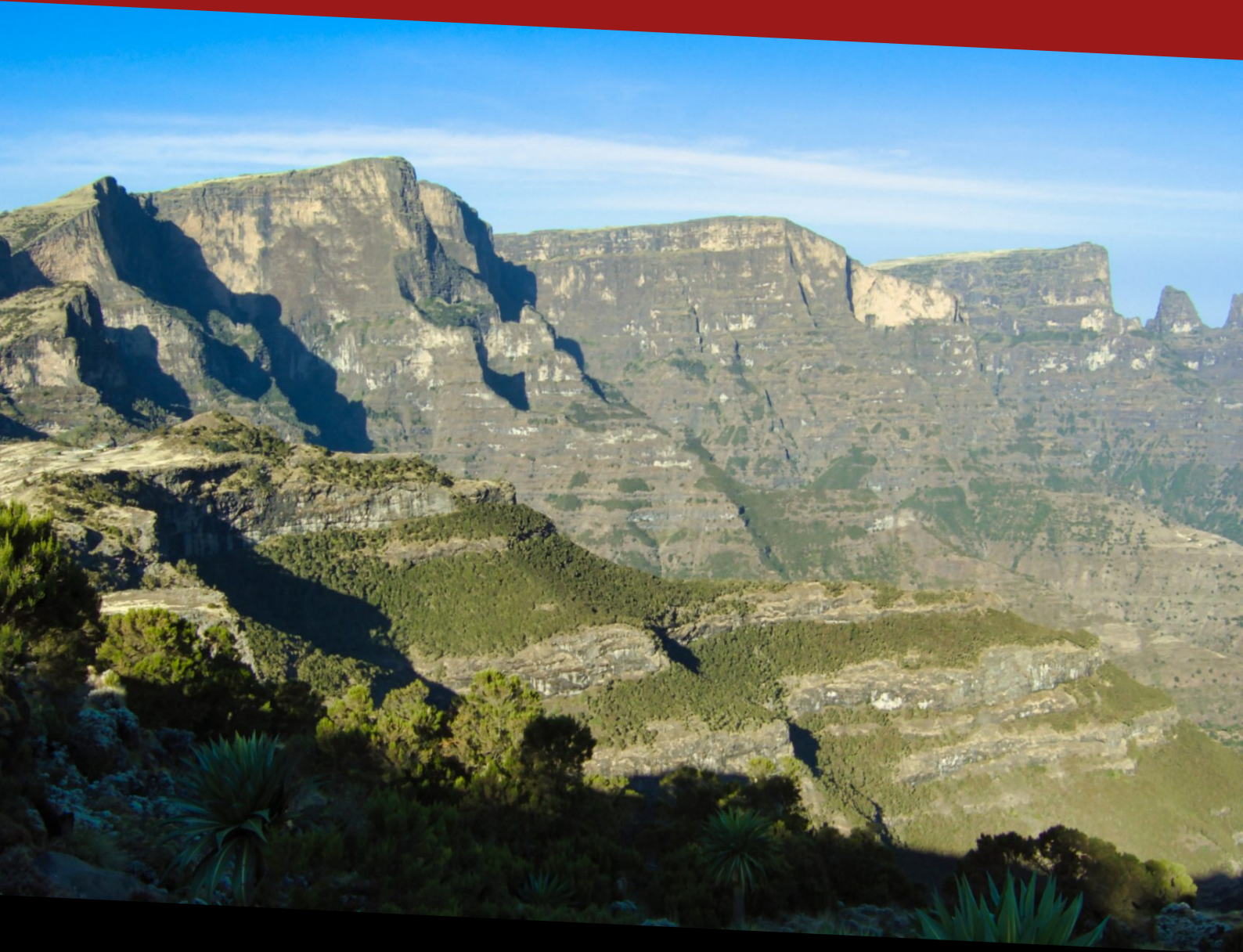


Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains

| 4,550m



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Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m



Join us on a trek through the spectacular **Simien Mountains** to reach Ras Dashen, **Ethiopia's highest peak** – standing at 4550m.

We'll spend 5 days trekking through **dramatic scenery** and **rugged landscapes** – from deep canyons fed by plummeting waterfalls to open moorland tundra scattered with giant lobelias and passing traditional rural villages and farmland for an insight into local life.

We'll get to see Ethiopia's fascinating **wildlife** up close and personal on our trek, including the iconic Gelada Baboons and more elusive Walia Ibex – found nowhere else on Earth.

This expedition also includes visits to the **unmissable cultural sites** of Gondar's royal castles and the UNESCO rock-hewn churches

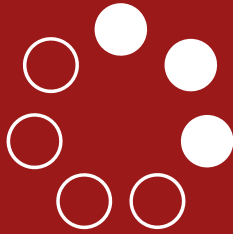
of Lalibela, so you get to experience the best of this unique and beautiful country.

Ethiopia's incredible culture and history can often remain overshadowed by the tragic famine of the 1980's but this beautiful country has witnessed remarkable change over the course of a generation. Stunning landscapes, green pastures, soulful people and an amazing adventure awaits!

