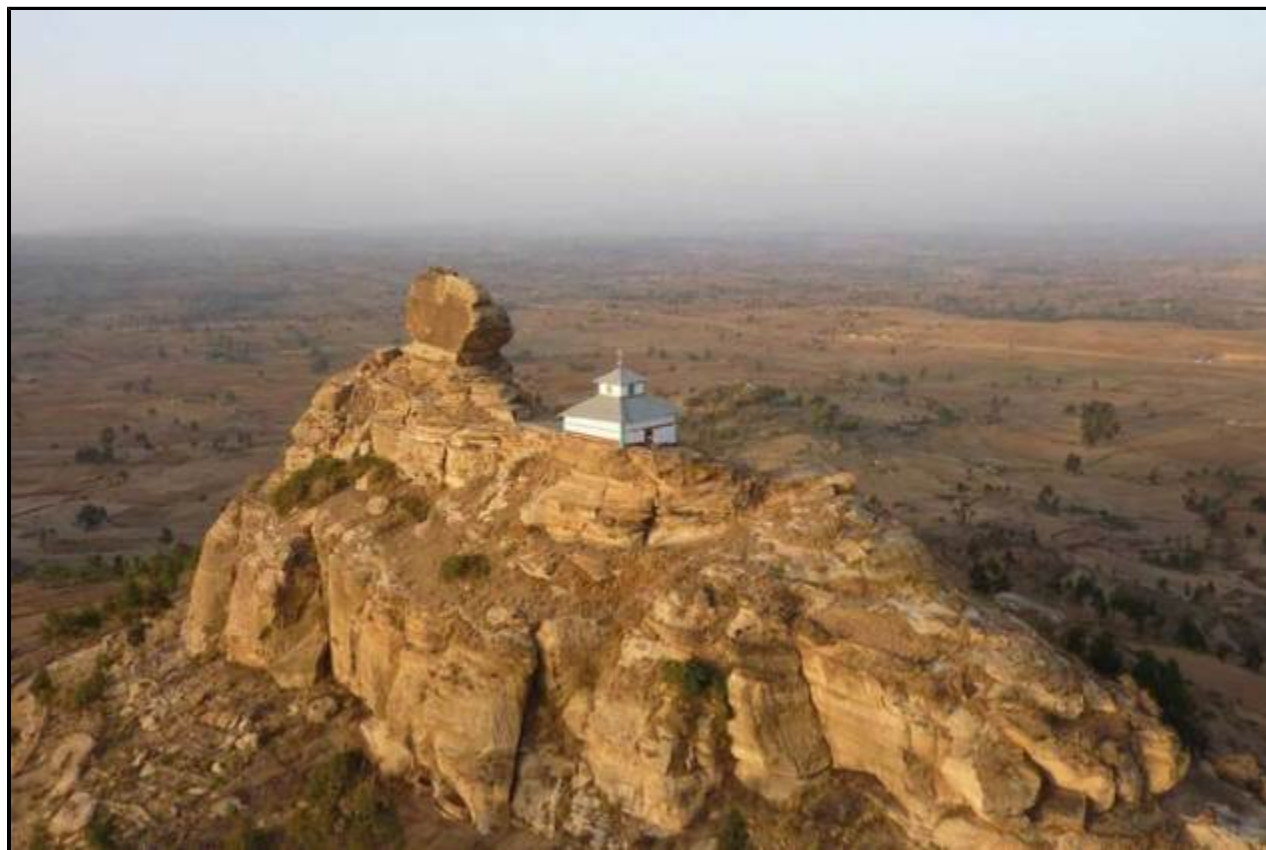


## Exploring the best of Ethiopia with Francis Naumann



## Travelling in October 2022

Prepared by: Francis Naumann on: 02 October 2020  
Telephone: +44 (0) 1980 849160

One of the many joys of Africa is that its enormity means a huge amount of it is almost completely unknown. From my long experience travelling across the continent I know that many of these hidden gems are utterly spellbinding, absolutely worth the effort of getting there in order to see places and people that remain relatively untouched by the outside world.

