

ETHIOPIA: ALL ASSUMPTIONS ASIDE - IT IS A TRUE GEM



Ethiopia, as many other African countries has had a troubled past and is often referred to as a dangerous place to venture. However, times have completely changed and the world needs to realize it has retained its stability and its ancient treasures are a must-see.

Ethiopia is a fascinating country - so different and diverse. Its past was very troubled indeed, yet many years have past since the military dictator was overcome here. For nearly two decades, it has been one of the most stable states in Africa with gradual economic growth.

It is a **true archeological paradise**. Long before Christianity became wide spread in Europe, the Ethiopians were faithful believers -Christianity was officially accepted here in 400 A.D. Religion plays a huge part in Ethiopian life and is a deep part of the society. We may find mentions of Ethiopia in the Old Testament and some believe the Ark of Covenant, holding the ten commandments is kept in Mouth Zion church in the ancient capital of Axum.

Ethiopian culture is exceptional. For a full taste, tourists should visit the **ancient capital of Axum** to admire the royal tombs as well as newly returned obelisks. During WW II the fascist leader Mussolini had one of the obelisks broken in three parts and carried to Italy. Now, after decades of negotiations, it has been returned to where it belongs.

The **Castles of Gondar** are yet another striking historical stop and a must see. The stone structures feature solid fortification system as well as sophisticated sauna baths and lion cages. They were built by Emperor Fasilidas and served as the country capital between 17th and 19th centuries.

The absolute gem and a stunning example of architectural perfection are the **Lalibela churches**, named after King Lalibela. Carved into a volcanic rock, the Church of St George is an outstanding example of the art of the locals. Many are intrigued by the engineering marvel of the cross-shaped churches.

Ethiopia belongs to the well-hidden gems of Africa though it is ready to welcome the first wave of tourists. With their potential, it will not take long.

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