



ABOUT ETHIOPIA

history

Ethiopia is a country beset by years of war, severe drought and epidemics. It has been crippled economically and socially, and has fought for years to regain its footing. As one of the oldest countries in the world, Ethiopia is Africa's second most populous nation. Historically known as a relatively isolated country, by the mid-twentieth century Ethiopia became a major hub for global trade. In 1945, Ethiopia became one of the 51 original members of the United Nations. The country is infamous for its devastating famine in 1984, which left more than one million people dead, and called into question its leaders, social system and political climate. Finally, in 1991, Ethiopia's long-standing regime—who many blamed for the famine—was overthrown and a constitution was adopted three years later. In 1995, Ethiopia's first multiparty elections were held. Today, Ethiopia has the fourth fastest-growing economy in the world (according to *The Economist*) and has been one of the fastest growing, non-oil-dependent African nations.

country information

- **Time:** GMT/UTC +3.
Ethiopians use the Ethiopian calendar, which dates back to the Coptic calendar in 25 BC. One Ethiopian year consists of 12 months, each lasting 30 days, plus a thirteenth month of five or six days. They are seven to eight years behind our calendar. The 12-hour clock cycles do not begin at midnight and noon, but instead are offset six hours. The first hour of daylight is 1.
- **Population:** 85 million
- **Area:** 1,104,300 sq. km.
- **Capital:** Addis Ababa (*means "New Flower"*)
- **Borders:** Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somali and Kenya
- **Languages:** Amharic is the official language of Ethiopia, although English, Italian, French and Arabic are also widely spoken
- **Ethnic Groups:** Oromo (34.5%), Amhara (26.9%), Somali (6.2%), Tigray (6%), Sidama (4%), Gurage (2.5%), Welayta (2.3%) and around 80 other small ethnic groups
- **Government:** Independent Federal Democratic Republic with a president as head of state and a prime minister as the head of government
- **Religion:** Muslim (40%), Orthodox Christian (40%), Animist (15%), other (5%)
- **Telephone:** 00 + 251 + city area code + local number
- **Money:** Ethiopian Birr, which is made up of 100 cents
- **Average Income:** \$100 per year (*one of Africa's, and the world's, poorest nations*)

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weather

Most of Ethiopia has a tropical climate moderated by altitude, with marked wet and dry seasons. The eastern lowlands are much drier with a hot, semi-arid to desert climate. In the highlands of Ethiopia, temperatures are reasonably warm around the year but rarely very hot. Most of the rain comes between April and September. Nighttime temperatures may fall to near or below freezing in the mountains, particularly during the dry season. Thunderstorms are very frequent in the wetter parts of the country, occurring almost daily during the wet season. In many places, there are more than a hundred thunderstorms a year. In the northeastern lowlands, the Danakil desert, and in the southeastern lowlands, rainfall is low and temperatures are high year-round. With the exception of the hot lowlands, the climate of Ethiopia is generally healthy and pleasant, except at the height of the wet season when there can be a constant cloud cover and rain.

culture

ART

Traditional Ethiopian art, such as paintings, are an expression of religion, especially the Greek Orthodox religion. Paintings have a medieval style and people are painted with large, almond-shaped eyes.

MUSIC

Ethiopia has a strong tradition of music. Popular music is played, but most musicians also sing traditional songs and most audiences choose to listen to both popular and traditional styles. Ethiopian music uses a unique modal system that is pentatonic, with characteristically long intervals between some notes. This creates a somewhat “unfinished” and anticipatory atmosphere to the music. Folk instruments include the masenqo (*fiddle*), washint (*flute*), kebero (*drums*) and krar (*lyre*).

SPORTS

Football (*soccer*) is the most popular sport in Ethiopia. Basketball and volleyball are also becoming increasingly popular.

FOOD

Ethiopia's staple food is injera, a spongy bread made of a unique crop only grown in Ethiopia called teff. Injera is baked in a clay pan and eaten with sauce made of either meat, ground grains, beans, or vegetables. The following recipe for Misir Wat is served with injera, which you can buy from an Ethiopian market or restaurant. If you would like to make your own injera, find a recipe online and visit your local health food store to buy teff in the bulk grains section.

MISIR WAT

Makes 6 servings

Ingredients

2 cups lentils, split
6 cups water
2 cups red onions, chopped
2 tablespoons oil
1 tablespoon ginger
1 teaspoon garlic
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
4 hot peppers (*green*)
Salt to taste

Directions

1. Wash lentils and boil in water for five minutes.
2. Cook onions in oil, stirring gently so onions don't turn brown.
3. Remove lentils from heat; drain and reserve water for later use. Add lentils to onions.
4. Add reserved water, stirring to prevent mixture from sticking to the bottom of the pan.
5. Add ginger, garlic, black pepper, peppers and salt.
6. Simmer for 20 minutes.

