

CH>RITY
CH>LLENGE



TRIP NOTES

**BELIEVE
ACHIEVE
INSPIRE**

**SIMIEN MOUNTAIN TREK
ETHIOPIA**

Thu 08 Mar - Sun 18 Mar 2012





In aid of your choice of charity

08 Mar - 18 Mar 2012

11 DAYS | ETHIOPIA | TOUGH

The Simien Mountains are one of the major highlands of Africa, rising to their highest point at Ras Dejen (4,620m) in Ethiopia. Charity Challenge's route up Africa's fourth highest peak is a long way from the regular tourist trails. Instead, it leads into beautiful lowland valleys and high escarpments, dotted with Amhara villages. Tough but rewarding, the summit trek is followed by a challenging ridge route, which takes in several 4,000m peaks en route. Perhaps the biggest challenge comes on the trek from Arkwasyie as we leave the higher plateau, cross several substantial ridges and valleys and climb down the near vertical Devil's Staircase with a 900m descent to reach Lamo. This colourful itinerary includes time in historic Gondar and the capital of Addis Ababa, offering many encounters with the ancient culture of this fascinating African country.

- Summit Ras Dejen, Ethiopia's highest peak
- Rugged mountainous landscape
- Largely unexplored route
- Visit unchanged Amhar villages
- A chance to see some of Ethiopia's varied wildlife include gelada baboons and the elusive Simien wolf

YOUR CHALLENGE DAY BY DAY

DAY 1 Thu 08 Mar

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International departure from London

The fundraising and training is about to pay off as the big day has finally arrived. Having waved goodbye to family and friends, take the flight to Ethiopia to relax ahead of this gruelling challenge or spend time getting to know your teammates before the hard work begins.

DAY 2 Fri 09 Mar

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Arrive Addis Ababa

The group will be met by a local Charity Challenge representative on arrival in Addis Ababa. We will then be transferred to our hotel, where we can freshen up and recharge for the hard work ahead.

DAY 3 Sat 10 Mar

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Fly to Gondar, drive to Debarq, trek to Sankaber, 3,230m (approximately 3 hours trekking)

It's an early start before our flight to Gondar. From there it's three hours drive to Debarq. There's a short pitstop at the HQ of the Simien Mountains National Park (2,600m). Once there, we check our provisions, load up the mules and trek towards Sankaber. We venture around Aman Amba and keep close to the edge of the escarpment. Team dinner and overnight at Sankaber Camp.

DAY 4 Sun 11 Mar

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Sankaber to Chenek, 3,500m (approximately 6-8 hours)

Fertile in parts and harsh elsewhere, the route descends to an escarpment near the head of the Wazla Wenz. Back on the main path, we take the bus to Ambaras. There's then another transfer to the rock split, from where we walk the final 30 minutes towards Chenek. There are caves at the camp which are home to the unusual rock hyrax.

DAY 5 Mon 12 Mar

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Chenek to Ambiko, 4,200m (approximately 10 hours)

Draw on all your energy reserves for this long and steep walk to Ambiko. Be on the lookout for a range of endemic Ethiopian birds, many of which reside amid the Simien mountains. Sadly the Simien Wolf has vanished and a growing number of animals are becoming endangered. We arrive at our camp in Ambiko for a well-needed rest ahead of summit day tomorrow.

DAY 6 Tue 13 Mar

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Ambiko to Ras Dejen and return, 4,550m (approximately 10-12 hours)

It's a 4am start for a long day. We start by ascending Ras Dejen in a loop to the south-east, then north to the summit. This is Africa's fourth highest mountain and the highest in Ethiopia. Revel in the glory at the summit, but don't forget

that the hard work is not over yet! We retrace our steps for the long descent back to camp.

DAY 7 *Wed 14 Mar*

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Ambiko to Sona, 3,100m (approximately 10-11 hours)

Rise and shine early again for a steep descent to the valley floor, followed by several hours of climbing to the top of the main escarpment. Walking alongside a river, we see the imposing summit of Ras Dejen. The route heads up to the village of Arkwasiye at 3,400m, before venturing downhill for two hours to Sona, perched right on the edge of the spectacular Devil's staircase.

