

ETHIOPIA

Location & Size:

Ethiopia is located in the North Eastern part of the African continent or what is known as the “Horn of Africa.” Ethiopia is bounded by Sudan on the west, Eritrea and Djibouti on the northeast, Somalia on the east and southeast, and Kenya on the south. Ethiopia lies between the Equator and Tropic of Cancer, between the 3^o N and 15^o N Latitude or 33^o E and 48^o E Longitude. The country occupies an area of approximately 1,127,127 square km., which is slightly less than twice the size of Texas. The total land area is 1,119,683 square km and the area occupied by water bodies is 7,444 sq. km. The Ethiopian border is 5,311 km long.

Geography:

Ethiopia is a country rich in geographical diversity. It consists of rugged mountains, flat-topped plateaus, deep gorges and river valleys. It is erosion, volcanic eruptions and tectonic movements over the ages that have contributed to the nations diverse topography. The highest altitude is at Ras Dashen (4,620 m above sea level) and the lowest altitude is at Kobar Sink (120 m below sea level). A large percentage of the country consists of high plateaus and mountain ranges, dissected by major rivers such as Blue Nile, Tekeze, Awash, Omo, and Wabi Shebelle etc... All in all, Ethiopia consists of nine major rivers and 19 lakes. The Blue Nile, the chief headstream of the Nile, rises in Lake Tana in northwest Ethiopia.

The Great Rift Valley extends across the Ethiopian plateau, which is divided into two by a series of north-south tending escarpments. The escarpments are very steep

towards the rift valley on either side. In general, the western high lands have high rims in their western edges, but low lying plateaus and plains to the east and south.

Climate:

Ethiopia has four major seasons: Summer 'Kiremet' (June – August); Autumn 'Tibe' (September – November); Winter 'Bega' (December – February) and Spring 'Belg' (March – May). However, the coldest month is not always in 'Bega' and the hottest month is not always in 'Kiremet'. Ethiopia lies near the equator where maximum heat from the sun is received. The length of days and nights are almost the same in most regions. The average seasonal temperatures are:

Summer	Low of 10 ⁰ C	High of 39 ⁰ C
Autumn	Low of 12 ⁰ C	High of 35 ⁰ C
Winter	Low of 10 ⁰ C	High of 31 ⁰ C
Spring	Low of 13.3 ⁰ C	High of 32 ⁰ C

The rainfall decreases from the southwest to the northeast. The rainfall is largely concentrated during the summer months of June, July and August.

In general, the climate is moderate, except in the lowlands of the Danakil Desert and the Ogaden, which are hot all the year. The highlands are temperate with night frost in the mountains. A single rainy season in the west brings twice as much rain as the wet seasons in the east.

History:

Ethiopia is the oldest independent country in Sub Saharan Africa. The earliest evidence of Ethiopian history is around 1000 BC, when the queen of Sheba visited King Solomon. Ras Kassa had himself crowned as the emperor at Axum under a different name 'Tewodros'. This happened in 1855 when he constructed an army to reunite the provinces of Tigre, Amhara and Shoa. He later shot himself in 1867 because the British blockaded his fortress. The ancient Ethiopian monarchy maintained its freedom from the colonial rule. One exception to this rule is the Italian occupation between 1936 and 1941. In 1974 a military junta, the Derg and deposed Emperor Haile Selassie established a socialist state. Torn by bloody coups, uprisings, wide-scale drought and massive refugee problems, the regime was toppled by a coalition of rebel forces, the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), in 1991. A constitution was adopted in 1994 and Ethiopia's first multi-party elections were held in 1995. A 2.5-year border war with Eritrea that ended with a peace treaty on December 12th 2000 has strengthened the coalition, but hurt the counties economy to a considerable extent.

