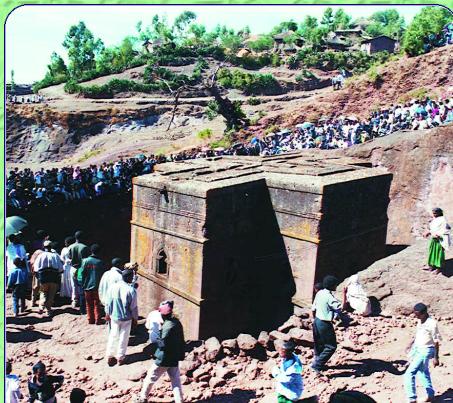


A Tourist Guide to The Amhara Region of Ethiopia

*(The Three Top Tourist Destinations:
Bahir Dar, Gonder, and Lalibela)*



Bete Giyorgis rock-hewn church, 12th C. (Lalibela)



Palace of Emperor Fasil, 17th C. (Gonder)



The Blue Nile Falls (Tis Abay, around Bahir Dar)

**Amhara National Regional State
Bureau of Culture & Tourism**

Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, May, 2006



Pelikans, L. Tana

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Bureau of Culture & Tourism, 2006.

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*Front Cover: (Outside) Bete Giyorgis rock-hewn church, 12th Century (Lalibela)
Palace of Emperor Fasil 17th Century (Gonder), and
The Blue Nile Falls (Tis Abay, around Bahir Dar)
(Inside) Pelicans on the shores of Lake Tana*

*Back Cover: (Outside) Some of the natural, historical and cultural attractions of
Amhara
National Regional State*

(In side) Some of the natural attractions of Amhara Region



Ankober Eco - Lodge

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Sunset over Lake Tana



A colony of Gelada Baboons



An amazingly beautiful girl from Lalibela



Kota Mariam Monastery, Lake Tana

Mural at Azwa Mariam Monastery, Lake Tana



Introduction

Ethiopia, a mosaic of people and cultures, encyclopedia of geology, the cradle of mankind and civilization, is found in the Eastern part of Africa equidistant between the Equator and the Tropic of Cancer.

The country, naturally rich in intriguing landscape, endowed with rich biodiversity, soaked in history and having culturally hospitable, traditionally sensitive and intrinsically religious people has become a tourist paradise. Owing this, many travelers, researchers, and great many tourists have been visiting the land since long ago. Among them, Francisco Alvarez in the early 16th century, the Spanish Jesuit Pero Paes in the early 17th century, the Scottish traveler James Bruce in the late 18th century and Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain in the mid 19th century can be mentioned. Most of them extensively have written and spoken of their unique and wondrous experiences and encounters, that in turn have called the attention of many adventurers, researchers, visitors... to flow to the country to satisfy their greed and interests.

The Amhara National Regional State, home of age-old monuments and other heritages situated on the "Historic Route" has the Lion's Share of the country's tourist attractions. Three of the seven world heritage sites of Ethiopia (the Medieval castles of Gonder, the Simien Mountains National Park and the Rock Hewn Churches of Lalibela i.e. one of the eight wonders of the world) are housed here. The thunderous Blue Nile Falls, Ethiopia's largest lake, Lake Tana dotted with island monasteries, the endemic wild lives like Walia Ibex, Gelada Baboon, Simien Fox etc still adorn this gracious region.

The climate of the region that is mainly controlled by altitudinal factors rather than latitude generally falls under two broad categories; that is, the sunny season which prevails October through May and the rainy (wet) season runs from June to September. The mean annual temperature and rainfall of the region vary between 70c - 300c and 400 - 2000mm.

In this guidebook, only three top tourist destinations of the region are presented in birds-eye-view; namely, Bahir Dar, Gonder and Lalibela. The focus is on natural and man-made heritage sites, tourist facilities, entertainments and infrastructure that the tourists require during their stay in these towns and their environs.

1. Bahir Dar

Bahir Dar, the nature favoured town, sharing the shore of the Ethiopian giant inland water body, Lake Tana, is glooming. The African largest river, Blue Nile emerging from this lake and sweeping along, the lined tall palm trees and jacarandas along the main streets and the papyrus reed boats having been sailing since the Egyptian pyramid age on the lake are that ever adorn this Ethiopian highland town. That is why it has become a major destination and gate off for both domestic and international tourists.

Bahir Dar is also a convenient jump off for the Ethiopian famous 'Historic Route' passing through Gonder, Lalibela and Axum. Consequently, Bahir Dar has been launching economically, socially and politically. And now it is the capital of the Amhara National Regional State.

- The town's
- ❖ Year of foundation: in 1930.
 - ❖ Distance - from Addis Ababa -Via Debre Marcos, 565 kilometres. -Via Mota, 485 kilometres.
 - from Gonder, 180 kilometres and
 - from Axum, 540 Kilometres
 - ❖ Altitude: 1790 metres above sea level
 - ❖ Average Temperature: 18.30c which is the most favourable weather condition throughout the year.
 - ❖ Language: It is Amharic that is the official language of the Country, comprehensively spoken though

other Ethiopian languages are communicated. But the medium of instruction in secondary schools and in Universities is English.

- ❖ Religions: Major religions are Christianity (Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido) and Islam; though with less number of followers other Christian descendants are also found.
- ❖ Public transportation: Smart, new, clad, international airport Very suitable road from the capital and other towns
- ❖ University: Bahir Dar University embracing the two campuses has grown up to this status and opened different faculties including the Engineering Faculty (Tel. (251) 058-220 02 77) , Education Faculty, and Business & Economics Faculty (Tel.(251) 058-220 01 43) among others.
- ❖ Communication: Postal, telephone, fax, and internet services connect Bahir Dar to all parts of the world.
- ❖ Medical Service: Felege Hiwot Hospital, is the public referral hospital, while GAMBY private hospital has soon become operational. A public health center, and other numerous private clinics and pharmacies are delivering services to patients.
- ❖ Power: 220 volt, for single phase customers 380 volt, for triple phase customers
- ❖ Water: Potable water is available.

1.1 Tourist Facilities and Infrastructures

1.1.1 Hotels (Tourist Standard)

Though not plenty enough when compared with the tourist flow in peak seasons, there are some standard and recommended hotels, pensions, restaurants and snakes.

Guests indeed enjoy much the luxurious accommodations, the cheap and delicious dishes, and the most hospitable reception. Here is the list of hotels with their services and entertainments.

Tana Hotel

It is a three star hotel situated on the shore of Lake Tana and occupies a large area with superimposed trees. This best hotel offers open-air services in its beautiful garden.

- ❖ Tel (251) 058 - 220 05 54
- ❖ Fax (251) 058 - 220 20 42
- ❖ P.O.Box - 78
- ❖ Number of rooms: 60 (56 twin beds and 4 suites)
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: for single occupant, \$ 37.50 for couple occupants, \$ 50 suites, \$ 75
- ❖ Restaurant: there are ala-cart and fixed menus including both national and foreign dishes that can satisfactorily deserve any guest.
- ❖ Bar service: both local and imported beverages

Other Services

- Secretarial service

- Internet service
- Fax service
- Telephone service in every room
- Satellite TV in the bar and in the lobby
- Laundry
- Small swimming pool
- Parking lot
- Beautiful garden
- Conference hall (for 100 participants)
- Camping site
- Tour operator
- Souvenir shop

Dib Anbesa Hotel

This is the other sumptuous hotel, located between two squares. It is built and furnished with beautiful woodcarvings. The ceilings and the different columns are trimmed with colourful traditional paintings that do have historical and artistic values.

- ❖ Tel (251) 058 - 220 14 36
- ❖ Fax (251) 058 - 220 18 18
- ❖ P.O.Box - 982
- ❖ Number of rooms: 60
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: single, Birr 130 double, Birr 165 twin, Birr 185 suites, Birr 230

- ❖ Restaurant: there are both ala-cart and fixed menus with delicious domestic and foreign dishes with a very reasonable price.
- ❖ Bar: both local and imported beverages

Other Services

- Secretarial service
- Telephone service in half of the rooms
- Satellite TV in the bar and in the restaurant
- Parking lot
- Express laundry
- Small garden
- Beauty saloon
- Tailor
- Air port -hotel transfer service
- Tour operator
- Souvenir shop
- Conference hall

Ghion Hotel

The one star hotel, Ghion like Tana Hotel is lodged on the immediate shore of Lake Tana. Its spacious precinct of natural vegetation sheltering different types of birds makes the open-air services more marvelous.

- ❖ Tel (251) 058 - 220 01 11

- ❖ Fax (251) 058 - 220 03 03
- ❖ E-mail; ghionbd@ethionet.et
- ❖ P.O.Box - 5
- ❖ Number of rooms: 30(all double)
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: \$ 19 for single occupant and \$ 25 for couples.
- ❖ Restaurant: There are both ala -cart and fixed menus including both foreign and national dishes.
- ❖ Bar: both local and imported beverages.

Other Services

- Fax service
- Telephone service
- Satellite TV in the bar
- Laundry
- Beautiful garden
- Camping site
- Conference hall (maximum for 80 participants)
- Air port -hotel transfer service
- Tour operator
- Souvenir shop

Ethio- Star Hotel

This is a recently built hotel destined on the main street neighboring Summerland & Dib Anbesa Hotels.

- ❖ Tel. (251) 058 - 220 20 26
- ❖ P.O.Box - 831
- ❖ "ethiostar>ethiostar2@.com<
- ❖ Numbers of rooms: 27 (5 twins and 22 double)
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: double, Eth. Birr 100 twin,
Eth. Birr 110
- ❖ Restaurant: Serves both foreign and national dishes.
- ❖ Bar: both local and imported beverages
- ❖ Pastry

Other Services

- Telephone service available in every room.
- Satellite TV in the restaurant and bar lot.
- Parking lot,
- Beauty saloon,
- Conference hall (with a capacity of up to 100 participants),
- Terrace bar service,
- Souvenir shop,
- Pool service.

Papyrus Hotel

It is a lately built hotel and may boast to be famous in the town.

- ❖ Tel (251) 058 - 220 51 00

- ❖ Fax (251) 058 - 220 50 47
- ❖ P.O.Box - 222
- ❖ Number of rooms: 100(48 single, 10 twin, 30 double, 10 superior double and 2 Suite)
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: single, Eth. Birr 214.80 double, Eth. Birr 268.45 twin, Eth Birr 268.45 superior double, Eth Birr 322.15 suite, Eth. Birr 536.90
- ❖ Restaurant: national and foreign dishes
- ❖ Bar: cozy and snack bars

Other Services

- Telephone in all the rooms
- Fax service
- Secretarial service
- Fully furnished rooms
- Laundry
- Swimming pool
- Sauna bath
- Two Conference halls (for 200 participants & 60 participants)
- Air port-hotel transfer service
- Souvenir shop
- Internet service

Summer Land Hotel

This is a recently built hotel destined on the main street neighboring both Dib Anbesa and Ethio Star Hotels, anchored between them.

