

INVEST IN ETHIOPIA

TOURISM: INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES



Ethiopia is a land with a very unique culture and heritage. With a history going back thousands of years, it is one of the oldest nations in the world.

Ethiopia offers international tourists an unrivalled choice. A country with one of the richest histories on the African continent, is a land of natural contrasts, ranging from the peaks of the rugged Simien Mountains to the depths of the Danakil Depression, which at 120 metres below sea level, is one of the lowest points on earth. Ethiopia is blessed with an abundance of natural beauty, offering an astonishing variety of landscapes, including Afro-Alpine highlands soaring to around 4,300 metres, moors and mountains, deep gorges, the largest cave in Africa (Sof Omar), the Great Rift Valley, tropical forests, white-water rivers, savannah land, giant waterfalls and volcanic hot springs.

Although situated close to the equator, the country largely has a climate tempered by altitude, which means that most of its regions enjoy an idyllic spring-like climate throughout the year. In its considerably vast area (1.14 million sq.kms), Ethiopia has tourist attractions that will appeal to a wide range of interests. The combination of attractions is rare in a single country and includes a wealth of historical, cultural, archaeological and anthropological sites, as well as numerous areas rich in natural gifts.

Ethiopia is the land of the Queen of Sheba, home of the Ark of the Covenant, the birth place of coffee and 'Lucy'- the world's oldest known almost-complete hominid skeleton, more than three million years old.

Historical attractions

The Historic Route, covers, among others, the ancient town of Axum, the capital of the far reaching Axumite Kingdom, which dominated the vital crossroads of Africa and Asia for almost a thousand years, with its amazing carved obelisks, Christian festivals and relics, including the Ark of the Covenant, Lalibela, with its 11th century remarkable rock-hewn churches that the world have ever seen until Gondar, the capital of Ethiopia during 1632-1667, with its castles and palaces; Negash, one of the earliest holy Muslim centres from the Prophet Muhammad Era with the Negash Amedin Mesgid; the walled Muslim city of Harar and Lega Oda, near Dire Dawa where one can see cave paintings considered to be thousands of years old.

Natural attractions



Known locally as Tis Isat – 'Smoke of Fire' – the Blue Nile Falls is the most dramatic spectacle on Blue Nile River. Rivalling the attractions of the Blue Nile falls is Lake Tana, source of the Blue Nile, which is the largest lake with 37 islands scattered about

on the 3,000 sq km surface of Ethiopia's largest body of water. Some 20 of these islands shelter churches and monasteries of significant historical and cultural interest

dating back to the 14th century. The Great Rift Valley lakes, many with national parks, are home to a wealth of bird and animal life offering a wide opportunity for bird-watching and camping along the chains of national parks. The high, rugged Semien Mountains in the north are one of the major mountain massifs in Africa. The region includes many summits above 4,000m and culminates in the highest point in Ethiopia. Ras Dashen, at 4,543m, is the fourth highest mountain in Africa, home to the Walia Ibex, a unique indigenous mammal. The Bale Mountains, in the south east are also home to some unique wild life and rich flora, and are ideal for trekking, whilst some of Ethiopia's fast flowing rivers are becoming famous for white-water rafting.

Cultural attractions

Ethiopia is a mosaic of people with more than 80 nations and nationalities, each with its own language and culture, different styles and costumes. It has been referred to as 'the land of thousand smiles'.



In the north and centre of the country different Semitic languages are spoken while Cushitic is a common language in the east and other parts of the south. To the west and south west, Nilotic people are living with their distinct language and culture.

Folk culture is also an important element of today's Ethiopia. Ethiopian cuisine is unique by way of ceremony, flavour, colour and presentation.

The traditional restaurants and cultural centres around the country provide a mix of presentation with warm folk music and dances, traditional cuisine and an opportunity to experience a unique Ethiopian coffee ceremony.

This gives it great potential for anthropological and educational tourism, photography & hunting safaris, bird watching, water sports, desert trekking, mountain walking, and camping and eco tourism.

Even though Ethiopia has a wide range of tourist attractions and is a land of contrasts and extremes, the tourism sector has not yet been fully exploited.

