

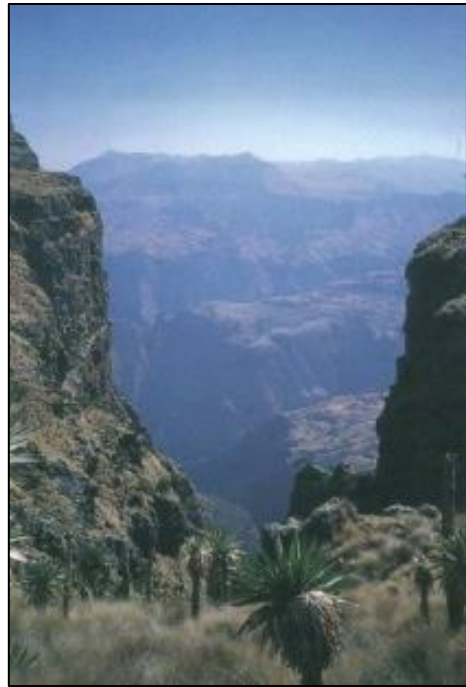
Simien Mountains Full Trek w/ Historic Route

Simien Mountains, Ras Dejen, Lamo, Gondar, Axum, Lalibela and Addis Ababa

Overview

The Simien Mountain massif is one of the major highlands of Africa. Its highest point, Ras Dejen (4,543m) – the fifth tallest peak on the African continent – is situated in the north-western corner of Ethiopia. Our itinerary will take you to its summit. This is a challenging but also rewarding climb, and forms part of a tough ridge route which will see you conquer two 4,000m+ peaks.

The Simiens are among the most scenic mountain ranges in all of Africa. The West Plateau, where we trek, is bounded on the north and east by a massive escarpment, many kilometres long and over 1,000m high in places, and cut along its length by steep gorges. It is stunning. The Simiens are also a major wildlife sanctuary for several endangered species, such as the Gelada Baboon, which gather in huge troops on the escarpment, and the Walia Ibex, which are much more difficult to find.



Before the trek you will fly to Gondar, which was once the capital of Ethiopia. Here you will have the chance to explore the castles of Gondar, powerful symbols of seventeenth century wealth in a country that is unfortunately now so poor. Following the trek there will be time to visit the ancient historic towns of Axum and Lalibela – perhaps the most interesting historic sites on the continent of Africa.

Please note the trekking component of this itinerary is intended to be tough, particularly if you encounter poor weather. You should be physically fit to trek the full Simiens route. We also offer an abbreviated Simiens trek.

Your Financial Protection

All monies paid by you for the air holiday package shown [or flights if appropriate] are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 3145.

For more information see our booking terms and conditions.

A former trading post on the caravan route between Gondar and Axum, Debarq (2,700m) serves as the gateway to the Simien Mountains National Park. You'll make a short stop here, enjoying an early lunch at a town hotel, before meeting with the muleteers who will accompany you on your trek. Once the provisions have been checked, and the mules loaded, you'll be ready to depart on foot into the mountains.

Leaving town, you follow an undulating path up and down spurs, across the Lamma Wenz (river), and through welcoming villages. You then round Aman Amba while keeping close to the edge of the escarpment – from where you can look down onto Adarmaz Camp in the valley below – before reaching your camp for the first night, Sankaber, at an altitude of 3,230m.

Total trekking time today will be approx. 4 hours.

Day 04 Sankaber to Geech

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Today will see you trek from Sankaber to Geech Camp (3,630m). Start by descending to the escarpment near the head of the Wazla Wenz, from where there is a dramatic view of the Jinbar Wenz waterfall cascading down into the Geech Abyss. From here, it is a steep trek up to Geech Village, where you camp for the night.

It's likely that you will begin to feel the effects of altitude today, so keep to a steady pace and drink lots of water to ensure you stay hydrated.

Overall altitude gain 400m. Trek time 7/8 hours.



Day 05 Geech to Chenek (3,600m) via Imet Gogo (3,926m)

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Today will see you take the periphery route – with its majestic and awe-inspiring views from the escarpment – via Imet Gogo to Chenek. The day starts with an easy trek across the gently rising plateau to the famous viewpoint at Imet Gogo (3,926m). Here you may be lucky to see the rare Walia Ibex on the crags far below, so do approach Imet Gogo quietly. From Imet Gogo, continue south-east via Inatyte to Chenek along mostly level terrain.

Today's walk is a gentle hike with relatively little altitude gain. Trek time 7/8 hours.

Day 06 Chenek to Ambiko (3,600m)

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A long but interesting walk from Chenek (3,600m) to Ambiko (3,100m), with optional climb to Bwahit summit.

Today's walk will see you explore a region of the Simiens noted for its wildlife – with Walia Ibex and Gelada baboon both present in the area, along with several endemic birds. (Unfortunately, the Simien Wolf has disappeared from this area, and other species are continually being pushed away from their usual habitat). This is a sensitive area, and so vehicle support will be reserved for emergencies.

There will also be the option today of trekking to the summit of the Simiens' second highest peak, Bwahit (4,430m), before descending steeply towards the village of Chiro Liba, where we usually lunch. From Chiro Liba, you continue the descent to the Mesheha River Valley (2,850m) and up the other side to Ambiko camp at 3,100m. Note that the Bwahit climb is optional, and so if you prefer to reserve your energy for tomorrow's summit attempt, you can instead trek direct to Ambiko via Chiro Liba, taking today at a more leisurely pace.



Camp at Ambiko at low altitude of 3,100m. Trek time approx 9/10 hours.