ABOUT ETHIOPIA

holidays and festivals

Timkat (The Feast of Epiphany): January 19

The greatest Ethiopian festival of the year, Timkat is a three-day celebration, beginning on the eve of Timkat with dramatic and colorful processions. The following morning, the great day itself, Christ's baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan River is commemorated. The third day is devoted to the Feast of St. Michael, the archangel, one of Ethiopia's most popular saints.

Fasika (Ethiopian Easter): April (*follows the Eastern method of calculating Easter*)

On Easter's eve, people celebrate by going to church and lighting candles during a colorful Easter Mass service, which begins at midnight. People go home to break their fast with the meat of chicken or lamb, accompanied with injera and traditional drinks. Like Christmas, Easter is also a day of family reunion, an expression of good wishes with exchange of gifts.

Enkutatash (Ethiopian New Year): September 11

New Year's Day and the Feast of St. John the Baptist are celebrated on this day. The day is called Enkutatash meaning the "gift of jewels." When the Queen of Sheba returned from her visit to King Solomon in Jerusalem, her chiefs welcomed her back by replenishing her treasury with jewels. The spring festival has been celebrated since these early times and as the rains come to an abrupt end, dancing and singing can be heard at every village in the green countryside.

Meskel (The Finding of the True Cross): September 27

The second most important holiday in Ethiopia, which has been celebrated for more than 1,600 years, this feast commemorates the discovery of the cross upon which Jesus was crucified, by Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great. The event took place on March 19, 326 A.D. Dancing, feasting, merrymaking, bonfires, and even gun salutes mark the occasion. The festival begins by planting a green tree on Meskel Eve in town squares and village marketplaces.

orphan statistics

- An estimated five million children are orphaned in Ethiopia.
- There are 2.7 million children with special needs living in orphanages in Ethiopia.
- There can be as many as 85 to 100 students in each class at school.
- More than 40% of all of children in Ethiopia are malnourished.
- Only half of the population has access to safe water.
- There is only one doctor for every 34,000 people.
- One out of every six children don't live past age five.



ABOUT ETHIOPIA

resources

Here is our recommended reading/watching list. Of course, there is so much more, but this will get you started.

BOOKS

- *There is No Me Without You* by Melissa Fay Greene
- *From Ashes to Africa* by Josh and Amy Bottomly
- *Ethiopia, the Unknown Land: A Cultural and Historical Guide* by Stuart Munro-Hay
- *When the World Began: Stories Collected from Ethiopia* by Elizabeth Laird
- *Cutting for Stone* by Abraham Verghese
- *In Search of King Solomon's Mines* by Tahir Shah
- *The Ethiopians: A History (Peoples of Africa)* by Richard Pankhurst
- *Ethiopia: The Bradt Travel Guide (4th edition)* by Philip Briggs
- *Exotic Ethiopian Cooking: Society, Culture, Hospitality, and Traditions* by Daniel J. Mesfin
- Helpful Website with many books: www.comeunity.com/adoption/books/Oethiopia.html

MOVIES AND DOCUMENTARIES

- *A Walk to Beautiful* (www.walktobeautiful.com): A documentary on the Fistula Hospital
- *Love, Ethiopia* (<http://www.refocusmedia.org>): A documentary by ReFocus Media
- *Project Earth: Ethiopia* (http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/project_earth_ethiopia_tribes_of_ethiopia)
- *Seeds of Hope: Meeting the Challenges of HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia*
- *Against Great Odds*: A film that describes the persecution of Christians during the Marxist government in 1982
- *Home Across Lands* – documentary about a small group of Kunama refugees from Eritrea, as they cross the Ethiopian border and then go on to America.
- *13 Months of Sunshine*

WEBSITES

- www.LonelyPlanet.com/ethiopia
- <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/ethiopia.html>
- www.wordtravels.com/Travelguide/Countries/Ethiopia/Photos
- www.ethiopiantour.com/
- www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/cia-maps-publications/Ethiopia.html
- www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html

“Listen, my sons, to a father’s instruction; pay attention and gain understanding.”
Proverbs 3:24 NIV

LANGUAGE BASICS

ETHIOPIAN AMHARIC

Just for the sake of being “friendly,” please do not use the informal greetings with the elderly, dignitaries or generally with people who are not your friends. Respect for elderly and people with authority is paramount in Ethiopia. Therefore, in order not to give your acquaintance a wrong impression of yourself, make sure you adjust your behavior according to the circumstances.

