

Omo National Park is a national park in Ethiopia founded in 1980. Located in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region on the west bank of the Omo River, the park covers approximately 4,068 square kilometers, about 870 kilometers southwest of Addis Ababa; across the Omo is the Mago National Park. Although an airstrip was recently built near the park headquarters on the Mui River, this park is not easily reachable; the Lonely Planet guide Ethiopia and Eritrea describes Omo National Park as "Ethiopia's most remote park." [1]

The lower reaches of the Omo river were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980, after the discovery (in the Omo Kibish Formation) of the earliest known fossil fragments of Homo sapiens, which have been dated circa 195,000 years old.

There is virtually no tourist infrastructure within the park and little support for travellers. It was reported in 1999 that none of the tourist agencies within or outside Ethiopia would arrange tours in the park. [2] The Walta Information Center announced on 3 October 2006 that US\$1 million had been allocated to construct "roads and recreational centres as well as various communication facilities" with the intent to attract more visitors. [3]

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Fauna[edit]

Region on the west bank of the Omo River, the park covers approximately 4,068 square kilometers, about 870 kilometers southwest of Addis Ababa; across the Omo is the Mago National Park. The park offers excellent opportunities to view wildlife. It supports large herds of elephants, buffalos, Burchell's zebra, eland, beisa oryx, tiang, Lelwel hartebeest, and Grant's gazelle. Other wildlife that is relatively easy to see include lions, African wild dogs, giraffe, ostrich, greater kudu, hyena, black rhinoceros, hippopotamus, and warthog.

Native people and the Omo Park[edit]

The Mursi, Suri, Nyangatom, Dizi and Me'en are reported in danger of displacement and/or denial of access to their traditional grazing and agricultural land. This follows the demarcation of the Park boundaries in November 2005, and the recent management takeover of the Park by the Dutch African Parks Foundation [4] (also known as African Parks Conservation). This process threatens to make the Omo people 'illegal squatters' on their own land. [5]

There are reports that these tribal peoples have been coerced into signing documents they could not read by Park officials. [6]

On October 2008 African Parks Network (APN) announced they were giving up the management of the Omo National Park and leaving Ethiopia. APN stated that sustainable management of the Ethiopian parks is incompatible with 'the irresponsible way of living of some of the ethnic groups'. The organization has trouble dealing with the indigenous population trying to continue its traditional way of life within the park borders. [7]