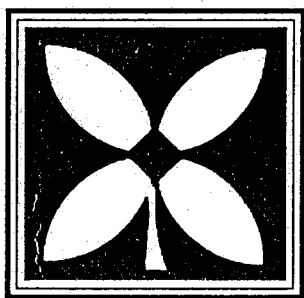
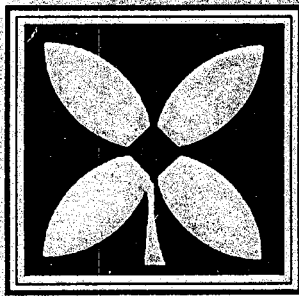


**TWENTY
ONE-DAY
TRIPS FROM
ADDIS ABABA**



The Ethiopia Heritage Trust



The Ethiopia Heritage Trust

Twenty One-Day Trips from Addis Ababa

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Produced by:
The Print Group
at the
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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is intended as a guide both for residents of Addis Ababa and for visitors. It is a modest attempt by the Ethiopia Heritage Trust to help those interested in exploring, enjoying and learning about some of the rich heritage of Ethiopia that lies close to Addis Ababa. We hope that the 20 sites assembled in this booklet will in turn stimulate both residents and visitors to explore further afield in this exciting and vividly beautiful country and to learn more about its culture.

The choice of what trips to include in this booklet was difficult. There was too much choice. What we tried to do is to include trips to suit a variety of tastes.

We have tried to provide accurate information, particularly over directions and names of places but inevitably there will be errors. For these we apologise and at the same time ask you kindly to let us know of any mistakes, as well as any suggestions for improvement for subsequent editions.

At the same time, while the goal has been to provide up-to-date information, please bear in mind that things change - new roads get built, places used as reference points may change their name or function and so forth. So please be ready for the odd surprise.

If you are a visitor to Ethiopia we suggest that you will find your enjoyment enhanced and your knowledge of Ethiopian culture and life improved if you make the trips with Ethiopian friends.

Whether or not you take a driver/guard with you to look after your car is a matter of personal choice: some people recommend this.

For the longer trips it is advisable to consider an early start, to allow time for any minor delay that might occur.

This booklet makes no claim to academic perfection over transliteration. We have simply tried to follow common usage and reasonable practice.

This booklet has been put together with the help of many people: a list is at the back of the booklet. To all of those who have helped we are very grateful.

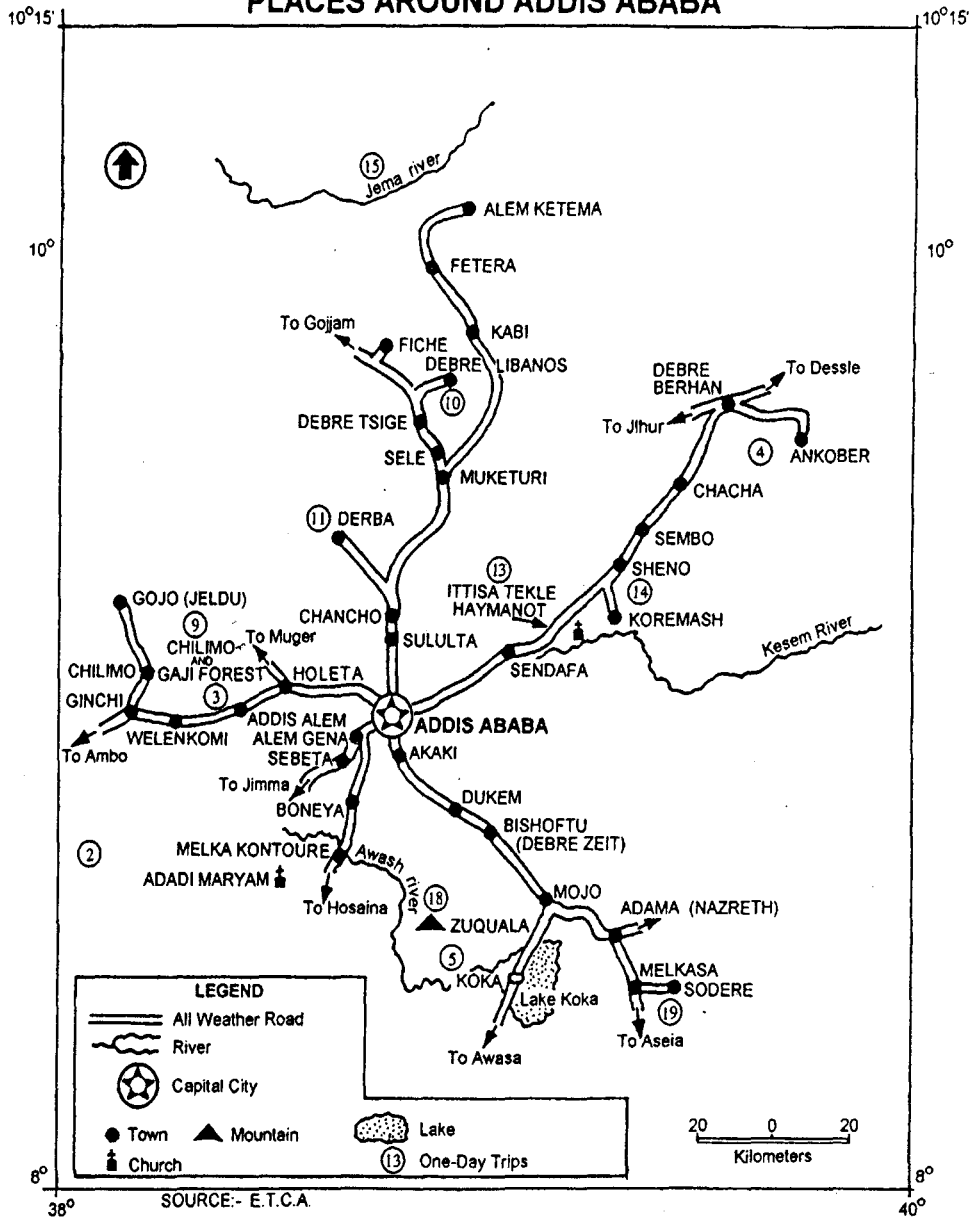
The booklet has cost nothing to produce, except the time and effort of those involved. All proceeds from the sale of this booklet go to support the work of the Ethiopia Heritage Trust.

LIST OF ONE-DAY TRIPS

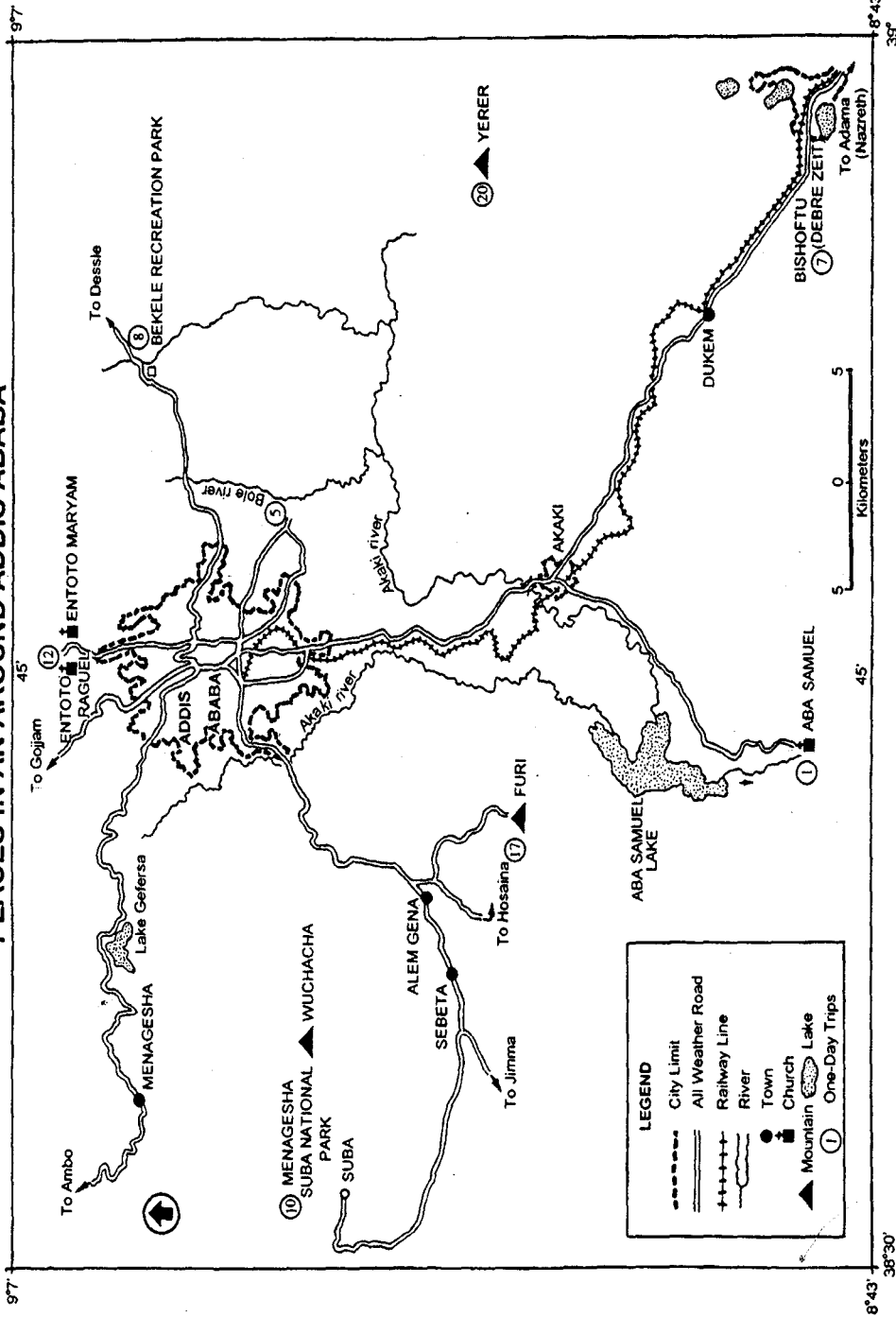
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Map 1

PLACES AROUND ADDIS ABABA



PLACES IN AN AROUND ADDIS ABABA



1

Aba Samuel and the Akaki River

With its lake, dam and church, Aba Samuel is an attractive spot within easy reach of Addis Ababa.

Accessibility

The trip from the centre of Addis Ababa to the dam at Aba Samuel and the gorge of the Akaki River covers about 45 km and takes about an hour and 15 minutes each way. A four-wheel-drive vehicle is essential, except perhaps in the middle of the dry season, and during the long rains any vehicle would find the going tough.