Ethiopia is unique; it is part of Africa but it feels unlike Africa in so many ways. It's ancient cultures, amazingly rich history and remote corners hold a number of world renowned highlights. This trip offers the chance to visit the astonishing churches at Lalibela, the Gheralta Mountains and the Omo Valley; at opposite ends of this huge country they present a fantastic contrast of faiths, landscapes, climates and traditions.

- October is the best month to visit the more arid northern part of the country when it's at its most beautiful and green following the rains.
- We will have a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 10 guests plus me.
- I have chosen the guides for the trip because of their outstanding knowledge of specific parts of the country
- I will be with you every step of the journey, to liaise with our guides and lodges and to smooth over any snags
- I chose the destinations we will visit following my own research trip in 2020
- The activities we can enjoy in Ethiopia will be walks in the Gheralta Mountains, visits to churches in Tigray and Lalibela, visits to remote villages in Tigray and the Omo Valley, boat trips on the Omo River, bird watching, a night fly camping, and a short tour of Addis Ababa.
- You have the option to add three nights in the Bale Mountains National Park, a superb place to see some of Ethiopia's wonderful wildlife including the Ethiopian wolf.

The itinerary takes in some of the very best and most interesting parts of Ethiopia, giving visitors a unique insight into the incredibly varied and ancient cultures that still thrive in this vast, mountainous and very fertile country. I can't wait to show it to you.

**Please Note:** Ethiopia is still a developing destination for tourism, and some services are not as guests might expect. A degree of flexibility is an asset when travelling here. A reasonable level of fitness is helpful to allow guests to reach the more demanding destinations, such as some of the churches in the Gheralta Mountains. We will make sure that everyone can enjoy the trip nonetheless.

## Summary of Arrangements

Date	Activity
Thursday, 13 October	Fly London Heathrow to Addis Ababa - 1 night
Friday, 14 October	Fly Addis Ababa to Mekele - 1 hour Korkor Lodge - 3 nights
Monday, 17 October	Fly Axum to Lalibela - 40 minutes Mezena Lodge - 2 nights
Wednesday, 19 October	Fly Lalibela to Addis Ababa - 1 hour Fly Addis Ababa to Murule Lale's Camp - 3 nights
Saturday, 22 October	Fly Jinka to Addis Ababa - 1 hour and 10 minutes Best Western Hotel Addis Ababa Fly Addis Ababa to London Heathrow - overnight - 1 night

## Thursday, 13 October 2022

### Fly London Heathrow to Addis Ababa - 1 night

This evening, we gather at London Heathrow in time to check in for the overnight flight to Addis Ababa. *International flights are not included at this stage, and will be available around 11 months before travel.*

#### Francis Naumann

I will join you all at Heathrow, before we check in for the flight to Addis Ababa. I will be travelling with you throughout this trip, lending my years of experience and insight into Africa to enhance your enjoyment of this Ethiopian holiday.

I know Africa like the back of my hand, thanks to six years in working as a guide across the continent, and many subsequent trips researching destinations for Aardvark Safaris.

While I love the wilderness and wildlife, enjoying conversations and interaction with local people is one of the biggest rewards of my African travels. I still relish the chance to explore new places and Ethiopia is my most recently explored destination, bring the total to 26 African countries.

Laid-back and unflappable, good company round the dinner table, Francis is the ideal travel companion in a country such as Ethiopia.



## Friday, 14 October 2022

### Fly Addis Ababa to Mekele - 1 hour

When we arrive in Addis Ababa this morning, I will assist you through immigration. We will be met before the luggage reclaim, and then escorted to the domestic terminal, where we will meet our guide for the first part of the trip. He will assist us with checking in for the scheduled flight to Mekele.

#### Korkor Lodge - 3 nights

Our drivers will be waiting at Mekele Airport, and will transfer us to the Gheralta Mountains. This is a scenic drive of about two and a half hours through the fascinating Tigray region, and we will arrive in time for lunch.

**Accommodation:** double or twin cottages

**Includes:** all meals, guided walks in the Gheralta Mountains, visits to four different churches, visits to local homesteads, villages and markets.

