



RIDE WORLD WIDE

Ethiopia 2012

Ride Information Sheet

Ethiopia is a land of myths and superlatives. A startlingly beautiful country, it is charming and complicated. Splendid 'imperial Ethiopia', it is one of the only African countries never properly colonised by the west. Sometimes referred to as the 'African Tibet' it is a remote land with arcane religious practises and strange tribes, often called the 'museum of peoples'. It is also known to those of us in the west as a place of poverty and extreme famine, another side to its many faceted character that is true at times and not so true at others. In all, Ethiopia is more complex and far-flung from the simplistic views the west generally holds of it.

The country has some eighty million inhabitants, of which perhaps half are Christian and half Muslim. Surrounded by Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and Kenya and with a total area of 1,104,300 square kilometres, it is five times the size of the United Kingdom and two and a half times the size of France. The population is largely rural, with eighty percent living in the countryside. Geographically, Ethiopia can be divided between lowlands to the east and south, and highlands to the north and west. The rides take place in the '*woina dega*', an Amharic word that labels the highlands to the north of Addis, between about 1,500 and 2,500 metres. This beautiful landscape, characterised by rolling green hills, herds of cattle and babbling brooks, is ideal riding country.

The Ethiopians who inhabit these plateaux are the 'Oromo' tribe and remain a people of the horse to this day. For them the horse (or for the rich, a mule) is a most normal and a quintessentially Ethiopian mode of transport and they will welcome you warmly, travelling as they do. A horse is also the perfect way to experience the rhythms of the true Ethiopian countryside, to slowly penetrate its aged beauty and to understand its inhabitants' simple life.

The rides are organised by Yves Stranger. Yves, who was born to a Guernsey family and is decidedly 'mid-channel' in his origins, grew up in the south of France where, as a child, he shepherded the family goats on horseback. He has lived in Ethiopia for the past seven years and speaks fluent Amharic, the national language. His wife Lydia is Ethiopian and his mother in law, Merehete, runs the camp and back up team.



Dates 6 night trips are run from set dates between October and June, with other dates available on request. Please see overleaf for departure dates and contact Ride World Wide to check availability.



The Horses Yves's horses are a mixture of the famed Abyssinian ponies, a hardy mountain breed of about 14hh many of which are renowned for their polo playing abilities, and Abyssinian ponies crossed with Lipizzaner, Arab and thoroughbreds, descendents of Emperor Haile Selassie's stable. The horses are tough, well accustomed to the altitude, energetic and brave. Saddles are generally 'McClellans', with one or two stock saddles and English saddles available. Saddle-bags are provided when needed. The rides are usually led by Elias, who speaks English, Amharic and Oromo and, as a local knows the customs and area well. Elias is accompanied by a back up rider and sometimes Yves also rides with the group. Grooms are on hand at camp to tack-up and un-tack the horses. There is a rider weight limit of 90kg.

Riding The rides include 6 days riding, generally about 4 or 7 hours in the saddle each day, with breaks to rest and for lunch, although riding time does vary. There can be quite a lot of walking, leading the horses - you will generally lead the horses for 10 minutes or so to warm them up in the morning before starting the ride and again to cool them off after riding at the end of the day. You will also be asked to get off to lead up or down any steep hills, so you do need to be comfortable walking on uneven ground and on a gradient - and of course mount your horse unaided. You may also be asked to dismount in villages out of politeness to the inhabitants. You are encouraged to spread out where possible, taking your own line, rather than single file, though when riding through narrow gorges and tracks through the rock formations this will not be possible. Groups are limited to a maximum of 6 guests. Horses are tacked up, prepared for you each morning by the grooms but some input is expected and you may be asked to un-tack / tack up at lunch time and also un-tack in the evening.

Pace The rides are at a slow to moderate pace overall due to the terrain but there are some long trots and canters along valley floors, and along paths between fields of crops. There are some quite steep mountain tracks, which dictate a slow pace, descending into and climbing out of deep valleys, and there is also some slower work when picking your way between crops and through homesteads and villages.