Route

Measuring from Menelik Square drive 19 km on the Bishoftu (Debre Zeit) road and at the end of Kaliti village, at a sign for the Dashen Hotel and just after a Shell filling station on the left hand side of the road, turn left on a tarmac road into Akaki town. Turn right in the town centre and ask for the road to Aba Samuel (*Yaba Samuel manged*). The road soon crosses the railway track and there are several alternatives, so keep asking until you are out of the town. At 27 km from Addis Ababa, fork right at a small culvert bridge. The road is beaten black earth, very difficult for an ordinary car when wet, and there are two small but awkward stream crossings where a four-wheel-drive vehicle is essential. At 34 km there is a village with a water pump and water storage tanks on towers. The road then improves, with red grit on the surface, and leads directly to the top of the dam. The track to the Akaki gorge turns off to the left shortly before reaching the dam. The area is thickly inhabited, as it contains some of the best *teff*-growing land in Ethiopia, so there is always someone of whom to ask the way.

Aba Samuel, the Lake and the Dam

The area takes its name from the church of Aba Samuel nearby. The tabot of this church is supposed to have been brought from the Aba Samuel church in northwestern Ethiopia. The dam at Aba Samuel was built during the Italian occupation and supplied hydroelectric power to Addis Ababa until it was replaced by the Koka Dam, built with Italian war reparations. It is no longer used, and the lake above the dam is mostly choked by water hyacinth. No water flows over the dam in the dry season but it begins to do so after the rains begin, and in *Keremt* (the rainy season) water smelling strongly of sulphur cascades down the whole front of the dam.

The disused dam is an attractive spot to visit. The heavy masonry is set off at the top, on one side of the dam, by a surviving line of blind arcades with a strongly Roman touch about them, and the stone construction blends well into the valley and rocks.

The Akaki Gorge

Below the dam and accessible on foot along the river or by four-wheel-drive vehicle down a track is the Akaki gorge, a spot of considerable (though not exceptional, by Ethiopian standards) natural beauty.

This is a good place to see dryland birds whose distribution doesn't quite reach Addis Ababa, for example the **wattled starling**, **Hemprich's hornbill** and the endemic **Abyssinian ground hornbill**.

Adadi Maryam and Melka Kontoure

This trip takes in a rock-hewn church as well as a Stone Age site.

Accessibility

The drive takes about an hour and 45 minutes each way. It is possible by saloon car but the road, though all-weather, is not asphalted for any considerable distance beyond the turn at Alem Gena. Even the short asphalt stretch beyond Alem Gena is badly potholed and broken.

Route

Take the Jimma road out of Addis Ababa. At 19 km you reach the small town of Alem Gena, where you will notice a Road Transport Authority station on the right. A little further on, in the town itself, turn left on a broken asphalt, then dirt road to Hosaina.

At 30 km from Alem Gena you cross the Awash River. In the rainy season the rapids and falls to the left are impressive; following the river downstream can also make a pleasant day trip on its own.

Melka Kontoure, the prehistoric site, is to be found about one kilometre upstream from the bridge, on the far side from Alem Gena. Either park your car and walk to it, or drive on the rough track (local youths will be happy to show you the way).

For Adadi Maryam, the rock church, continue on the main road for another 7 km and then turn right at a red and yellow sign with a cross. After 12 km the road stops and you have reached your destination. Park your car and walk forward to the church.

Melka Kontoure

This prehistoric site was intermittantly occupied from the Early Stone Age into the New Stone Age for about 1.8 million years. There is nothing to indicate this on the ground; imagination must get to work. There are some huts with exhibits, but to be sure of seeing these it is best to make arrangements in advance with the Ministry of Information and Culture as the huts are normally kept locked.

Adadi Maryam Church

A rock-hewn church which is still in active use by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Adadi Maryam is one of a number of relatively little known structures of this genre to be found outside the regions of Tigray and Wollo. Its origins and actual date of construction are not known. The church is almost certainly as old as the fifteenth century, however, and may even date back to the thirteenth century. The church is important evidence of the early adoption of Christianity in the surrounding Gurage area.

3

Addis Alem

This is a small historical town in pretty country.

Accessibility

The drive to Addis Alem, which is 55 km from Menelik Square, takes an hour and 20 minutes each way. The road is tarmac throughout and for a saloon car presents no difficulties.

Route

Take the Ambo road out of town all the way to Addis Alem. At about 18 km you will see Mount Menagesha to your left, a conical-shaped hill slightly detached from the main mass of Mount Wuchacha. You pass the Gefersa Dam, which supplies parts of Addis Ababa with drinking water. You will then pass through a number of small villages, among them Menagesha at about 30 km and Holeta at about 44 km. You also drive through some heavily forested areas.

When you enter the town of Addis Alem, pass a Mobil petrol station on your left and take the first proper track on your left. You will see a white sign with green writing and a green arrow on it pointing up the track, and you will also drive over a ditch. The track takes you up to Menelik's former palace and church.

Addis Alem

In Amharic *addis alem* means "new world". Emperor Menelik II founded the town in a place formerly called Ajere because the shortage of wood around Addis Ababa made moving the capital to a more wooded area seem desirable. Work started on the new palace immediately, in November or December 1900.

In 1902 a Frenchman declared "Addis Alem the town of the future, as Addis Ababa was that of the present, and Ankober and Entoto those of the past". Addis Alem was also described as Menelik's Versailles. The emperor mobilised his army to build the new capital, and sometimes up to 20,000 workers were used each day. The Italians, too, built an imposing stone Legation in Addis Alem as if to show, even after their defeat at Adwa, that they still intended to do great things in Ethiopia. Yet excluding the palace and the Italian Legation most of the buildings in Addis Alem were made of unimpressive wood.

Many opposed moving the capital. The foreign Legations and most of the Ethiopian nobility did not like the idea of uprooting their establishments in Addis Ababa in which they had invested heavily. Addis Alem was widely considered damp and lacking in good water. The fast-growing eucalyptus, which had recently been introduced to Ethiopia, was providing more wood for Addis Ababa. Empress Taytu also wanted to stay in Addis Ababa.

It was decided in 1902, probably at the instigation of the Empress, that Addis Alem should be used instead as a religious sanctuary. The proposed palace, which was then only partially completed, was accordingly converted into a church and called Debre Seyon, after Aksum Seyon (the rectangular shape was a new shape for a church in Ethiopia). Addis Alem was established as a place of asylum in 1905.

When Menelik's interest in it began to fade, some of the buildings were largely abandoned, but Addis Alem did become an important religious centre, with a leading church school and the head of the Church holding the lofty title of Nebura'ed, which was thenceforth only bestowed on the Abbot of Aksum Cathedral.

Nearby there is a building with red gates: it is Menelik's palace, which has been converted into a museum. There is an entrance charge of 2 birr for Ethiopians and 5 birr for foreigners. For the price you will get a guided tour of the one-roomed museum in Amharic. It contains Menelik's bed, some of his clothes and those of his children, as well as a number of religious artefacts, including books and musical instruments, royal treasures and guns that were used to fight the Italians. You can also see his balconied bedroom.

Past the palace and slightly down the hill is a large, old building: this is the meeting hall where Menelik used to chair gatherings from the raised platform.

If you leave the palace grounds you can walk up the hill past the bell tower to the large yellow building of the church of Addis Alem Maryam. This is unusual for an Ethiopian church in that it has paintings on the outside walls. If you are permitted to enter - not always possible - the paintings inside, dating from Menelik's time, are magnificent. If you are allowed in, a donation to the church of, say 10 - 30 birr for a couple is appropriate.

Ankober

The historic interest and impressive scenery of Ankober make it a compelling destination.

Accessibility

It takes around three hours to reach Ankober, which lies about 175 km northeast of Addis Ababa. A saloon car is perfectly adequate for most of the journey: the road from Addis Ababa to Debre Berhan (130 km) is good asphalt which is being further improved, and the 40 km from Debre Berhan to Gorabela is a good dirt-and-stone packed road, with some rough spots and soft patches after rain, along with sharp bends and steep pitches.

The short road from Gorabela to Ankober drops steeply, with some bad spots and sharp, steep bends. A powerful saloon car in good condition, not too heavily loaded, can probably manage, but a four-wheel-drive vehicle is preferable. If in doubt, park at Gorabela and walk down.

You should note that much of Ankober is obscured by cloud during the rains.

Route

Take the Dessie road out of Addis Ababa. At 23 km part of the Laga Dadi Reservoir can be seen to the right. Drive through the villages of Sendafa and Sheno. At about 100 km from Addis Ababa, on the plains to the right, is the site of the battle of Sagalle, where on October 27, 1916 the Shewan army defeated Negus Mikael of Wollo, the father of the deposed Emperor Lij Iyyasu. This victory put Empress Zewditu (r. 1916-1930) on the throne, with Ras Tafari Mekonnen (later Emperor Haile Selassie I) as the recognised heir.

At 130 km you reach Debre Berhan, founded in 1445 as his seat of power by the famous Emperor Zar'a Yakob (r.1434-68). Today it is essentially one long main street. It has several new hotels and makes a good stop for lunch.

At the far end of town the road to Ankober turns off sharply to the right, where a large yellow sign with black writing indicates the Ministry of Agriculture Sheep Breeding and Improvement Station. (Livestock is important in Debre Berhan, and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), maintains a compound there where travellers who make prior arrangements in Addis can be accommodated.) The stone-and-dirt road leads directly to Gorabela (40 km).

On the way, it passes close to the edge of the escarpment, where gelada baboons and red hot pokers are often in abundance. If there is no heavy cloud it is worth getting out of the car for fine views of the lowlands, particularly at Qundi, the highest peak in the area and located near the road on the left hand side as you drive to Ankober. (Ask people you meet on the road.) Qundi was in fact the residence of Menelik II's great grandfather, Mar'ed Azmach Wassansaggad, the ruler of Shewa (r.1808-13) and the father of Negus Sahle Sellassie (1813-47) who hosted the first British diplomatic mission in Ethiopia led by Captain W.C. Harris in 1841-42.

Just before Gorabela, look for two old trees beside the road on the left. On the tree furthest from the road, on the stump of a branch facing away from it, the name Iyyasu is carved in Amharic letters. Local tradition asserts that Emperor Lij Iyyasu (r.1913-16) himself, playing as a child, carved his name here. The grassy area around the trees would make a good picnic site.

Ankober is below Gorabela, the road dropping steeply down the escarpment. You have reached Ankober when you see on the left (2-3 km) the church of Mikael on a small hill above the road. Beyond the church, also on the left and on a high hill, is the old *ghibi*, or palace, site. One approach to it is by a narrow, steep and rather vertiginous path, which starts just beyond the church. The other—longer, but easier and safer—leads off to the left up the palace hill from further down the road.

Ankober

Ankober became important as a strategic site in the struggle between highland and lowland rulers as early as the 13th century. It was also economically important because it controlled the trade from the lowlands and the Red Sea port of Zeila. In the *Zemene Mesafent* period (Era of Princes or Judges c 1769-1855), Shewa enjoyed relative internal peace and Ankober flourished as the capital of its kings. They included Sahle Sellassie (r. 1813-1847), the grandfather of Menelik II. When Menelik moved his capital to Entoto and then to Addis Ababa in 1886, Ankober's importance waned, though it was still used as an arms and treasure store and a place of political detention. Changes in trade and trade routes also led to a decline in Ankober's fortunes.

