

Biking Ethiopia

bike adventures on the Roof of Africa

Country Info – Ethiopia

Ethiopia, officially the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic, is with its 95 million inhabitants Africa's second most populated nation. The ethnic diversity is unique and includes over 80 ethnic groups and spoken languages; Amharic is the official.

Ethiopia is 1,130,000 sq.km, approximately two times the size of France. Located in the North-Eastern corner of Africa it is landlocked between Eritrea and Djibouti to the North, Sudan and South Sudan to the West, Somaliland to the East, and Somalia and Kenya to the South.

Ethiopia is Africa's most mountainous country, also called the Roof of Africa. The landscape is beautiful and varied with distinct differences in altitude; from Ras Dashen of 4,620 meters *above*, to Dallol at 116 meters *below* sea level. These differences in altitude, give Ethiopia three climate zones and offer an enormous variation in landscapes, flora and fauna. Ethiopia is home to a wide range of endemic species of plants and animals. The country is furthermore home to a series of spectacular geological phenomena, among them Danakil Depression, the lowest point in Africa and the hottest place on the Earth with one of the few permanent lava pools.

Addis Ababa is the capital. Centrally located at an altitude of approximately 2,700 meters it is the third highest located capital in the World and this gives it a pleasant climate during the long dry winter season. Addis Ababa houses a larger number of diplomatic offices, such as the head quarter of the African Union, the Nile Basin Initiative, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and more than 90 other diplomatic missions and embassies.

Ethiopia is among the few African countries that have its own alphabet, time system and calendar. Moreover, it is known for its 2,000-year-old history, as home to the Queen of Sheba, and as one of the very few African countries that were not colonized. The monuments dating back to the Axumitic Empire, the ancient rock-hewn churches of Lalibela and Hawzen, the old castles and churches of Gondar, and the fortified city of Harar, are some of the places, listed by UNESCO as worthy of preservation.

In Afar scientists are making historic findings, that contribute to the understanding of the origin and early development of human kind. Ethiopia is home to Lucy, the oldest discovered hominid fossil of 3.2 million years of age, the birth place of coffee, and home to the first bare-footed marathon runner, Abebe Bikila, who won gold at the Olympic Games in 1960.

The Ethiopians are friendly and hospitable people. Many speak English, especially the youth, and it is easy to engage in conversation and a good laugh.

The country must fight drought regularly. But the outdated image of Ethiopia from the mid-1980's is finally changing. For more and more people are discovering the unique value, which this grand country with its magnificent natural treasures, its astonishing ethnic and cultural diversity, and undergoing rapid social and economic development, can offer...

Welcome to Africa's best kept secret!