Calendar & Important Dates:

Have you ever wondered why Ethiopian tourist promotion slogan reads "13 months of Sunshine?" well that's because the Ethiopian calendar has 13 months a year, with 30 days each month except the 13th known as 'the Pagumen' which means 'additional' in Greek. As of this year, 2002, the Ethiopian calendar is eight years behind and indicates it is 1994. Ethiopia still retains the Julian calendar, named after Julius Caesar. The Ethiopian calendar is eight months behind the Gregorian calendar, while Ethiopian Easter coincides with Gregorian Easter once every four years.

Ethiopian Month

Gregorian Calendar

Meskerem (New Year)

11 Sept – 10 Oct

Tikimt	11 Oct – 9 Nov
Hidar	10 Nov – 9 Dec
Tahsas	10 Dec – 8 Jan
Tir	9 Jan – 7 Feb
Yekatit	8 Feb - 9 Mar
Megabit	10 Mar – 8 Apr
Miyazya	9 Apr – 8 May
Ginbot	9 May – 7 Jun
Sene	8 Jun – 7 Jul
Hamle	8 Jul – 6 Aug
Nehase	7 Aug – 6 Sept
Pagume (5-6) days	6 Sept – 10 Sept

The important days & public holidays in Ethiopia are:

7 January Ethiopian Christmas

19 January Ethiopian Epiphany (Timket)

2 March Victory of Adwa Day

6 April Patriots Victory Day

12 April Ethiopian Good Friday

14 April Ethiopian Easter

1 May International Labor Day

28 May Downfall of the Dergue

11 September Ethiopian New Year

27 September Meskal

Population & People:

The total population of Ethiopia is approximately 65,891,874 people according to a 1998 census. The age structure is 47% under 14 years, 50.03% between 15 years and 64 years, 2.79% over 65 years. The population growth rate is 2.7% (2001 estimate), the birth rate is 44.68 births per 1,000 people (2001 estimate), death rate is 17.84 deaths per 1,000 people (2001 estimate) and the migration rate is 0.13 migrants per 1,000 people (2001 estimate). The life expectancy at birth for the total population is 44.68 years while for males it is 43.88 years and females is 45.51 years.

There are 76 nationalities in Ethiopia. The break up for the ethnic groups are: Oromo 40%, Amhara & Tigre 32%, Sidamo 9%, Shankella 6%, Somali 6%, Afar 4%, Gurage 2% and others 1%.

Currency:

The official currency of Ethiopia is the Ethiopian Birr (Birr = 100 Cents). The notes are in denominations of Birr 100, 50, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of 50, 25, 10 and 5 cents. The

import of local currency is limited to Birr 100 and the export of local currency up to Birr 100 is permitted provided the traveler holds a re-entry permit. The import and export of foreign currency is unlimited, subject to declaration on arrival. As of March 13, 2002:

U.S. \$ 1 = 8.36 Ethiopian Birr or

1 Ethiopian Birr = U.S. \$ 0.12

Education:

The definition of literacy in this context is ages 15 and over can read and write. The literacy of the total population is 35.5%. Male literacy being 45.5%, and female literacy being 25.3%. The primary education consists of six years and the primary enrollment ratio is 43%. The male youth illiteracy is 47%. On an average, there are 43 students per teacher in a class.

Education in Ethiopia was oriented towards religious learning until after World War II, when the government began to emphasize secular learning as a means to achieve social mobility and national development. The education system today suffers from inadequate financing. Education was severely disrupted during the civil war. Secondary education is in English and Amharic. Addis Ababa University has been a center of political activity, usually anti-EPRDF, and is subjected to periodic closure and the sacking of leading academics. The Addis Ababa University has an enrollment of around 15,347 people.

Language:

Although Amharic is considered the official language of Ethiopia, there are an astonishing 83 languages spoken in the country with 200 dialects. However the major languages are Amharic, Tigrinya, Oromigna, Guaragigna, Somali, Arabic, English

(major foreign language taught in school). Amharic is spoken by approximately 31% of the country's population.