- ❖ Tel (251) 058 - 220 65 66
- ❖ Fax (251) 058 - 222 09 89
- ❖ E-mail: gogobahardar@.com
- ❖ Numbers of rooms: 40 (18 single, 12 twins and 10 double)
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: double, Eth. Birr 362.50 twin, Eth. Birr 375 single, Eth.Birr 237.50
- ❖ Restaurant: both foreign and national dishes
- ❖ Bar: both local and imported beverages

Other Services

- Telephone , TV & cold and hot bath service in every room
- Satellite TV in the restaurant and bar
- Parking lot
- Two Conference halls (for 150 participants & 40 for participants)
- Terrace bar service
- Night club
- Souvenir shop
- Internet Service

1.1.2 Other recommended hotels, restaurants and pensions

No	Name	Telephone
1	Girum Gaint Hotel	(251) 058-220 08 32
2	Gojjam Hotel	(251) 058-220 01 57
3	Hadas Hotel	(251) 058-220 03 09
4	Axum Hotel	(251) 058-220 06 23
5	Tekle Hotel	(251) 058- 20 08 80
6	Enkutatash Restaurant No1 and No2	(251) 058-220 01 78/058-220 44 35
7	Tana Pastry and Restaurant	(2581) 058-220 13 02
8	Espano Lito Restaurant	(251) 058-220 51 56
9	Amanuel Restaurant No1 and No2	(251) 058-220 51 56
10	Blue Nile Spring Pension	(251) 058-220 00 38
11	Betel Pension	(251) 058-220 14 88
12	Zembaba Pension	(251) 058-220 16 88

Pastries

- ❖ Paradise Cafe
- ❖ Melat Cafe
- ❖ Central Cafe
- ❖ Mugera Café

1.1.3 Tourist Information Centre

Located in front of Ghion Hotel, Tel (251) 058-220 16 86

1.1.4 Tour Operators

These days, there are a growing number of tour operators along with the increasing flow of both domestic and international tourists. Guests can easily meet their demand of transportation to have a visit to any attraction site and elsewhere.

Name of the tour operator	Tel	Location	Types of vehicles	Carrying capacity
N T O /National Tour Organization/	0582 20 05 37	Tana Hotel	Mitsubishi Toyota	10 travelers 24 Travelers
Bahir Dar Tour and Travel Agency	0582 20 01 75	Mekonnen Gebeyehu Building	Mitsubishi Coach bus	8 travelers 19 travelers
Dib Anbesa Hotel Tour Operator	0582 20 14 36	Dib Anbesa Hotel	Mini bus Coach bus	12 travelers 20 Travelers
Ghion Tour service	0582 20 01 11	Ghion Hotel	Minibus	12 travelers
Galaxy Express Services	0582 20 14 74	Tana Hotel	Minibus	12 traveler

Note: It is only NTO that has a fixed price rate; that is, \$24 for Tis Abay and \$ 8 for city tour per head. For others, the price rate depends upon the number of the passengers. So, group tour is more economical.

There are a good number of boats that set at ease the demands of tourists to sojourn the alien dots of Lake Tana.

Name of the tour operator	Tel	Location	Types of vehicles	Carrying capacity
Pacific Boat Tour	(251) 058 220 05 37	Tana Hotel	Narga Entons	16 passengers 7 passengers
Shum Abo Tana Monasteries Travel Agency	(251) 058-220 15 34	Shum Abo Park	Heaven, Hamere Tsidik	8 passengers 15 passengers
Moon Light Boat Tour	(251) 058-220 50 81	In front of Kebele 10	Moon Light Kibran Gebral	8 passengers 12 passengers
Ghion Boat Tour	(251) 058-220 07 40	Ghion Hotel	Alpha Mahitem Tana	10 passengers 15 passengers 15 passengers
Tana Haiq Number One Boat Tour Agency	(251) 058-220 10 75	Behind St. Mikael Church	Mariye	16 passengers
Tana Haiq Transport Enterprise	(251) 058-220 00 06	In front of Dashen Bank	Yekatit Dahilak Fasiledes Tana Nesh	40 passengers 40 passengers 50-60 passengers More than 400 passengers

1.1.5 Public Transport Services

Ethiopian Air Lines, Ticket Office, Tel (251) 058-220 00 20 Road Transport, Tel (251) 058-220 05 07

1.1.6 Banking Services

These days with its overall economic advancement, Bahir Dar is getting progressed in Banking Services.

Name of the Bank	Tel	Types of services offered	Service Hour
<i>Commercial Bank- main branch</i>	(251) 058 - 220 04 96	Exchanging foreign currency Buying travel cheques Remittance through Western Union	Monday-Friday 8am-12am, 1pm-4pm Saturday 8am-12am
<i>Commercial Bank- Gishe Abay Branch</i>	(251) 058 - 220 54 17	Exchanging foreign currency Buying travel cheques Remittance through Western Union	Monday-Friday 8am-12am, 1pm-4pm Saturday 8am-12am
<i>Wegagen Bank Buying travel cheques</i>	(251) 058 - 220 20 38	Exchanging foreign currency	Monday-Saturday 8am-5pm with out break
<i>Abyssinia Bank Buying travel cheques</i>	(251) 058 - 220 13 14	Exchanging foreign currency	Monday-Friday 8am-12am, 1pm-5pm Saturday 8am-12am
<i>Dashen Bank</i>	(251) 058 - 220 17 17 Fax (251) 058 - 220 15 73	Exchanging foreign currency Buying travel cheques Western Union Money Transfer	Monday-Friday 8am-12am, 1pm-5pm Saturday 8am-12am
<i>Awash International Bank</i>	(251) 058 - 220 06 71	Exchanging foreign currency Money Gram	Monday-Friday 8am-12am, 1pm-5pm Saturday 8am-12am

1.1.7 Internet Services

- Corporate Computer Center Pvt. Ltd co.
Tel. (251) 058-220 17 67
E-mail: 3c@ethionet.et
- Professionals United Together Computer Center Pvt. Ltd Co.
Tel. (251) 058-220 44 91
E-mail: Put@ethionet.et - Head Office, in center of the town.
E-mail: puttana@yahoo.com - Tana Hotel
- Memory Computer Translation and Copy Center
Tel. (251) 058-220 20 10
E-mail: puttanca@ethionet.et
- Universe Computer Center
Tel. (251) 058-220 45 43
E-mail: ucc@ethionet.et

1.1.8 Police Stations

- Bahir Dar special zone police office, Tel (251) 058-220 09 38
- Station 1, Tel (251) 058-220 00 05
- Station 2, Tel (251) 058-220 14 01
- Station 3, Tel (251) 058-220 10 98
- Station 4, Tel (251) 058-220 65 02
- Station 5, Tel (251) 058-220 65 01

1.1.9 Super Markets

To camp for a couple of nights or hours at the attraction sites, the tourist has to have some packed foods and bottled drinks. So groceries and supermarkets are needed. Hence, York Mini Market Tel (251)058-220 41 01 located behind the newly built grand mosque and Shark Super Market Tel (251) 058-220 45 54 situated adjacent to Hadas Hotel can meet the demands satisfactorily.

1.2 Sight Seeing

As Bahir Dar is the tourist destination for its many alluring sites, a tourist becomes too busy with visiting these sites both in the town and its environs.

1.2.1 City Tour

The Pero Paes Edifice

The still erecting two storeys building at the enclosure of Saint George Church testifies that Bahir Dar was and still is the most inspiring place for the foreigners. The building which is said to have been founded by the Spanish Jesuit Pero Paes in the reign of Susneyos /1606-1632/ does not seem centuries old monument. Any destruction has not undergone over it. Architecturally, it has direct similarity with the palaces of Gonder.

Traditional Church School

Following the advent of Christianity in to Ethiopia in the 4th century AD, religious education has been spread widely. Children have begun to attend the church school. The institution that became the



Pero Paes Edifice, 17th Century

dominant center of education consequently has acted today as a guardian and a preserver of the traditional Ethiopian culture.

In the heydays of the institution; that is, when the church had a dominant power over the state, the school used to have dual purposes; that is to say, teaching children to serve the church and the government in clerical works. However, in the early 20th c with the introduction of the modern

school, its importance in the governmental affairs declined after having contributed much for the development of modern education.

The contents of the curriculum this traditional church school are organized logically and can be put under five stages. To complete the lessons of each stage, certain years are required. The range of school years at every stage may vary depending upon the learner's intelligence.

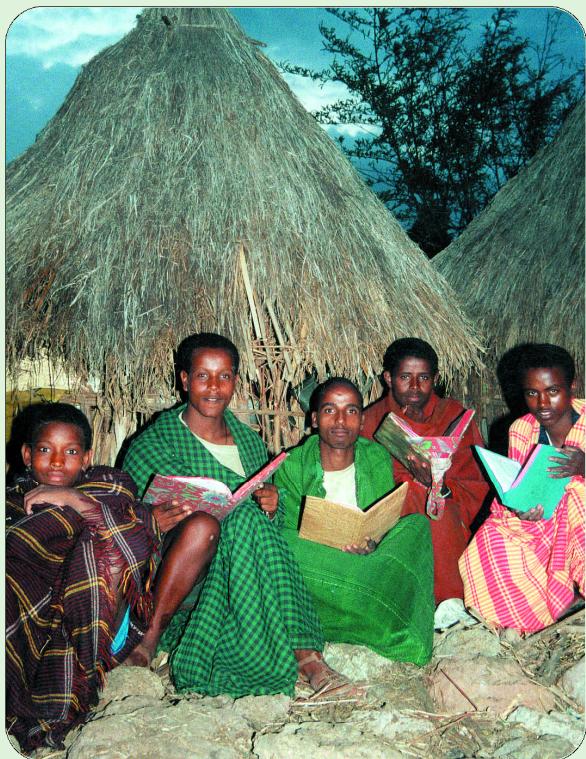
The first stage is 'Nibab Bet' which is intended to teach the child to read religious books. After he becomes able to read, the child gets

promotion to the second stage- 'Zema Bet' which includes teaching ritual singing, dancing and drumming. What comes next is 'kidase Bet' or 'Akuakuam' where altar priests are trained. The fourth one is 'Quene Bet' in which poetry is taught. The last stage where astronomy and the interpretation of the Old and New Testaments along with other sacred books are taught is 'Metsihaf Bet'. One who is interested to complete learning of these stages all courses requires at least thirty-five years.

Each course is offered by differently specialized church scholars best known as ***Merigetas***. One Merigeta may be specialized with one or two of the courses. The graduates of the institutions are Deacons, Priests, Merigetas, Bishops and Ark Bishops.

The medium of instruction in all levels of the courses is Geeze language. In times when

the church had a prominent power in the government, Geeze was the Lingua Francua of Ethiopia. Because of this, almost all the religious



Traditional School-at Bahir Dar Kidane Mihiret Church

books today are found written in Geeze, which still remains dominant to be the church language.

As the chief objective of the school is to produce dedicated religious leaders, the school life is full of devotion. The student lives "migrated" away from his parents in a small hut built around the church or the Merigeta's house. He gets his sustenance by begging piece of injera (a special kind of bread baked out of Teff) and corn from the near by laity. Moreover, he moves from place to place in search of the Merigetas accorded with the course he is going to attend.

The students are locally called ***Yekolo Temari*** (student feeding fried corn) for they usually eat fried corn. Most of the churches in the region have such schools. In Bahir Dar, Kidane Mihret church school can be a glimpse about church school life.

Open -Air Market

On Saturdays, for a tourist reaching Bahir Dar, the open-air market is the other enthralling site. What makes a stranger inspired are the stalled cereals and vegetables, cultural souvenirs, and the bargaining style of the local people.