DAY 8 *Thu 15 Mar*

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Sona to Lamo, 2,000m (approximately 6 hours)

The day begins with a near vertical descent (3,300ft/1000m) down the Devil's staircase. We will lunch at the bottom and have the chance to take a swim in the river, before following a slightly undulating path to Lamo. Situated at around 2,000m, Lamo – also known as Mekarebya – is one of the most stunningly beautiful spots in the Simiens and will be our welcoming home for the night.

DAY 9 *Fri 16 Mar*

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Lamo to Mulet, 1,800m (approximately 7 hours)

As you awake, take note of the magical view that surrounds you. Have your camera at the ready for a day of ridge and valley treks through some spectacularly beautiful scenery to Mulet, where we camp for the night. Prepare for a night of celebrations after our challenge the Simien Mountains, and before we part ways with the trekking crew.

DAY 10 *Sat 17 Mar*

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Mulet to Axum, 1,700m (approximately 2-3 hours)

The final day of walking leads out of the national park. The route heads downhill for up to three hours, before reaching the village of Adi Arkay (1,600m). We stop for a celebratory drink, then bid farewell to our muleteers and camp staff. Feeling exhausted but elated, we hop on the support vehicles for a five-hour drive to Axum, where we spend the night in a hotel.

DAY 11 *Sun 18 Mar*

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Axum to Addis Ababa

Axum has a long history, dating back at least 1,000 years before the time of Christ, when the Queen of Sheba made it her capital. The day begins with a tour of the historic sites. It is known for its massive, towering sculptures, some of which are more than 2000-years-old. After lunch, the group flies to Addis Ababa for a final team dinner and hotel stay.

DAY 12 *Mon 19 Mar*

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International flight

Be sure to exchange contact details with your trekking partners as you head back home to the UK. Armed with a sense of achievement, you can feel proud as you touch down and share your fantastic journey with your family and friends.

NB

The itinerary is there as a guide and may change due to unusual weather patterns, wildlife movements, the strength of the group & dogs, and so on. We will do our very best to keep to the set itinerary; however we cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes that may occur. In all such circumstances, your challenge leader will have the final say.

HOW TO FUND YOUR CHALLENGE

This page provides you details of the costs of your challenge.
The costs below are per person.

SELF FUNDER

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*Pay a registration fee of £375.00 when you book
Then a balance of £1288.00
(8 weeks before your challenge)
Raise as much as you can for your charity.*

FLEXI

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*Registration fee of £375.00 when you book
Then £600.00 towards challenge costs
(8 weeks before your challenge)
Raise a minimum of £2800.00 for your charity.*

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Before you go

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- Access to your own password protected account including support materials and training schedules
- Risk assessment and emergency management planning
- Public liability insurance
- Discount on personal equipment from The Outdoor Shop, Outdoorhire, Cotswold Outdoor and Nomad & MASTA
- Access to "ask the expert" re your kit requirements
- Access to training weekends (optional and at additional expense)
- Warm up exercise routines
- 16 and 20 week trek/bike training schedule
- Fitness training notes
- Sponsorship forms (online and hard copy)
- Template press release
- A-Z of fundraising ideas
- Support materials (itinerary, kit list, fact file, Q&As, health notes, travel tips, responsible travel policy and guidance)
- Fundraising advice

On your challenge

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- Internal road and air transfers as per the itinerary
- Accommodation during the challenge (usually in twin share)
- Three meals a day (unless otherwise stated in the itinerary)
- Drinking water on challenge days
- Entrance fees to national parks or other places of interest visited on the itinerary
- All ground staff including English speaking guide, drivers, cooks, and porters
- Full back-up support including first-aid qualified staff and first-aid supplies
- Activity equipment such as bikes, tents and rafts as per the challenge activity
- A donation to a community project in one of the countries in which we operate
- A Charity Challenge T-Shirt
- All challenge management before, during and post event

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

Before you go

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- Travel to and from the UK airport of departure
- Visa

On your challenge

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- Tips
- Departure Tax (if applicable)

- Vaccinations (please check Trip Notes for requirements)
- Travel Insurance (you can buy at time of booking or in your Account Area, or provide your own policy details)
- Clothing and equipment listed on your Kit List
- Personal spending money
- Any other specific items listed as not included in your Trip Notes

THE DETAILS

Fundraising deadlines

You will need to send your sponsorship money to the charity as you raise it. At least 80% of the minimum sponsorship required must be sent to the charity 10 weeks before departure (by 29/12/2011), and the remaining 20% within 4 weeks of completing the challenge (by 15/04/2012). If you have raised the necessary funds, the charity will then pay the balance of your challenge costs. The charity benefits by keeping the remaining sponsorship money and every pound over and above that you raise.

