



Remote River Expeditions

Ethiopia: Country & River Information

General Information

A. Visas, immunizations, customs, money

Visas. A visa application form, with instructions and recommendations, will be included with your trip documents. You should apply for your visa 45 to 90 days prior to departure. It is now also possible to obtain a visa upon arrival to Bole International airport.

Immunizations. Standard immunization recommendations for Ethiopia are as follows:

- Yellow Fever (required)
- Typhoid
- Hepatitis A
- Meningitis Type A (highly recommended)
- Tetanus
- Polio

Regulations and recommendations change often, so be sure to check with your physician and/or the Center for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov

Please remember to carry your yellow immunization card with your passport when you travel.

Customs. Clearing customs in Addis Ababa is usually straightforward and swift. Unless you have something to declare you should be able to pass smoothly through the 'Nothing to Declare' lanes. When you first come out of the arrivals hall, after claiming your luggage and passing through customs, and out into the open air, look across to the other side of the access road. One of our staff will be waiting behind the low metal barrier to escort you to your hotel. If you have specific questions or are planning to travel with a large amount of photographic or filming equipment please let our office know in advance.

Money. The local currency is the Birr. You should bring some of your money in travelers checks, but do bring a fair amount in cash. Outside of Addis it's hard to use anything but Birr or small denomination US bills. Credit cards are usually only accepted by airlines and major hotels. It is recommended to only exchange money with authorized banks or at hotels. Keep your receipts, as they are necessary for converting back to US currency.

B. Weather, clothing

Weather. In general, Ethiopia has a pleasant climate year round. The average temperature in Addis Ababa is 20 degrees Celsius (68 deg. F). On the Omo river the weather tends to be sunny and warm, but not uncomfortably hot. There is always the chance of occasional rains, however, and the temperature warms up as we move downstream.

Clothing. The nights can occasionally be cool; a leather jacket, wool sports jacket, or some kind of pile or synchilla jacket or pullover will be handy. A complete clothing and equipment list will be included in your trip documents.



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C. In towns: Food, tips, communications & post, security

Food. The food in Ethiopia is excellent, although somewhat foreign to the western palate. The staple food is thin sourdough bread called injera, combined with side dishes prepared with a variety of vegetables, meats, cheeses, and lentils, called wat. **Please note:** Although the water in hotels is supposedly safe, it is best to treat all water with iodine and/or a good water filter or purchase bottled water while in town. It is also best to order drinks without ice. Remote River's staff will provide water purification for all camping/river portions of the trip.

Tipping. If service is not included in the bill, tipping 5-10% at restaurants is fine. Tipping of guides, camp staff, and drivers is at the discretion of individual travelers. On many trips a client tip pool (\$5-\$10 /day) is collected, passed on to the trip leader and divided among the crew.

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Security. In general security is much better than in Kenya or Tanzania. For the most part the people are friendly, and violent crime against tourists is rare. Of course precautions should be taken against pickpockets and petty theft, which is more common, especially in Addis.

Ethiopia at a Glance

Full country name:	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Area:	1,127,000 sq km (439,530 sq mi)
Population:	55 million
Capital city:	Addis Ababa (pop 3 million)
People:	Oromo (40%), Amhara and Tigrean (32%), Sidamo (9%), Shankella (6%), Somali (6%), Afar (4%), Gurage (2%)
Language:	Amharic, Tigrinya, Orominga, Guaraginga, Somali, Arabic, English
Religion:	Muslim, Ethiopian Orthodox, animist
Government:	Federal republic
GDP:	US\$242 billion
GDP (per cap.):	US\$400
Inflation:	10%
Major industries:	Agriculture, forestry, agricultural processing
Major trading partners:	USA, Germany, Japan, Italy



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Ethiopia: Omo River Expedition Information

The Journey

Options, wildlife, scenery, people, camping, typical day...

Trip options: We offer the Omo as Full Trip, Upper Half or Lower Half in which case clients can opt to do either half as well as the full trip. The first half begins at the Gibe bridge 185 km out of Addis Ababa on the Jimma road, and ends at the bridge joining Sodo and Waca known as the Bele bridge. The second half begins at Bele bridge and we take-out (depending on road and recent weather conditions) at Mui River Junction or Duse village. From there we travel overland by 4x4 to Jinka and a Ethiopian Airlines flight to Addis Ababa. We may expect to Addis by road as well.

Boats: We use 16-ft inflatable rafts with six air compartments. For most of the trip, the boats are oar-powered, with an experienced river guide at the oars. For the last few days of the second half, the boats are lashed together and the whole rig is driven by a small outboard.

Whitewater: Although the majority of the river is calm, the Omo does have some challenging whitewater. While it does not contain the monster rapids found on rivers such as the Zambezi, there are numerous, exciting, and enjoyable class 3 to 3+ rapids. During the first few days we are treated to a series of lively and challenging rapids. Depending on the water level we encounter one or two larger (medium sized) rapids which we scout before running. Team members have the option to walk around these rapids for an excellent photo opportunity or to ride along. While providing a bit of splashing excitement none of the rapids we encounter are threatening. The first half of the trip contains most of the rapids, but the two most challenging ones, Potamus Plunge and B-Team, are found on the second half.

No previous experience is required only a willingness to embark on a true wilderness expedition.

Equipment: All river, camping and commissary gear is provided. We use 5 meter oar powered Inflatable Avon and Domar rafts. Camping equipment includes spacious North Face dome tents, Thermo rest inflatable sleeping mattresses.

Annoyances. The Omo River would be paradise but for the tsetse flies. These pesky beasts haunt certain sections of the river. Repellent is of limited effectiveness. A long-sleeve white hooded sweatshirt along with long-leg, light colored cotton pants is the best anti-tsetse measure. They go away at dusk, and are usually left behind on hikes.

