



## Practical information

### The Country

Ethiopia is a country with one of the richest histories on the African continent. It is the oldest independent country in Africa and one of the oldest in the world. Ethiopia is truly a land of contrasts and extremes. Some of the highest and most stunning places on the African continent are found here, such as the ruggedly carved steeples and spires of the Semien mountains (UNESCO's world heritage site). Ethiopia is a mosaic of people with more than 80 languages, different lifestyles, costumes and cultural dances. Amharic is the official language, although English, Italian, French, and Arabic are fairly spoken. Outside the larger cities, indigenous languages are likely to be spoken - there are eighty-three, with some 200 dialects. The most common of these are Oromifa and Tigrigna.

The capital Addis Ababa was settled in 1886. It is well endowed with museums, including the Ethnological Museum (set within emperor Haile Selassie's former palace) which gives a great insight into Ethiopia's many rich cultures. Another highlight is the National Museum, the collection of which ranks among the finest in sub-Saharan Africa. Addis also gets rave reviews for its restaurant scene and nightlife. Bole Rd – the avenue that connects the airport to the centre – is the fashionable district, with plenty of bars, eateries, galleries and clubs. Mercato, Africa's largest open-air market, is worth visiting for those who want to do some shopping.

### Climate

Perched on the Abyssinian plateau, some 2400m above sea level, Addis boasts a climate classed as 'tropical highland' – in other words, balmy and temperate, with cloudless blue skies for about eight months of the year. There are two main seasons: the **dry season** from October through May and the **wet season** from June to September. Climate is typically very mild to cold, with temperatures on the wide-ranging highlands averaging below 20°C. The heaviest rains traditionally start falling in June, so it is advised to have appropriate clothes and umbrella.

### Calendar

Ethiopia follows the Julian calendar, which consists of twelve months of thirty days each and a thirteenth month of five days (six days in a leap year). The calendar is seven years and eight months behind the Western (Gregorian) calendar.

### Time

Ethiopia is in the GMT + 3 hours time zone (three hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time). Time remains constant throughout the year. The Ethiopian day is calculated in a manner similar to many equatorial countries, counting starts at Western 6.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. Western 7.00 a.m. is therefore one o'clock, noon is six, 6.00 p.m. is twelve o'clock midnight, and so on. In Addis Ababa, the sunrise and sunset are at around 06.30 and 18.45 respectively.

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## Health

Visitors are strongly advised to consult a doctor at a travel health clinic about the necessary vaccinations, at least 6 weeks before departure. Vaccinations requirements sometimes vary from year to year, and at such clinics the latest information will be available. Some information can also be found at the website of the World Health Organization (<http://www.who.int/ith/en/>), including the following. prior to entry, visitors should be in possession of a valid health certificate for yellow fever. Vaccination against cholera is also required for any person who has visited or transited a cholera infected area within six days prior to arrival in Ethiopia. Malaria is endemic in some parts of low land areas. Visitors should begin taking a recommended chloroquine-based prophylactic two weeks before their arrival and continue taking them for six weeks after their departure. In addition, medication for chloroquine-resistant malaria is a wise precaution. Medical facilities are improving and quite a number of public and private medical centres (open 24h/7) are available in Addis Ababa.

## Visa requirement

Visa applications may be obtained at Ethiopia's diplomatic missions overseas. Ethiopian embassies may charge a fee for visas, and usually require an onward air ticket, a yellow-fever vaccination certificate and proof of sufficient funds.

## Safety

Violent crime is, fortunately, rare, particularly where visitors are concerned. However, petty theft are problematic. The Mercato is worst, as pickpockets abound – targeting *faranjis* (foreigners) and Ethiopians. Other spots requiring vigilance include Piazza, Meskal Sq, minibus stands, and Churchill Ave.

## Local transports

There's an extensive network of blue-and-white minibuses servicing Addis that is efficient and cheap. Stopping at most major intersections, journeys cost from Birr 0.55 to Birr 1.25. Taxis are also everywhere. Journeys up to 3km usually cost Birr 20 (more at night), while medium/ long journeys cost Birr 30/50. If you share, the normal fare is split between passengers. Bole International Airport, located just 5km southeast of the city centre, is regularly served by both taxis (Birr 25 to Birr 50) and minibuses.

## Emergency numbers

- **Fire brigade** (993)
- **Police** (991)
- **Red Cross Ambulance service** (992)

## Medical services

- **Bethzatha Hospital** (0115 514141; off Ras Mekonen Ave; 24hr) Private hospital recommended by embassies.
- **Ethio-Swe Dental Clinic** (0116 614932; Bole Rd) Respected dental office.
- **Hayat Hospital** (0116 624488; Ring Rd; 24hr) Respected and reliable. Consultations cost Birr40.



- **St Gabriel Hospital** (0116 613622; Djibouti St; 24hr) Private hospital with X-ray, dental, surgery and laboratory facilities. Consultations cost Birr50.

### Money & Banking

The local currency is the Ethiopian Birr made up of 100 cents. Visitors may import an unlimited amount of foreign currency, providing declaration of such currency is made to customs on arrival. Foreign currency may be changed only at authorized banks and hotels. The currency declaration form must be retained, as this will be required by customs on departure. Visitors, however, will be able to change back any excess Ethiopian Birr to foreign currency at the airport before departure. Numerous Commercial Bank branches and copious private banks, like Dashen, United and Wegagen, will change cash and travellers cheques. Branches in hotels keep longer hours. Only Dashen offer Visa and MasterCard cash advances (up to US\$500). Commission is 5.5% (minimum US\$12.50).

### Duty free

Duty-free import are permitted for up to: 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars, 1/2 lb of tobacco, 1 litre of alcoholic beverages, two bottles of perfume. Visitors may export souvenirs with a value not exceeding Birr 500, although some articles (such as animal skins and antiques) require an export permit.

### Electricity

Ethiopia uses 220 volts and 50 Hz cycles AC. It is best to bring your own round, two-prong adapter and transformer if necessary.

### Communications

Internet Services (Dial up) and Broadband network (WiFi) are available at every Hotel & Guesthouse and many Internet Cafes are available in the city. Since last March, Ethio telecom has launched the 3G high-speed Internet service offering 3G dongle and 3G WiFi router. Prepaid mobile phone SIM card can either be rented at the hotel or buy at any EthioTelcom offices providing 2 photos and a copy of passport.

### Upon arrival

The venue of the workshop is the Panorama Hotel (see address underneath). The hotel will provide a shuttle service from and to Bole international airport in Addis Ababa. The driver will be waiting at the airport showing a sign with your name or simply "WHaTeR". In case other colleagues will arrive around the same time, you may be asked to wait a bit. Sorry in advance for any inconvenience.

### Sources:

- <http://www.tourismethiopia.gov.et/>
- <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/ethiopia/addis-ababa/practical-information>