Day 07 Ras Dejen Summit (4,543m) and back to Ambiko

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The toughest day of your journey, today will see you ascend to the summit of Ras Dejen, the tallest peak in the Simiens. Waking early, you begin by trekking to the head of the Mesheha Valley and the village of Mizma, where you will get your first view of your imposing goal. To reach it you will contour round a number of steep gullies, ascending all the time, until you find yourself on a rocky plateau, which is dominated by the three peaks.

Scrambling up, you will notice that there are 2 distinct hog-back rock summits, the first being the highest. Once in sight, it is a relatively easy scramble to the top of one of Africa's highest mountains. This is it! Ras Dejen, at 15,157ft/4,543m, is Africa's fifth highest mountain and the highest in Ethiopia. After refreshments and rest at the top, you will retrace your steps to Ambiko camp.

A tough day, with an overall altitude gain of 1,343m from Ambiko to the summit of Ras Dejen. Trek time approx 11/12 hours – maybe even longer depending on weather conditions.

Day 08 Ambiko to Arkwasyie

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Today begins with a steep descent to the valley floor, followed by a 2-3 hour ascent. After this, the terrain becomes easier, rounding several bends to finally see the village of Arkwasyie. Here there are two Gane and Marshall supported projects – the Medical Centre and the School – so you can expect to be made very welcome.



Altitude gain 500m. Trek time 7/8 hours.

Day 09 Arwasyie to Lamo

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Leaving the higher plateau and village of Arkwasiye (3,600m), you cross a long ridge, then climb 900m down the near vertical Devil's staircase to the village of Lamo (2,000m) – one of the most beautiful locations in the Simiens.

Overall height loss will be around 1,600m. Trek time up to 10 hours.

Day 10 Lamo to Mulet

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We recommend an early start this morning, to admire the stunning view at sunrise. From Lamo, you can look north-east across the valley to the circle of mountains around Amba Ton, and see the same view that is illustrated on Ethiopian Airlines tickets.



Today's walk will involve a mix of ridge and valley treks through some spectacularly beautiful scenery en route to Mulet, where you camp at much the same altitude as Lamo.

Trekking time approx. 8 hours. Altitude undulating approx 1900m.

Day 11 Mulet to Adi Arkay; transfer to Axum FB

Leaving Mulet this morning, you trek to Awaza, with wonderful views to Amba Ton and the high escarpments of the Simiens Plateau along the way. From Awaza, walk to Adi Arkay (1,600m). Trekking time approx 2/3 hours.

After a celebratory drink in a cafe, say goodbye to your muleteers and camp staff, and meet the vehicles for the five hours drive to Axum. On arrival, check into the Yeha Hotel for, where dinner, a warm room and shower will be waiting!

Day 12 Axum HB

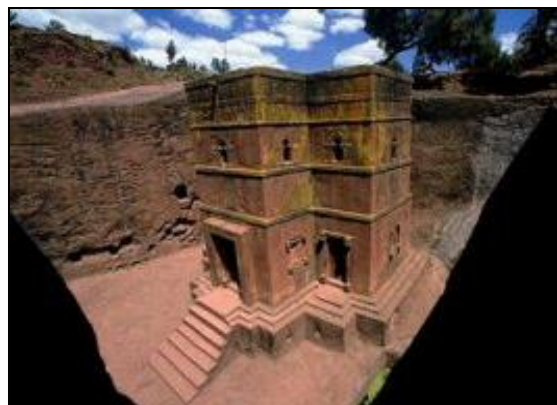
Embark on a guided tour of Axum, to explore its amazing stellae and learn about the region's pre-Christian culture.

Axum dates back some 2,000 years to when it was the hub of the Axumite Empire. According to legend, the Queen of Sheba made it her capital 1,000 years before the birth of Christ. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was founded here in the fourth century, and Axum remains its holiest city.

Your tour will take in Axum's amazing stellae – giant, towering monoliths that are thought to pre-date the arrival of Christianity to the country – as well as the Church of St Mary of Zion, which, according to Ethiopian tradition, houses the legendary Ark of the Covenant.

Day 13 Fly to Lalibela HB

Morning flight to Lalibela. On arrival at Lalibela airport you will be met by your guide and transferred to the centre of town, where you stay at either the Mount View or Tukul Village Hotel. After check-in, embark on a tour of the ancient site, visiting the first group of rock churches.



Lalibela is the one place in Ethiopia that no visitor should miss. Indeed, were it virtually anywhere but in Ethiopia, Lalibela would rightly be celebrated as one of the wonders of the world.

Situated at an altitude of 2,600m, among wild, craggy mountains, there is a stark grandeur to Lalibela. Formerly called Roha, before adopting the name of the 11th-Century King Lalibela of

the Zagwe Dynasty, the town has a long and storied history, which you'll learn more of during your tour.

Dinner and overnight at Mount View Hotel.

Day 14 Lalibela HB

Start the day with a visit to Asheton Mariam Monastery, a 2-3 hour walk from the main Lalibela complex. Noted for its stunning location, Asheton Mariam has been carved into the cliff face and stands out as one of the highest monasteries in Ethiopia. Return to Lalibela in time for lunch.

The rest of the day will be spent exploring the second group of rock churches, including the famous Bet Giyorgis.

Overnight in Lalibela.

Day 15 Fly to Addis Ababa B

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight to Addis, where you will be met on arrival and transferred to your hotel in the city centre (the Saro Maria or similar).

This evening, we can arrange for a meal at a central restaurant.

Day 16 Departure B

Check out after breakfast and transfer to Addis Ababa International Airport. Depending on your flight time, you may have several hours in Addis, in which case there is an option to use the Hilton or Sheraton pool and gardens.

NB Ethiopian schedules are "flexible" and a good level of understanding and tolerance is required, not only with the flight schedules but also at Addis airport where security checks are tight and time-consuming. Keep this in mind and you will be able to make the most of one of Africa's most wonderful destinations.