Typical group size

The typical group size is 16 - 25 participants

Optional extras

Travel insurance
 Single room supplements*
 Extensions at end of trip*
 Trek/bike training weekends*
 (*subject to availability)

Travel insurance

Your safety when travelling with Charity Challenge is our main concern, which is why it is a booking condition that you have a suitable travel insurance policy, which covers you for the adventurous nature of your challenge, the activities you are undertaking, and the altitudes. Charity Challenge has chosen to partner with specialist travel insurance providers Campbell Irvine (for UK residents) and Rise & Shield* (for non-UK residents). Both companies can arrange cover for an extensive number of activities, such as high-altitude trekking and cycling events, which include emergency medical treatment and repatriation expenses. Please note that Charity Challenge is not able to advise on matters relating to individual travel insurance policies and does not accept any liability for policy matters or claims.

Full details including costs may be found at <https://www.campbellirvine.com/charitychallenge> and <https://riseandshield.com/partners/charity-challenge/>

* Rise and Shield do not provide cover to Cuba.

Responsible Tourism

At Charity Challenge we are committed to sustainable and responsible tourism, and work closely with bodies such as the International Porter Protection Group and Climate Care to ensure that our challenges benefit the local environments and communities in which they take place. We ensure that all rubbish is disposed of responsibly, and following local guidelines on cultural and environmental protection and respect, we aim to limit our impact on the natural environment. In addition to taking these practical steps to ensure that our challenges are sustainable, we also make a contribution each year to a number of local community projects, so as to give something back directly to the communities that we visit. Since 2000 we have donated almost £200,000 to such projects, supporting a range of initiatives, including schooling for children in Africa, shelter for street children in Brazil, and Orang-utan conservation in Indonesia. We recommend that any gifts brought over for children are given to the UK challenge leader and distributed where needed by them and our local Ground Agent. If you wish to do more, you should consider buying drinks, postcards and souvenirs from the local vendors. For many, it is their sole source of income. For more information, please visit our [Responsible Tourism](#) pages, where you will be able to view a list of the projects that we currently support.

Challenge Training

If you would like to get a feel for our challenges ahead of your departure, why not consider booking on a 1 or 2 day UK Challenge?

We have a variety of challenges, covering all levels of difficulty, taking place in stunning National Parks across the UK that are led by highly qualified and experienced expedition and mountain leaders. These challenges will give you the perfect opportunity to monitor fitness levels, test out your kit, meet people in the great outdoors, share fundraising stories and gain valuable advice and support for the challenge ahead. We encourage participants to make use of our highly knowledgeable leaders and ask them any questions you may have about clothing and equipment, expedition health and wellbeing, trekking skills, walking techniques and teamwork!

We are offering all participants **50% off** the registration fee when you book on one of the UK challenges listed via the link below. Just use the code **TRAINING** when booking. T&C's – you must have an active booking on a challenge to avail of this offer. Discount cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Find out more [here](#)

Training

A good level of fitness is definitely required. Anyone who leads a fairly active and moderately healthy lifestyle should be able to complete the challenge, as long as they train regularly over a period of at least three months leading up to it. Don't forget that the temperature and climate will be different from the UK, and that you will be exercising constantly for a number of days. See the [Fitness Training](#) notes for more information.

Training tips for the Simien Mountain Trek:

- Endurance training should be your primary focus.
- Ensure that you get some training walks done in the mountains of the UK to familiarise yourself with walking on rugged terrain.
- Carry a full daypack while training, and steadily add more weight
- Join one of our training weekends! Read more about our training weekends by clicking [here](#).