The best churches, which need a certain level of mobility and fitness to reach, are probably Abuna Yemata and Abuna Gebre Mikhael. Abuna Gebre Mikael is accessed via a steep path going up into the mountains, while the last part of the track to Abuna Yemata is a bit of a scramble over the rocks requiring a good head for heights. Maryam Korkor is another on the list to visit and, this too, is reached via a steep mountain path.

The best walks in the mountains for a real off-the-beaten-track feel are those to Maryam Korkor and Abuna Gebre Mikhael. The views from the mountain tops are stunning too.

Abreha Atsbeha church probably has the most impressive interior and might be the oldest in the region. It is a half hour drive from Korkor through some great Tigrayan countryside and the vehicle can literally drive up to the steps at the bottom. Maryam Papassiti is another church that is easy to get to, a 15 minute drive from the lodge, then a beautiful stroll down a riverbed through wonderful farming community to get to the church. This is a good chance to visit some of the locals in their homesteads. Depending on the timing, we'll hope to join a service in one of these churches, which allows a much better understanding of what it's all about. Saturday is market day too, so we will definitely get to visit one.



Korkor Lodge is located at the northern foot of the Gheralta Mountains, in the Tigray region of the far north of Ethiopia. The privately owned and managed lodge has 12 spacious cottages in its lovely natural gardens, and excellent, panoramic views of the mountains and neighbouring communities from its hilltop position.

The rugged and remote Gheralta Mountains are spectacularly beautiful, and have many deep hidden valleys among their high peaks. The mountains also hide 28 remarkable churches, many of which date from the 5th Century. Often founded by hermits in search of solitude, some of the churches are amazingly inaccessible, perhaps also to test the faith of worshippers. Located high in the mountains, and reached by climbing cliff faces, some have been carved out of the sandstone and richly decorated with religious art and frescoes over the centuries.

Christianity is not just a religion in this region; it is the guiding light of life for Tigrayan people. Faith and worship are the cornerstones of everything they do, and the pattern of life revolves around the ancient traditions of these deeply religious people.

The warmth of the welcome here is a delight, and the people have a wonderful sense of purpose, dignity, and humour. Every hillside is terraced to allow it to grow food, and the people are hard working, tenacious



and fun. As well as the incredible churches, we hope to visit some of the vibrant markets and neat villages of this magnificent part of Tigrai.



## Monday, 17 October 2022

### Fly Axum to Lalibela - 40 minutes

After a very early breakfast our drivers will take us to Axum, which is a scenic journey of about three hours through an amazing landscape. The road passes close to the site of the Battle of Adwa, where the armies of Ethiopia defeated the invading Italian army in 1896.

We may be able to visit the ancient Stelae field before boarding the midday flight to Lalibela, which should take 40 minutes and will arrive in time for lunch.

### Mezena Lodge - 2 nights

Our new drivers will be awaiting us at Lalibela Airport, and will transfer us the short distance to the lodge for lunch. After lunch we head out to visit the first cluster of the incredible churches here, including Bete Medhnialem and St Giorgis. The following day, we will visit Yemrehanna Kristos, the cave church, returning to town for lunch. We spend the afternoon exploring the second cluster of churches before heading up the mountain to Ashotan monastery. We can enjoy sundowners from the top of Ashotan Mountain with fantastic views of the town far below.

**Accommodation:** double or twin cottages

**Includes:** all meals, guided church visits and walks



Mezena Lodge has 30 individual stone and timber bungalows spread out through 16 hectares of gardens and bush on a hilltop in Lalibela in northern Ethiopia. The lodge is well located in the town for access to the amazing churches for which Lalibela is renowned. The lodge has a large restaurant, a bar, and a pool.

Lalibela is world famous for its rock-hewn churches, and the main focus of a stay at Mezena Lodge is visiting these astonishing creations. Scenic walks, bird watching, and enjoying the local life and culture are also enjoyable activities here.