Today there is not even a village on the old site, but only a few scattered farms. The sole historical remains are the churches of Mikael, built by Sahle Sellassie, and Maryam, built by Asfa Wossen (Sahle Sellassie's grandfather r. 1775-1808), both restored in 1892, as well as the palace. The churches are open after the regular morning liturgy but it may be difficult to gain entrance at other times. All that is left of Sahle Sellassie's palace is a circular dry-stone wall. The vertical cemented stone wall at the centre of the hilltop is not part of the palace, but, according to local information, all that remains of an Italian post.

Aliyu Amba and the Zinjero Gedel ("Baboon Cliff")

With a very early start and a good car it is possible to add Aliyu Amba and even the escarpment beyond Debre Berhan to a day trip to Ankober.

Aliyu Amba, about 15-20 km beyond Ankober, was once a commercial market and staging post of some importance. There are no historical remains to see but it has a mosque and an interesting market on Saturdays at which local goods, especially cotton *gabis*, are sold.

The escarpment known as Zinjero Gedel is about 40 km beyond Debre Berhan on the Dessie road. There is a gap in the escarpment with a magnificent view, in clear weather, over the lowlands. It is said to be one of the coldest and windiest places in Ethiopia. The road to it is badly potholed but it is being improved.

Awash River and Koka

This is a spot for gentle walking and spotting hippos, crocodiles and water birds.

Accessibility

The drive takes an hour and 40 minutes each way from Meskal Square. The road is asphalt until the last 3 km. This bit should really be done in a four-wheel-drive vehicle but is possible for the more adventurous in an ordinary saloon car with good clearance.

Route

From Addis Ababa take the Bishoftu (Debre Zeit) road. In the centre of Bishoftu note the turnoff to the left to the Hora Ras Hotel and the reading on the odometer. Drive on through the town towards Adama (Nazreth) until you reach a point between 35 and 36 km from the turnoff to the Ras Hotel. Here there is a somewhat disguised crossroads. You will see an asphalt road to the left, which does not actually reach the main road (a section of dirt road links the two) and a dirt road to the right. Take the dirt road on the right, which turns into asphalt after 100 metres. If you miss the turning and find yourself in Adama, turn back, and 5.2 km from the triumphal arch that marks the entry into the town you will find the crossroads.

At 5.6 km, just after you have crossed a culvert, turn left on to a dirt track. The turning is not all that obvious; however, there is usually someone around to ask. The magic word to say is "hippos". The track is rough. If in doubt about the route, bear right. You can do so only so far, as a gully appears on that side of the track. The track itself ends after 3 km at the River Awash.

The Awash River area

The Awash is the most exploited of all the big rivers in Ethiopia. The sugar plantations at Wonji and Metahara use the Awash. Koka Dam, the first major dam in Ethiopia, and the source of a significant proportion of the country's hydroelectric power, is built on this river.

The place where you leave your car is bustling: people come to it to collect water for washing clothes, watering livestock and other purposes. There are hot springs just by the river. The youths here can be a little over-eager, but if you want a guide you will have no lack of a choice of youngsters willing to help. They are likely to be better than you at spotting hippos and crocodiles, but it is quite possible to manage on your own. If you select a guide, agree on a fee beforehand.

Turn left, downstream, and follow the river. The crocodiles are reasonably plentiful and you should see perhaps ten in the course of a two-hour walk. As crocodiles are easily alarmed, you will see more of them if you walk quietly and look over the edge of the bank where they like to lie just out of the water, or partly concealed. Hippos, too, spend most of the day in the water, and you will spot the nose, eyes and ears of perhaps four or five when they come up for air. Local farmers say that they leave the water in the late afternoon, but they are more likely to leave after dusk.

After the first 200 or 300 metres, the walk takes you along irrigated fields. Thereafter you have a pleasant walk along a river bank beautifully shaded by fig trees - shola in Amharic (*Ficus sur* (*F. capensis*)). Unfortunately, these are being cut down to make charcoal.

This is a good place to see **Marabou storks**, **night herons**, **Senegal thick knees**, **green-backed herons**, **grey herons**, and many other river birds. **Bee-eaters** (**blue-breasted**, **carmine** and **little**), **hoopoes** and **namaqua doves** are also common. Any baboons you see on your trip are likely to be **Anubis baboons**.

The big yellow and black lizards you may see swimming in the river or perched on the riverside trees are Nile monitors (*Varanus niloticus*), Africa's biggest lizard.

Return the way you came when you have walked as far as you wish.

Bekele Recreation Park

A popular spot for weddings, this park offers an opportunity—rare near the capital—to walk in peaceful surroundings with little attention from onlookers.

Accessibility

It takes 30 minutes from the Arat Kilo roundabout to reach the park, about 15 km east of Addis Ababa. A saloon car can easily make the journey, which is on tarmac road until the last few metres.

Route

Take the Dessie road out of town past the Kotebe College of Teacher Education (10 km) and through the village of Kotebe itself. You will go over the Yekka Hills and then descend into the plains. At about 14.5 km you will see the Zobel Recreation Park. Shortly after, you will come to the Bekele Recreation Park on the right. Turn down the drive and park in the clearing.

Bekele Recreation Park

Bekele is by far the largest of four pleasant recreation parks clustered together (the others are Green, Shemelis and, of course, Zobel). It has a number of recreational sites where people may walk with very little hassle. If you go down the hill, you will come to a large building constructed around a huge bisana tree (*Croton macrostachyus*), with big branches sticking out through the roof. The house is generally used for wedding celebrations but it can also be used for group picnics. During the months when many weddings take place, Bekele Park is very busy at weekends.

About 100 metres from the park, on the left side of the road, is a multi-purpose modern hotel. A pleasant place with attractive scenery, this is a nice spot to sit and relax.

Bishoftu (Debre Zeit)

Surrounded by volcanic crater lakes, Bishoftu is a lively small town, suitable either for a visit or for a week-end getaway.

Accessibility

It takes around 50 minutes to reach Bishoftu, which lies 45 km south-east of Addis Ababa. The road is tarmac throughout, and it is perfectly possible to do the trip in a saloon car. The road is heavily used, however, especially at weekends. Returning after dark from any destination along the Bishoftu road requires the driver's fullest attention.

Route

Take the Bishoftu road south from Meskal Square. It leads directly to the centre of Bishoftu, passing Lake Chalalaka on the outskirts of town, on the left-hand side of the road.

Bishoftu

Bishoftu (usually thought to mean "tasteless" in the Oromo language; in fact it means "place of water/lakes/springs") lies on the western edge of the Rift Valley. It is a bustling town, its streets thronged with horse-drawn two-wheeled carts (*garris*) and home to various research and training institutes. Emperor Haile Selassie had one of his palaces on the shore of Lake Hora.

Of the seven lakes in the vicinity of Bishoftu, five are the result of explosion craters, where ground water came into contact with hot volcanic rock, the water boiled and the resulting steam pressure caused an explosion.

The Warka Hotel is a good place to get fresh, well-prepared Ethiopian food in a pleasant setting, with a big werka tree (*Ficus vasta* - a kind of fig) in the grounds. It is close to the roundabout by the railway line. The Hours Ras Hotel has a lovely view overlooking the Hora Lake

Lake Chalalaka

This lake is not a crater lake. It is essentially a flood plain which disappears in the summer. It is fed from the local fields and not by any major river system. It is shallow and attracts a wide variety of birds, including flocks of flamingoes and African spoonbills.

As you enter Bishoftu, railway tracks run along the road on the left-hand side. Lake Chalalaka is behind the silos on the left. For a close view of the lake take the turning 500 metres before the silos with a sign for the Zuqwala Hotel (there are also signs for Lancia and the Abeba & Tewodros Cement Works). Cross the railway lines and you will find the lake on the right. For a more extensive view of the lake take the turning marked by the large yellow sign for Borra Animal and Poultry Feed Processing, cross the rails and continue straight along the dirt road for 4 km (do not take the later left turn to Borra).

Lake Bishoftu

To reach this lake there are two routes. The first is to turn right opposite the Tigest Bar and the Efruit shop, about 75 metres before the Shell petrol station and immediately before the Tourist Hotel. Continue along this track to find Lake Bishoftu on the left. The second way is to continue another 500 metres to the right turn next to the Agip station and opposite the sign for the Hora Ras Hotel take the first left. There is a good view point next to the public library.

This is a pretty lake and it is possible to walk down to its shore but the lack of shade makes it unsuitable for picnics. If you follow the first route it might be better in the wet season to park a saloon car near the main road and walk up the short tracks.

Lake Hora

In the middle of Bishoftu there is a turning to the left at the sign for the Hora Ras Hotel. Take this turning, bear left and cross the railway line. At the traffic circle take the second exit and proceed for 1 km. The road forks. For the Hora Hotel take the left fork. It is well signposted. If you prefer to have lunch in a hotel this is the best spot; you can lunch outside the hotel overlooking the lake or walk down within the hotel compound to the lakeside. (The hotel serves a special buffet lunch on Sundays and these tend to be crowded)

Haile Selassie's palace, next to the Hora Hotel, bears the name "Fairfield" in memory of a villa in Bath, England, where the Emperor stayed during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. The palace is now an Airforce Hospital with no public access.

If you want to do more than just eat, then for an entrance payment of 2 birr you can go to the Recreation Centre on the lake, where paddle boats and other small boats are for hire and a small launch provides round the lake trips for 5 birr. You can also have a picnic here or set up camp. This is a favourite spot for many people from Addis Ababa during the weekends. The bird life on the lakeshore is profuse, including large numbers of coots and grebes.

To reach the opposite side of the lake from the hotel, take the exit road from the hotel, turn left and continue until you come to a left turn just after the Ethiopian Management Centre on the right. A short track will take you close to the lakeshore and a large Odaa tree (*Ficus sycomoros* - another kind of fig tree). In traditional Oromo belief this tree is considered sacred and a week after the Meskel feast each September there is an important ceremony held here, attended by huge crowds.

Elliptical in shape, with a perimeter of 4.6 km, 87 m deep and with small creeks flowing into it from various points, Lake Hora is worth a visit. However, the lake area being so accessible and popular can become very crowded at times.

Hora means "salty or mineral water drunk by cattle".

Lake Babogaya (also known as Lake Bishoftu Guda)

As you come out of the Hora Hotel to the main road, turn left and continue driving past the Recreation Centre, the KHC Children's Centre and the Galilee Centre. The road becomes a dirt track. Continue along it, avoiding the road to the left leading to the ILRI (International Livestock Research Institute) compound, for

four or five minutes. On the left you will see a small brick wall perpendicular to the road, and just after it a track leading left. If you park there and walk away from the main road to the left you will see Lake Babogaya.

If you wish to get closer to the lake or to spend the night by it, there are two possibilities. You can continue along the track where you parked your car till you reach the Catholic Mission, the building to your right on the lakeside and visible from the car. It is possible to spend the night here, though it might require prior arrangement. Alternatively, retrace your route to the track leading to the ILRI compound, where accommodation is also available. You must get permission beforehand, by telephoning ILRI in Addis Ababa. It will cost 25-30 birr per night.