The very attractive 'Agelgil'_round lunch-box basket covered with naturally colourful animal skin is produced in Bahir Dar. But it is found adorning every Ethiopians and a Bahir Dar destined tourist's house. Not only the agelgil, the intricately made wood, leather, and horn products and so much more can also be obtained by a tourist for they have practical as well as artistic and cultural values.

Above all, the 'shema'_the white cotton national dress and the



Agelgil-a special kind of basket /lunch box/ in open air market

colourful scarves are the other not-to-be missed souvenirs. Any Ethiopian or a foreigner look pretty enough having dressed in them.

Bezawit Hill Top and the Emperors' Palace

Five kilometres east of the town, the split-level Bezawit palace of the former Ethiopian Emperor Haile Sillassie perches alone upon a hilltop with elegant views over the Nile River and Lake Tana. This most spectacular scenery, Bezawit palace was used only twice by the Emperor when he would stay an overnight on his periodic tour



Agelgil-a special kind of basket /lunch box/ in open air market

of the provinces. The virginally kept enclosure of this palace is still charismatic as if there were the Emperor.

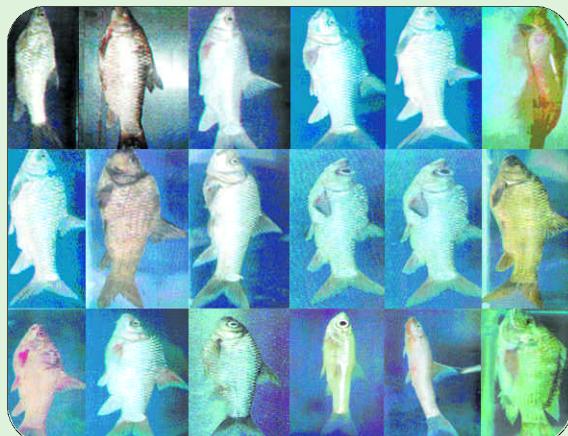
In this thrilling site, tourists delight in watching birds, taking a look at the panoramic view of the Blue Nile River emerging from Lake Tana, and the stretched waterscape _ Lake Tana.

Luckily, especially in the evening, a tourist may oversee hippopotamus from the foothill of Bezawit in to the deep water of the Blue Nile River. The palace is reached by gentle walking, riding bicycle or by hiring vehicles.

1.2.2 Lake Tana

The Ethiopian jumbo heart-shaped inland water body, Lake Tana, is one of the famous superbly panoramic water escape where tourists sense an atmosphere of timeless wonder. Lake Tana with the total area of 3600 square kilometers, stretching 75 kilometres North-South, 60 kilometres East-West, lying at about 1830 metres above sea level and having 14 metres maximum depth is rich in bird and fish life.

Little is known and studied about the lake's fauna and flora. It invites many researchers to



Some of the endemic barbs fish species

Source;
"Lake Tana
Fishery Resources &
Sustainable Development"
Eshetu Dejen,Dr., 1998Ec,
Bahir Dar

discover its immense and untouched natural resources. In the past few years, though not complete enough, recent studies have singled out some 26 species of fish out of which 17 are endemic species to Lake Tana, at large to Ethiopia.

These endemic fish species constitute 14 large barbs, one small barb and two gara species. These noteworthy Lake Tana large barbs species are varied because of the morphologically distinct forms they exhibit.

Some of these large barbs reach a body length of 85cm and a weight of 12kg. Of the commercial catch in the southern shore of Lake Tana, the large barbs comprise 35%.

1.2.3 Island and Peninsular Monasteries

It is the 37 islands that make Lake Tana the most breathtaking site. These islands shelter some 21 monasteries surviving remnants of a very old meditative tradition. Most of the monasteries with some exceptions which dated back even to the 14th century AD were established in the medieval period by the monks locally referred as The Seven Stars. The dedicated monastic spiritual life of the monks



papyrus reed boats plying over Lake Tana

in these monasteries is an alien world for the visitor.

The monasteries also house myriads of treasures, beautiful mural paintings, icons, parchment manuscripts, scrolls and emperors assets. They have been used as safekeeping places for the religious relics and art treasures during the times of trouble. In the trouble periods, these valuable treasures were transferred to these monasteries from all corners of the country. Even the Ark of the Covenant was once kept temporarily in one of the monasteries_Daga Estifanos. Consequently, these monasteries have served as museums for the Ethiopian church arts and emperors assets.

These monasteries are reached by motorboats. But, tankwas_papyrus reed boats of ancient design that add extra beauty for Lake Tana are the main forms of transport for the local people and for the monks. They have been used since the Egyptian pyramid age. These reed boats are manufactured on the shores of Lake Tana from papyrus tree.

Despite the fact that every island monastery deserves a visit, the most commonly visiting ones, taking Bahir Dar as springboard are the following.

Kibran Gabriel (about 9 kilometres)

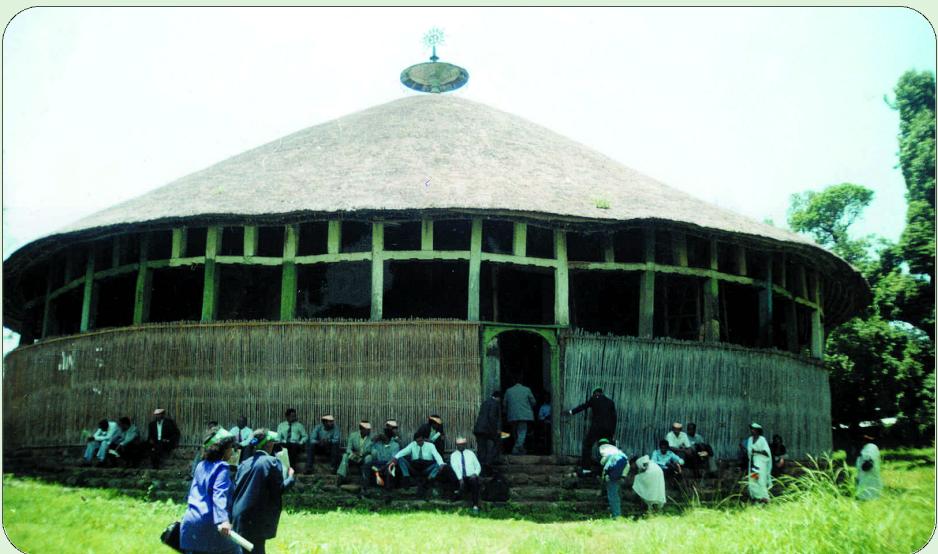
Kibran Gabriel founded in the 14th century and rebuilt during the reign of Emperor Iyasu /1682-1706/ is the closest monastery to Bahir Dar. The museum of this monastery, which was built during the construction of the Gonderine palaces displays collections of priceless treasures. Because of religious reasons, this monastery is not indulged for ladies to enter.



*Kibran Gabriel Island Monastery, Lake Tana /14th Century/
Zegie Peninsula (about 12 kilometres)*

Wura Kidane Mihiret

The peninsular monastery of Zegie, Wura Kidane Mihiret permitting



Wura Kidane Mihiret peninsula Monastery, Lake Tana

women to enter is the other plebeian adduction of Lake Tana. The church's design is similar to that of kibran Gebriel. As noted by many visitors, Wura has a more decorated building with colourful frescoes depicting scene from biblical lore and the history of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church. The frescoes dating back to the early 17th century are incredible to have been painted by human being. Besides, in the enclosure like the other monasteries, there is a museum having priceless treasures such as illuminated manuscripts of more than 1040 years old, crowns, dresses of Empresses and so on.

In this peninsula, along with Wura Kidanemihiret monastery, Mehal Zegie Giyorgis, Abune Betre Mariam and Azwa Mariam monasteries are also worthy of visiting. The grass roofed and elegantly built monastery, Azwa Mariam is renowned for its remarkable frescoes as Wura. Where as Mehal zegie Giyorgis and Abune Betre Mariam monasteries jointly possess a splendid museum having collections of crowns, crosses, vestments, illuminating manuscripts and others. As Ura, these monasteries let ladies enter.

Daga Estifanos (about 40 kilometre)

Daga is the other principal magnetism and most visited monastery though it is far from Bahir Dar. As that of Kibran, it is closed to women. This monastery is erected on a steepy hilltop and needs to climb up walking through a winding path.

The treasure house found here is different from other monasteries in that it hosts piles of brightly coloured ceremonial cloaks and mummified coffins containing remains of the former Ethiopian Emperors; that is, Emperor Dawit /Late 14thc/, Emperor Zere Yakob



Daga Estifanos Island Monastery, 13th Century

(15th c), Emperor Suseniyos (early 17th c) and Emperor Fasiledes(17th c).

Tana Kirkos (about 50 kilometre)

Projecting on the eastern shore of Lake Tana and on a remarkably beautiful setting, Tana kirkos monastery had been used as one of the four places of ancient Judaic worship where sacrificial stones are still found. It is in this monastery that the Ark of the Covenant had been kept for 800 years before it was taken to Axum (the ancient Ethiopian capital) in the 4th century AD.

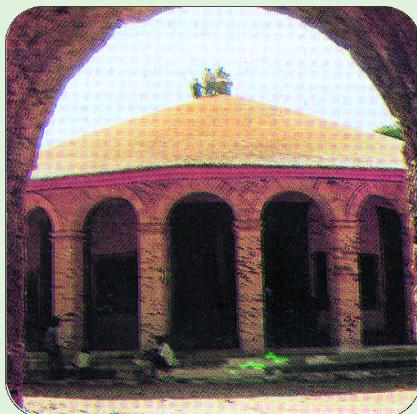


Judaic Sacrificial stone - Tana Kirkos Monastery

The founder of the Ethiopian church music, St. Yared has written his first book of song called Degua at this monastery. The museum of the monastery has collections of several valuable and unique treasures, which inspire visitors. It is closed to ladies.

Narga Silassie (about 37 kilometres)

Located on the shore of Deq islands, particularly at a small woody semi-island, Narga Silassie monastery is quite different from other



***Narga Silassie Island Monastery
18th Century***



A painting in one of the parchment manuscripts of Narga Silassie 18th Century

Tana monasteries architecturally; that is, it is similar to the palaces of Gonder. Narga Silassie was unusually built by Empress Mintiwab (1730-1755) with domes and turrets of the three gates. It is open for ladies.

Precautions (to visit the monasteries)

- Entrance fee is 20 Birr per head in every monastery.
- Encamping is not allowed without the permission of West

Gojjam Culture, Tourism and Information Department. This is for the safety of the relics.

- The visiting hour of the monasteries is 7Am- 5Pm.
- Smoking cigarettes or pipes in church courtyards and getting in to the churches without taking off hats, caps and shoes is ABSOLUTELY PROHIBITED. It is BIASPHEMOUS.
- Intending to buy manuscripts, hand and processional crosses, books and scrolls is forbidden though the temptation of few untrustworthy local people for sale is manifested.

The Blue Nile Falls

Blue Nile, the Grand River in Africa is one of the natural wonders of Ethiopia especially for its breathtaking falls. The Blue Nile Falls near



The Thunderous Blue Nile Falls (tis Isat)

Tis Abay town, 35 Kilometres South East of Bahir Dar has been drawing the attention of tourists from different corners of the world. That is why thousands of visitors are seen streaming to this most spectacular scene.