Lalibela is a hilltop town in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, situated at 2,500 metres above sea level. The town is best known for 11 churches that were carved out of the solid basalt bedrock which are located around it. Created during the reign of King Lalibela in the 12th and 13th Centuries. There are suggestions the locations of the churches are intended to replicate the layout of Jerusalem, with which Ethiopia had been connected for centuries. Much of the country once followed Judaism in fact.

This astonishing collection of ancient buildings can all be visited during a few days spent here. The plan is to see as many as we can while allowing time to enjoy each of them fully, as well as the fantastic scenery and the wonderfully vibrant local life. This will involve a bit of walking, and it's worth taking it gently at this altitude, allowing time to appreciate the wonderful surroundings.



## Wednesday, 19 October 2022

### Fly Lalibela to Addis Ababa - 1 hour

This morning we will be returned to Lalibela Airport in time for our scheduled flight back to Addis Ababa.

### Fly Addis Ababa to Murule

We will be met at Addis Ababa Airport and shown to the aircraft for our private flight to Murule airstrip in the south Omo Valley. The flight takes about an hour and 30 minutes.

### Lale's Camp - 3 nights

Lale Biwa will meet us at Murule airstrip with vehicles and drivers. We have a 20 minute drive to the river at Korcho village, where we board the boat. We then have a 20 minute cruise along the Omo River to Lale's Camp, travelling between forested river banks full of birdlife and monkeys and arriving in time for lunch in camp.

**Accommodation:** private tented safari camp with twin or double tents

**Includes:** all meals, house drinks, laundry, village and nature walks, boat trips, and a night fly-camping in a Mursi village in Mago National Park

Our days here will be spent using the river as a highway to visit isolated communities, and we will be able to see prolific bird life as well as plenty of monkeys. The riverine forest opens up from time to time, to give us a glimpse of the limited amount of riverbank farming that the local tribes carry out. In addition to visiting people near Lale's Camp, we will travel upriver to the Mago National Park, and stay a night in a fly camp in a village belonging to the Mursi people. As hunter gatherers, they are unique in the Omo Valley, and retain the unusual tradition of inserting lip-plates in the lower lips of women.





Lale's Camp has seven large canvas safari tents located in a shady patch of forest on the bank of the Omo river in southern Ethiopia's Omo Valley. The camp is owned and hosted by Lale Biwa, a remarkable man who was born here and has lived here for most of his life.

The tents are well spaced apart, have en-suite bathrooms with a bucket shower and a flush loo, and double or twin beds. The camp has a spacious mess tent, and an outside table for lunch, and battery charging points throughout.

The Omo Valley is one of Africa's least visited regions, and is home to numerous tribes with fascinating animist cultural traditions. Lale is a superb guide, and is immensely well-respected by all of the local people. The relationships he has with the tribes allows guests to witness the traditions and lives of the Nyangatom, Kara, Hamar and Mursi people on walks and boat trips. The Omo River itself is broad and beautiful, often edged with dense stands of fig and mahogany trees, and numerous species of birds flourish here among the lush vegetation. The river is home to a significant number of crocodiles, and black and white colobus, vervet and De Brazza's monkeys can be seen in the trees along the banks. Pel's fishing owl can sometimes be spotted too.

Each of the tribes we visit has a distinct set of traditions, including those of hair styles, decorations and jewellery, body decorations and scarring, and the animist religions. Being able to visit these people and see an unimaginably ancient way of life still thriving in this remote and very beautiful place is a real privilege.



## Saturday, 22 October 2022

### Fly Jinka to Addis Ababa - 1 hour and 10 minutes

After breakfast, we have a four hour scenic drive to Jinka, a pretty town in a very fertile valley in the mountains. We will arrive in plenty of time to have a picnic lunch and check in for the scheduled flight to Addis Ababa.

### Best Western Hotel Addis Ababa

We will be met outside the arrivals hall, and driven to our hotel. There should be time for a brief city tour, which might include the National Museum, Ethnological Museum, Trinity Cathedral and the Shewa Meda cloth market. This evening we have a farewell dinner at an excellent local restaurant.