Access to most of the lakeshore is not easy. The best locations are occupied by private weekend cottages. The birdlife is, however, superb; there are often flocks of flamingoes on the lake. It is 65 m deep, and the water appears green, due to a species of algae (*Microcystic aeruginosa*). The lake is worth a brief visit - or a week-end stay.

If you stay overnight in this area, a drive after dark along the tracks in the vicinity of this lake is an excellent way of seeing some spotted hyenas, and occasionally serval cat and white-tailed mongoose.

8

Bole River

This is a place for water birds. It is easily accessible for a short walk with pleasant views of Yerer Mountain.

Accessibility

The Bole River is approximately 13 km from Menelik Square in the centre of Addis Ababa. The journey takes about 30 minutes, depending on the traffic, and is perfectly possible in a saloon car with reasonable clearance. A four-wheel-drive vehicle would give you the flexibility to venture out into the surrounding areas, however.

Route

Take the Bole road to the airport. Just before you enter the airport, about 100 metres before an arch that says *Bon Voyage*, you will see a road leading off to the left, marked by a large white sign with *Toyota* written in red. There is a taxi stop just before the turn.

Soon you come to a crossroads, with a Mobil petrol station in front of you. Turn right and continue on an asphalt road for about 100 metres, after which the road turns to dirt. With the airport on your right, continue along this track, passing a large customs shed on your right. Both sides of the fork which comes next lead to the Bole River, but it is best to avoid the road that bends left and continue straight ahead. If you stop for a moment, you will see a small rock-face on your right. Walking to it, you can see a small lake in an excavated quarry adjacent to the shed.

Carry on down the main track along the perimeter fence of the airport. When the fence stops, you descend a small hill to your left, from which you will be able to see your destination. After another kilometre or so you arrive at a flat grassland where you can park your car near the small Bole river.

Bird-watching by the Bole River

Now walk downstream, away from Addis Ababa. It looks uninteresting and at the beginning there is a depressing amount of rubbish, but keep going towards Yerer Mountain to the east. Before long you are likely to come across the **wattled ibis**, which is unique to Ethiopia. After 10 minutes, you begin to find rats in the field, running from hole to hole. On your right you will see farmers' houses that are typical of this part of the country. You can stop and chat with the farmers, to get some idea of rural life without having to travel to the provinces.

After walking for 20 minutes, you cross the Bole River and are now on its left bank. You will encounter various kinds of *Echinops* (plants with globular spiky flower-heads and prickly leaves), and if you turn your back you see behind Addis Ababa the range of the Entoto Hills in the distance. From here onwards you come across various water birds, including the **grey heron**, the **sacred ibis**, the **black-winged stilt** and the **great white egret** among many others.

By now you may have walked for about 50 minutes; cross back to the right side of the river, where you can have an undisturbed picnic in tranquil, breezy surroundings. Or simply carry on walking as far as your energy and inclination last.

Return to your car the way you came.

Chilimo and Gaji Forest

This indigenous forest west of the capital near Ginchi is pleasant for walking, animal-spotting and even camping.

Accessibility

The trip takes two hours, and outside of the rainy season it is possible with a saloon car. A four-wheel-drive vehicle is essential, however, for the detour within the park to the tree nursery and the office that was once Empress Menen's rest house. The rains can make access to this spot difficult.

Route

From Menelik Square take the Ambo road past the General Wingate School at 6 km on your left. At 15 km you go through a small village called Burayu that is famous for its meat market and red bricks. At 19 km you pass the man-made Lake Gefersa, one of the two reservoirs that supply Addis Ababa with drinking water. On your left is the mountain massif of Wuchacha; the outlying conical hill covered with trees is Menagesha hill. At 25 km is a big arch on the left which signals the entrance to the military training centre of Tatek, where ex-President Mengistu Haile Mariam trained the bulk of his 300,000-strong militia. Three kilometres further on you will see a signpost for the Cheshire Home on your right. You are driving through a mixture of indigenous and eucalyptus trees.

At 41 km is the rural town of Wolmera, and at 46 km the town of Holeta. (A turning to the left just before you leave the town leads to the Holeta Military Academy, where Mengistu Haile Mariam was a cadet.) As you enter Holeta, there is a signpost on the right indicating the road to the Muger Cement Factory.

Driving away from Holeta, it is possible to see on the left, in the middle distance, a large building surrounded by trees. This is a palace built by Empress Taytu (r. 1889-1913), wife of Menelik II. The palace cannot be visited as it is in the grounds of the military academy.

At 55 km you go through the town of Addis Alem and can see the Addis Alem Maryam church at a distance, on top of a hill to the left. There is also a palace and a meeting hall built by Empress Taytu's husband, Menelik II. At 80 km is a village called Welenkomi and at 94 km you reach the town of Ginchi.

As you are leaving Ginchi you pass a Mobil station on the left. Half a kilometre further on, turn right on a reasonable dirt road towards Jeldu. The road goes through the Chilimo and Gaji forest. You know that you are on the right track when you see a green signpost on the left indicating a Rural Roads Training Production Unit camp at about 800 metres from the turn. (If in doubt, ask.)

Empress Menen's Rest House

To visit the Rest House turn to the left 3.8 kilometres after joining the Jeldu road. Drive another 3.2 km down this road (difficult in wet weather even for a four-wheel-drive vehicle) to the house, which now serves as an office and nursery site. The building itself is somewhat disappointing—a medium-sized bungalow of brick

and concrete with a tin roof and a veranda—but the setting towards the head of a valley is very pleasant. It is said that Empress Menen, the wife of Haile Selassie I, used to visit when she owned a wood factory there. It closed 20 years ago.

Of more interest is the beautiful and imposing 40-metre high *Podocarpus falcatus* (previously, and more attractively known as *Podocarpus gracilior*) in front of the house. Local people say that the Italians used it during the occupation as an observation post, building a platform hut high up in the tree complete with machine gun. Metal rungs deeply embedded in the tree support this theory.

Chilimo and Gaji Forest

Rejoin the Jeldu Road and after another kilometre or so you reach the outskirts of the forest.

Ten years ago the forest, which is full of *Juniperus procera* (the indigenous juniper) and *Podocarpus falcatus* extended for over 21,000 hectares; today it comprises only 10,000 hectares. Animals to be found include black and white **Colobus monkeys**, **vervet monkeys** and the **olive baboon**. **Menelik's bushbuck** is occasionally to be seen and, very rarely, **leopard**.

The road climbs steadily through the forest and follows a ridge at the top. The highest point is at around 3,000 metres, with good views over the forest to the plains.

You can choose your own place to walk in the forest; there are no special trails to follow. If you decide to camp, the nursery site next to Empress Menen's rest house could be the ideal place.

Tullu Galesa

About 8 km after entering the forest, you emerge from it on to a rolling grassland plateau with prosperous-looking farms. About 1.5 km down the road you will notice a small tree-covered hill close to the road on the right. There are Ethiopian flags on either side of the road; if you reach a sign saying "Baritte Gadessaa 105 km" you are 100 metres beyond the hill.

Tullu Galesa means Galesa's hill, or mountain, in the Oromo language. On top of this hill is a clearing where it seems there may previously have been a church, as locals believe. Down among the trees to your right is a shrine for traditional worship, centred on a sacred tree, a *Prunus africanus*. The most important ceremony is at Meskal in September; others are held in October and May.

Debre Libanos

Debre Libanos is Ethiopia's premier monastery; nearby is the so-called Portuguese bridge and, beyond, the market town of Fiche. All overlook the impressive Jema valley.

Accessibility

Debre Libanos is 108 km from Addis Ababa, and driving there takes about two hours each way. A saloon car is fine going to the monastery and to Fiche, but for the short detour to the "Portuguese Bridge" a four-wheel-drive would be preferable (alternatively you can walk the kilometre or so involved).

Route

Take the Gojjam road out of town through the Entoto hills and almost all the way to Debre Libanos. At about 50-55 km, the scenery becomes more spectacular; the road grows bumpier at around 60 km.

At about 104 km there is a sign directing you to turn right for Debre Libanos. Descend on this rather steep rough road until you reach the church.

Debre Libanos

Debre Libanos was founded around 1275 by St. Tekle Haymanot. Legend has it that the Saint moved into a cave there which had previously been inhabited by a magician and named his new monastery Debre Asbo. He turned part of the cave into a church, which he dedicated to St. Mary, and stood praying on one leg for seven years without interruption. His leg fell off as a result, and in pictures he is always shown with one leg and with wings which were miraculously given to him by divine grace as a substitute for his lost leg. (For further details about St. Tekle Haymanot see the entry on Ittisa Tekle Haymanot and Kessem Gorge).

A site, more or less over Tekle Haymanot's remains. The first big church on the site was built by Emperor Yeshaq (r.1413-30). His younger brother Emperor Zar'a Yakob (r.1434-1468), used the monastery as an important centre for the implementation of his radical religious policies and renamed it Debre Libanos.

The church is said to have been rebuilt at the turn of the sixteenth century but was destroyed by Ahmad Gragn in 1531, when he also massacred a large number of monks. Soon afterwards the centre of the kingdom moved to the Lake Tana area and eventually to Gondar where the prominent members of the Debre Libanos order followed the court and the old site was reduced to insignificance.

The monastery however, never disappeared, even during the difficult times. A few of the Gondarine kings, especially Iyasu I (r.1682-1704) visited the site and provided momentary assistance. By the time of Menelik II's grandfather, Negus Sahla-Sellassie (r.1813-47) it had again become a leading monastic centre. Emperor Yohannes IV (r.1872-89) visited the monastery in 1878 and had a new church built, the work being completed in 1884. Menelik II (r.1889-1913) re-built it once again, in much the same octagonal style as the churches on Entoto.

Debre Libanos was a victim of another massacre in February 1937 on the occasion of the attempt on the life of the Fascist Italian Viceroy, General Graziani. The monastery was suspected of giving shelter to his assailants and hundreds of monks, deacons, students and neighbouring peasants were killed in revenge. There are human bones on display on a ledge in the hillside above the church; some say that these are the bones of the monks and deacons who died in the massacre. In fact there is uncertainty about their origin; the solution to the riddle may be found in the widespread belief that those who die or are buried in Debre Libanos will ascend directly to heaven.

On the restoration of the Ethiopian Government in 1941 Debre Libanos became, once again, the most important monastic centre in Ethiopia with its abbot having the title of Echege, the highest ecclesiastical rank next to that of the Egyptian bishop. On November 17, 1963 the eighth and present church of St. Tekle Haymanot was completed at the cost of 1,600,000.

Today, to enter the church you must pay 10 birr, which also covers the cost of a guide. The modern church has a number of stained-glass windows, as well as a marble floor and pillars. For no extra money the guide will take you to Tekle Haymanot's cave up the hillside to the right of the church (you are unlikely to find it on your own). On the other side of the church is the monastery, which only men may visit.