The Blue Nile Falls locally known as "Tis Isat" or "Smoke of Fire" that the water stretched on 400 metres wide surface and plunging dramatically 45 metres deep creates drizzly plethora that in turn produces brilliant rainbows across the gorges of the river. The misty deluges drive the onlookers up to a kilometres away. The curtains of the spray enthral any visitor and will not ever vanish from memory. Specially, a morning visit rewards tourists with the astounding rainbows.

Environ of these falls is endowed with marvelous landscapes, natural forests and multicoloured birds.

On the way to Tis Abay Falls, Andasa Mineral Water is found in a small island formed by the Blue Nile River. Furthermore, to the West of Tis Abay Town, some 7 kilometres off the road in the extended escarpment of Yagume ridge, surrounded by stunning natural scenery, there is an impressive rock hewn church called Dengay Debelo which is said to have been hewed by St. Lalibela before his coronation.

To reach the falls, there are two alternative ways. One is the route through 1.5kilometres road Eastern out skirt of the town to the parking lot, which lies on the edge of the Blue Nile gorge. Then after walking for about 20 minutes crossing the 17thc footbridge locally called Alata Bridge that had a historical value built by Portuguese, a

crescent shaped gorge appears with a thunderous noise; that is, the Blue Nile Falls.

The other alternative is the route through the North East of the main road where the local people cross the river with papyrus reed boats. For the guests, motorboats are hired to cross the waters. After plying across the waters, a 30-40 minutes walking along the bank of the river is required to reach the bottom of the falls. But using the former route



Alata Bridge

gives chance to visit the historic footbridge, the spectacular sceneries, and also it provides a chance to watch birds in the forest and in the gorge. Or else both ways can be used, one to go to falls and the other to turn back from the falls.

Note: There is Tourist Information Centre in the town where you pay an entrance fee.

Entrance fee: Eth. Birr 15 for adults and Birr 5 for a student

For video filming: Eth. Birr 100.

Wanzaye - The curative hot spring

How nature is generous, wonderful, merciful, mysterious and beautiful is witnessed at Wanzaye, a highland spa and hot spring. The en route attraction located 49kilometres from Bahir Dar East of the main road to Gonder before reaching Wereta town, having dressed in greenish vegetations, Sheltering numerous and beautiful birds in its compound, Wanzaye is really a place most breathtaking. Having got situated encircled with superintendent standing hills and the big river Gumara, Wanzaye becomes still brilliant and extra ordinary.

The holy hot spring of wanzaye is available in the form of shower in different rooms having different temperature /38oc, 40oc and 42oc /.



Wanzaye, Hot Spring Hotel

Many domestic tourists especially desperate patients flock to Wanzaye and in turn Wanzaye's holy hot spring dries the tears of such patients. Here lies the mercy of nature. Washing and drinking with the holy hot spring treat certain diseases like scabies, skin infections, intestinal parasites, rheumatism and others.

Visitors moreover, enjoy much watching the colourful birds and the leaping apes, and observing the riverside evergreen natural vegetations and the beautiful garden.

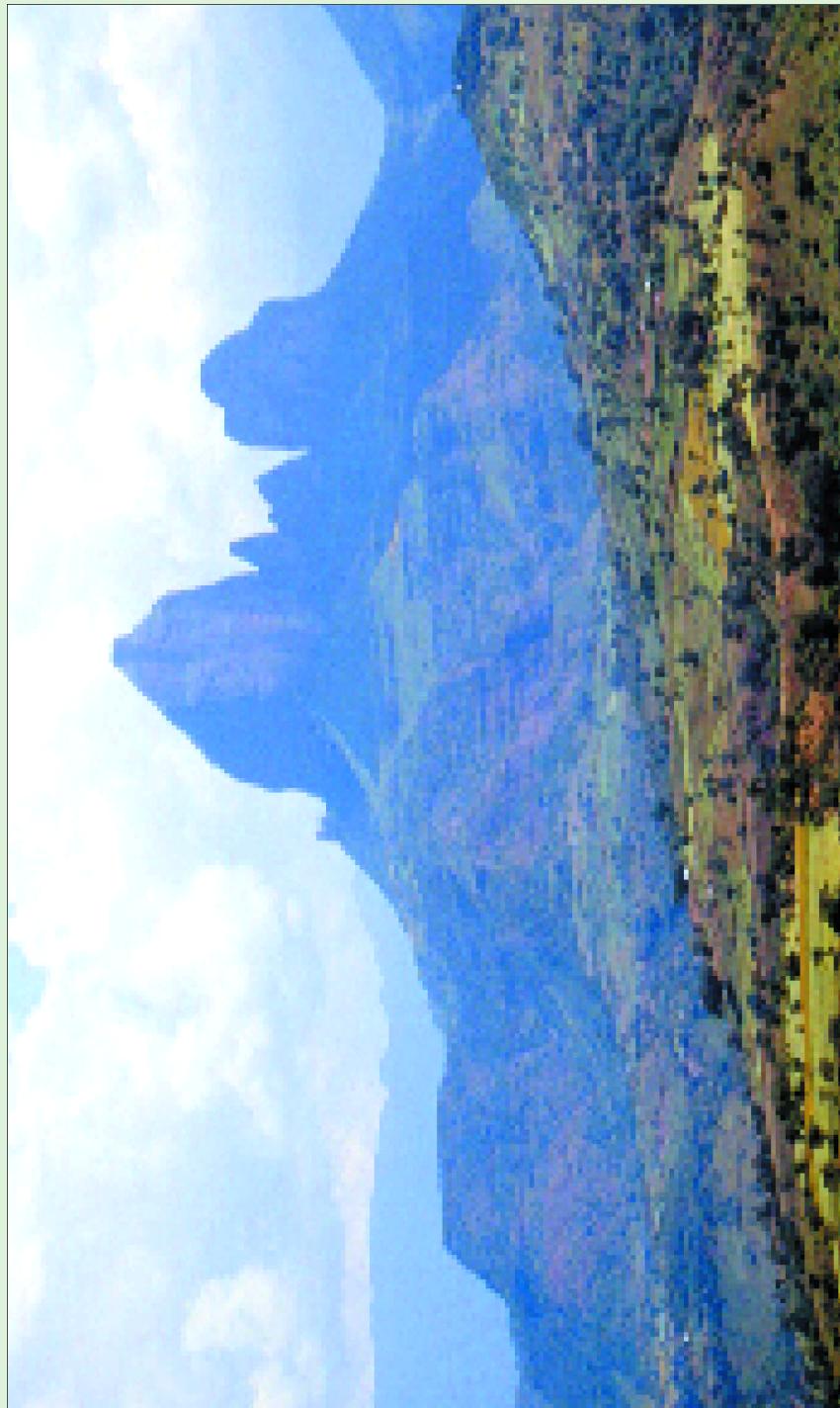
A guest does not need to worry where to stay, Wanzaye Hot Spring Hotel is handy and welcomes any tourist. There are bar and restaurant services that can meet the needs of the tourist. The bedrooms (10 twin and ten double) the camping sites are ready to accommodate their guests. The beautiful compound and the satellite TV are also entertaining the tourist.



A Colony of Red Foxes



View of some of the Castles along with Gonder Town from one of the 12 gates of the Royal Compound



Ras Dashen, the highest peak in Ethiopia (Simien Mountain National Park)

2. Gonder

The glorious, historical and graceful city, Gonder that has been called the 'African Camelot', is known for its astonishing castles of the medieval emperors. This land of monuments founded during the reign of Emperor Fasiledes /Fasil/ in the 17th century was the principal city of Ethiopia for about 250 years. Lying at an altitude of 2300 metre, skirted by two mountains, Gonder has spectacular views over the beautiful landscapes of the fertile agricultural land and the gleaming waters of Lake Tana, 60 kilometers to the southwest.

The renowned castles of Gonder have got the status of world heritage site. It is because of these monuments that Gonder has become one of the destinations of the famous 'Historic Route'. Great many tourists of the world flock regularly to Gonder to praise and enjoy these old age Ethiopian heritage and religious ceremonies.

- The town's
- ❖ Year of foundation : 1632EC
 - ❖ Distance from - Addis Ababa, 750 kilometre
 - Bahir Dar, 180 kilometre
 - Axum, 360kilometre
 - ❖ Average Temperature: 19.70c
 - ❖ Visiting season: Through out the year, even though January is the best time to enjoy the colourful celebrations of Epiphany.
 - ❖ Language: Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia

- ❖ Religion: Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Christianity is the prominent one
- ❖ Transportation: Modern, international airport and all weather roads are used.
- ❖ Colleges: Gonder Medical Science College and Gonder Teachers College
- ❖ Communication: Postal, telephone, fax, telex, and Internet services connect Gonder to all parts of the world.
- ❖ Medical Service: a referal hospital (Gonder Medical Science College Hospital), a health centre, private clinics and pharmacies
- ❖ Power: 220 volt, for single phase customers 380 volt, for triple phase customers
- ❖ Water: Potable water

2.1 Tourist Facilities and Infrastructures

2.1.1 Hotels (*Tourist Standard*)

When compared with the tourist flow, the number of standard hotels at Gonder is not enough. Some of the good hotels including the three stars Goha Hotel are given below.

Goha Hotel

Perching on the peak, Goha Hotel has a commanding view over the city

- ❖ Tel (251) 058-111 06 34
- ❖ Fax (251) 058-111 19 20
- ❖ P.O. Box. 182
- ❖ Number of rooms: 60(2 single, & 58 double)
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: single, \$ 30 double, \$ 40
- ❖ Restaurant: mainly foreign dishes and with special request national dishes
- ❖ Bar: both imported and exported beverages

Other Services

- Fax service
- Telephone service in 40 of the rooms
- Satellite TV in the lobby
- Laundry
- Parking lot
- Garden
- Conference hall (for 50 participants)

Circle Hotel

This hotel is newly built and stands five stories high. The top of its terrace offers special views to the whole town especially the royal enclosure and even to the distant waterscape of Lake Tana.

- ❖ Tel (251) 058-111 19 91
- ❖ Number of rooms: 26

- ❖ Price rate of the rooms: single, Eth. Birr 80 double,
Eth. Birr 100
- ❖ Restaurant: mainly, national dish
- ❖ Bar: both imported and local beverages
- ❖ Satellite TV in every room

Fogera Hotel

This is an impressive hotel especially for its attractive bedrooms in 'Gojjos' -traditional grass roofed houses.❖ Tel. (251) 058-111 04 05

- ❖ P.O.Box. 136
- ❖ Number of rooms: 11 /twins/
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: single, Eth. Birr 172.50
double, Eth. Birr 215.80
- ❖ Restaurant: national and foreign dishes
- ❖ Bar: both local and imported beverages.

Quara Hotel

- ❖ Tel (251) 058-111 00 40
- ❖ Fax (251) 058-111 19 20
- ❖ P.O.Box. 182
- ❖ Number of rooms: 15
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: single, Eth Birr 50
double, Eth Birr 60
- ❖ Restaurant: mainly foreign dish
- ❖ Bar: both local and imported beverages

Terara Hotel

It has a large compound with a beautiful garden and parking lot.

- ❖ Tel (251) 058-111 01 53
- ❖ P.O.Box. 108
- ❖ Number of rooms: 31C16 single, & 15 double)
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: single, Eth Birr 56
double, Eth Birr 75 - 112
- ❖ Restaurant: national and foreign dishes
- ❖ Bar: both imported and exported beverages.