**Accommodation:** twin or double day rooms - we check out later this evening

**Includes:** dinner

The Best Western Hotel in Addis Ababa is well located in a vibrant part of the city, and is convenient for the International Airport and the city centre.

The hotel has 160 well equipped rooms, all with en-suite bathrooms, air-conditioning, a tv, safe, mini bar and kettle. The hotel has a gym, sauna, cocktail bar, lounge and restaurant, and offers easy access to plenty of good restaurants and bars nearby.

Addis Ababa has a wealth of fascinating history to appreciate and a lively current cultural scene. There are also some excellent Ethiopian restaurants and traditional coffee shops, and it's certainly worth spending a day exploring this exciting city.

### Fly Addis Ababa to London Heathrow - overnight - 1 night

Later this evening, we will be returned to the airport in time to check in for the homeward flight to London.

### *Optional services*

#### **Bale Mountain Lodge - based on a minimum of 4 guests**

In my opinion the Bale Mountains are the finest place in Ethiopia to see some of the country's unique endemic wildlife such as the Ethiopian wolf, along with spectacular scenery and a large tract of intact indigenous forest with phenomenal biodiversity.

Please join me for a 3 night extension to the Bale Mountain Lodge and enjoy exploring this wonderful national park and its amazing flora and fauna with me. See the pricing page for the additional cost of this option.

**Accommodation:** double or twin room

**Includes:** return flights from Addis Ababa to Robe / Goba airport, all meals, laundry, forest walks, visits to local communities, wildlife drives to the Sanetti Plateau to find the Ethiopian wolf.

The Bale Mountains National Park has a great variety of habitat, including temperate forest and high altitude moorland. It is one of the best places to see the critically endangered Ethiopian wolf, which thrives on the Sanetti Plateau thanks to the huge numbers of rodents living there. Other endemic species found here include the Bale monkey, mountain nyala, Menelik's bushbuck, Stark's hare, and Bale and Harennna chameleons. Lion, buffalo and elephant are also sometimes seen or heard in the forest. The birdlife is also excellent, thanks to the variety of habitats to be found, and there are numerous endemic species to be seen.





Bale Mountain Lodge sits in a natural clearing in the Bale Mountains National Park of south central Ethiopia. Situated at 2,380m within the Hareenna forest, the lodge is perfectly placed for guests to experience a pristine wilderness in the national park as well as offering access to the Rift Valley and wider local attractions.

The design of Bale Mountain Lodge resembles traditional Ethiopian buildings. The lodge has 11 stone and timber rooms with ensuite bathrooms and verandahs, decorated in an Ethiopian style with locally sourced furniture and soft furnishings. The rooms have wood burning stoves keep guests warm in the cooler mountain climate. The lodge has a bar, a lounge, and a thatched dining room with big windows offering amazing views over the natural clearing and mountain range beyond.

The park can be explored on guided walks through the forest, drives to the Sanetti Plateau to look for the wolves, and excellent bird watching. Visits to waterfalls, meeting honey collectors, and riding horses are also on offer here, and day trips to explore sites further afield, such as the Sof Omar caves, can be arranged.



## Pricing Details

### The itinerary includes:

Ethiopian Airlines Internal flights - flight times to be confirmed in due course (**please note: strict 20kg luggage allowance per person including hand luggage. Soft bags only - no wheels or rigid frames allowed**).

Private light aircraft flight from Addis Ababa to Murule in the Omo Valley

Passenger and airport taxes

Airport and other transfers

Accommodation as stated

All meals

Drinks as stated

Laundry as stated

Activities as stated - *we will endeavour to do as much as we possibly can, but cannot guarantee exactly what will take place each day or specific events*

National Park and concession fees

### The itinerary excludes:

Ethiopian Airlines International flights - the flights are usually available from 11 months before travel

Visas for Ethiopia US\$50 per person on arrival or before travel

Travel insurance

Tips and gratuities

Other personal spending

**Please ask** your GP for guidance about malaria and yellow fever, as both are present in Ethiopia.

### Aardvark Holiday Prices

Unlike many other companies, we forward buy the foreign currency needed to pay for a booking at the time a trip is confirmed. We will not therefore surcharge you because of exchange rate fluctuations after receipt of your deposit.