Ethiopia

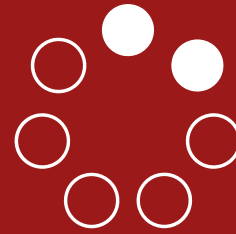
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Physical – P3

This trip is physically tough. Frequent exercise is necessary to prepare properly for this expedition. Regular walking mixed with training at the gym to build up endurance and cardiovascular fitness is key. Expect to be able to do 8 hour days in hilly and often steep terrain, carrying a pack of 6-10kg in weight with the occasional extra long day.



Technical – T2

Consider this a trek, although there may be occasion to use hands for short sections of easy scrambling. No previous climbing or trekking experience is necessary.

Please note that the grading system used is a rough guide only.



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ITINERARY

DAY 1 : Depart UK

Depart UK, usually with your 360 guide.

DAY 2 : Addis Ababa - Gondar

We arrive at Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa and take the short internal flight to Gondar, which is one of Ethiopia's largest and most impressive cities and was once the capital. We'll be met by our local team at the airport and transferred to our hotel.

You'll have some time to rest after your flight and we'll go on a guided city tour of Gondar, which will include a visit to the walled Royal Enclosure and its six castles, Fasilida's Pool (which is still used for Timket celebrations today), Ras Gimb Palace Museum and the Debre Birhan Selassie church, with the most famous ceiling in Ethiopia.

(D)

DAY 3 : Trek Sankaber (3250m) - Geech (3600m)

Today we leave our lodge after an early breakfast and transfer to Sankaber, in the Simien Mountains National Park. We will have beautiful views en route, on both sides of the escarpment ridge and we will likely get a glimpse of the endemic Gelada baboons.

We will begin our trek by lunchtime, which starts by walking through the Wazla Valley, the riverbed normally dry at this time of year. As we emerge from the valley we are presented with one of the most impressive vistas in Africa – the Geech Abyss – a 1,000m deep, sheer-sided canyon fed by plummeting waterfalls, the biggest of which is the Jibar River Falls.

We continue towards Geech village, crossing the Jinbar River further upstream before we make our way along the well-trodden paths that the farmers use to reach their fields before camping near the village.

(B/L/D)

Total trekking time: 5-6 hours

DAY 4 : Trek Geech (3600m) – Chenek (3620m)

We have an early breakfast and head off across open moorland tundra, dotted with giant lobelias which are endemic to Ethiopia. It's a reasonably long but steady climb up to the peak of Imet Gogo (3,926m). This craggy outcrop sits 1,500m high at the top of plummeting cliffs, giving us more jaw-dropping panoramic views across the lowland plains far below.

From here, we head for Korbete Metia, a vast solid rock wall and head through the pass to reveal more panoramic vistas, with lammergeyers (bearded vultures) often circling above us. We then descend to Chenek for our night's camp, which offers fantastic views of the escarpment.

(B/L/D)

Total trekking time: 7-9 hours.

DAY 5 : Trek Chenek (3620m) – Ambikwa (3200m)

From Chenek, we continue up the picturesque valley towards Bwahit Peak, which overlooks last night's camp. It's a tough ascent to reach the Bwahit Pass and Peak but you'll be rewarded with wonderful views of the Mesheha River Valley, as well as getting our first glimpse of Ras Dashen, Ethiopia's highest mountain.

There's even the chance of sighting walia ibex, indigenous to this area only. From the pass, the path leads down 1,000m to the valley floor, where we cross the Meshenia River. After crossing the river, we have our final climb of the day – a 200m ascent to the village of Ambikwa for the night's camp.

(B/L/D)

Total trekking time: 6-8 hours.

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Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

ITINERARY

DAY 6 : Trek Ambikwa (3,200m) – Ras Dashen (4,550m)

We'll wake in the early hours of the morning, while the stars are still bright and begin our trek to the summit of Ras Dashen (4550m).

We'll start today's trek continuing up the valley to the tiny village of Mizma. From here, we have a steep ascent out of the valley to the crest of the ridge before continuing a gentle path which tracks along the side of the valley. We'll pass local farmers tending to their herds of cattle and goats which graze on the open pastures.

Ras Dashen soon comes into view and is one of three distinctive buttresses. Getting to the cairned summit involves some easy scrambling – and requires no climbing skills. We'll spend some time taking in the panoramic sunrise views of Ethiopia's highest mountain, the ultimate reward for our efforts! In clear weather, the views extend all the way to neighbouring Eritrea.

Our descent will be much quicker and we return to Ambikwa for our final night of camping.

(B/L/D)

Total trekking time: 8-10 hours.

DAY 7 : Trek Ambikwa (3,200m) – Chiroleba (3,200m)

Today, we walk to Chiroleba where we will be met by our vehicle and transferred to our hotel a few hours drive from the Simien Mountains National Park – for a well-deserved Ras Dashen beer, shower and proper bed.

Our trek will descend 400m to the Meshesha River and then gently re-ascend 400m to the village of Chiroleba, passing interesting geological formations and getting our final glimpses of the Simien's vegetation and wildlife en route.

Total trekking time: 3 hours

DAY 8 : Lalibela

We have a leisurely start in contrast with recent days. After breakfast, we make the short transfer to Gondar airport for a speedy domestic flight to Lalibela.

Lalibela is a high place of Ethiopian Christianity and a centre of pilgrimage for much of the country. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Lalibela is famous for its distinctive rock-cut churches dating from the 12th and 13th centuries.

After checking into our hotel, we'll spend the afternoon touring the north-western cluster of medieval monolithic cave churches, which are impressive both in terms of size and the quality of art.