2.1.2 Other Recommended Hotels, Pensions and Restaurants

Ethiopia Hotel

- ❖ Tel (251) 058-111 02 03
- ❖ P.O.Box. 163
- ❖ Number of rooms: 20(11 single, & 9 double)
- ❖ Price range: single, Eth Birr 25, double, Eth Birr 35
- ❖ Restaurant: mainly national dish
- ❖ Bar: both local and imported beverages

Misrak Pension

- ❖ Tel (251) 058-111 00 69
- ❖ Number of rooms: 14
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: Eth Birr 60-70

Belegez Pension

- ❖ Tel (251) 058-111 43 56
- ❖ Fax (251) 058-111 43 57
- ❖ P.O.Box. 881
- ❖ Number of rooms: 14
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: Eth. Birr 50-60

This pension is very beautiful and has telephone, Fax and television services.

Restaurants

- ❖ Mini Fogera Restaurant (in front of Fogera Hotel)
 - Tel. (251) 058-111 03 91
- ❖ Ras Restaurant
 - Tel. (251) 058-111 01 83

In Ras Restaurant, besides the delicious dishes, the dinning room is adorned with cultural collections. Here, dinner ceremony has special scene that you are feeding with candlelight, which creates a special impression.

2.1.3 Tourist Information Centre

Located adjacent to Terara Hotel, and established to entertain any queries forwarded by tourists, this public office is always open except for holidays; in working hours its Tel. No. is (251) 058-111 00 22.

2.1.4 Tour Operators

Though there are certain tour operators working in the town, it is only NTO and Galaxy Express Services that do enjoy their own offices.

Name of the tour operator	Tel	Location	Types of vehicles	Carrying capacity
NTO	(251) 058-111 03 74	On the main street to Goha Hotel	Mitsubishi Coaster bus	9 Passengers 22 passengers
Galaxy Express Service	(251) 058-111 15 46	Goha Hotel	Mini bus	12 passengers

2.1.5 Public Transportation Service

Ethiopian Airlines, Ticket office, Tel (251) 058-111 01 29

Road Transport, Ticket office, Tel (251) 058-111 03 83

2.1.6 Banking Services

Name of the Bank	Tel	Types of services offered	Service Hour
Commercial Bank of Eth.	(251) 058-111 15 52	Exchanging foreign currency Buying travel cheques Western Union Money Transfer	Monday- Friday 8am-12am, 1pm-4pm Saturday 8am-12am
Dashen Bank	(251) 058-111 43 43 Fax : (251) 058-111 43 44	Exchanging foreign currency Buying travel cheques Western Union Money Transfer	Monday- Friday 8am-12am, 1pm- 5pm Saturday 8am-12am

Name of the Bank	Tel	Types of services offered	Service Hour
Awash International Bank	(251) 058-111 48 68	Exchanging foreign currency Buying travel cheques	Monday- Friday 8am-12am, 1pm- 5pm Saturday 8am-12am
United Bank	(251) 058-111 46 30 Fax : (251) 058-111 13 71	Exchanging foreign currency Buying travel cheques	Monday - Saturday 8am-4: 30 pm with out break

2.1.7 Internet services

- PC Techno Information Technology Center
Fax (251) 058-111 43 70
E-mail: Pctechno@Yahoo.com
- Azania General Computer Service
Tel. (251) 058-111 16 53 /0581 11 47 74/
Email: t-mail-AzanaYnadm@yahoo.com

2.1.8 Police stations

Gonder zone police office, Tel 0581 11 03 97
 Station 1, Tel (251) 058-111 01 96
 Station 2, Tel (251) 058-111 01 97
 Station 3, Tel (251) 058-111 03 73

2.1.9 Super market

Super markets, specially for tourists that intend to visit the Simien Mountains National Park are indispensable. Mostly, food items need

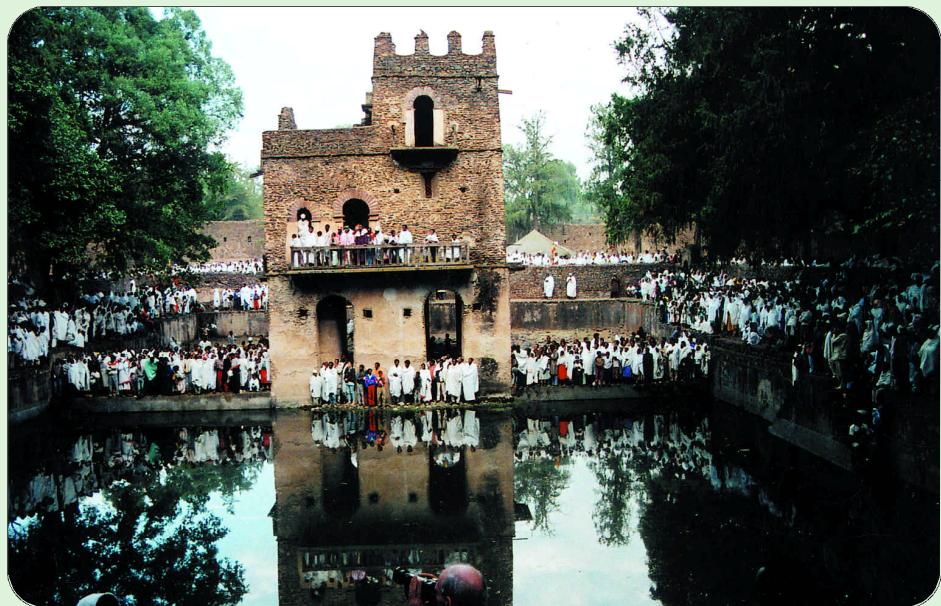
to be purchased here. Ras Dejen Super Market at Piazza is a well-known shop for its good supplies of both plant and animal food products.

2.2 Sight seeing

2.2.1 Medieval Castles of Gonder

The Royal Enclosure

Stretched in the area of 76,000m² in the heart of the town and containing six castles plugging in complex tunnels and raised walkways, the Royal Enclosure is the authentic beauty of Gonder. The oldest and the most impressive one is the Castle of Emperor Fasil standing two storeys high that was constructed around 1640. It is made of roughly hewn basalt stones and has a crenellated parapet and four domed towers.



Epiphany Ceremony at Emperor Fasil Bath, 17th Century

Emperor Fasil Bath

Emperor Fasil, due to his keen interest in architecture, along with the seven churches and a number of bridges, has built a three storey stone pavilion positioned next to a large sunken bathing place-even



Emperor Fasil's Palace and Museum (right to left/ in the Royal Compound, a World Heritage Site /17th Century/

today it is filled with water from the near by Keha river during the "Timket" or Epiphany ceremony. It is about 2 kilometre from the centre of the town along the Gonder-Bahir Dar road. Epiphany ceremony at this



Empress Mintwab Banquet Hall, 18th Century

bath, which great many tourists used to attend enthusiastically, is the most colourful celebration.

Kuskuam Complex

Perched on the hills, northwest of the town about 3 Kilometre, there is a royal compound known as Kuskuam. It was built in the second half of the 18th century by Empress Mintiwab. The enclosure, though not well preserved as the royal one has a series of buildings including a three-storey castle and ruined palaces.

Mikael Sehule Palace

Situated outside the Royal Enclosure, Mikael Sehule's palace is also an important site worthy of visiting.

2.2.2 Debre Birhan Silassie

The original church, which was not destroyed by the Mahadist war



Debre Birhan Silassie Church, 17th Century

when the Dervish of Sudan attacked Gonder in the end of the 19th century, is Debre Birhan Silassie-'Trinity at the mount of light.' This is one of the most beautiful churches in Ethiopia. Debre Birhan is renowned for its magnificent ceiling, amusingly decorated with a marvelous painting of the winged heads of the 80 Ethiopian Cherubic Faces- all have slightly different expressions.

Drawn by the same artist, Haile Meskel, the walls are also adorned with frescoes that manifest briefly the Ethiopian Saints, martyrs and biblical lore. East of this church, there is a traditional church school with magnificent collection of small Gojjos/huts. It deserves a visit too.



Painting adorning the ceiling of Debre Birhan Silassie Church, the Ethiopian Cherubic Face

Entrance fee

- ❖ *For the Royal Enclosure, a charge of Eth. Birr 50/ head and Eth. Birr 75 for a Video camera is normal. The ticket is valid*

for only one time and it can also serve to visit the Fasil Bath.

- ❖ *For Debre Birhan Silassie, you will be charged Eth. Birr 15 / head.*

2.2.3 Open Air Market

It is obvious that in Ethiopian towns, Saturday is a market day. Tourists find the open-air market of Gonder very impressive and strange because of the different crafts.

Women are even observed in the market while they are making intricately the different baskets and adorning them with red coloured animal skins.

2.2.4 Welleka-Felasha Village

The former 'Bete Israels' or the Ethiopian Jews' or Felashas' village situated about 3 kilometres north of the town is the other popular visiting place especially for the magnificent souvenirs, pottery and the Jews temple, which has no laity now a day.

For not accepting Christianity, the 'Bete Israels' were confiscated their land. Consequently, their economy get shifted to pottery, blacksmithing and wavering. Despite the

mass evacuation of the Felashas to Israel in 1991, the craft of making pots has been adopted by the residents of that village (non-Felashas).

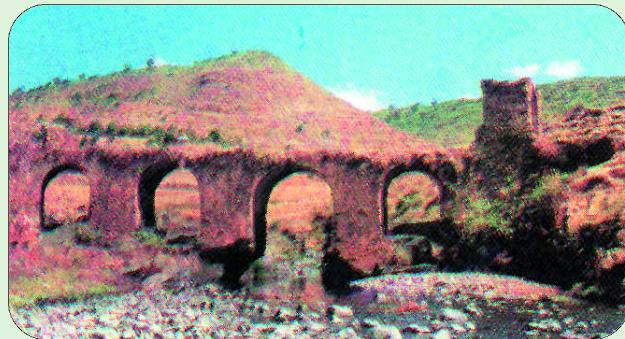


Candle Stick Made of Clay, Welleka

There are machine products of pots besides the intricate hand made red and black pots that are not to be missed by any visitor.

2.2.5 Angereb Bridge

Located about 5 kilometres Southeast of the town, having built on the Angereb River in the early 17th century by Emperor Fasil with the still existing four arches, Angerb Foot Bridge is an impressive relic of the period.



