

RIFT VALLEY LAKES – ZIWAY, LANGANO, ABIJATTA-SHALLA, HAWASSA

OVERVIEW

South of Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian Rift strings a series of accessible lakes with birdlife, resorts, and easy weekend escapes. Lake Ziway's islands host monasteries and waterbirds; Langano offers swimming beaches; Abijatta-Shalla National Park protects twin soda lakes; Hawassa is a lively lakeside city with a fish market promenade.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Lake Ziway: Boat trips to Tullu Gudo Island (historical church) and bird-rich reedbeds; shore gardens are good for morning walks.
- Lake Langano: Brown-sand beaches and lakeside lodges; popular for swimming and water activities.
- Abijatta-Shalla National Park: Lookouts over two contrasting lakes—shallow Abijatta and deep Shall—a with flamingos and raptors; fragile habitats require designated tracks.
- Hawassa: Lakeside park, fish market (saganaki tilapia grills), and boat rides; city restaurants line the green waterfront.

1–3 DAY PLANS

- One Day (Short Escape): Addis → Ziway for boat/birding → Langano lunch/swim → return.
- Two Days: Overnight at Langano; sunrise birding; day trip to Abijatta-Shalla view sites.
- Three Days: Add Hawassa night; morning fish market and lakeside ride before return to Addis.

PRACTICALS

- Access: Paved highways south; traffic can be heavy near Addis; self-drive with caution or use reputable drivers.
- Seasonality: Best light and views Oct–Feb; summer rains (approx. Jun–Sep) bring greener landscapes and more insects.
- Etiquette: Life jackets on boats; protect nesting areas and follow local guide cues.

SOURCES SUMMARY

Attraction descriptions reflect long-standing regional travel practice; park status and bird concentrations vary seasonally.