(B/D)

DAY 9 : Lalibela

We'll spend the morning visiting the remaining rock-cut churches which offer Lalibela's most finely carved exteriors – including the most famous of all – Bet Giyorgis – which was constructed in honour of the patron saint of Ethiopia, Saint George.

You'll have free time in the afternoon to explore at your leisure. You can visit the lively Lalibela Saturday market for a fascinating insight into local life or hike up to the Asheton Maryam Monastery, which boasts lovely views.

(B, D)

DAY 10 : Addis Ababa and flight home

We'll have another leisurely start this morning and head back to Lalibela airport for a domestic flight to Addis Ababa.

Whilst in Addis Ababa, we'll enjoy a celebratory meal – a traditional Ethiopian dinner with music and dancing. Try to avoid having too many local beers, as we need to head to the airport after dinner for our night flight home. (B/D)

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Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

ITINERARY

DAY 11 : Arrive UK

Arrival to London Heathrow airport.

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KIT LIST

Bags & Packs

Kit bag

A 90 -120L duffel bag to transport kit. A duffel bag is a strong, soft, weather resistant bag without wheels but with functional straps for carrying. Suitcases and wheeled bags are not suitable

Daysack

Approx. 40L capacity. Your day to day pack that you carry with your daily essentials, fitted with shoulder straps and importantly a waist belt

Waterproof rucksack cover

To protect rucksack from rain

Drybags

Nylon rolltop bags that keep fresh clothing and other important items like passports and iPods dry in the event of a total downpour that seeps into your kitbag. Good for quarantining old socks. Please note that many countries are now banning plastic bags. We would always advise buying re-usable nylon rolltop bags for keeping your kit dry (and sustainability).

Small kit bag or light bag

This is for any kit you intend to leave at the hotel and could even simply be a heavy duty plastic bag

Padlocks x 2

For use on your kit bag for travel and on the expedition plus your hotel bag

Sleeping Gear

3 Season sleeping bag

3-season with a rating to around -5C. Down is lighter but more expensive than synthetic and ratings vary between manufacturers

Sleeping bag liner

Silk is best for keeping the bag clean and you a little warmer

Sleeping mat

A sleeping mattress is supplied. However if you would like to, bring a sleeping mat for added comfort and warmth.

Headwear

Warm headgear

This can be a warm hat, beanie, balaclava, anything to reduce the heat loss from your head

Wide brimmed hat

Keeps the sun off exposed areas like ears and the nape of the neck

Buff/Scarf

Essential for protection from the sun and dust

Sunglasses

Category 4 minimum. Worth spending money on good UV filters. Julbo is our preferred supplier

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

KIT LIST

Sunblock

Buy the highest SPF you can find as UV intensifies with altitude

Lip salve

Sun cream will not work on your lips and they are very susceptible to burn without proper protection

Upper Body

Base layer x 2

This is the layer closest to the skin and its principal function is to draw (wick) moisture and sweat away from the skin. You can also get thermal base layers for use at higher altitudes that provide an additional insulative layer while still drawing sweat during times of high exertion

Mid layer x 2

These are typically lightweight microfleece or similar technology that provide varying degrees of warmth and insulation without being overly bulky or heavy to pack

Gilet (optional)

Optional - A great low volume additional layer to keep your core warm, whether down, Primaloft or fleece

Light insulated jacket

A lighter jacket such as a Primaloft or lightweight down which can be worn at lower to mid altitudes is a great addition to your kit offering greater flexibility with layering

Soft Shell (optional)

Optional - These should be windproof (not all are) and insulative. They are mostly made of soft polyester and sometimes resemble a neoprene finish which makes them very mobile and comfortable to wear. While offering a degree of weather repellence, they are not waterproof

Hard Shell

These jackets are thin, highly waterproof and windproof and worn over all other items of clothing. You'll find these made of Gore-Tex or other proprietary waterproof yet breathable technology. Inexpensive hard shells that aren't breathable will prevent evaporation, making you sweat intensely and are not recommended

Down jacket

Generally made using feathers, these are the ultra-warm and insulated layer that are used when at camp or in extremely cold environments. Those with a windproof outer fabric will provide the best insulation. Ask advice in the shop (or from us) when buying the jacket and mention you want it rated to -10C and the assistant will recommend the correct fill for you

Warm gloves

Consider liners or a light polartec pair for lower altitudes and evenings, and a thicker waterproof pair like ski gloves for higher altitudes

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

KIT LIST

Lower Body

Trekking trousers

These tend to be polyester so they dry quickly after a shower and weigh little in your pack. Consider perhaps a pair with detachable lower legs as an alternative to shorts

Softshell trousers

Windproof or thermal lined trekking trousers for higher altitudes and the summit phase. Thermal leggings can still be worn underneath if necessary

Long Johns

Thermal insulation for the lower body

Waterproof overtrousers

Like the jacket, an essential piece of kit to stay dry and should also be Goretex

Underwear

Merino or wicking material, not cotton. How many pairs you take is entirely up to you

Feet

Walking boots

Well worn in 4 season waterproof boots with mid to high ankle support

Comfortable trainers

For evening use and to give your feet a break once we reach the camps

Trekking socks

Start with lighter socks lower down, working up to thicker pairs for higher up as it gets colder. Some people like a clean pair every day, others are happy to change every other day – that's a personal choice

Spare laces

Just in case

Hydration

Water bottles/bladder

3L equivalent – Camelbaks are useful at lower altitudes but have a tendency to freeze up at higher altitudes without insulation tubes, Nalgene bottles are better at altitude. We suggest a combination of a 2L bladder and 1L bottle or 2 x ½L bottles to put in your jacket for summit night

Water purification

Although generally all water is boiled some prefer to double up and add purification tabs as well. Always good to have in your bag

Toiletries

Wash kit

Keep it simple on the mountain. Essentials are toothbrush, toothpaste and deodorant. Moisturiser is advisable, everything else is a luxury!