### The Itinerary

Aardvark Safaris reserves the right to rearrange the order of the itinerary if required for operational reasons. For example, if all guests wish to visit the Bale Mountains, we will revise the itinerary to make best use of flights and time.

### Guest Numbers

We can host a maximum of 10 guests on this trip.

### Payment

A deposit of 25% confirms participation. Should we be unable to fill enough places, it will be refunded in full. The Balance Payment will be due 10 weeks before departure.

### Confirmation date

The trip will be confirmed or cancelled no less than 6 months before departure

**The per person price for these travel arrangements: £6,941**

**The supplement for a single room throughout: £436**

**The additional per person sharing cost for a 3 night stay at Bale Mountain Lodge: £3,939**

## Why Choose Aardvark Safaris?

### **Honest independent advice from knowledgeable and experienced Africa experts.**

We've all lived and worked in Africa and tailor make high quality holidays in areas we know and love. We use camps and lodges we've tried and tested, and understand the importance of working with some of Africa's best guides and hosts. We listen to your wishes and use our experience to tailor a safari that suits you perfectly. We will provide hassle free arrangements including full itinerary planning, providing the most effective routings and avoiding unnecessary (and costly) stopovers. We are completely impartial in our advice (no-one at Aardvark works on commission).

### **Holidays with 100% financial protection.**

Our licencing with ATOL and insuring of non-flight holidays protect you should either we, or our suppliers, cease trading. Please remember that if you do decide to book direct with companies in Africa, or through a non-bonded company here in the UK, your money is at risk.

### **Avoid the pitfalls of booking direct with an African operator.**

Booking direct you have zero financial protection. Can you pay with a credit card? If so what are the hidden charges? If you cannot pay by credit card then you will have to arrange a money transfer at your expense. When you get there what happens if nobody is there to meet you? If you have any complaints with the quality of your holiday how do you try and arrange compensation, you have very limited rights. Our registration number is 3800138 and our status can be checked at Companies House.

### **You pay no more booking through Aardvark than if you arranged the holiday yourselves.**

Typically there are no additional costs to you for having the benefit of our advice. Our suppliers pay us a commission for each booking which is how we make our profit. In some instances we are able to plan trips more cheaply than you would yourselves. If you think that we are charging you more for accommodation or services than you can find direct, we are happy to look at the difference and see if we can remedy the situation. If you would like a breakdown of the quote, we will happily provide this.

We can't guarantee to be competitive with flight prices as sales and special offers released on airline websites sometimes undercut the rates we are given direct by the airlines. If you can find cheaper flights than us you are welcome to book these independently of our travel arrangements.

### **Once a trip is confirmed we will not charge you for any currency fluctuations.**

The price of your holiday stays the same even if there are currency movements before you travel. We buy in our currency when you pay your deposit covering you against fluctuations.

### **There if you need us - 24 hours 7 days a week emergency phone cover.**

We provide a full emergency back up service, both from ourselves and through local representatives on the ground, in case you have any difficulties whilst you are away.

### **Service doesn't stop when you leave the UK, you get great service in Africa too.**

We've worked with the majority of our suppliers for years and by visiting regularly we know we're still working with the best. By speaking to clients after they've travelled we feed back their thanks and occasionally niggles too which helps to keep standards high.

### **Committed to looking after the environment.**

Our holidays allow you to enjoy wildlife, local communities and remote areas of Africa, and conservation is important to us. We work hard to ensure that the benefits tourism can bring to an area are not offset by negative impacts. We have supported the Koiyaki Guide School in the Masai Mara since its inception, giving local people the chance to take a part in the future of their area.

### **Recommendations are at the heart of our business and we are able to supply you with a reference.**

Over 70% of our clients come to us through recommendation and many of our clients are on their second or third trip with us. Although we started in 1999, and have grown in the intervening years, we still act in the style of a small company and have retained our personal touch with the owners still involved on a day to day basis. See the many online reviews to see what clients say about us or let us know if you would like to speak to a past client.