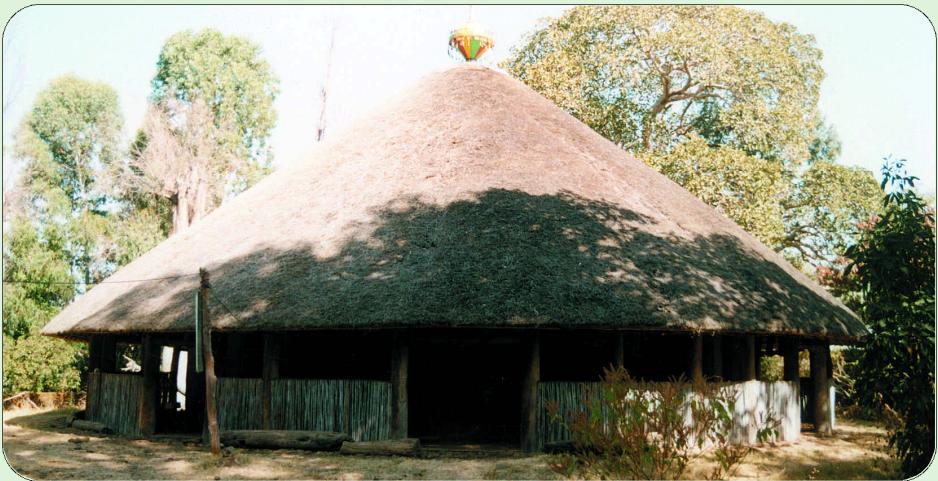
Angereb Bridge, 17th Century

2.2.6 Kossoye Hill

Kossoye ensconced on the lofty hill, north of Gonder town about 30 kilometres along the road to Axum is a wonderful magnetic site. The tower of Kossoye offers views to any direction to the maximum, even to a section of the North Western border of the country. Because of its astounding scenery, Queen Elizabeth of England and the former Ethiopian Emperor Haile Silassie once camped here. Topographically, it is similar to the Simen Mountains National Park.

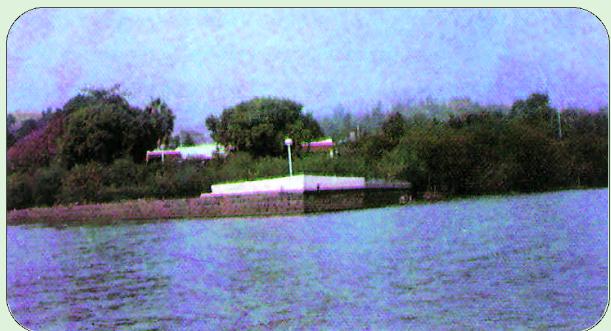
2.2.7 Gorgora Port

Situated at 64 kilometres from Gonder and about 95 kilometres from Bahir Dar, on the northern shore of Lake Tana, Gorgora is a town of affinity; that is, the most rewarding site especially for birdwatchers. This is one of the many medieval towns of Ethiopia that served as a



Debre Sina Mariam Church, Gorgora, 14th Century

temporary capital. The most inspiring visiting site is the nearby ancient round Church Debre Sina Maryam, built in 1334, which is remarkably adorned with the very



Gorgora Port

old frescoes. It is also possible to visit ruins of Susneyos palace, the island churches and monasteries such as Birgida Mariam and Man Inde Aba Medihane Alem and the likes.

Gorgora can be reached either by minibus from Gonder or from Bahir Dar by speedy ferries. To stay at Gorgora, there is Gorgora Hotel, which is run by the maritime Authority.

Gorgora Hotel

❖ Tel - 7

- ❖ Number of rooms: 13 (4 single, 7 double and 2 suites)
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: single, Eth. Birr 110
double, Eth. Birr 150, suites, Eth. Birr 220
- ❖ Restaurant: both national and foreign dishes
- ❖ Bar: both local and imported beverages

Other Services

- Satellite TV
- Beautiful garden
- Ground tennis court
- Parking lot

2.2.8 The Simien Mountains National Park /SMNP/

The marvelous landscape of all Abyssinian lands, the SMNP is one of the Ethiopian World Heritage Sites. What make this park unique are its scenic beauty and rich biodiversity. Its altitude ranges 1900 metres to 4620 metres (Ras Dejen) the highest peak in Ethiopia and the fourth African summit.



Trekking in the Simien Mountains National Park

The scenic splendors of the Rocky Mountains and the ragged chain of escarpments, the massifs, the deep gorges are some of the

breathtaking views of the park.

Owing to the extended elevation, varied fauna and flora are sheltered among which many are endemic species. Walia Ibex-even endemic to the park, Gelada Baboon, Simien Fox and Minilik Bush Duck are endemic mammals. Golden Backed Wood some of the endemic bird species to be worth mentioned.



Walia Ibex



Gelada Baboon



Red Fox (Simien Fox)

where every arrangement is made. For instance, arranging visiting programmes, assigning guides, scouts, mules and muleteers are done here by the park office.

Debarq is a small town 101 kilometres north of Gonder and is reached by the regular running buses from Gonder or by the tour operators' vehicles.

There are about two hotels that can deserve tourists well, Simien Park Hotel and Simien Hotel.

Simien Park Walyia Hotel

- ❖ Tel 0581 17 04 06

Price rate of the rooms: single, Eth Birr 25, twin, Eth Birr 45

- ❖ Restaurant: both national and foreign dishes
- ❖ Bar: both local and imported beverages

Other Services

- Telephone service
- Satellite TV
- Cooking and camping equipments to be rented
- Souvenir shop

Red Fox Hotel

- ❖ Tel 0581 17 04 36
- ❖ Number of rooms: 12
- ❖ Price rate of the rooms: Eth Birr 15
- ❖ Restaurant: manly national dish
- ❖ Bar: both local and imported beverages

Other services

- Good compound
- Satellite TV

After arranging your accommodation, you need to go to the park office. It is open for 12 hours to serve tourists. It is here you pay for the ticket and make certain arrangements for trekking.

Different charges are set as follows :

Entrance fee

Types of visitors	Age category	Visiting hours	Fee (Eth. Birr)
Foreign resident	Adult	48hrs	30
	Child	48hrs	10
Foreign	Adult	48hrs	50
	Child	48hrs	25

Campsite use

Types of visitors	Age category	Visiting hours	Fee (Eth. Birr)
Foreign resident	Adult	48hrs	10
	Child	48hrs	5
Foreign	Adult	48hrs	20
	Child	48hrs	5

Campsite use

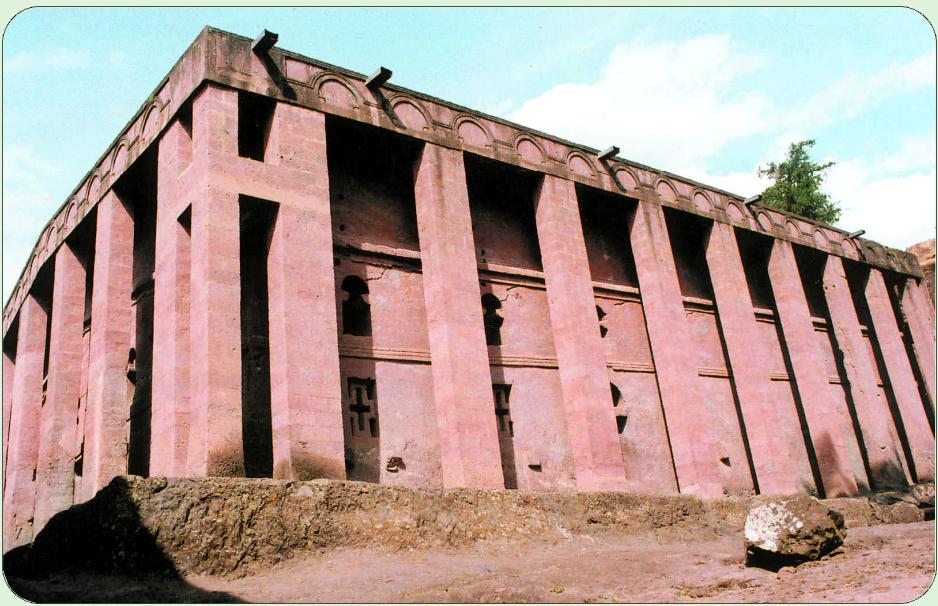
Carrying capacity of the vehicle	Visiting hours	Fee (Eth. Birr)
Vehicle with £ 5 Seats	48hrs	10
Vehicle with 6-12 seats	48hrs	15
Vehicle with > 12 seats	48hrs	20

Other charges (to any visitor)

- ❖ Scout allowance per a day, 30 Eth. Birr
- ❖ Pack animals per a day, 20 Eth. Birr
- ❖ Muleteer allowance per a day, 20 Eth. Birr
- ❖ Cooker allowance per a day, 50 Eth. Birr

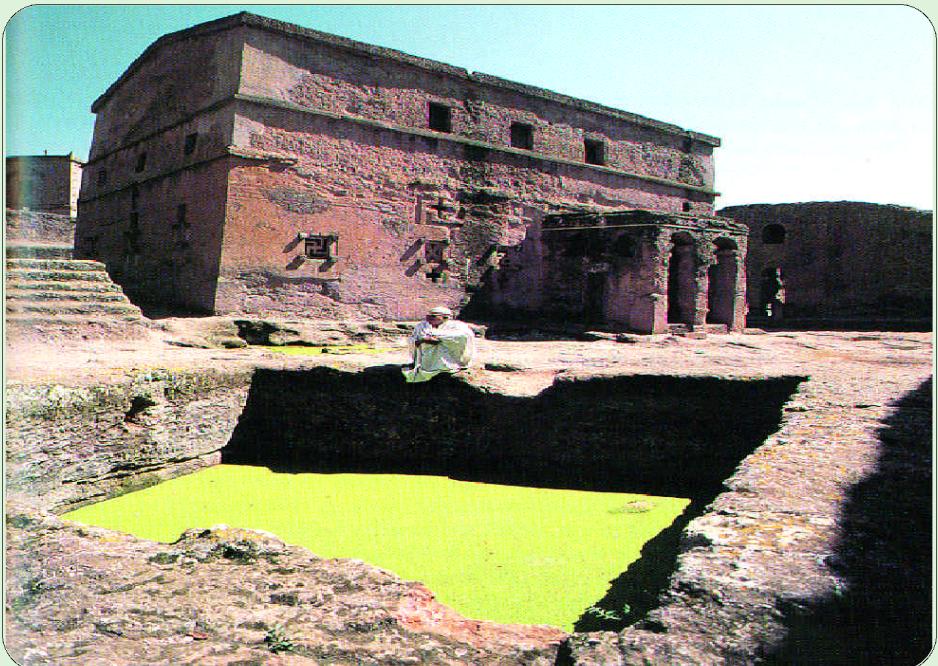
Note:

- *Receipts or payments for entrance fee, camping and vehicle tariff fees if not used, cannot be refunded.*
- *There are two well-equipped lodges at Sanka Ber Campsite.*
- *Their price range: for a foreign resident, Eth. Birr 35 per day for a foreigner, Eth. Birr 40 per day*
- *Tourists that intend to visit the Simien Mountains National Park need to exchange hard currency at Gonder town, as there is no bank at Debarq.*