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

KIT LIST

Personal first aid kit

The 360 med kits are designed to be used in emergencies and akin to an A&E rather than a pharmacy on Expeditions so please come prepared with useful meds for yourself such as painkillers (Ibuprofen if you can take it and a Paracetamol) plus blister plasters, plasters, antiseptic, rehydration sachets and any muscle rubs you wish to use.

Personal medication

Keep this in your daypack

Wet wipes

These are great for washing when shower facilities become a thing of the past

Alcohol gel

A must have for good camp hygiene

Insect repellent

For early stages and once back down

Toilet paper

Provided on the mountain but a spare in your daysack may be useful if you need to hide behind a rock between camps

Nappy sacks or dog poo bags

Only needed to bag your toilet paper if you are caught short in between camps and for keeping your rubbish tidy in your tent

Miscellaneous

Head torch

Bring spare batteries

Trekking poles

These tend to be a personal preference but help with your stability and can dampen the pressure on the knees coming down hill

Camera

Bring plenty of spare batteries and memory cards

Penknife (optional)

Snacks

You will be fed very well and given snacks each day however we advise bringing a small selection as a little bit of comfort. Extra snacks can be bought en-route if needed. Energy gels and protein bars are not suitable

Entertainment

Of course optional, but most trekkers like to bring an iPod, book, Kindle, cards etc for evening entertainment.

Documentation

Passport

Don't forget this! Your passport should have at least 6 months validity. With your passport expiry date at least six months after the final day of travel.

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

KIT LIST

Copy of passport

Rarely needed but worth having just in case

Visa

Granted on arrival, it costs \$50 USD for a 3 month stay, subject to change

Passport photos x 4

We need these to obtain your climbing and trekking permits

Dental check up

We recommend you have a dental check-up before your trip. New fillings can be an issue at altitude if there is an air pocket left in the gap

Money

We recommend you take at least US\$350-\$400 in small denominations. This will allow for \$150 – \$180 tip money plus any extras such as satellite phone calls and emergency funds. Small denominations are recommended as it may be difficult to obtain change and it will be easier to divide tip money

Travel insurance

Copy of own travel insurance details. And relevant contact numbers. We have a partnership with True Traveller and would recommend that you contact them when looking for travel insurance for your trip with 360. However, it is vital that you ensure that the insurance cover they offer is suitable for you, taking your personal circumstances (items to be insured, cancellation cover, medical history) into account. Many other insurance providers are available and we do recommend that you shop around to get the best cover for you on the expedition you are undertaking. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for your intended trip. To include medical evacuation and coverage up to the maximum altitude of this trip.

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m



Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

FAQ'S

Food and Water

What is the food like on the mountain?

All meals on the mountain are of the highest possible standard. In fact considering that our cooks have to produce the best possible meals in a wilderness setting using only the most basic of facilities (gas burners) the meals they produce are nothing short of a miracle. The meals are always fresh, nutritious and varied. We ensure that dietary preferences are always met and that the best local ingredients are used. The underlying aim is to provide balanced nutritional meals packed with carbohydrates to re-fuel hungry bodies and to replenish stores for the next day of activity.

You are invited to bring along any of your favourite snacks and goody bags from home if you want. Concentrate on high energy food-stuffs such as Jelly Babies or nuts to give you that little boost on an arduous day and remember that chocolate will melt.

I have food allergies, can these be catered for?

Absolutely, please inform the office of any allergies or intolerances and we will ensure that these are taken into account on the trek.

Where does the drinking water come from?

We use bottled water on this trek. We recognise that it's not particularly environmentally-friendly, but there are too many villages above most water sources for it to be reliably clear.

Fill up your camelbaks or bottles at breakfast before heading out for the day and take a good 2 liters minimum with you.

If you do find you need to fill up from streams out on the trek, be sure to purify the water first.

How often is fresh water available for replenishing during the day?

Before leaving camp in the morning you will fill your water bottles or camel bladder. If this runs low you will have ample more water to replace it with. For most walking days water can be replenished at the lunchtime site.

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

FAQ'S

Accommodation

How does tent sharing work? And how big are the tents?

Most altitude related symptoms manifest themselves at night. We therefore recommend tent sharing from the onset of this expedition.

Tent share is always organised according to sex and where possible age groups. Obviously if you are climbing this mountain with a friend or partner then you will be able to share tents. If you have joined the team by yourself then it is highly likely that you will be sharing a tent with your pre-assigned room buddy unless prior arrangements have been made. We use high quality 3 man tents to be shared between 2 people to provide extra space for your comfort.

Will the camp be freshly set up or will we be staying at existing camps at set sites on the way up?