Comforts: Pleasant climate, great campsites, excellent cuisine featuring fresh fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy products, bread, pies and cakes baked in a well-embered Dutch oven. We provide a shower / toilet tent and safari chairs in camp. The rafts are equipped with custom shade tarps and back rests.

Health. There is a risk of bilharzia on Omo trips, so a post trip check-up is advisable. Praziquantel is a safe and reliable cure. Malaria is prevalent here as well, and malaria prophylaxis is a necessity. While these risks are real, keep in mind that we have been running trips here for many years, and our staff will provide recommendations to keep the risks as low as possible.



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Wildlife: There are plenty of hippos and crocs (more crocs on the second half). We see waterbuck, bushbuck, warthog, and sometimes, lions and leopards. Primates include colobus, vervet, blue, and DeBrazza's monkeys, and baboons. On the second half of the trip we pass Mago and Omo National Parks where buffalo and zebra are sometimes spotted seen from the rafts. On rare occasions even lions, leopards and wild dogs.

Birdlife: A full complement of African water birds, plus forest and bush species. Fish eagles, Goliath herons, kingfishers, bee-eaters, storks, kites, vultures ... In the background, the soft lament of the emerald spotted wood doves, the bubbly purr of the white-browed coucal and the raucous cawing of silvery cheeked hornbills. Other species encountered include: Pel's fishing owl; giant, pied, woodland, blue-breasted, and malachite kingfishers; Abyssinian ground hornbills, along with many doves; fish eagles; kites; harrier hawks; and goliath, grey, and green-backed herons.....

Scenery. Especially varied in the first half, where the river lies in a 5,000 feet deep canyon, whose slopes are covered in tall grass, bush, and scattered trees, with cultivation up high. There are spectacular sheer inner gorges of columnar basalt and many stretches of black lava-boulder gorge. The belt of riverine forest widens in the more open parts of the canyon to become a gallery forest with many colobus. There are stretches of savannah ideal for wildlife and bird walks. The tributaries, with innumerable waterfalls up to 1000 feet high, water slides, hot springs, and pools, are a delight. There are still many that we have not yet had a chance to explore. The second half has less dramatic canyon scenery, but the eroded badlands of the last few days, with distant views of jagged mountains is equally magnificent.

Vegetation: We enjoy a wonderful variety of riparian Giant euphorbia, fragrant jasmine, rare orchids, the desert rose, and classic acacias.

Activities: Hiking up side streams to fantastic waterfalls, highland villages and markets. Riverside Encounters with the people of the lower Omo are frequent and delightful. There are numerous clear swimming pools and enjoyable waterfall showers. Fishing for the Omo catfish, which can exceed 5 feet and 50 pounds. We usually layover (camp 2 nights at one site) at least once, frequently at a lovely campsite from which we climb up to visit picturesque villages.

People. We occasionally meet highland people who are crossing the river to go to a market or to smuggle coffee, or who have come down to fish. At most of the campsites we are entirely alone, with no sign of people except in the fields high above on the valley walls. We do some hikes up to visit highland settlements of the Wolayta, Janjaro, Kembatta, or Gofa people. The last 5 or 6 days of the second half provide an excellent opportunity to visit some of the most remote, exotic, decorative, and unvisited people in Africa: the Bodi, Kwegu, Mursi, and Bume. The men wear very little, with bead necklaces and earrings for decoration, and the Mursi women still use huge lip-plates, the Bume men elaborate clay hairdos. We have good interactions with these friendly people, exchanging the news (when we find an Amharic speaker), trading for baskets, giving limited medical help...



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Camping. Many of the campsites are smooth, clean sandbars. There is always plenty of firewood, and good tent sites with enough room for privacy. Some camps may be near clear tributaries, hot springs, interesting trails, hippo concentrations, etc. Although there are some favorite sites we try to hit each trip, we are still finding wonderful new camps – the Omo will never become routine.

Meals. Meals are served buffet-style served on a table. All our trips offer excellent cuisine featuring fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, and dairy products along with bread, pies, and cakes baked in a well-embered Dutch oven. Woven mats arranged around a campfire provide a comfortable resting place, for meals and socializing.

Typical Day on the River: Most of us enjoy an early wake up, and the crew gets a fire going for breakfast. After breakfast, cleanup, breaking camp, packing the boats, and a quick bath, we are usually ready to head downstream by 10 AM. We travel in a leisurely way, stopping whenever appropriate to hike up to a waterfall, play in a waterslide, or explore a tributary. At midday, we find a shady place for a lunch of fruit, bread, and sandwich fixings often with time for reading or a siesta afterward. We continue downstream after lunch for an hour or two, generally stopping to camp between 3 and 4 PM. Then it's time to unpack, set up the tents, collect some firewood and explore the camp area. After dinner and some campfire time, 9 PM will see most of us off for a tranquil sleep in the refreshing cool night air. The routine is varied by periodic layovers (two nights at the same camp), which afford the opportunity to explore, relax, do laundry, etc.

NOTES ON THE ITINERARY

Although we will do our very best to adhere to the itinerary schedule as listed, it is subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control. Starting point of river trip may vary somewhat depending on weather and road conditions. If the trip is delayed because of bad weather, cancelled or delayed flights or delays on other modern transportation, sickness, or other situation for which Remote River Expeditions or its agents cannot make provisions, the cost of delays is not included.

Wild Animals

Many of the animals we come to Africa to see are large and potentially dangerous. Wild animals are generally quite afraid of man. They tend to avoid our campsites and to run away if approached by humans on foot. Attacks by wild animals are rare, but no walking or camping safari in the African wilderness can guarantee that such incidents will not occur. Remote River Expeditions is not to be held responsible for any injuries caused during any incident involving the behaviour of wild animals.

