

Ethiopia – A Living Museum of Remarkable Cultures

Ethiopia is one of the tourist destinations, which for a long time now have been hidden from the eyes of the world. However, the country's tourism industry has been on the rise, and it is slowly establishing itself as one of the emerging tourist destinations in the world. It is a safe country with a lot of attractions, which offer a unique and rewarding experience to the visitors. However, one of the most amazing things about Ethiopia is the indigenous cultures of the local people.



Ethiopia is famous for cultural tours that are organized in the country focusing on the communities living in the Southern region, especially the people of the Omo Valley. These tours provide a unique opportunity to appreciate the joy of living the life to the fullest without the need of material things.

Southern Ethiopia is one of the most culturally-rich regions in the world, featuring people from nearly 45 different language groups. The communities that reside here include the Borane and Karo, who exhibit several amazing practices. One of the most fascinating traditions of these people is the building of dome-shaped houses, which are beautifully designed using bamboo trees.

One of the most interesting places in the Southern region that you can visit for a full cultural experience of the Ethiopian people is the area around the Mago National Park. The park is famous for a wide range of wild animals that inhabit it. In addition, it is surrounded by people from seven different ethnic groups. These communities are an important part of the ecosystem, and visitors are welcome to get to know their cultural practices, and learn how they co-exist harmoniously with the surrounding wildlife.

The Omo Valley region is one of the most unique regions in Africa, where you can find some of the major ethnic groups existing peacefully with each other in a relatively small area. Anthropologists around the world have even gone as far as terming the region a "Living Museum" due to the unique cultural representation that it holds. Below are some of the major peoples and cultures in the region:



The Dassanech people

The Dassanech are part of the Cushitic speaking group that resides in the Omo Valley. They reside in the southern region of Ethiopia, where the Omo River deltas pour into Lake Turkana, hence their name which means "people of the Delta". Their main livelihood comes from cattle, which is used as a source of milk, meat, and leather for clothing. They also engage in farming, especially during the rainy seasons when the Omo River has plenty of water. They are popular for the ceremony known as the Dimi, where the upcoming marriage of the daughter of a male member of the society is celebrated. During the ceremony, the man becomes an elder in the community.

The Dorze tribe

The Dorze tribe is a part of the Omotic speaking people of the southern Ethiopia. The tribe was formerly known for its warriors, but its people are now famous for their farming practices and their rich weaving tradition – they weave a very high quality cotton clothing. The Dorze tribe lives in a community-based society, where most of the disputes are settled the traditional way – through elders.

The Karo tribes

The Karo tribes are found along the borders of the Lower Omo River. They are famous for their rich traditions, which include wearing elaborate headdresses among the women and decorative body art among the men, which is achieved by painting their bodies with chalk. These practices are common during important ceremonies, such as the Pilla, which marks the rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood.

The Konso people

The Konso people are part of the eastern Cushitic speakers, who practice farming and weaving. They are found approximately 960 miles to the south west of Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa. They are widely known for their woodcarving practice, and they are often referred to as the "people of wooden totem".



The Mursi and Surma

Found in a remote wilderness in the southwest region of Ethiopia, the Mursi and Surma are a largely forgotten ethnic group who lead their lives with very little influence from the outside world. They are widely known for their unique culture, which includes lip and earlobe piercing among the women, and stick fighting among the men. They also have a long history of painting their bodies in decorative art.

The Hamar and Benna

The Hamar and Benna people reside in the far south west region of the Omo Valley, beyond the Mt Buska. They are highly superstitious and until recently very little information about them was known to the outside world. Often referred to as the "Bull-jumping" people they are famous for their bull jumping ceremonies, which are used as a rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood for the male members of the society. The bull-jumping ceremonies also serve as courting, where both men and women decorate themselves in order to win a mate.

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