There is a well-known poem in Amharic about Debre Libanos. The author is anonymous. It is addressed by a man to the woman he loves and roughly translated it goes as follows:

I hear you have become a nun at Debre Libanos.

You have killed my soul. Will there be mercy for you?

The "Portuguese Bridge"

Return to the main road and turn right, taking the first track on your right after that. Follow the track until it flattens, park your car and walk away from Debre Libanos parallel to the main road (if the going is too rough for your car, park it earlier and walk). Within 100 metres the bridge will be visible on your right.

Although the bridge was long reputed to have been the work of the Portuguese in the 17th century, it is now known to have been built in the 19th century by Menelik II's uncle, Ras Darge who was Governor of the region of Salale. It is believed that part of the bridge is made of ostrich eggshells and limestone. If you walk on to the bridge you will get a spectacular view of the valley and the Jema river. You may cross the bridge, walk up the hill on the other side and then along the cliff edge. After the rainy seasons there is a waterfall which plunges 600 metres to the valley below. There are usually Gelada baboons to be seen on the edge of the cliff - sometimes more than a hundred animals.

Fiche

This is the largest town near Debre Libanos. To reach it, return to the main road from the bridge, turn right and drive on towards Gojjam until you reach a sizeable town usually called "Commando", which has a number of hotels and bars. A road

branches off to the right, in a slightly north-east direction, from the middle of the town. It leads you to Fiche, a small town built almost on the edge of the cliff with breath-taking panoramic views of the Jema valley below the cliff, the Abay (Blue Nile) gorge to the north and north-west and the mountain heights of eastern and southeastern Gojjam on the horizon.

Lij Iyassu (r. 1913-1916) was imprisoned at Fiche for a period after his downfall. The late 19th century church of St. George is worth a visit.

Derba and Mulu Farm

This excursion leads through lovely countryside, especially recommended for those interested in birds; Mulu Farm was the home of the Sandford family.

Accessibility

The drive takes about an hour and 10 minutes each way. It can be done in a saloon car with good clearance except during or just after heavy rain, when a four-wheel-drive vehicle is better.

Route

Take the road to Gojjam past the Italian Cultural Institute. It climbs steeply up the Entoto Hills with panoramic views of Addis Ababa at around 10 km, just before you reach the gravel road on the right-hand side leading to Entoto Maryam Church. At around 25 km you go through Sululta village.

Just at the outskirts of Ch'ancho village, at about 41 km, turn left on the "White Road" (it is whitish). The road is a good, well-maintained stone road. At 43 km you cross the Sibilu River. Continuing straight on, you reach Derba village at 63 km. Drive through it until the road ends at the gate (65 km) of what is called "the cement factory" but actually is not.

Derba

The guards on the gate have a tendency to refuse entry but persistent negotiation will prevail. Once through it, you reach an observation platform, from which you look down the gorge of the Bole River on the left. The Bole joins the Muger River where the cable (see below) meets it. The Muger river in turn flows into the Abay (Blue Nile) river some kilometres to the north.

The so-called cement factory is a cable-bucket teleferique built in the 1960s by a Yugoslav company to bring limestone up from the Muger Valley for the cement factory in Addis Ababa (hence the White Road, made of limestone). The stone is also taken up a road, visible to the left of the cable, to the Muger Cement Factory, which was built by the then East Germans in the 1980's about 30 km from Holeta, a town on the Ambo Road.

For a good walk, leave the viewpoint at the top of the teleferique and go to the right, keeping near the edge of the gorge. If you walk for 40 minutes or so across to the edge of the narrow part of the Bole gorge, you are rewarded by a view of the Bole falls at its head: a spectacular sight, especially in the rainy season. **Lammergeiers** are often seen at eye level, over the gorge.

Returning the way you came, at 2.3 km from the teleferique, just on the outskirts of Derba, turn left down a track. After half a kilometre you come to the precipitous edge of the gorge where there is a waterfall known as the Aleltu Falls, after the name of the river. **Gelada baboons**, which are endemic to Ethiopia, can at times be seen nearby (or ask a villager where they were last seen). This is a good place to observe **Ruppell's griffon vulture**, which nests on the cliff-face opposite. It is

also possible to see **lammergeier**, **lanner**, **peregrine** and **black eagle** as well as endemic species such as the **white-billed starling** and the **white-collared pigeon**. It is a pity that the youths that gather around the Falls can be annoying at times with their persistence.

Mulu Farm

Rejoining the White Road, drive back in the direction of Addis Ababa and take the second turning on the right, at 6 km from the teleferique (just before you reach a signpost for the Mulu Seyo School on the left-hand side). The grassy track leads after about one kilometre to the somewhat dilapidated farm house that used to belong to the Sandford family.

Dan and Chris Sandford farmed Mulu as tenants of the Emperor's family and later of the government from 1922 to 1975, except during the Italian occupation. Forced to leave Ethiopia when the Italians invaded, they returned during the Second World War. Dan, who as a Brigadier General led Mission 101 and helped to oust the occupiers, subsequently became an advisor to Emperor Haile Selassie. Chris Sandford in 1946 founded the school in Addis Ababa which is now known as the Sandford English Community School.

Since 1975 the farm has belonged to the state. It is a relatively green spot with varieties of plants, and a walk around the place is worthwhile. The farmhouse itself is occupied by several local families.

Just below the farmhouse, slightly to the right as you face down the valley, a small track runs down through the trees to where a clear little spring emerges. It was dammed by the Sandfords a few metres below, providing a constantly clear pool from where the farmhouse water was drawn. A few minutes observation by this pool will produce sightings of some lovely woodland birds coming to drink.

Sibilu River

Return to the White Road and drive to where it crosses the Sibilu River at 43 km from Addis Ababa. Here, perhaps as an alternative expedition, you can park and walk down beside the river, where the bird life is well worth seeing. Species include the **blue-winged goose**, **Abyssinian long-claw**, **red-cheeked swallow** (rare in Ethiopia), **common quail**, **grey wagtail**, **green sandpiper**, **wattled ibis**, **African black duck** and **half-collared kingfisher**. After about a 20-minute walk downriver, past several attractive places for picnicking, you reach a low waterfall. The area has many varieties of flower as well.

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Entoto

The shortest trip out of Addis Ababa, Entoto offers churches of historic interest at the site of the previous capital of Ethiopia, and a wonderful view over the city.

Accessibility

It takes about 15 minutes to drive the approximately 10 km from Menelik Square to the first church on Entoto. The road is tarmac throughout and a saloon car is adequate for the drive. However if you want to view the Entoto Natural Park a four-wheel-drive vehicle is advisable.

Route

Take the road past the Sidist Kilo university campus. After you pass the American Embassy on the right you come to a fork in the road. Bear left. Here you will be passing through the Shiro Meda part of town; the market specialises in cloth. Follow this road to the top of Entoto. (The number 17 bus also goes up Entoto.) As you climb the hill you will see many wood-carriers, almost invariably female, and both eucalyptus and indigenous trees. The church of St. Mary is on the right at the top of the hill.

Entoto

Emperor Menelik II founded Entoto as his capital in 1881 (it was his fourth) and named it after an early capital known to have existed in the area before the wars of Ahmed Grag. His decision to settle at that place symbolised his determination to make Ethiopia great as Emperor Lebna Dengel, a powerful ruler in the 16th century, is believed to have had a residence on the site. Menelik also believed that he was fulfilling an old prophecy that a great grandson of Lebna Dengel would one day rebuild it.

The first building to be put up was the palace. Then, after Menelik's marriage to Taytu Betul in 1883, she supervised the construction of Entoto Maryam church while at Menelik's request, a church dedicated to the Archangel Raguel was completed in 1885. This was one of the first octagonal churches in the area, and perhaps owes its shape to an Indian architect, Haji Khawas of Peshawar.

To celebrate the completion of Entoto Maryam church Empress Taytu gave a prodigious banquet which is said to have lasted for a week and cost 5315 cattle their lives.

Entoto was built as a fortress but was not suitable as a peacetime metropolis. The climate on Entoto was also harsh. The place was exposed to the wind, hard to reach and without drinking water. Again, its wood supply was exhausted. It is not surprising that the capital was soon transferred down the hill to what is now Addis Ababa.

Entoto Maryam Church

As you walk through the entrance to the church compound, you will see to your far right a small church built in 1883/4 (the main church was completed in 1886/87). The houses that surround the church are inhabited by the monks and priests, and underneath many of them are said to be tombs.

Menelik was crowned King of Kings here on November 3, 1889 in the church. The bell tower to the right of the main church was built by Empress Taytu and restored in 1971 by Princess Yeshashwork. At the back of the church you can see Addis Ababa to your right. The buildings that you see behind the church comprise buildings from Menelik's palace compound, with later additions. They are now inhabited by priests. When you are three-quarters of the way round (going anti-clockwise), you can see on your right the storehouse for the church, where the communion is kept.

The church is open on the 28th of each month, on Sundays and every day during the fasting season from noon.

Entoto Maryam Church Museum

The museum is on the left just as you enter the church compound. It is small but contains interesting artifacts donated by the emperors Menelik and Haile Selassie, including presents to Menelik from England, Russia, Greece, Jerusalem and elsewhere.

It is closed on Mondays but open on other days 0900-1300 and 1430-1730. The entrance fee is currently 10 birr for foreigners and 1 birr for Ethiopians, and includes an explanatory tour of the museum.

St. Raguel's Church

To reach this church continue on the tarmac road for about another kilometre. After the road has turned left you will see the church on the left-hand side of the road.

As you enter the church compound, you will see a green gate to your far right. Behind it is a small cave church, apparently belonging to very early times. Because of the religious school nearby, it is frequented by many scholars. To gain entrance, seek permission from the church authorities.

View over Addis Ababa

Leaving Raguel church compound continue driving on. You will see that the road skirts a hill-top crowned by a radio mast. Turn left on a rough track just before passing the radio mast. Park after 50 metres or so.

The children who accost you may be persistent but the view over Addis Ababa is stunning. Wuchacha is the main massif on the right. In the centre distance is the volcanic cone of Zuquala, while Yerer is on your left.

Entoto Natural Park

This Park is being developed by the Ethiopia Heritage Trust. As you drive up the hill towards Entoto Maryam the Park is on your right. However, the best way to

see it is to drive on from Entoto Maryam church and where the tarmac road turns left take the turning to the right onto a dirt road. Stop wherever you like on this road during the next 5 kilometres. The Park, which comprises 13 square kilometres, is spread out before you on the right, with Addis Ababa at its feet and again, the widespread views of the distant mountains. The added advantage of enjoying the view along this road rather than near the radio mast is that you are more likely to have the peace and calm to yourselves.

Further details of the Ethiopia Heritage Trust are set out at the back of this booklet. Your support in helping develop the Park would be appreciated.

Ittisa Tekle Haymanot and Kessem Gorge

A trip to the birthplace of Ethiopia's most famous saint can be combined with walks to nearby monasteries and down to the river gorge.

Accessibility

It takes an hour and 15 minutes to drive to the village. A saloon car is perfectly adequate.