Our local camp crew will set up the tents for you each night. We send them ahead of the group to secure the best site and to get the site prepared before you arrive. Bear in mind that these guys are also porters and when our walking days are shorter we might get to camp before them. If this happens then have a cup of tea in the dining tent and wait for your tents to be ready.

Will the toileting facilities will be “au naturel”, or pit latrines?

We bring along our own toilet tents with Portaloo units. This method allows us to maintain the best possible levels of hygiene without contributing to the toilet problems that can happen at some camps.

Health and Safety

What happens if there is a problem on the mountain?

All our guides are in communication with each other by phone and radio. In addition the national park operates a rescue service on all the routes we use, this service is linked by radio to the park headquarters. In the vast majority of cases of emergency rescue the problems can be attributed to altitude and if so the solution is immediate descent to lower altitudes. Our local mountain crew are all experienced in dealing with any problems that arise. Our guides are either doctors or qualified with the highest standard of wilderness first aid qualifications and can handle any emergency to the highest level of competency, in the vast majority of cases without national park assistance.

FAQ'S

What happens if I get altitude sickness?

There are different types of altitude sickness. Although our acclimatisation regime ensures that everybody enjoys the best possible chance of getting high on the mountain, altituderelated problems can happen. The most common of this is high altitude sickness, (AMS – acute mountain sickness).

Symptoms for this generally include:

- Headache
- Nausea
- Vomiting

It all sounds quite dramatic but generally this is just the process your body naturally goes through to adjust to the higher altitudes and the reduced partial pressure of the atmosphere. For some people the acclimatisation process is a little longer and harder than others.

For our guides this is all part and parcel of trekking at relatively high altitude and although we assess each client's personal situation carefully we also further consider the compounding affects of dehydration brought on by excessive vomiting and lack of appetite.

AMS might sound frightening but our guides are fully trained (and experienced) in helping relieve your symptoms and providing advice on how to best proceed.

Please note that we don't recommend using Diamox as a prophylactic and if you have been prescribed it by your GP, please raise this with your expedition leader.

What can I do to help prevent AMS?

In most cases AMS can be avoided by following these guidelines:

- Drink lots of water
- Walk slowly
- Stay warm
- Eat well

We recommend that you familiarise yourself with the various affects that altitude can cause.

During your pre-climb briefing, we describe altitude sickness to you in detail, and advise you how to cope with it. The most important thing is not to fear it, but to respect it and to know how to deal with it and more importantly tell your guides how you feel. Our guides have seen every condition that the mountain produces, and they will always know how to deal with problems.

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

FAQ'S

Should I bring Diamox on the expedition with me?

Although we recommend you come armed with a course of Diamox or other high-altitude drug on this expedition, we do not recommend that take you these as a prophylactic during the trek or climb. We view Diamox as a treatment drug rather than a preventative medicine. Most adventure medics give similar advice, however we do appreciate this can be confusing, as many GPs (who aren't necessarily mountaineers) do suggest taking it as a prophylactic.

We pride ourselves on designing all our itineraries with acclimatisation very much front and centre and this expedition itinerary has been carefully designed to allow for your body to adjust to the altitude gradually, safely and comfortably. However, if you find that you are still having problems adjusting to the altitude (see our FAQ on Altitude Sickness) then your expedition leader or expedition medic will recommend the correct course of action regarding taking Diamox.

Should I take Diamox?

It is far preferable to take Diamox if and when needed during the course of the expedition. If you are already taking it and then start having altitude related problems you are left with few options but to descend to a more comfortable altitude which sadly often means that the summit is not attainable.

Furthermore, Diamox is a diuretic, meaning you will have to drink a lot of fluid to prevent dehydration. Of course, the upshot of this is you'll have to pee more which means you'll probably be having to get up more in the night and take cover behind rocks during the day. Another quite common side-effect is that it can cause your extremities to "buzz and tingle" including your fingers, toes and lips which can feel quite unsettling. Other side-effects can include dizziness and light headedness with loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. Although all these side-effects are manageable when you have symptoms of altitude sickness, we personally believe it is counter-intuitive to take it unless necessary.

Of course, it is totally up to you, this is just our recommendation and we're not doctors. If you do decide to take Diamox on the advice of your doctor then please do let your leader know in situ so they are aware of this. We also suggest you take the drug for a couple of days a few weeks before travelling so you can experience the symptoms before taking them during the trek.

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

FAQ'S

Do I need to take Malarial drugs?

The Malaria protozoa generally does not survive over an altitude of 1,500m so Malaria poses no threat on this trek.

You advocate taking a small first aid kit, what should it contain?

We advocate a little bit of self-help on the mountain. If you have a blister developing for example then please stop take off your boot and treat it before it becomes a problem. Your own first aid kit should contain: a basic blister kit, plasters, antiseptic, high factor sun protection, your own personal medication (sometimes your porter might get to camp after you and if he is carrying your medication you may not be able to take it according to the regime you are used to), basic pain relief (aspirin and Ibuprofen), a personal course of antibiotics if prone to illness. Foot powder in your socks every morning is great for preventing blisters. Generally the best approach to take when packing your first aid kit is to include such basic medications as if you would on a family or personal holiday.