GREETINGS / CONVERSATIONAL PHRASES			
Good morning		Danar adek <i>(to a man)</i>	Danar adesh <i>(to a woman)</i>
Good night	Dehna eder <i>(pronounced denadur)</i>		
Hello	Tena yistilign <i>(formal)</i>	Seulam <i>(informal)</i>	
How are you?	Dunna not? <i>(respectful, to elder)</i>	Endimin-neh? <i>(informal, to a man)</i>	Endemin-nesh? <i>(informal, to a woman)</i>
Fine, thank you	Dunna ñuey		
What is your name?		Simeh man naw? <i>(to a man)</i>	Simish man naw? <i>(to a woman)</i>
Goodbye	Ciao <i>(informal)</i>	Dehna hun <i>(to a man)</i>	Dehna hugni <i>(to a woman)</i>
Please		Ebakih <i>(to a man)</i>	Ebakish <i>(to a woman)</i>
Thank you <i>(very much)</i>	<i>(Betam)</i> ahmesugenalew		
You're welcome <i>(no problem)</i>	Minem Aydelem		
Yes	awo		
No	aye; aydelem		
Okay	Ishi		
Excuse me <i>(getting attention/ begging pardon)</i> ; I'm sorry	Yiqirta		
I don't understand	Algebagnem		
Sorry	Aznallo		
I am a vegetarian <i>(I don't eat meat)</i>	Siga albuelam		

QUESTIONS			
Do you speak English?		Englizegna tichilaleh? <i>(to a man)</i>	Englizegna tichiyalesh? <i>(to a woman)</i>
Is there someone here who speaks English?	Englizegna michel sew aleh?		
Where is the toilet?	Metatebiya bet yet new?		
How much?	Sint new?		

LANGUAGE BASICS

NUMBERS	
0	Zero
1	And
2	Hoolet
3	Sost
4	Arat
5	Amest
6	Sidist
7	Sebat
8	Sement
9	ZeTegn
10	Aser
11	Asra-and
12	Asra-hoolet
20	Haya
21	Haya-and
30	Selasa
40	Arba
50	Hamsa
60	Silsa
70	Seba
80	Semanya
90	ZeTena
100	Meto
200	Hoolet-meto
300	Sost-meto
1000	Shee
2000	Hoolet-shee

CLOCK TIME	
The day starts at 1 se'at ke tewatu (<i>o'clock in the morning</i>) = 7 a.m.	
2 se'at	8 a.m.
3 se'at	9 a.m.
4 se'at	10 a.m.
5 se'at	11 a.m.
6 se'at	12 p.m.
7 se'at	1 p.m.
8 se'at	2 p.m.
9 se'at	3 p.m.
10 se'at	4 p.m.
11 se'at	5 p.m.
12 se'at	6 p.m.
1 se'at ke'mishitu (<i>o'clock in the evening</i>) = 7 p.m.	
2 se'at	8 p.m.
3 se'at	9 p.m.
4 se'at	10 p.m.
5 se'at	11 p.m.
6 se'at ke'lelitu (<i>o'clock at night</i>) = 12 a.m.	
7 se'at	1 a.m.
8 se'at	2 a.m.
9 se'at	3 a.m.
10 se'at	4 a.m.
11 se'at	5 a.m.
12 se'at	6 a.m.

DAYS	
Sunday	Ehood
Monday	Segno
Tuesday	Maksegno
Wednesday	Erob
Thursday	Hamoos
Friday	Arb
Saturday	Qdame

MONTHS	
September	Meskerem
October	Tikimt
November	Hidar
December	Tahisas
January	Tir
February	Yekatit
March	Megabit
April	Miyaziya
May	Ginbot
June	Senay
July	Hamle
August	Nehasie

LANGUAGE BASICS

COLORS	
Black	Tiqoor
White	NeCH
Red	Qey
Blue	Semayawi
Green	Arengwade
Yellow	BiCHa
Brown	Buna'aynet/ Buna'ma
Purple	WeynTej
Orange	Bertukan
Light blue	Wuhama semayawi
Dark blue	DemaQ semayawi

FOOD	
Bread (<i>Ethiopian</i>)	dabo
Curry	wet
Meat (<i>red</i>)	sig
Chicken	doro
Vegetable	atakl
Spicy	qmemama
Mild	aletcha
Coffee shop	bunna bet

DIRECTIONS	
Right	Qegn
Left	G'ra
Straight ahead	QeTita menged
Opposite	TeQarani/ Feet'lefeed
Adjacent	ATEgeb/Gon
Turn left	wede g'ra taTef (to a man)
	taTefi (to a woman)
	taTefu (to more than one person or to an elder)
Turn right	wede Qegn taTef (to a man)
	taTefi (to a woman)
	taTefu (to more than one person or to an elder)

PRONUNCIATION

Most of the transliteration has been kept as close to English as possible. A few letters will differ:

- e'**: as in the a in ago
- ai**: like bait
- ie**: like pie
- o'**: cross between the oa in coat and au in haul
- g**: like the g in Gwen
- kw**: like q in quick
- ny**: like the ni in onion

www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/language/ethiopian-amharic-phrases.html