Route

Take the Dessie Road. Cross the rivers Lega Tafo and Lega Dadi to the village of Sendafa (38 km, measured from Menelik Square), where there is a police college on the left. At 43 km you pass through the town of Beke Mariam. Drive a further 10 km and turn right onto a good gravel road. It is marked by a metal signboard in Amharic with a small cross on top.

After another 7.5 km the road reaches the edge of the Kessem Gorge. The view is attractive. If you leave your car and stroll to the right you can see the Bole Falls, which are impressive in the rainy season. Below the falls, the small Aba Moga River forms two pools that look pleasant for a picnic. There are red-fronted baboons, **Gelada baboons**, in the area.

The road descends into the gorge. After a further 3.6 km it stops, halfway down the gorge, at the village of Ittisa, or, to give it its full name, Ittisa Tekle Haymanot Geddā (geddam is the Amharic word for monastery).

St. Tekle Haymanot

The best-known saint in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Tekle Haymanot (c. 1215-1313), is believed to have been born here. An important historical figure, he played a significant role in ending the Zagwe dynasty in favour of the Solomonic dynasty that began with Yekuno Amlak. At an early age he left Shewa to study at Lake Hayk in Wollo and then at Debre Damot in Tigray before founding in northern Shewa the monastery of Debre Libanos, still the foremost monastery in Ethiopia (for further details see the entry on Debre Libanos). He is always depicted standing on one leg, which church tradition holds he did for seven years at Debre Libanos, praying, until the leg fell off.

Ittisa Tekle Haymanot Church

The church has a tradition that it was founded by Aba Salama Kesate-Berhan as St. Michael's Church in 328, during the reign of Abraha and Atsbeha of Axum. The tradition continues that he carved a total of 1286 tablets in this church, making his followers carry them to different parts of Ethiopia to establish Orthodox churches and perform missionary duties. It is this church that was later named after St. Tekle Haymanot.

According to the Amharic inscription on the wall of the church, the monastery was founded here in 1250. It was destroyed by Ahmed Gagn, whose Muslim forces occupied Shewa in 1531. After 333 years the monastery was rebuilt by King Sahle

Selassie of Shewa (r. 1813-1847). During the Italian occupation, the monastery was moved away from its site near the church, which had been built in 1908 by Empress Taytu (r. 1889-1913). Emperor Haile Selassie built the stone steps that surround the church.

In the grounds of the church, following its wall to the right, are tombs over what are believed to be the graves of Tekle Haymanot's father and mother, Tsega Zeab and Igzie Haria. They were built by Empress Menen, wife of Emperor Haile Selassie, in 1924. Between them lies the tomb of Abuna Petros, Emperor Yohannes IV's Egyptian bishop who retired here on the Emperor's death in 1889. The first tomb to the left of the churchyard entrance is that of Wolde Meskal Tariku, who was Emperor Menelik's Minister of Pen (*Tsehafi T'zaz*).

In addition to monthly celebration there are major celebrations (*negs*) at the church twice a year on Tekle Haymanot's feast days. The more important one is held on Tahsas 24 (2 January), the lesser on Tir 24 (1 February).

St. Tekle Haymanot Monastery

A path to the left of the water pipe in the village green leads to this monastery, and takes about 10 minutes to walk. Though the principal building is an unimpressive metal-roofed dining hall, the history of the monastery goes back centuries. This monastery is one of three that can be considered a single institution. The others are St. Mariam and St. Balewold. Together they number several hundred monks and nuns, who are supported by the charity of the Christian community around them.

The Church School

Return to the village green and on the opposite side of the church is a traditional church school. Here you can see the roofs of about 40 small *gojos*, or *sarbets* (visitors to Ethiopia usually use the term "tukul" for a grass-roofed house but Ethiopians do not). These have been built by the school's 500 or so pupils, whose ages range from four or five years to 20 years, and are inhabited by both teachers (priests) and those students who do not walk to school.

The Birthplace of St. Tekle Haymanot

From the village green walk or drive back along the road you came in on. After two minutes you cross a bridge and on your right you will see rock dwellings. The one further from the bridge is said to be St. Tekle Haymanot's church and the closer one is his birthplace. Between them you will see that holes have been cut in the rock, with their entrances re-sealed. These are the burial places of monks and nuns.

Walks

There is an attractive walk down to the River Kessema at the foot of the gorge, which local people say takes them one hour and the unfit two hours. There are also worthwhile walks to the monasteries of St. Mariam (one hour) and St. Balewold (about three hours).

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Koremash

This trip leads to one of Menelik II's arsenals, set amongst spectacular scenery.

Accessibility

Koremash is about 85 km from Addis Ababa, and the journey takes approximately two hours. A good four-wheel-drive vehicle is essential as the road is very bad in many places.

Route

Take the Dessie Road. You pass the Kotebe College of Teacher Education - previously Haile Selassie Secondary School - on your left after 10 km. At 16 km you cross the river Laga Tafo and at 23 km the Laga Dadi (River of Tej). At 36 km you drive through Sendafa, with the police college on your left.

At 70 km, having passed through the villages of Aleltu and Fitcha, you reach the smaller village of Hamus Gebeya (Thursday Market, in Amharic). Just as you come out of this village you will see a track leading off to the right (the turning is marked by a blank, brown metal sign). This road will take you through marvellous scenery all the way to Koremash.

Kidane Mehret Church

About 5 km after turning, you reach the edge of the gorge, where the church of Kidane Mehret is spectacularly located. The priests say that there has been a church on the site since ancient times and that it was burnt by Ahmed Gragin in the 16th century.

Koremash Village and Church

A further 8 km on you reach Koremash village. Drive right through it to where the road stops. According to local people, the church there, Kudus Mikael, was established about a hundred years ago by Menelik II. The church was later moved to another site some way down the hill and returned to its present location 40 years ago. A market is held in front of the church on Tuesdays.

Koremash Arsenal

If you continue past the church, you then enter through a crumbling gate the compound where Menelik's arsenal is situated. The 11 buildings are spaced in a horseshoe shape. There is additional storage space under the roofs, which are entered by a hole high up on the end walls. A couple of buildings were restored in 1985-87 by a Lutheran mission and are used to store grain. Other buildings are occupied by units of local government: the education bureau, the agricultural bureau and so forth.

If you walk the length of the compound to the far side, you can go through a small gap in the wall and stand on a narrow ledge to see the most remarkable scenery near Addis Ababa. At the end of the promontory the river immediately below is called the Derekit. A little to the right it joins the larger Amarit River. Further to the right, and hidden in the distance, the Amarit joins the Kesseme River, which in

turn leads on to the Awash River. Of the two peaks in front of you, the higher one on the left is called Megazes.

Local tradition has it that when Menelik II first saw Koremash (which means "a man who plants kore", a kind of tree) he called it Salayesh (which means "I missed seeing you earlier", and which is a name given to a number of places to express regret that if it had been seen earlier it would have been put to good use for much longer).

Marhabetie and the Jema Valley

This trip offers a day in the heart of the mountains of northern Shewa amidst pleasant and often impressive scenery.

Accessibility

In a good car, the trip takes about three hours from the centre of Addis Ababa to the bridge over the Jema River, which is about 153 kms away. The first part of the journey is feasible most of the year by saloon car. There is a good asphalt road with a few potholes as far as the turn at Muka Turi (80 kms) off the Gojjam road, followed by a very good packed stone and hard dirt road, with only a few roughish places, as far as the village of Lemi (130 kms). The road is being improved. Three shallow fords with a bottom of small stones are usually easily negotiable but can become difficult after heavy rain. Bridges to replace two of them are almost completed.

Beyond Lemi, however, the road drops steeply in sharp corkscrews down to the Jema River and the surface is much rougher. Use of a four-wheel-drive vehicle is strongly recommended. For those unable to obtain one, there is a public bus service from Addis Ababa to Alem Ketema, the capital of the district of Marhabetie. A day out by bus, a night in a hotel in Alem Ketema and a bus back the next day would make a pleasant excursion.

Route

Leave Addis Ababa by the Gojjam road. It climbs the Entoto range, which here forms the watershed between the Awash and the Abay (Blue Nile). At the top, the view over Addis Ababa must be one of the finest urban prospects in the world. Eucalyptus plantings provide much of the firewood for Addis Ababa, and loaded and unloaded donkeys crowd the road. Beyond Entoto, the beautiful rolling Sululta plains are still important grazing lands. The principal crop is hay, as the plains are flooded during the rains and are too wet for cereal cultivation. Much of the hay is taken to Addis Ababa for sale. The area was once *madbet*, providing food and grazing for the Imperial army. Villages along the road, in season, sell *irgo*, or yoghurt, which Ethiopians eat with *mitmitta*, a hot, peppery spice.

Continue through the village of Sululta at around 25 km. Just before Ch'ancho (41 km), a dirt road leads left to the Muger Valley and to Mulu Farm (see separate entry). Stay on the main road until the village of Muka Turi (81 km), then turn sharply right just beyond the small Agip station.

Follow the dirt road through some small villages with fords at 98 km, 101 km and 114 km. As far as Lemi, the road passes over flattish plains with mountains in the blue distance. At 125 km the road runs beside a sheer escarpment overlooking the Jema River. At Lemi (131 km) those in a saloon car are strongly advised to go no further than the top of the big descent, but to enjoy the view before turning back.

If you have a four-wheel-drive vehicle, drive on, keeping to the left at Lemi, ignoring apparent turns in the small town and a major new road which branches off to the right and leads to Debra Berhan on the Addis Ababa - Dessie Road. As you go

on to the left the road drops steeply. About halfway down there is an attractive little traditional round church on a hillock on the right and further down there are sheer cliffs to the left. At the bottom, boys sell lemons beside the road. At 153 km the road crosses the Jema River by a narrow Bailey-type bridge. (The Jema River is one of the major tributaries of the Abay (Blue Nile) river which it joins a few kilometres north of the bridge on the Addis Ababa - Gojjam Road).

The grassy banks above the Jema would make a good picnic spot, though the river is said to have crocodiles. The heat in the valley is often quite fierce and the humidity is high, but for a short time this makes a pleasant change from the colder, thinner air of Addis Ababa.

Guards at the bridge do not advise driving beyond Alem Ketema, even in a four-wheel-drive vehicle. On the way back, it is possible to take a left turn on the new road at Lemi and return to Addis Ababa via Debre Berhan, which takes about two and a half hours.

The area

Marhabetie and the Jema Valley is not a place which has history in the sense of famous churches, palaces, battle sites or ancient remains. The inhabitants of this quiet and lovely area have, of course, been part of the broader pattern of events for centuries as they lived, worked, married, died and at times went out from their homes to war. Marhabetie was a centre of strong patriotic resistance in 1936-1941 during the Italian occupation, for example. What makes the heart of northern Shewa well worth a visit is its often stunning scenery and the sense of remote rural life largely unchanged for generations.

Menagesha Suba National Park

An expedition to what is said to be the oldest protected forest in Africa provides a pleasant walk, beautiful views and a variety of birds.