Riding Experience The rides are aimed at reasonably experienced, confident riders. To join them you must feel relaxed, comfortable and secure in the saddle on well schooled horses at a walk, trot and fast canter. You should also be used to riding for reasonably long hours, outside in an open environment and on sometimes challenging terrain. The horses are sensible, but they have a generally lively temperament so they suit confident, relaxed riders. As with all our rides, you will enjoy your trip much more if you are fit - for Ethiopia you should be both riding fit and with a good level of general fitness as there is quite a lot of walking over rough terrain. If you do not ride regularly at home, we recommend some concentrated training in the months before you go to get used to the hours you will spend in the saddle.

Terrain The rides take you off the beaten track to areas which are seldom visited by foreigners and some villages and homesteads that you ride past may have not seen Europeans in living memory. Much of the riding is through cultivated land - these highlands are very fertile and many different crops are grown. You will see people working the fields in biblical fashion, ploughing with oxen and harvesting with sickles. The valley bottoms, and areas which are marshy in the rains, tend to be left for the shepherds to take their cattle and sheep to graze. Here there are plenty of open pastures which offer good opportunities for long trots and canters. There are places each day where riders need to dismount to walk over rough ground - both uphill and down - and you need to be quite physically fit. The routes tend to stick to the highland plateaux but sometimes you descend into a valley system and there are often fabulous views across gorges of true African proportions. Overall the area is lovely for riding with varied scenery and some chances to move on each day. In October, just after the rains, it is usually lush and green with many wild flowers. As the dry season continues the crops are harvested and the open stubble fields offer chances to spread out more and take ones own line. Eagles, buzzards and vultures can be seen soaring above, storks, cranes and ibis hunt the marshes for frogs and insects and there are other beautiful birds including bright bishop and widow birds, weavers, hoopoes and a variety of sun birds. There is no big game though you may see the famous bleeding heart baboons, vervet monkeys and Abyssinian hares - and there are many hyena which can sometimes be heard at night and from which the horses have to be stabled during hours of darkness.



Accommodation The first night is spent in Addis Ababa at a comfortable 3-4* hotel. Rooms have en-suite bathrooms. 2 nights are spent at the Suba Park Headquarters in simple, rustic cabins with shared bathroom (or tents maybe set up next to the cottages). Other nights are spent in mobile camps. Sleeping tents are either small 2 man 'dome' tents or more traditional Abyssinian style tents. Good, 4 inch thick, mattresses are provided to sleep on - you may need to take a sleeping bag for the mobile camp. There is a central 'mess' tent which is made of white canvas and tables and chairs are set up inside for breakfast and dinner - though on fine evenings and mornings you will eat in the open air. In the evening, whilst sitting around the fire, you will be offered a 'gabbi', a cotton blanket, to drape over your shoulders and keep out the cool night breeze. A 'shower' tent, which has a basin and jugs for pouring hot water, is set up for the group. There is also a 'long drop' loo tent.



Meals Ethiopia does not have a great reputation of 'haute cuisine' however the camp staff make a huge effort to show off some of the traditional Ethiopian food and produce some really delicious dishes. The staple - 'ingera' - is rather like a large pancake and is traditionally used as an edible plate on which are placed sauces and curries. In local restaurants this will come served on a basket table and is eaten communally. Ingera is made from a tiny grain (tef), which is ground and fermented, then cooked on a metal griddle over the fire. The result is a sponge like pancake with a slightly sour taste, eaten cold - you break off bits with your hand to scoop up the sauce / curry. Breakfast in camp is usually fruit juice, porridge, scrambled eggs or omelette and fresh bread or toast with butter, jam, peanut butter and delicious Ethiopian honey. Coffee is a great tradition and on some days this will be prepared Ethiopian style (which takes some time!), served rather like in Turkey, in small cups and usually pre sugared. Tea is usually drunk black and often has a spice, a cinnamon cardamom mix, added - very refreshing. Lunch is generally a picnic, carried in your saddle bags, which might be a sandwich of unleavened bread with tuna and mayonnaise or ham and cheese - or baked potatoes and boiled eggs. Dinner is usually a number of curries and sauces, perhaps chicken, beef or goat, served with ingera, bread or rice. On fast days (most Wednesdays & Fridays) no meat is served but the vegetable dishes excel. Pudding may be fruit, homemade cake or flan. Vegetarians can, of course, be catered for, but please let us know in advance by filling in the dietary requirements on the booking form. Tea, coffee and mineral water are included and bottled soft drinks, wine, beer and spirits are available for purchase. Some wine is produced locally but both the bar is stocked with both Ethiopian and South African wine.