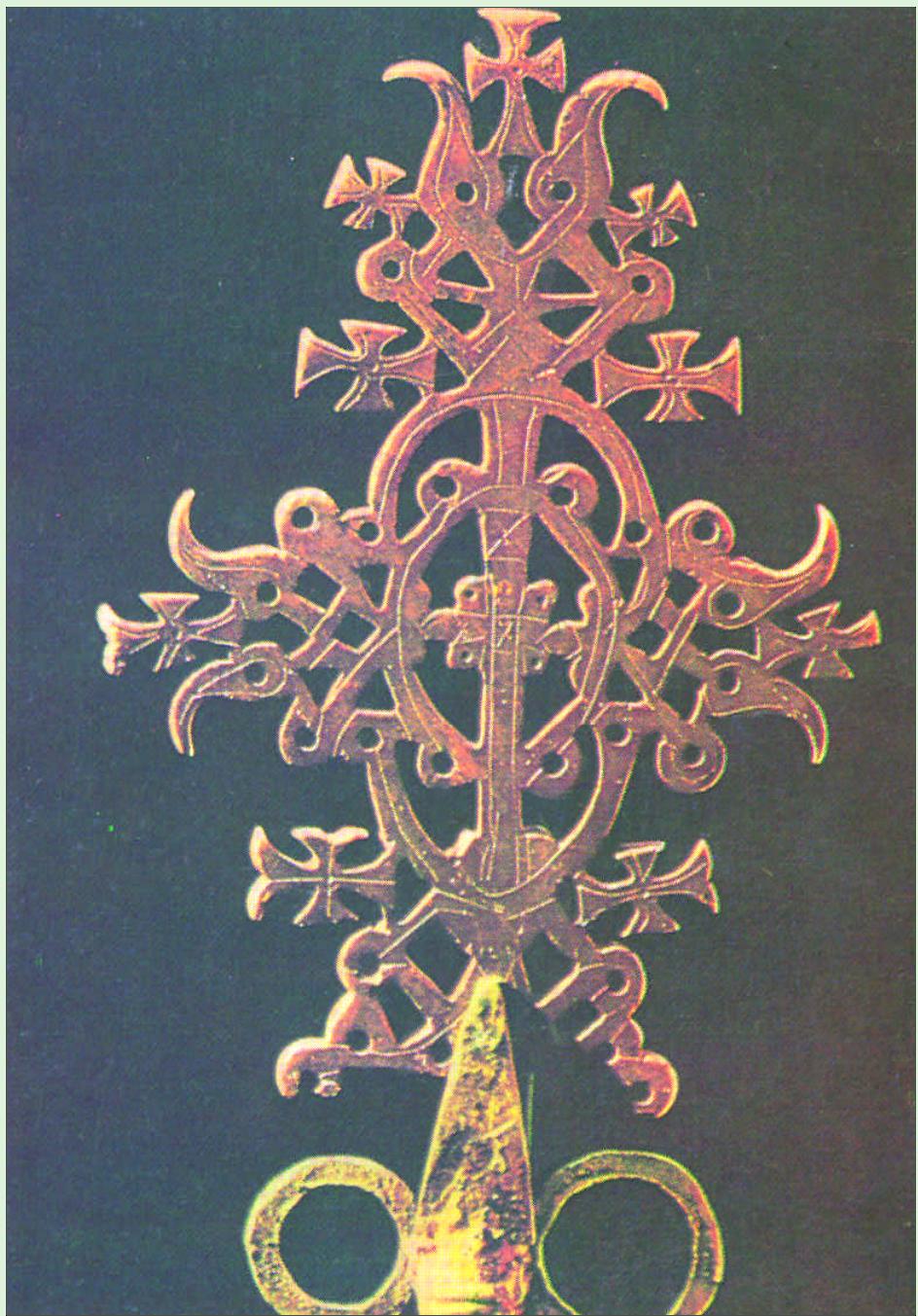


Bete Mariam / House of Mary/- a one storey monolithic church

Bete Medihane Alem, the largest of all the Lalibela Rock hewn churches



Amongst the 11 rock hewn churches in Lalibela.



A processional cross at Bete Gebriel, one of the 11 Rock hewn churches of Lalibela

3. Lalibela

Installing isolated from other sister towns, perching on a commanding view and surrounded by chains of mountains, Lalibela, the former Roha seems wise in possessing the UNESCO's World Heritage Site and the magnificent Rock Hewn Churches. The holy land, Lalibela was a capital of Ethiopia in the 12th Century. It was in her heydays that Lalibela has got built these wonderful rock hewn churches that are not found elsewhere in the world.

During Christmas & Epiphany, this town is adorned with her innumerable guests gathered from different corners of the world.

- The town's
- ❖ Year of foundation: 523EC
 - ❖ Distance from- Addis Abeba - Via Woldiya, 642kilometre - Mekele, 279 kilometre - Bahir Dar, 316 kilometre
 - ❖ Altitude: Between 2500-2800m above sea level
 - ❖ Language: Amharic
 - ❖ Religion: Orthodox Tewahido Christianity is the predominant one
 - ❖ Transport: Modern, international airport and suitable road
 - ❖ Communication: Postal and telephone services
 - ❖ Power: 220 volt, for single phase customers

380 volt, for triple phase customers

- ❖ Water: Potable water
- ❖ Medical Service: One hospital

Lalibela can be reached either by air on Ethiopian Airlines except in rain season or by road throughout the year from the capital and other different towns. In the rainy season, due to foggy climatic condition the regular flight might seldom be interrupted.

3.1 Tourist Facilities and Infrastructures

3.1.1 Hotels (Tourist Standard)

In the peak seasons, especially during Christmas & Epiphany the hotels and restaurants are usually appear to be crowded. But the existing hotels and restaurants are in good position to meet the needs of their guests.

Roha Hotel

The three star hotel situated on the south west of the town, Roha is the most conspicuous and luxurious hotel.

- ❖ Tel (251) 033-336 00 09
- ❖ Fax (251) 033-336 01 56
- ❖ Number of rooms: 63 (1 suit, 57 twins and 6 single)
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: single, \$37.50 twin, \$50
- ❖ Restaurant: foreign and national dishes

- ❖ Bar: both imported and local beverages

Other services

- Fax service
- Telephone service- in the reception room
- Satellite TV- in the lobby
- Laundry
- Parking lot
- Garden
- Campsite
- Souvenir shop

Note: *In the town and on the way to Roha Hotel, there are many souvenir shops so that a tourist can buy whatever he wants.*

Lal Hotel

This is the other luxurious hotel located south west of the town on the way to the Roha Hotel.

- ❖ Tel (251) 033-336 00 08
- ❖ P.O.Box 58
- ❖ Number of rooms: 65 (16 single, 49 double)
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: single, \$21.6 double, \$30
- ❖ Restaurant: foreign and national dishes

- ❖ Bar: both local and imported beverages

Other Services

- Telephone service- in reception room
- Satellite TV- in bar and restaurant
- Manual laundry
- Parking lot
- Garden
- Campsite
- Tour operator
- Souvenir shop

Seven Olives Hotel

This hotel is situated in the centre of the town as opposed to the other hotels and has a commanding position, which is on a hillside.

It is an impressive hotel specially for its traditional grass roofed bar and the beautiful flowery garden under which an open-air bar service is nicely carried out.

- ❖ Tel (251) 033-336 00 20
- ❖ Fax (251) 033-336 01 56
- ❖ Number of rooms: 28 (26 twin, 2 single)
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: double, Eth.Br 237.88

single, Eth.Br 129.75

- ❖ Restaurant: foreign dish & with special order national dish
- ❖ Bar: both local and imported beverages

Asheten Hotel

- ❖ Tel (251) 033-336 00 30
- ❖ Number of rooms: 24 (18 twin & 6 single)
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: single, Eth.Br 40 double, Eth. Br 100
- ❖ Restaurant: With in advance order, both foreign and national dishes are available. This restaurant is nicely decorated with the traditional intricately hand-woven 'Mesobs'- dinning tables made of special grass, and colourful chair and table dresses.

Jerusalem Guest House

Sited on the southern outskirt of the town, Jerusalem Guest House is a luxurious and cultural depicting hotel.

- ❖ Tel (251) 033-336 00 47
- ❖ P.O.Box 49
- ❖ Number of rooms: 25 (20 twin & 5 single)
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: single , \$20 double, \$30

- NB**
- * A 30% discount is made during low seasons
 - * For NGO employees special discount is made though the guests are foreigners.
 - ❖ Restaurant: national and foreign dishes
 - ❖ Bar: both local and imported beverages

Other Services

- Telephone service
- Manual laundry
- Garden
- Campsite
- Cultural hall-where coffee ceremony and cultural shows are performed

The hotel has also a good souvenir shop so that guests can easily purchase whatever they want.

Blue Lal

- ❖ Tel. (251) 033-336 00 80
- ❖ Number of rooms1 0 (5 twin & 5 single)
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: single , Eth.Br 40/50 double, Eth.Br 60/70

Here guests enjoy much the cultural dinning tables and the delicious foods. From the foreign dishes, French dish is commonly prepared here.

Alefparadise

- ❖ Tel. (251) 033-336 00 23
- ❖ Number of rooms 1 0 (5 twin & 5 single)
- ❖ Price range of the rooms: single , Eth.Br 60
double, Eth.Br 80

3.1.2 Recommended Restaurants

Blue Nile Restaurant

- ❖ Tel. (251) 033-336 04 93

This is a newly opened restaurant with its interesting traditional seats and dinning tables. Along with the national dish, some foreign dishes are prepared.

Lalibela Restaurant

- ❖ Tel. (251) 033-336 00 37

This is a newly opened restaurant with its interesting traditional seats and dinning tables. Along with the national dish, some foreign dishes are prepared.

Unique Restaurant

- ❖ Tel. (251) 033-336 01 25

Ayinalem Lulseged Restaurant

- ❖ Tel. (251) 033-336 03 15

Roha Restaurant

- ❖ Tel. (251) 033-336 00 38

Note: In these restaurants and in some hotels, the guests have better order in advance the kind of dish they want to get prepared.

3.1.3 Tour Operators

Name of the tour operator	Tel	Location	Types of vehicles	Carrying capacity
NTO	(251) 033-336 04 10	Seven Olives Hotel	Toyota Land Cruiser Coaster	9 Passengers 30 Passengers
Lal Tour Operator	(251) 033-330 00 08	Lal Hotel	Land Cruiser Turbo	8 Passengers 18 Passengers

3.1.4 Public Transport

Ethiopian Airlines, ticket office, Tel 0333 36 00 46

3.1.5 Police Station

Station 1, Tel 0333 36 00 60

3.2 Sight seeing

3.2.1 World Wonder Rock hewn Churches of Lalibela

The perplexing **Rock Hewn Churches of Lalibela** and its vicinity inspire their guests. Great many tourists stream to Lalibela town to applaud the rock-hewn churches of King Lalibela dated back about 800years. What unique antiques that have been carved and still

erected for that many centuries! The impossible has become possible; the incredible has become credible here on the rock-hewn churches. How could man hew these unusually complicated and each architecturally unique church masterly with pristine tools without the advent of modern engineering techniques to Ethiopia! The construction of these churches is said to have been done by King Lalibela himself and it is said that he had finished the work in 24 years of time.

After paying a call on these churches, many visitors worry a lot to talk and to write on what they have visited. As a case in point to Alvarez, the first European to visit Lalibela in 1520 wrote, "***I swear by God, in his power I am, that all that is written is the trust and there is much more than I have already written, and I have left it that they may not tax me with its being falsehood,***" such a worry occurs because these types of churches are not found elsewhere in the world. For their amazing intricacy, even Ethiopians get overwhelmed at a great extent as the foreigners though there are more than 400 rock hewn churches built before and after Lalibela specially in the northern part of the country.

In the carving of the 11 rock hewn churches, as the Deeds of St. Lalibela and the taught of the church advocate, some supper natural force have helped him. Otherwise, who would manage the bulk of burdens to make the dream come true? There was no slave labor as the Egyptians pyramid construction. There were no such skilled crafts men. So, who did help him all that constructing activity? If we assume that foreigners might helped him, why did not they whittled for their own country and why rulers of other nations did not employ

these skilled crafts men for their country to have such wonderful monuments? Series of questions can be raised but their answers are not as such easy.