Your 360 expedition leader and / or a local porter (we call the ambulance man!) carries a very comprehensive first aid kit which contains a wide range of supplies and medications. They are fully trained to use whatever is needed for any emergency that may arise. We advocate keeping this in mind when packing your own first aid supplies and keeping your own FA kit as compact and light as possible.

What vaccinations do I need?

The following vaccinations are recommended for Ethiopia:

- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid
- Diphtheria
- Tetanus
- Polio
- Yellow Fever (see below)

This list is not absolute and it is important you should see your GP Surgery or travel clinic for latest recommendations and to ensure you are up to date on necessary vaccinations.

Do I need to have a yellow fever certificate?

The advice about Yellow Fever vaccinations for travelling to Ethiopia changes frequently and you must check with your GP surgery or Travel Clinic for the latest advice before you travel. We cannot advise you on this due to the frequency with which the advice changes.

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

FAQ'S

Kit

What clothing should I wear on the mountain?

We advocate the beg, steal and borrow principle for first timers instead of buying brand new stuff that may never get used again. The cost of equipment is usually a major deterrent for people coming onto trips in the first place.

Our guides usually start the walk wearing long, lightweight trekking trousers and t-shirts. Long trousers are recommended as a deterrent to insects, stinging plants and to act as sun protection. Shorts can also be worn on the initial few days of the trek as the temperature is usually warm. Ensure that you apply sun protection frequently!

The prevailing conditions on the mountain will dictate what you will wear: if it is cold when you leave the camp in the morning then wear a fleece. As things warm up take advantage of the zipper system which most trekking clothing has and open and / or close the zips to adjust to your own preferred temperature. If you get too warm simply take a layer off.

The nature of mountains means that weather can be changeable so it's worth having layers and waterproofs to hand.

What is the best type of footwear to use?

Because of the huge variety of terrain encountered when ascending this mountain it is very important to wear the right footwear. Boots should be sturdy, waterproof, insulated against cold temperatures and offer adequate ankle support. In addition it is highly recommended that your boots are well worn in to prevent the formation of blisters.

A wide range of suitable boots are on the market and further advice as to which brands are available can be found online or at your local gear store. When in store try lots of boots on, use the ramps in the shops to test their traction, make sure they are comfortable as you will be almost living in them for days on end and they are very important.

It is not necessary to buy technical boots with crampon clips unless you plan to do more ambitious climbs in the future as crampons are not used to climb this mountain.

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

FAQ'S

What should I carry inside my daysack?

A daysack is worn at all times during the trek. The content of this is mandatory and should include: a fleece (for when taking breaks or weather changes) a full set (top and bottoms) of waterproofs, sufficient water for the day, snacks, camera equipment, personal medication and a head torch.

Your day to day sack should weigh no more than 3 – 4 kg and a rucksack of around 40L capacity will more than suffice. This rucksack can be filled to brim with extra stuff when checking in at the airport.

It is important that this bag has an adjustable waist belt to transfer the weight of your daily load onto your hips and from here onto your legs (your strongest muscles) to do most of the carrying.

What do the porters carry? What is the correct porter weight?

Your porter bags should be off a soft material “duffel bag” or rucksack variety and should not be a suitcase or hard bodied metal case. Furthermore they should weigh no more than 12-14 kg when packed for the mountain – we have found this weight to be ample. T

Please bear in mind that park regulations restrict the weight porters can carry and that on top of your load porters will also have to carry a share of the food, kitchen equipment, camping equipment and their own survival gear.

Inside the porter bag should be a change of clothing, your clothing for higher up the mountain, sleeping bag, personal toiletries etc. (Refer back to the kit list).

Are down jackets necessary?

They are highly recommended and are worth their weight in gold on summit day and in the evenings and early mornings.

A layer system comprising of several layers of base and thermal layers, fleeces, and a thick jacket will suffice on most summit nights but nothing beats the efficiency of a good down jacket (especially when topped with a water proof layer).

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

FAQ'S

How warm does my sleeping bag need to be?

Should be rated within the -10C comfort zone. From the first camp upwards it is not unusual to experience frosty nights and a good night's sleep is important to giving you the best chance to climb this mountain. Ensure you get a sleeping bag that has this temperature rating at this comfort zone rather than as its extreme zone.

3 season sleeping bags can be enhanced by using an inner silk liner (or similar), and ultimately by draping your down jacket over you. The idea is to be as comfortable and warm as possible for the night and henceforth to ensure plenty of sleep for the arduous days ahead. It is important to remember that down sleeping bags work by your own body heating the down that's inside the bag. Once you have warmed the bag up the feather down will retain the heat and ensure that you sleep at a temperature that's your own body temperature. For best results wear as little as possible when inside your sleeping bag. Our guides will often only wear a set of thermals in their bag. It is important for the bag to trap the heat. By wearing multiple layers of clothing your clothing will trap this heat and your bag will not function properly.

Is it possible to rent equipment before I go?

You can rent equipment from our friends at www.outdoorhire.co.uk. However, we do advocate the use of personal equipment when it comes to footwear, your boots should be well worn in to your own feet.

What clothing is suitable for when we come back from the mountain?

Ethiopia is close to the equator and daytime temperatures are warm.

Shorts and T-shirts are fine to wear during the day. Evening wear generally tends to be casual with long trousers and casual shirt appropriate for all hotels and restaurants. Ethiopians are generally quite conservative in their dress code and are generally well dressed despite their situation in life.