Weather The altitude in Ethiopia ranges from about 110 metres below sea level in the Danakil Depression to 4700 metres in the highlands and temperatures and rainfall throughout the country vary immensely, giving rise to an incredible diversity of ecosystems and a rich endemic flora and fauna. The riding is in the highlands at an altitude of between 2,000 and 3,000 meters. The rainy season in the highlands is from July to September, during which monsoon like downpours occur daily. The dry season is from October to June, with a short rainy season in April. Rides are run during the dry months only but please note that showers are possible in the mountains at any time. Daytime temperatures are 20 to 25 C drooping to around 5 C at night. Although the highlands are highly populated, they are almost completely lacking in tropical diseases - there is no malaria for instance.

What to bring We will send you a list of things to bring when you make your booking.

Example Itinerary - Oromo Highlands Ride

This is an example of the itinerary but it is only an example and the route and day-by-day arrangements may be changed (riding days can be changed for market visits or there may be a local horse race or a colourful religious festival to visit) in your guide's absolute discretion and / or according to local conditions.

[Depart London eg on Ethiopian Airlines ET 701 at 21.05]

Day 1 - Arrive in Addis Ababa (eg on Ethiopian Airlines at 06.50) and transfer to the MN International Hotel (or similar). Settle in to your room and time freshen up. Own arrangements for lunch, then in the afternoon there will be time to explore the city, including the ethnological museum, which gives a thorough overview of the different cultures and peoples of Ethiopia. Own arrangements for dinner at the hotel or local restaurant. Night at the Beer Garden Hotel (or similar) in Addis Ababa.

Day 2 (Monday) - Breakfast at the hotel then an hours drive west of Addis Ababa to meet the horses. After getting acquainted with your horse, you set off across the highland plains, peppered by small homesteads and Orthodox churches that form much of the central heart of Ethiopia. Stop for a picnic lunch en route and in the evening arrive at the camp which will be set up near Rob Gebeya. Dinner and night in camp. (B,L,D)

Day 3 (Tuesday) - The ride today takes you over the high plains towards Senyo Gebiya and the Muger River gorge. You will get your first feel for the plains of Shoa, which have long been the breeding grounds for Ethiopia's horses and mules (which you will hopefully witness first hand later in the market). The night is spent camping by a traditional homestead. Dinner and night in camp. (B,L,D)

Day 4 (Wednesday) - Breakfast and set off riding from camp, crossing countless small brooks on the way, amongst herds of cattle and fertile lands very far from typical images of Ethiopia. There is plenty of good going, with opportunities for some good canters. A picnic lunch on the plains then ride on to camp. Dinner and night in camp. (B,L,D)



Day 5 (Thursday) - Leaving the plains you ride down towards Mount Wechecha, a medieval stronghold of the imperial court. In the afternoon you arrive at the endemic forest of Suba, whose first trees were planted by the 15th century Emperor Zara Jacob. The night will be spent in the park headquarters - rustic accommodation with a fireplace and very atmospheric. Dinner and night at the park headquarters. (B,L,D)

Day 6 (Friday) - The ride today takes you through the forest, inhabited by the endemic Menelik bushbuck, yellow fronted parrot, African forest hog and leopard. This is quite a slow day riding wise, quietly walking for much of the time to increase chances of seeing the shy wildlife. A picnic lunch out in the forest and then ride back to the park headquarters. Dinner and a second night at the park headquarters. (B,L,D)

Day 7 (Saturday) - Breakfast and set off across the plains to the stables in Soluta. Skirting the hills of Entoto with their eucalyptus forests, and stopping for a picnic lunch, you reach the stables in the late afternoon. There are some good opportunities for some nice canters. On arrival at the stables you will say goodbye to the horses and, time and weather permitting you will visit a horse market where you can buy incense from the Land of Punt and plastic sandals from Southern China... and a good 'Sennar' mule if it fits in your luggage! You can also sample some *tej* -or mead- in the local equivalent of a country pub. There may be a chance to witness 'Gugs,' an Ethiopian equestrian sport in which riders, to train for warfare, gallop widely after each attempting to strike their opponent with a blunted wand. This is a wonderful spectacle with horses dressed in their colourful, traditional tack. Drive back to Addis Ababa airport for a late evening flight home (eg on Ethiopian Airlines at 01.45 on Sunday, arriving London at 07.15 same day) [OR extension to visit Lalibela - see on]. (B,L)