Tour operators

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TRADE & INVESTMENT



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Tourism services and investment opportunities

As Ethiopia is the seat of a number of international organisations including the African Union, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and more than 100 embassies, conference tourism is seen as an area with great growth potential.

The economic policies implemented by the current government have created a climate conducive for growth in the tourism/hospitality sector. The total number of international tourists is growing each year.

Major international hotel groups, Hilton Sheraton, Intercontinental, Accord, Emerald have built resorts and lodges around the major tourist attractions such as Kuriftu and Bishangari. Ethiopia provides a better tourism infrastructure for the visitor who wants to spend time exploring this remarkable and beautiful country.

The government is keen to attract other major international hotel chains to the country to address the demand for high quality hotel facilities.

Tourism opportunities exist in the construction of star-rated hotels, lodges and resorts, international and specialised restaurants as well as tour operators. Potential investors can take advantage of these opportunities through direct investment or joint ventures with local partners.

Infrastructure

Ethiopia's tourism sector is poised to benefit from a major infrastructure development programme underway in the country including the construction, upgrading and expansion of airports, road, rail and communication networks as well as electric power generation and water works. As part of this, airport improvements at Lalibela, Axum, Gondar, Bahir Dar, Makalle, Arba Minich, Dire Dawa and Jijiga have been completed along with major expansion and modernisation of the international airport at Addis Ababa. Road improvements and new construction projects are also widely underway across the country.

Opening up to tourism

The Ethiopian Government has removed constraints relating to visa and customs regulations, with a view to facilitate growth in Ethiopia's tourism. The Ethiopian Ministry for Culture and Tourism works closely with the regional tourism bureau, tour operator associations and hotel associations. It has a pivotal role in bringing together the private sector and regulatory authorities and is very keen to work with private investors to expand Ethiopia's offer as a top quality African tourist destination – hence the vision is to make Ethiopia among the top ten tourist destinations in Africa by the year 2020.

Transportation

The chief mode of travel to Ethiopia for tourists is currently by air, with the main carrier being Ethiopian Airlines (EAL). For more than 60 years, EAL has become one of the continent's leading carriers, unrivalled in Africa for efficiency and operational success, returning profits for almost all the years of its existence. Operating at the forefront of technology, it has also become one of Ethiopia's major industries and a veritable institution in Africa. It commands a lion's share of the pan-African network including the only daily east-west flight across the continent. EAL serves 60 cities across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, USA and Europe. One of Africa's premier airlines EAL is known for many firsts including: the first jet airliner in the continent, the first 767 in Africa and it will soon be the first airline in Africa to take delivery of Boeing's 787 dream line. It is also one of the few profitable airlines in the world.

EAL is a winner of many awards, the major ones are:

- The NEPAD Transport Infrastructure Excellence Awards 2009
- Airline of the Year Award at the 41st Annual General Assembly of the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) held in Maputo, Mozambique.
- Airline of the Year 2009 award at African Business Award organised by the London-based African Business Magazine and Commonwealth Business Council.
- 2008 Best Airline in Africa Award at the African Travel Award in Lagos, Nigeria, for its excellent network and convenient connections in Africa.
- The 2008 Brussels Airport Company Award in recognition of its distinguished long haul operations witnessed through the introduction of new routes, new products, and close cooperation with Brussels Airport in marketing activities.
- The 2008 Corporate Achievement Award of Aviation & Allied Business for setting the pace towards the development and growth of the African aviation industry.

Domestic air travel has also seen increased competition. There are 27 licensed private airlines in Ethiopia and three of them are in operation. Suhura, Abyssinia Flight Services and Transnational Airways (TNA).

Trainable labour

One of Ethiopia's most valuable natural resources is its people. The country has a large pool of trainable manpower with a strong cultural disposition for warm hospitality. It currently produces over 30,000 university graduates per year, with particular strength in business, management, economics, accounting and law. The Ethiopian Ministry for Culture and Tourism has committed itself to expanding hospitality training and runs a training institute, which provides great opportunities for practical training.

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