In the churches, every thing has biblical implications. What is found here in Lalibela symbolically is found there in the holy city, Jerusalem.

To visit the Lalibela Rock Hewn churches, they are grouped in to three basing the river called Jordan.

The first group north of Jordan River comprises six churches; Bete Medihane Alem, Bete Maryam, Bete Meskel, Bete Denagil, Bete Debre Sina and Bete Golgota. This group of churches symbolizes the Earthly Jerusalem.

Bete Medihane Alem (The House of the Redeemer of the World) is the largest church of all the Lalibela churches amazingly having 72 giant pillars. It is a freely standing monolithic church resting alone in its courtyard. Inside this church, among other interesting things to see, three striking empty graves symbolically dug for the three biblical



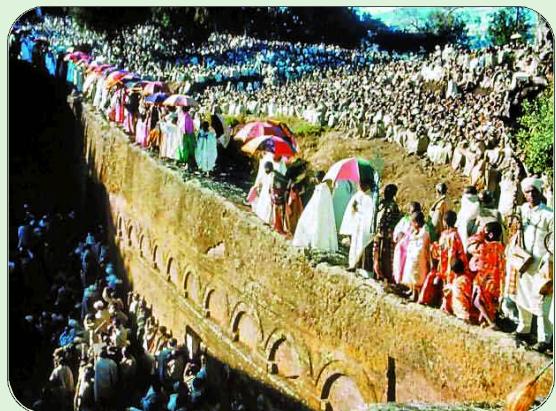
A Priest holding "Afro Ayigeba" cross, at Bete Medihane Alem Church.

patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are visited. Moreover, there is "Afro Ayigeba" the renowned cross for its healing power that is shown on Sundays and on some holidays. Recently, this cross has been stolen and sold out to foreigners and brought back to its original place by a tremendous combined effort of a great many people Ethiopians and foreigners alike.

In the churches, every thing has biblical implications. What is found here in Lalibela symbolically is found there in the holy city, Jerusalem.

Crossing the short tunnel south of Bete Medihane Alem comes Bete Mariam courtyard, which also comprises Bete Meskel and Bete Denagil.

Bete Mariam (The House of Mary) is the other freely erecting one storey monolithic church, which was built first. It is the most beloved church by the pilgrims. Even King Lalibela favoured this church in which he used to attend the daily masses.



Christmas -at Bete Mariam

The most colourful holiday celebrations like Christmas and Epiphany are carried out here even today. Here the visitors experience an atmosphere of serenity. In this courtyard, there is a pool, which is believed that washing in it can cure woman sterility.

What make Bete Mariam still more contemplative are its frescoes bearing biblical lore.

In the northern and Southern corners of this courtyard, Bete Meskel and Bete Denagil are posted which are not as large as the other Churches.

South west of the courtyard, after crossing the trench appear the most inscrutable complex of twin churches, Bete Debre Sina and

Bete Golgotha in which the Silassie (the Trinity) Chapel, the symbol of Tomb of Adam and even the grave of King Lalibela are sheltered.

Sheltered under the same roof with Bete Golgotha, Bete Debre Sina (The House of Mount Sinai) is the immediate chapel from the entrance. Saint Lalibela built this church to symbolize Mount Siena where Moses received the Ark of the Covenant.

Bete Golgota (The House of Golgotha) church is interchangeably called Bete Mikael. This is the most complex chapel where Golgotha, Bethlehem, and Keranio are built symbolically. From the tomb of



Bete Amanuel, the finest and most impressive church as to the art historians

Saint Lalibela inside this church, holysoil-'Imnet' is taken by which people get treated from certain diseases because of their adherent belief. On the wall of the church, there are relief sculptures of 7 apostles. Moreover, a decorated cross and a wooden praying stick of Saint Lalibela are shown.

The second group of churches symbolizing the heavenly Jerusalem, located East of Jordan River comprises east to West Bete Amanuel, Bete Merkorios, Bete Abba Libanos and Bete Gebriel-Rufael.

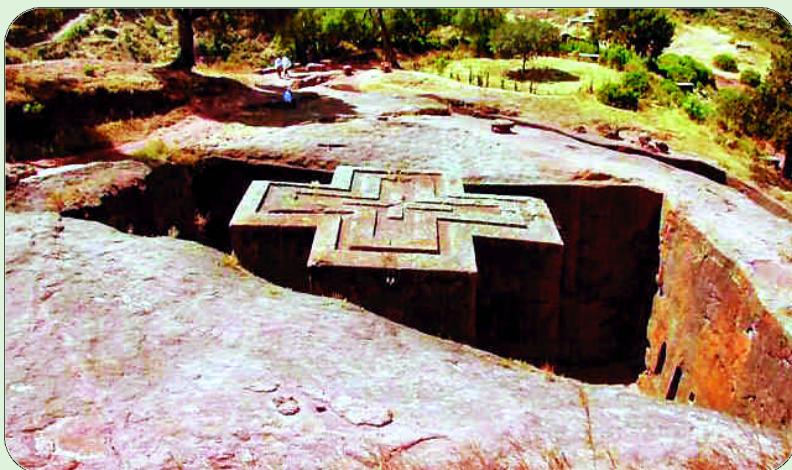
Bete Amanuel (The House of Emanuel) is architecturally most outstanding and freely erecting monolithic church. Even art historians appreciate more its architecture. It has an upper storey and most striking blind windows. The church is linked with the neighbouring one, Bete Merkorios with a dark, long subterranean tunnel.



Bete Abba Libanos

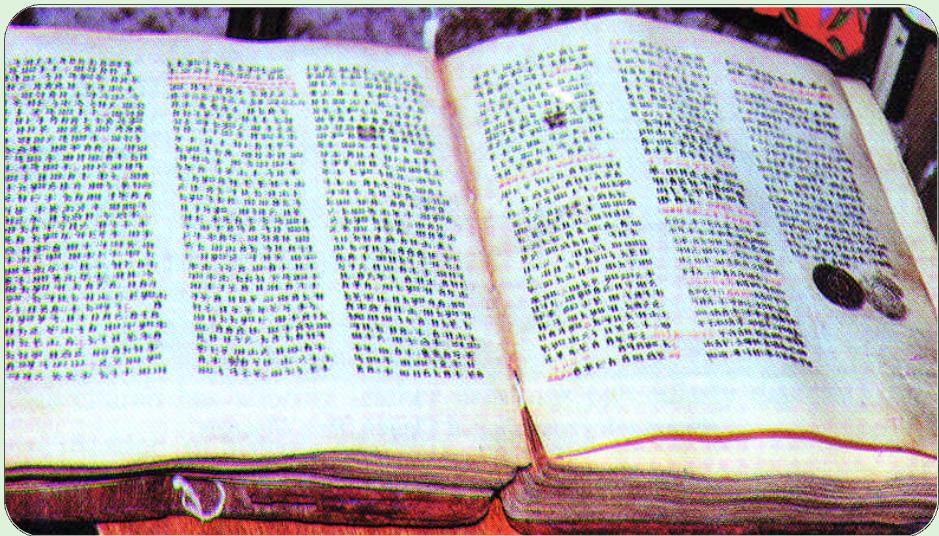
Bete Merkarios (The House of Merkarios) is dedicated to Saint Merkarios. The church has wooden bound parchment manuscripts, brass and gold crosses, and cotton fabric paintings that particularly portray the crucification of Christ.

Bete Abba Libanos (The House of Libannos), a church dedicated to the Ethiopian Saint Abba Libanos, constitutes the southern border of the second group of churches. The roof of this church is attached to the living rock.



A remarkable cross-shaped Church, Bete Giyorgis

Bete Gebral - Rufael (The House of Gabrael and Rufael) is architecturally complex and twin church like Bete Debre Sina and Bete Golgotha. It can be entered from two directions. The two chapels are sharing the same roof and entrance. In the immediate chapel, Bete Gebral, an impressive and a very big parchment manuscript having 332 pages and different crosses are displayed. It is this chapel usually open for visitors. What makes this church complex is that it has underground rooms.



The 332 page parchment manuscript, at Bete Gebrael

Constituting the third group and setting lonely, Bete Giyorgis is architecturally an elegant, sophisticated and most striking church. This freely standing monolithic church symbolizes Noah's ark. Owing to these sorts, Bete Giyorgis is getting the standard of national symbol.

The church is entered through a tunnel that again leads to a trench. In the courtyard, there is a holy water where it flows from is not easily demarcated. In the grave holes around the detached walls in the courtyard, there are mummies that are easily seen by visitors. Inside the church along with big parchment manuscripts and crosses, there is a large wooden box, which was unusually locked by wooden nuts in which saint Lalibela used to put the pristine carving tools. The presence of this box here signifies that Bete Giyorgis is the lastly built church.

To visit all these rock-hewn churches meaningfully, a couple of days are required.

Note: *The entrance fee to all of these churches is 100 Eth. Birr.*

3.2.2 Other Rockhewn and Cave Churches around Lalibela

In the vicinity of Lalibela, there are several rock-hewn and cave churches, which can be reached either by walking or riding mules. Following two are examples.

Asheten Mariam, alighting on the glamorous mountain, 4000m above sea level, is indeed the most captivating site, which offers a commanding view of Lalibela Town and its environs. King Ne Akuto Le Ab, the nephew and successor of king Lalibela, built this church. The church is partially detached from the living rock.



sensul at Asheten Mariam Church



Icons, Crowns and Drums, the biggest drum is brass and the other two are copper

This church has alluring leather paintings particularly depicting the crucification of Christ, elegantly decorated parchment manuscripts and crosses. This church is reached either by two hours gentle walking or by riding mule.

Stationed on the hill foot, **Ne Akuto Le Ab** is a marvelous cave church. The cave in which the church is positioned, by its nature is breathtaking. From the roof of this church, a curative holy water drips constantly throughout the year. This holy water is said to have a healing power to many ailments.

At the treasure house of Ne Akuto Le Ab, priests show visitors strange metallic drums, crowns and crosses.

The church is reached after driving 7 Kilometre on the road to the Airport and walking for 15 minutes to the east.

The other elegant cave and rock hewn churches around Lalibela are **Yimrihane Kirstos** (cave church), **Arbaitu Insisa, Bilbila Giyorgis, Bilbila Kirkos, Genete Maryam, Emkina Lideta Maryam, Emkina**

Medihane Alem and Kenkenit Mikael.

Note: The entrance fee of these churches is 20 Eth. Birr for each except Yimrihane Kirstos, that is 50 Eth. Birr.

The other sight seeing for the tourist in Lalibela town is the **open-air market** that is visited on Saturdays. In this marvelous open-air market the most attractive traditional dresses and sashes are not to be

missed souvenirs to be purchased. Besides, observing the bargaining system of the peasants is really enjoyable.



*A merchant with her intricately woven scarves and other traditional garments
at the open-air market of Lalibela town*



11 Churches of Lalibela

Information Centers which are found under ANRS Culture & Tourism Bureau

1. Bahir Dar Tourist Information Center

Tel.: 0582 - 20 16 86
Bahir Dar

2. Tis Abay Tourist Information Center

Tis Abay

3. Gonder Tourist Information Center

Tel.: 0581 - 11 00 22
Gonder

4. Lalibela Tourist Information Center

Tel.: 0333 - 36 01 67
Lalibela



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