The Trek

Will we see lots of other Westerners? What about wildlife?

This is quite a well known trekking area, particularly by French and Italians (the Italians occupied Ethiopia during the war), so Geech and Chenek could be reasonably popular camps during high season. Very few people, however, go all the way to Ras Dashen so after Chenek we might see a handful of other people, but not many.

In any event, once we leave the camps, we tend to be on the trail on our own. Aside from the Gilada Baboons of course, there are plenty of colonies along the trek and they head to the escarpments for safety so we'd be unlucky not to see any. There are also Wallia Ibex, particularly after Chenek, but they are shy and tend to wander around on their own, so a sighting might not be so likely. Lammergeyers normally circle overhead too!

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

FAQ'S

The Weather

How cold can it get?

In Addis and Gondar – both well above 2,000m – the temperature range is normally about 20C–28C, very occasionally low 30's, but cooler than one would have imagined.

In the mountains the daytime temperatures will start warm in the mid to high twenties, but by night – particularly higher up – be prepared for the temperature to drop below freezing.

Don't be deceived by the mild temperatures however, the vast majority of this trip is spent over 3,000m and the sun intensifies very quickly with altitude so slap on the cream liberally and frequently. You'll definitely want a sunhat, along with high factor sunscreen and lipsalve. The last thing you want is to be dealing with sunburn.

Travel

Do I need to book my own flights to Ethiopia?

360 Expeditions will be booking flights on your behalf. We provide confirmation of flight times and departure terminal approximately three weeks before your departure date. Please be aware that flight schedules are subject to change. Please ensure that you have checked your flight details before you set out for the airport.

Insurance

Do I need special travel insurance for the trek?

You must carry individual travel insurance to take part in the trek. We cannot take you on the mountain without proof of insurance.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for your intended trip. To include medical evacuation and coverage up to the maximum altitude of this trip.

Your insurance details are requested on the booking form, however this can be arranged at a later date. 360 Expeditions will be requesting your insurance details 8 weeks before your departure.

Entry into Country

Do I need a visa for Ethiopia?

Visas are compulsory for entry into Ethiopia for UK citizens.

All international visitors to Ethiopia can now apply for an e-visa – www.evisa.gov.et

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

FAQ'S

Training

How can I best train / prepare for climbing the mountain?

The 360 expedition training programs have been devised to be expedition specific. Use these as a guide but also feel free to contact us for individual advice on how best to incorporate a suitable fitness program with your own lifestyle. If you are struggling from day one then you will not enjoy the rest of the trip. Physical preparation does not have to be Herculean: concentrate on cardio-vascular exercise during the week by taking short runs when time allows and try to spend at least 2 weekends a month going on long duration walks (longer than 6 hrs) carrying a rucksack of around 10kg.

This kind of regime will not only prepare your body for carrying minor loads but will harden your body against the big days on the mountain itself. In addition it will help break in your boots and get you used to your equipment. In combination this will pay dividends when you reach The Simien Mountains because even though you can't train for altitude your body will be ready for arduous days and you will be familiar with how to best use your equipment, so you can enjoy and appreciate the mountain all the more.

How fit do I need to be for this expedition?

Having a good level of fitness will allow you to enjoy the expedition all the better and increase your chances of reaching the summit of Ras Dashen. Summit day can be up to 10 hours long and the climb is steep!

How out of my comfort zone will I be?

On a day to day level remember that you will be camping at altitude. You are likely to be cold, washing and toilet facilities will be limited, your appetite may be affected by the altitude and as you get higher on the trek it is possible that you will suffer shortness of breath and many people have difficulty sleeping. Remember that everyone on the trek is probably experiencing exactly the same symptoms, both physical and mental.

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

FAQ'S

Finance

When is the money due for this expedition? What kind of payment do you accept?

Generally speaking deposits are due upon booking as we need to book your international flights well in advance. The full amount should be paid 4 months prior to departure. However having said this, our aim is to get you to the top of this mountain and we understand that personal financial situations can vary. Please contact our friendly office crew to discuss a suitable interest-free payment plan should you find raising the funds to be difficult. We have after all been in your shoes and go by the motto of where there's a will there's a way.

What is your cancellation policy? What is your refund policy?

Please read our terms and conditions carefully before you depart. 360 Expeditions highly recommends trip cancellation insurance for all expeditions. Due to the nature and heavy costs of government and operator permits we must adhere to a stringent refund policy.

What currency do I need to take with me?

The Ethiopian currency is the birr. Notes are available in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 50 and 100 birr. Coins are available in 5, 10, 25 and 50 cents, or santim and also 1 birr. One cent coins do exist but are not used; if you do acquire one (usually from changing money), consider it a souvenir.

US dollars, Euros and GB Pounds can easily be exchanged at banks. If you're bringing US dollars, it's best to bring notes that are series 2000 or later (aka "big-headed" notes), especially for \$100 bills; series 2006 or later is even better. Since older notes were more easily counterfeited, many banks will not change them.

What additional spending money will we need?

The amount of money you will need depends on how many presents you wish to buy or how much you wish to drink when you come off the hill. As a basic rule of thumb \$200 should be more than adequate for any post expedition spending.