Accessibility

It takes one hour and 30 minutes to drive to Menagesha, which is on the southwest slope of Mount Wuchacha. The first 29 km are asphalt and the rest is dirt; care must be taken in driving over the irrigation channels that cross the road from Sebeta to the park. The route is possible with a saloon car, but to drive from the park headquarters to the upper edge of the park without a four-wheel-drive vehicle is not easy. During the rainy season a saloon car is definitely not a good idea and even a four-wheel-drive car will have problems.

Route

Take the Jimma road southwest from Addis Ababa and pass ALERT (All Africa Leprosy Rehabilitation and Training Centre) at 10 km. The town of Sebeta lies at 26 km, and leaving the town you pass under a metal archway. At 1.4 km from the archway, where there is a sign for the ETCA Ethiopian Training and Testing Branch, turn right on the dirt road towards the Meta Ambo Brewery. After 100 metres the road forks. At the fork you will see a sign indicating the Menagesha Suba National Park 16 km away. Bear left.

Interrupted by irrigation channels, the road leads, at 16 km from the Brewery sign, to Suba village, which is set in woodland. You will know that you have arrived when you see topiary work ahead of you. Bear left and take the second turning on the right. After 100 metres you come to the thatched entrance gateway to the park, with a sign saying "Welcome to Menagesha Suba".

Return Journey

You can return to Addis by the Ambo road instead, if you wish; it takes perhaps ten minutes longer. Leave the park under the thatched gateway and turn right at the T-junction after about 100 metres. The road is a reasonable dirt one, though you must beware of small bridges where the sides of the road have been nibbled away. After some 17 km you reach the paved Ambo road. Turn right.

On your right you will see Mount Menagesha, a conical tree-covered hill. Menagesha means literally "Mountain of crowning" and is said to be the place where the medieval Christian kings of Ethiopia were crowned. At about 15 km from the point where you joined the Ambo road, you pass Lake Gefersa, a man-made reservoir and a good place for spotting birds, including the endemic blue-winged goose.

Menagesha Suba Park

The park is one of the best juniper forests in Ethiopia. While many trees in Ethiopia have been cut down for timber and fuel, Menagesha has fortunately been protected since the 1600s, making it probably the oldest protected forest in Africa.

King Zar'a-Yakob (r.1434-1468) is said to have ordered the area planted with

seeds of trees from Wef Washa forest near Debre Sina. Though portions of Menagesha have been exploited for timber in the past, much of it has been allowed to develop naturally, showing us how the forests of the upper central plateau might once have looked.

Menagesha Forest is part of the volcanic dome of Wuchacha. The dome culminates in a broad, flat northern summit (about 3350 metres high) and a sharp southern peak (about 3300 metres).

After driving for a little less than 2 km on the forest road, you reach the park headquarters at 2400 metres. The drive goes through a part of the park that was logged, and old stumps are clearly visible among the secondary growth. From the headquarters there is an attractive 6 km forest walk to the upper boundary of the park at 2500 metres. You can also drive, though it would be difficult for a saloon car.

At around 0.8 km from the headquarters there is a bridge where it is sometimes possible to see **rock Hyrax**; the spot is marked by the enormous lobelia, *Lobelia gibberoa*, and the giant groundsel, *Senecio gigas*. After passing a camp site at around 1.2 km, where the British general, Field Marshall Montgomery is said to have stayed when he visited the Park shortly after the Second World War, there is another bridge at 2.6 km where giant groundsel and lobelia can again be seen; the spot is known as Lobelia Bend.

In the early part of the walk, the main trees are the endemic *Juniperus procera*—some of them truly magnificent giants—the African olive, *Olea africana*, and *Podocarpus falcatus*. The March-flowering fireball lily, *Scadoxus multiflorus*, is spectacular. As you go higher the vegetation changes: species such as tree heather, *Erica arborea*, St. John's wort, *Hypericum revolutum*, appear and the juniper gets smaller.

At the upper boundary of the park you find, as you emerge from the forest, an attractive octagonal building. This is said to have been built for ex-President Mengistu Haile Mariam as one of his retreats. The views from there are marvellous, while almost equally striking are the slopes and peaks of Wuchacha rising behind you. From here you can walk among the valleys and peaks of Wuchacha and to the summit itself.

Some larger wild forest mammals include **Menelik's bushbuck** (*Tragelaphus scriptus meneliki*, a very dark endemic subspecies); **Colobus monkey**, black and white, found near big junipers; and **Anubis baboon** (olive baboon), which can be seen anywhere in the forest. At the base of the forest, **vervet monkey** and **grey duiker** are found. (Duikers are also called **crowned antelopes** and are generally hunchbacked and smallish, with simple horns which do not reach beyond their ears.)

The birds in the forest include the **black-headed forest oriole**, which has a lovely clear song; the **white-cheeked turaco**, green, with vivid red wings in flight; and the **crowned eagle**. And at dawn and dusk, the beautiful endemic **yellow-fronted parrot** calls from high trees in the forest clearings.

Nursery and Sawmill

In Suba village, surrounded by hedges and topiary work, is the tree nursery belonging to the national park. Opposite, is the entrance to the disused sawmill, which is interesting to visit if you can persuade the guard to allow you in.

17

Mount Furi

This extinct volcano is just outside Addis Ababa and provides an easy walk with impressive views.

Accessibility

It takes 45 minutes to motor in a saloon car to the point from which the walk begins. It will then take a little over two hours to climb the mountain at a gentle pace and an hour and a half for the descent.

Route

Leave Addis on the Jimma road. At about 13 km from Menelik Square you pass through the small village of Kara Kore, a turning and stopping place for taxis and buses. At 19 km you reach the outskirts of Alem Gena, where you will notice a green-and-white sign for a Road Transport Authority station. A couple of hundred metres further on turn left opposite a sign for the Ethiopian Roads Authority Training and Testing Branch on a decayed asphalt road. This gives way to dirt, and is the Hosaina road.

After 4.5 km you pass a new mosque on the left. A further 3.5 km on there is a turning to the left to Geja Kudus Balewold; the dirt road is heavily eroded. You will see a small blue-and-white sign in Amharic. Park here.

The Walk

Mount Furi is an extinct volcano of the Tertiary period and is between 4 and 40 million years old. It is composed largely of trachytes (trachytes are dark, basic lavas, often used for building stone). Its summit rises to 2839 metres and the climb is about 400 metres.

Follow the road to a church, through countryside which shows signs of severe erosion. You reach the octagonal church, Geja Kudus Balewold, after about ten minutes. It is surrounded by trees, as is traditional in Ethiopia, and is simple inside and out. Built in 1953, it is served by 12 priests, who mainly live in the buildings inside the compound.

The path continues through eroded eucalyptus-planted slopes. Choose your own route up; the easiest, after the church, is to follow the ridge in front and slightly to the right of you.

As you get higher, the views of Wuchacha to the left and the cone of Zuquala to the right are impressive. As you climb out of the eucalyptus plantations, the typical vegetation for the height and area appears, though the coverage is somewhat thin. Among the plants to be found are the white-flowered, sweet-smelling bush *Carissa edulis*, the indigenous white rose (*Rosa abyssinica*), the yellow-flowering *Helichrysum splendidum*. The small yellow flower with five heart-shaped petals, *Thunbergia rospali*, is particularly beautiful. The mauve-coloured, grasslike *Polygala sphenoptera* is modest but attractive. Commonly seen is a low, light-blue flowering *Echinops sp.*, and in places wild asparagus (*Asparagus africanus*) can be found.

As you climb you are aiming for the masts of the television transmitter antenna. Between 45 minutes and an hour after leaving the church you cross a low col before entering a eucalyptus plantation which covers the moderately steep climb to the summit. As you cross the col and start the climb, look out for the beautiful, small, blue butterflies that abound at certain times of the year.

The summit is crowned by the television station, and it is forbidden to take pictures there. The summit is rather a disappointment, as the tall eucalyptus block the view in many places. Best to enjoy the views on the way up and down.

18

Mount Zuquala

The distinctive cone of Mt. Zuquala can be seen on the horizon south of Addis Ababa. It has been a holy place and a place of pilgrimage for centuries. From the top the views are stunning and there is a beautiful crater lake.

Accessibility

The drive to Zuquala takes about two and a half hours each way. A four-wheel-drive vehicle is essential; even with such a car the trip is not possible in, or just after, the rainy season. The gradient is 1:6 in places.

Route

Take the Bishoftu (Debre Zeit) road out of town and continue until you reach the outskirts of Bishoftu, 45 km from Addis Ababa. About 150 metres from a big Shell petrol station on the left there is a turning on the right, just after the Shell Oils shop and immediately before the bus station. Take this turning.

About 3.5 km from the main road you will see in front of you a steel factory: there is a red metal sign spanning the road. Take the track going off to the right. A further 3 km down the track is a crossroads. Turn right here.

Ten kilometres from the crossroads you will come to the church of Medhane Alem surrounded by trees to the right. The church is 97 years old. In the homes in and around the church we are told that 25 priests, 110 *debteras* (deacons), four monks and 20 students live and work.

Bear right past the church. Zuquala is now plainly visible ahead and slightly to the right. You will also be able to see the side vents in the volcano. At the base of Mount Zuquala you will come to the village of Wambor Danisa. Take the track on the right, which leads up the mountain. The road finally ends in a clearing approximately 81 km from Addis Ababa, at an altitude of 2911 metres.

As you climb the mountain, you will see heather, St. John's wort, lobelia and giant groundsel. It is also a good place to see the white-cheeked turaco.

Zuquala

Zuquala is an important religious centre; the waters of Lake Zuquala are renowned for their traditional miraculous healing power. The religious pilgrimage that takes place twice a year on the mountain (on 13 or 14 March and 15 or 16 October) is dedicated to Saint Gebre Manfas Quddus, or Abbo. St. Abbo is said to have gone to the area during the reign of King Lalibela (13th c.), supposedly to save people from their sins.

It may also have been a place of refuge. It is said that at the time of the Muslim Ahmed Gragn's invasion in the early 1530s, for example, fleeing Christians sought refuge on Mount Zuquala. The remains of one church which might be from this period can still be seen in the undergrowth (see below).

Besides the formal church services there are traditional religious ceremonies that take place in Zuquala involving *dalaga* – ritual singing and dancing. The *zar*

ceremony involves singing and incantations aimed at spirit possessions, particularly to cure sterility. Zuqala is also an important Oromo place of "animist" worship.

Haile Selassie's Church

When you park your car you will notice two churches to your left, Abbo and Medhane Alem. Although you cannot enter, they are worth seeing from the outside. The further church - Medhane Alem - was constructed by Emperor Haile Selassie.

Touring the Lake(1)

A walk around the lake will give a good idea of how high the top of the mountain is and provide views of striking scenery. It is possible to get a guide, for which you should not pay more than 10-20 birr.