Dates 2012

8th to 14th January
 12th to 18th February
 4th to 10th March
 13th to 19th May
 27th May to 2nd June

14th to 20th October
 28th October to 3rd November
 11th to 17th November
 9th to 15th December

Rates 2012

Please note that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are now quoted in euros / USD. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the euro/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay.

4 to 6 riders **Euros 1315** per person
 2 to 3 riders **Euros 1535** per person
 1 rider **Euros 1750**

Rates include - 6 nights twin accommodation, all riding, guiding and equipment, transfers from / to Addis Ababa, and meals from breakfast on day 2 to lunch on day 7. Rates assume twin bedded rooms in hotels / tents. (A single supplement is payable only if you are not prepared to share a room / tent).

Rates do not include - International flights / travel to Addis Ababa any visa fees, personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have), your bar bill, meals in Addis Ababa or any tips you may wish to leave.

Single supplement - If you are booking as a single traveller and are happy to share a room / tent with another single traveller of the same sex then a supplement is not charged. If you would particularly like a single room / tent then these are usually available on request - there is a supplement of 150 euros, payable in Ethiopia direct in cash.



Day 7 - As above, then overnight at a 4* hotel in Addis Ababa

Day 8 - Breakfast and an early morning flight to Lalibela (eg ET 126 departing 08.00, arriving 09.00). You will be met on arrival and driven into town to the Yemereha Hotel. Time to settle in and lunch before visiting the first group of the amazing 11 rock-hewn churches. Night at the Yemereha Hotel (or similar) in Lalibela. (B,L,D)

Day 9 - Breakfast and set off by mule to visit *Asheten Maria*, a church a little way out of town. Return to Lalibela for lunch and in the afternoon visit the second group of churches in Lalibela. (B,L,D)

Day 10 - Time permitting you will visit the *Naktuleab* cave church. Then transfer to the airport for a flight back Addis Ababa (eg ET 123 departing 11.50, arriving Addis 13.40). Connect with your flight back to the UK (eg departing at 01.25 on Day 11, arriving London 06.55) (B)



Rate - Approx 680 USD (single supplement USD 90)

Rate includes - 3 nights twin accommodation, transfer to Addis Ababa airport on day 8, guided visits and site entrance fees, all meals from lunch on day to breakfast on day 10. Rates assume twin bedded rooms in hotels.

Rate does not include - International flights / travel to Addis Ababa, domestic flights to Lalibela, any visa fees, personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have), your bar bill and any personal items, or any tips you may wish to leave.

Travel arrangements For these rides you need to fly to Addis Ababa and meeting is at the airport on the first day. Ethiopian Airways and British Midlands currently have direct flights from London to Addis Ababa on most days. Flights range from around £450 to £700 economy return plus taxes depending on time of year, the airline used and availability. If you would like to visit Lalibela after the ride then we suggest using Ethiopian Airlines for all flights so that the internal flights can be booked in conjunction with the International flights. In this case the cost will add about £100 per person. If you book International flights with another airline then we can arrange internal flights separately but the cost will be around £300 per person. **If you would like further advice on flights, a quote for a flight inclusive holiday or to book flights, please call us (our ATOL number for flight bookings is ATOL 6213).**



General visa and health information (NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking)

Visas A visa **IS** currently required to visit Ethiopia. This can be obtained on arrival at Addis Ababa airport (this is usually quickest / easiest) or you can apply in advance. Cost is currently USD 20.

Health No inoculations are legally required to enter Ethiopia if travelling from Europe but Polio, Tetanus, Typhoid, Hepatitis A, Diphtheria and Yellow Fever are recommended - Cholera, Hepatitis B, Meningitis and Rabies may also be recommended in some cases. There is currently no malaria risk in Addis Ababa or above 2000m where most of the riding takes place. You should consult a health professional for further and more detailed advice in any case.

DRAFT 03/01/12



Local horseman playing the traditional 'gugs'