Ethiopia is a relatively cheap place and when indulging in the local custom of haggling then goods can be very good value for money. Your 360 leader will be happy to point out the relative bargains and the suitable prices plus where to get the best value for money. The only cash you'll need to consider taking with you on the mountain is the local crew tips which are presented to them usually on the final evening at the last camp before you sign out from the national park.

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

FAQ'S

How much do we tip our local crew?

Our local crew work extremely hard to ensure that your expedition runs well. While tipping is not compulsory, once you see how hard the crew work and realise the small amount of money they get paid relative to one's own income tipping will seem the least they can do to say thank you. As a general rule we suggest around 1,000-2,000 Birr per client which is pooled and then apportioned according to seniority. This is about £30 across the whole local team. For the leader this is your call.

What happens if I need to leave the trip early?

If you need to leave early, arrangements can be made with the help of your 360 Guide. Additional costs (transport, hotels, flights etc.) will be incurred by the trekker but our guides will be able to assist in every detail of your departure.

Are ATMs widely available to withdraw local currency?

There is a bank to change money near immigration and baggage claim at Bole International Airport, as well as several ATM's. All banks should have the same exchange rate, whether in the airport or in the city. ATM's are fairly widespread in Addis, and are fast making their way into the regions. They are present in Gondar and Debarke. But they should not be relied upon once outside Addis, they're often either out of order or simply out of cash. Bank branches in the regions will normally advance against a visa card during working hours.

Ethiopia is very much a CASH ECONOMY, (Ethiopian birr, not foreign notes), don't expect to pay for much – if anything – with a credit card or US dollars / GBP.

As a guide, £1GBP is roughly 35 birr. A beer is normally about 50 birr (tourist rate), a coffee about 30 birr. Meals might be around 200 birr for a main course. Do take some cash with you on the trek as hawkers will gladly sell you a Ras Dashen beer or soft drink.

Ethiopia

Ras Dashen, Simien Mountains | | 4,550m

FAQ'S

Electronics

Will I be able to charge my camera/phone battery on the trek?

Opportunities to charge your batteries will be limited. If you can get hold of a solar battery charger this is probably the best option. This together with making sure that you keep your spare batteries warm i.e. by keeping them near your body day and night should mean that you can keep snapping all the way!

Is there mobile phone reception on the trek?

Ethio Telecom is the sole mobile network provider, and as such tends to run beyond capacity, but this improves by the day. At the time of writing, international SIMs work on the network for voice, but not data. Coverage is surprisingly good right to the top of Ras Dashen. Local SIMs can be purchased at the airport but are quite expensive, especially if you're only there for a short while.

Is a travel adaptor necessary for the plug sockets in the hotel or are they like UK?

The voltage is 220v / 50Hz like the UK. Round two-pin plugs are used, like in Europe.

General

Will my valuables be safe?

While we will do everything we can to provide adequate safety for the group and security for your possessions, the general rule is that if you don't need it, don't bring it. This includes jewellery, necklaces, rings and even watches. Your passport and money should be kept on you at all times. As with travel in any foreign country, you need to look after yourself and your possessions, and this is no different.

Ethiopia

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TRAINING PROGRAM

To begin 6 months prior to the expedition where possible.

1. CVS: Cardiovascular exercise which is low impact such as swimming, cycling, cross trainer, rowing.

2. Weekend walk should be done over undulating terrain. Only a light rucksack needs to be carried.

3. For specific exercises it is worth doing static squats and heel raises on a regular basis to improve leg muscles prior to the trip. Static squats are especially useful to help protect the knees. Please remember that it is still important to have a well balanced workout using a variety of muscle groups.

4. It is worth winding down and resting in the week leading up to the trip, doing several light walks to keep things going.

5. When walking going at a pace of a brisk walk with a light sweat and enough to feel breathless is recommended

6. During the program, rather than step up suddenly each month (example, going for 3 one hour walks each week during the weekdays in April to 3 one and half hour walks suddenly in May) it is better to build up gradually each week so there isn't a large transition (example, going for 3 one hour walks during week 1 in April, going for 3 one hour and ten minute walks during week 2 in April, going for 3 one hour and fifteen minute walks during week 3 in April, going for 3 one hour and twenty minute walks during week 4 in April)

6. It is important you seek medical advice prior to starting any training program, especially if you are not used to regular physical exertion

All the best with your training!

MONTH 1

OPT 1

2 x 30 mins weekday walk
1 x 1 hour weekend walk
1 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 30 mins weekday walk
2 x 1 hour weekend walk
1 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 2

OPT 1

2 x 45 mins weekday walk
1 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 45 mins weekday walk
2 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 3

OPT 1

2 x 45 mins weekday walk
1 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 45 mins weekday walk
2 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 4

OPT 1

3 x 1 hour weekday walk
1 x 4 hours weekend walk
3 x 15 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 1 hour weekday walk
2 x 4 hours weekend walk
3 x 15 mins CVS

MONTH 5

OPT 1

3 x 1.5 hours weekday walk
1 x 5 hours weekend walk
3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 1.5 hours weekday walk
2 x 5 hours weekend walk
3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS

MONTH 6

OPT 1

3 x 2 hours weekday walk
1 x 6 hours weekend walk
3 x 30 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 3 hours weekday walk
2 x 6 hours weekend walk
3 x 30 mins CVS



"Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty & well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out & loudly proclaiming 'Wow! What a Ride!' "

Dream it. Plan it. Live it.

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