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Expedition Details

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Between its ancient wonders and its vibrant ethnic traditions, Ethiopia presents a rare chance for photographers to document fascinating cultures barely touched by the centuries. In the Omo River Valley, meet and photograph diverse peoples who distinguish themselves with elaborate body paint, scarification, and lip plates. Document bustling market scenes, and train your lens on the exquisite underground churches of Lalibela.

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Day 3 — Addis Ababa/Arba Minch

Begin the day with a behind-the-scenes tour of the National Museum of Ethiopia. See historical treasures as well as some of the most important early human fossils finds in the world. Fly south to Arba Minch, set amid thick jungle at the junction of Lake Abaya and Lake Chamo. Settle into our cliff-top *tukuls* (thatched huts) overlooking the “Bridge of God” that separates the lakes, and take photographs of the sweeping landscape.

Paradise Lodge (B,L,D)

Day 4 — Arba Minch/Jinka

During a cruise on Lake Chamo, zoom in on a wide variety of birdlife, as well as hippos and crocodiles wallowing by the shore. Then drive south and west by 4x4 through ever-changing landscapes of banana plantations, terraced hills, and high mountains. A stop in a market village gives us a first chance to photograph the unique tribes of the south. Upon arrival in Jinka,

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gain insights into the area's ethnic groups at the wonderful Jinka Museum.

Eco Omo Safari Lodge (B,L,D)

Day 5 — Jinka

The distinctive cultural identities of the Omo Valley make it an extraordinary place to photograph. This is the home of tribes such as the Kara, the Hamar, and the Mursi, who decorate themselves with beads, feathers, and elaborate body paint and pride themselves on ancient traditions. From everyday village scenes to portraits of women with lip plates to intriguing initiation rites, our photographic opportunities abound. Today we meet the Mursi, a pastoralist society that inhabit Mago National Park and are especially known for the lip plates worn by the women. Stroll through a Mursi village to witness daily life and learn about their intriguing culture. Back in Jinka this afternoon, visit Omo Child, a nonprofit co-founded by National Geographic Emerging Explorer Lale Labuko to stop the practice of mingi. This superstition dictates the killing of children who are believed to be cursed, and is still followed by some tribes. Omo Child rescues these children and gives them a home and an education to help them become contributors to society in the future.

Eco Omo Safari Lodge (B,L,D)

Days 6 & 7 — Jinka/Turmi

Work on portraiture and capturing scenes from everyday life during a fantastic photo adventure. Head south into the heart of the Omo Valley, stopping at villages and market towns along the way. Get acquainted with Hamar people, who fashion their clothing out of goat skins, cowrie shells, and beads, and cover their hair and skin with a mix of butter and red minerals. Visit the Kara, known for their face and body painting, in their farming communities along the Omo River. Wander through the local markets with your camera in hand, catching fleeting interactions between different tribes and filling your lens with images both colorful and quirky of the market stalls. With luck, our visit will coincide with a bull-jumping or an evangari dance—two of the important rituals of the region.

Buska Lodge (B,L,D)

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Days 8 & 9 — Turmi/Konso/Addis Ababa

Our last Omo Valley encounter is with the Arbore people, who live in tall, rounded huts. After a photo shoot, drive to the terraced hills of the Konso region, declared a UNESCO World Heritage site for its rich culture. Here, train your lens on a very different kind of village, built within concentric stone walls. Meet the Konso chief, a spiritual leader with an important role in tribal judicial matters, and hear about his people's complex traditions. Drive back to Arba Minch the next day, and fly back to Addis Ababa.

Kanta Lodge (B, L, D; B, L)

Days 10, 11, & 12 — Lalibela

Fly north to the World Heritage site of Lalibela. Hewn out of sheer rock below ground level, Lalibela's eleven freestanding churches date from the 12th century and have welcomed worshippers ever since. Spend two days day venturing through and photographing the web of tunnels and trenches that link the churches, capturing the site from unusual angles. Head into the countryside to visit Yemrehane Kristos, a beautiful stone church built within a mountainside cave that pre-dates the churches of Lalibela. Stop at a village for an up-close look at rural life in northern Ethiopia and watch local women make *injera*, a flatbread that accompanies most meals.

Tukul Village (B,L,D)

Days 13 & 14 — Addis Ababa/U.S.

Return to Addis Ababa and enjoy time to explore the city. Set on a photo shoot, wandering amid the stalls of the Mercato, the largest open-air market in Africa, where metalworkers recycle scrap metal and merchants sell all manner of local products. Trace Ethiopia's tumultuous recent history at the Red Terror Martyrs Museum, or stop by a local coffee producer to pick up freshly roasted beans. This evening, transfer to the airport for your return flight, arriving home the next day.

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Optional Extension

- [Gonder, Lake Tana, and the Simien Mountains - Post-Trip Extension, 5 Days](#)

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Ethiopia: The Omo Valley and Lalibela



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