Religion:

Ethiopia is a platform for many different religions, beliefs and practices from time in memorial. The major religion in Ethiopia is Christianity. The other major religions present in Ethiopia are Islam and Judaism. These persuasions exist together and contemporaneously without causing any noticeable shock in the social, cultural and political life of the country. The break of the religions are as follows: Muslim 45% Ethiopian Orthodox 40%, Animist 12%, Others 3% - 8%.

Agriculture:

Agriculture accounts to over 40% of the GDP, 80% of the exports and 80% of the labor force. Agriculture remained in 1991 the economy's most important sector. Ethiopia has great agricultural potential because of its vast area of fertile land, diverse climate, generally adequate rainfall and large labor pool. Despite its advantages, Ethiopian agriculture remains underdeveloped and outdated. A major cause for the underdevelopment is the drought, which persistently affected the country since the early 1970's. The country also has a poor economic base (low productivity, weak infrastructure, and low level of technology). According to the World Bank, between 1980 and 1987, agricultural production dropped at an annual rate of 2.1 percent, while the population grew at an annual rate of 2.4 percent. Consequently, the country faced a tragic famine that resulted in the death of nearly one million people from 1984 to 1986.

Land use in Ethiopia consists of 12% arable land, 1% permanent crops, 40% permanent pastures, 25% forests and woodlands and 22 % others according to a 1993 census. The fertilizer consumption was 159 grams per ha of arable land (1998). The major cash crops are coffee and tea and the major food

crops are maize, wheat, barley, sorghum, millet, teff and potat. In 1999, the agricultural GDP was 52%. The cereal yield was 1,141 Kgs. In 2000.

Economy& Trade:

On the scorecard, Ethiopia's world GNP ranking is 99 and the GNP per capita is \$110. Ethiopia has an inflation rate of approximately 3.7%. Since the end of the civil war, Ethiopia is one of the world's poorest counties. Ethiopia has begun moving toward a market economy by encouraging foreign investment and reforming land tenure. Economic decline was reversed in 1993 as the agricultural and industrial output grew. The latter was fueled by the purchase of parts and raw materials funded by foreign aid.

The major export items are coffee, animal skins and hides, chat, flowers, pulses, and vegetables. Most of Ethiopia's exports are to Germany, USA, Japan, Italy and France and most of their imports come from UK, Germany, Japan, USA and Italy. In 1998, the GDP was \$32.9 billion, export \$550 million and import \$1.3 billion.

The major weakness of the Ethiopian economy is the dependence on agriculture, periodic serious droughts, and a war-damaged infrastructure.

Food:

Ethiopian food is like the Ethiopians themselves: spicy, subtle, piquant and most of all unforgettable. A formal Ethiopian meal begins with the washing of hands. An Ethiopian meal might lead you to think you were already in heaven. Beef cooked, raw, cubed, ground and marinated in a fiery red pepper sauce with more flavors blended in than the most sophisticated foreign palate can identify. However 'Doro Wot' (Chicken in sauce) is probably the most widely known Ethiopian dish of all. A festive meal without a richly flavored doro wot, hard-boiled eggs is practically a contradiction in terms. Most

Ethiopian food is served over 'Injera' (slightly sour pancake). Other popular Ethiopian dishes are Shiro Wet, Enset Kitta, Kitfo and so on...

Landmarks:

The Menelik Mausoleum: Built in 1911 in the old Baata church it serves as a tomb for emperors, princess and martyrs of freedom.

St. Geroge's Cathedral: Built in 1896 in the traditional octagonal shape by emperor Menelik II to commemorate his victory at Adwa.

The National Museum: Houses numerous antiquarian relics and archaeological artifacts.

Trinity Cathedral: Built in 1941 to a European design in commemoration of Ethiopia's liberation from Italian Occupation.

Jubilee Palace: It is a modern palace to commemorate the silver jubilee of the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie I.

Alagappan Annamalai