Africa! A tour around the town will be offered in the afternoon.

**Day 4** We drive 100km to the small town of Debarq, the hopping off point for the Simien National Park. After completing formalities here we drive further on up into the park to start our trek. We get our first views over the northern escarpment down across the foothills below, a taste of what is to come over the next week. *3 to 4 hours walking.*

**Day 5** Still following the ridge, it is likely we will encounter endemic wildlife (Gelada Baboons) and plants (Giant Lobelia) this morning. After a couple of hours we arrive at the 500m Junbar waterfall - a favourite location for the abundant Lammergeyer. We then skirt around the top of the waterfall, cross the river, pass through a tiny settlement and ascend to our spacious campsite, home for two nights. *7 to 8 hours walking.*

**Day 6** The day is spent exploring the viewpoints, ridges and highpoints of the escarpment. We aim to ascend Imetgogo (3925m), not only a spectacular viewpoint but a landmark we will be able to look back at virtually every day from now on. *4 to 6 hours walking.*

**Day 7** Again following the escarpment we pass Imetgogo and drop into a valley full of lobelias. A diagonal ascent through heather takes us to the summit of Inatye (4070m). After a level section along the top we descend steeply to camp among the lobelias at Chenek. *6 to 7 hours walking.*

**Day 8** A long day. We ascend parallel to the dirt road through dense vegetation where we have our best chance to spot the endemic, endangered and rare Walia Ibex. We cross the Bwuhit Pass (4200m - the enthusiastic can ascend Bwuhit Peak 230m higher) and then make a long descent through the village of ChiroLeba to the Mesha River. A short ascent the other side takes us to Ambiko. *8 to 9 hours walking.*

**Day 9** Optional ascent of Ethiopia's highest mountain, RasDashen (4620m). A pre-dawn start is needed for this long ascent which is mostly on good trails. Initially we climb

steadily through fields and villages to reach higher pastures as the trails round a spur. A few zigzags take us up to the plateau from where we skirt around the back of the summit ridge to make the final ascent (a short scramble onto an exposed ridge) from the east side. Often we will be accompanied by shepherd boys who spend the season up here watching over their precious flocks. After enjoying sweeping views from here, we return to camp the same way to be greeted as heroes by our camp staff when we return. *9 to 11 hours walking.*

**Day 10** Another long day but with only gentle gradients to contend with. We descend to re-cross the Meshawa River, and then head off north across fields and passing scattered houses to the sprawling village of Arkwasiye. We continue through this village, and after another couple of hours descending gently arrive at a spectacular camp perched on top of a ravine at Sona. *8 to 9 hours walking.*

**Day 11** Don't miss the sunrise from here - it cuts across the face of Imetgogo where we stood a few days ago. After breakfast we descend 1100m down into the ravine on a good path to reach welcome warm air and a very inviting set of pools in the Ansiya River where we take a long lunch break. Our camp is an easy 90 minute walk further down the valley. *5 hours walking + lunch!*

**Day 12** We carry on down river, either following the river bed or tracks through the fields to reach another fine lunching and bathing spot where a side stream enters the main river. After lunch it is a hot steep ascent for a couple of hours to reach the village of Hawaza - and a shop!! We are now amongst the rock towers that we looked down on from the escarpment earlier in the trek and our final camp is set on a spur with views that typify the whole aura of the most beautiful place. Take pictures - but rest assured the memories will last forever. *5 to 7 hours walking.*

**Day 13** A 2 hour walk along a rough road brings us to Adi Arkay, a rather grubby town on the Gondar to Aksum 'highway'. Here we meet our vehicles and return, via Debarq back to Gondar. *2 hours walking, 4 hour drive.*

**Day 14** We fly back to Addis where there is usually time for further exploration before going out for dinner with traditional dancing. After dinner we transfer to the airport to check in for the night flight back to the UK.

**Day 15** Arrive back in the UK