If you start off anti-clockwise, you will see a lot of houses to your right, which belong to a nunnery. When you are about a third of the way around you may see the Awash River winding its way across the countryside below you. At a little more than halfway around you are at the highest point. If you walk into the undergrowth towards the lake there are a number of earthworks which belong to a church believed to have been destroyed by Ahmed Gagn.

When you are between half and two-thirds of the way around, it is possible to see Lake Koka to your left in the distance. Finally, when you are most of the way around, if you walk towards the lake there is a rock formation which is said to have been designed to find out if you are holy. There is a small space between two rocks no more than 20 cms apart through which you must fit. If you manage it, you are holy. (You will probably need to be very holy—or to have a guide—in order to find the exact spot.)

Walking at a leisurely pace, with pauses to admire the view and have a picnic, the walk takes about three hours.

Touring the Lake (2)

If you want a shorter walk you can descend down to the crater floor from near where you parked your car; someone will readily show you where the path starts. It is then a pleasant, gentle hour's walk around the margins of the lake.

The forest around the lake is a good place to see the black and white **colobus monkeys**, and the **grey duiker** is also fairly common at the forest fringes; the marshland around the lake often harbours flocks of the endemic **wattled ibis**. (The name for this bird in the Oromo language is "Gaganu", and it is often applied to an excessively talkative person....)

It is worth remembering that Zuqala is considered a holy place and the monks take a dim view of anyone desecrating the area in any way.

19

Sodere

With its comfortable hotel, naturally-heated swimming pool and trees filled with monkeys, Sodere offers a pleasant escape from Addis Ababa.

Accessibility

Sodere is approximately one hour and 45 minutes south of Addis Ababa on a road that is tarmac throughout. A saloon car is perfectly adequate for the journey.

Route

Take the Bishoftu (Debra Zeit) road out of town through Bishoftu itself and on through Mojo (avoid the right-hand turn at Mojo for Lake Langano). Just past Mojo (about 78 km from Addis Ababa), the man-made Koka Lake is on the right, and baboons are frequently visible on the side of the road. Ten kilometres from Mojo is the town of Adama (Nazreth), with a number of good hotels (especially the Plaza Hotel) if you want to stop the night. Continue along the main road until the Agip petrol station on the right, followed by a big Post Office, also on the right. You will then see a right turn. Take it, and continue to about 108 km from Addis Ababa, where you will see a road leading off to the left, marked by a colourful sign for the Sodere Resort Hotel.

Sodere Resort Hotel

Before entering the Resort Hotel compound, it is possible to walk along the river, where there are low falls a short distance from the hotel. **Crocodiles and hippos** can sometimes be seen, especially in the late afternoon.

The large compound itself, shaded by trees full of **Vervet monkeys**, is also an agreeable place for a stroll. Its many attractions include a large naturally-heated swimming pool, a restaurant and bars, and a good hotel. The entrance fee for all visitors is 5 birr per person at weekends and 3 birr for weekdays. As you enter the compound you see the reception on your right, where those who want a room should register.

If you turn right immediately after the Public Baths (naturally heated deep baths) and then go left at the fork, you arrive at the main swimming pool. (Going right at the fork instead brings you to the hotel.) There are changing rooms at the side of the pool and a small bar; a smaller pool is nearby. In the hotel complex not far from the pool there is a restaurant that serves three meals a day, with a bar on the second floor. The hotel rooms are good, with ensuite bathrooms, and those in the new complex have balconies overlooking the river valley.

Sodere is a pleasant destination for a day's excursion or a weekend stay. During the weekend it is frequently busy but for the rest of the week it is a tranquil place and the woodland around the hotel fills up with interesting birds.

Yerer Mountain

This notable landmark south-east of Addis Ababa offers fine views and excellent walking.

Accessibility

Allow a full day for the expedition and start early - particularly if you wish to climb the mountain on foot (Alternative 2). A four-wheel-drive is needed for all three Alternatives.

Route

There are three alternatives. All start by leaving Addis Ababa on the Bishoftu (Debre Zeit) road.

Yerer Mountain

Yerer rises to 3,100 metres. It is a 3.5 million years old central volcano, made up of agglomerates (the near-by Zuquala is more youthful, at about 1 million years).

The surrounding area is historically associated with the 15th-century Emperors Tewodros I (r.1412-13) Zar'a Yakob (r.1434-1468) and Lebna Dengel (r.1508-1540).

Alternative 1

The drive takes about an hour and 30 minutes. Before reaching Dukem, at about 30-35 km, look on the left side of the road for a sign pointing along a dirt road to Kora Maryam church. It comes as the main road drops towards the plain of Dukem, with the railway line close by on the right. The road to Kora Maryam is also the new road to Yerer. This road is reasonable outside of the rainy season for a four-wheel-drive vehicle and leads to a spot high up on the mountain, within about an hour and a half's walk of the summit.

Alternative 2

This is the route for those who wish to climb Yerer on foot. The approach definitely requires a four-wheel-drive.

At Dukem (39 km from Menelik's statue in Addis Ababa) look on the left near the far end of town for the sign Hoteela Karaa Bahaa. At the turning just beyond it, by the Hotel Mesrak Ber (sign in Amharic script), there is a sign with a red cross and the words "Mena Qoricha Barsaiyaa Tasfaayee". Turn left here and after 100 metres cross the railway. Turn right through the village. Ask for St Michael's Church (*Kudus Mikael Beite Kristian*) - though the first church you will come to is Medehane Alem (Medehane Alem means the Saviour of the World). Keep heading directly for Yerer Mountain, asking as required, as the tracks are confusing. The church of St Michael, at about 7 kilometres from Dukem, is on a hill; park somewhere near the hill - exactly where depends on the state of the roads.

From this point the walk to the summit of Yerer and back is around 20-23 kilometres. It is fairly strenuous and it is much better to go slowly, given the altitude. While it can be climbed faster it is better to allow 5 - 6 hours for the ascent and 3 hours for the descent. There are several routes, of which the following is only one.

As you look at Yerer you will see ridges coming down towards you on the right and the left, like arms about to embrace (ignore the smaller ridge between the two). Climb the ridge on the right, and as you get closer to the top, go round to the left to reach the highest peak. You have to find paths yourselves, but this is not difficult.

You will reach the foot of the mountain proper in about 40 minutes and start climbing up through a few junipers (*Juniperus procera*) and scrub containing beautiful red aloes, *Scabiosa colombaria* (one of the two species of scabious found in Africa) and the yellow-flowering *Helichrysum*. But the real delights are the *Carissa edulis*, which has a red bud, a white flower, prickles and looks and smells like jasmine to the uninitiated and *Jasminum*, which has a red bud, white flower, no prickles and smells as jasmine should. The scent of the two combined can be overpowering. As you climb higher you also come through a lot of willow (*Salix subserrata*), perhaps surprisingly, nowhere near water.

After about two and a half hours and at about 2,650 metres, you emerge into more open scrubland with some heather (*Erica arborea*) and St. John's wort (*Hypericum revolutum*); the air here floats with the scent of thyme. At about this point you start to get a good view of a tall rock pillar on your right standing away from the main mountain mass. And here you are likely to get your first view of the vultures that circle majestically. About four hours after starting, you begin climbing through a round-coned cypress wood (*Cupressus lusitanica*), a tree not native to Ethiopia, and half an hour later you will reach a good dirt road - the road described in Alternative 1.

From here you have a good view of the main peaks of Yerer and can plot your way to the top. The best way is probably to follow the road right until it ends and then keep climbing and circling around from right to left. Shortly after the road ends, and after you climb out of the trees, you will get wonderful views of the chasms and clefts of the mountain as it falls away to Bishoftu. You will reach the summit after a further hour. It has stunning views towards Addis Ababa and Wuchacha, to the majestic cone of Zuquala, the lakes of Bishoftu and beyond to the Rift Valley and Koka Lake.

Sensible walkers return the way they came. Another route takes you back down the other ridge (the other welcoming arm of Yerer) so you complete the circle. To do this you return the way you came, but only as far as the road. Follow the road for almost an hour. Then, using your judgement and experience you turn left and pick your own way down. To find a route back is not that easy as there are some thorny and difficult places, but it can be a delightful walk.

Alternative 3

Drive to Bishoftu and take the left turn marked to the Hora Hotel, crossing the railway. Where the road forks left to the hotel, bear right and continue along the road as asphalt gives way to good dirt. You pass the Bishoftu branch of the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the Ethiopian Management Institute residential centre on this road. Further, near the Veterinary College, fork left for Yerer.

The dirt road is good at first but deteriorates; and from the foothills on, a four-wheel-drive vehicle is essential. Even so some places are awkward, especially after rain. The tracks cross each other and can be confusing, so simply ask which is *ye Yerer manged* (the road to Yerer). There are plenty of people around to direct you.

The road climbs steeply in places to a col at about 16.5 km beyond Bishoftu. There used to be ruins, probably medieval, at the foot of the mountain but these seem to have disappeared as local people have taken the stones for their own use. The road enters woods as it climbs, but much cutting of trees is thinning them. On the ascent, there is a pillar on the left of the road commemorating a visit by Emperor Haile Selassie in 1945 (in the Ethiopian calendar; 1952-53 in Gregorian terms). On the slopes above the col there are more ruins, perhaps dating from the 14th or 15th centuries. Not much remains except the foundations or retaining wall of a circular enclosure and some steps which look more modern.

The road continues and drops beyond the col. The col itself is as near as you can get by car to the different summits of Yerer to the left and right. It would make a good start for a shorter walk to one of the summits or an excellent picnic place.

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THE ETHIOPIA HERITAGE TRUST

* The aim of the Trust is to act as a body for the holding in perpetuity of sites and buildings of historical and/or aesthetic interest and of lands of natural beauty to be preserved for present and future generations.

* The Trust is an independent charity, non-political and non-religious.

* It is non-profit making and raises its own funds. It works to harness the power of voluntary service and depends upon the contributions of private individuals and businesses.

Entoto Natural Park

The Trust's first project, to establish a Natural Park on the Entoto Hills above Addis Ababa, is under way. Addis Ababa Municipality (Region 14) has donated 13 square kilometres of land (33 gashas) to the Trust in perpetuity for this purpose. The Park is situated above Kidane Mehret Church. Its main aims are:

1. To provide a pleasant place for recreation for the people of Addis Ababa.
2. To bring back to the Park the native trees, shrubs, flowers, birds and animals that used to be found on Entoto.
3. To be a living educational centre.
4. To help prevent soil erosion and flooding.

At the time of writing the Trust has owned the land for a year. In that time, amongst other activities, 68,000 indigenous trees have been planted in the Park through voluntary labour.

Facilities planned for the Park include a visitors centre, student dormitories, a cafe/restaurant, many kilometres of paths, picnic places and an open-air theatre.

The illustrations in this booklet are from the Park.

Other Plans

The Trust's first building project is hoped to be the acquisition and restoration of the historic Old Municipal Building in Addis Ababa. Discussion about other sites outside Addis Ababa has begun.

YOUR SUPPORT

We hope that we will have your support. The more members we have the greater our influence and the more we can do. And we need money for our work.

For further information and application for membership please contact:

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