What happens if I fall ill, can't keep up or there is an emergency?

The event is not run as a race and there is always a large discrepancy in people's walking ability. This is allowed for. There will be a staff member at the back of the group at all times to ensure that you are not left behind and can take things at your own pace. If necessary you can be carried off the mountain by mule. Towards the earlier stages of the trek, we are able to get a 4x4 vehicle along some of the tracks up to the Simien Mountains. There are medical facilities in Gondar and in Addis Ababa.

Safety

Charity Challenge considers the safety of all of its participants and staff to be a top priority, and as such we have set up one of the most advanced and thorough safety management systems in the industry. In a nutshell, Our Challenge Safe brand (link to Challenge Safe page on new website) formalises our ethos when it comes to safety, and brings together the procedures and risk management strategies that we use to audit all aspects of our challenges, from vehicles to accommodation to the activity itself. Your welfare is paramount!

In terms of your Simien Mountain Trek, there are a couple of important points that you should be aware of:

- Battling the altitude on the mountain up to the summit.
- Arising before dawn and trekking through the night on summit day
- Night time temperatures can go as low as -15 degrees
- Long trekking days in the heat

Phone and WiFi

You will have a good phone and WIFI reception while at Ouazarzate. On trekking days, there will be some phone signal at some points.

Toilets

There are no toilets on the wilderness route, so you must make sure you bury all waste. Where local conditions permit, we arrange for basic long drop toilets in the camps. Mountain streams will be the main washing facility! Your camp team will provide washing bowls of warm water as you arrive at camp at the end of the day's trekking. Take plenty of toilet paper with you, and antiseptic wipes / anti-bacterial hand gel.

Clothing and equipment

Good quality, durable kit could mean the difference between a fantastic challenge experience and an uncomfortable one. For this challenge, waterproof, well-worn in boots will be indispensable, particularly coupled with some really good quality walking socks. You don't need a clean pair every day, but enough to make sure you have dry socks each morning. The benefits of a comfortable day sack cannot be underestimated, so make sure that you train with this. Other essentials are high quality gore-tex waterproof and windproof jackets and trousers, technical/wicking t-shirts rather than cotton shirts, and a down jacket for the evenings in camp and your summit day/night. A full kit list for this challenge can be found [here](#) once you book you will have access to kit discounts with our partners The Outdoor Shop, Outdoor Hire

and Cotswold Outdoor.

Food & Drink

There will be a hot breakfast (porridge, eggs, toast, tea and coffee) to start the day, a packed lunch on the mountain, and a filling hot meal in the evening (soup, followed by rice, potato or pasta and sauce.) There will be ample drinking water, as we will be filling up from local water sources. This will need to be treated with iodine drops or tablets to purify the water. The staff will collect water each morning and evening for drinking and cooking. Please let Charity Challenge know prior to departure if you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies.

Do we need to take our own sleeping bags/ mats?

Yes, you will need to bring a warm sleeping bag (four season or three season with fleece liner), and it would certainly help your chances of a comfortable night's sleep if you bring a good Thermarest sleeping mat. Also see Kit List.

Accommodation

You will be camping on the mountain in two person tents, which will be supplied by us. At the very beginning and end of the climb, you will be staying in more comfortable hotel accommodation. If you are travelling with a friend or partner who you wish to share with, please let Charity Challenge know in advance.

Typical day

You will be woken early each morning at approx. 6:30am, and given a basic but hearty breakfast. After breakfast you will pack up with the help of all the tour leaders and begin the first trek of the day for about 3 hours. A long and early lunch will be taken to avoid trekking during the hottest part of the day. We set off to walk again for another 3 hours (approx.) and then we establish camp late afternoon for dinner and a well-deserved rest.

Level of Difficulty

The Simien Mountain Trek is graded as "tough". Summit night in particular is a gruelling experience that will test you both mentally and physically. You should not undertake this challenge without significant training.

You can tell your supporters that on your Simien Mountain trek you will be:

- Trekking for around 6-8 hours per day.
- Sleeping and trekking at altitudes up to the peak at 4200m.
- Arising before dawn and trekking through the night on summit day.
- Experiencing nightly temperatures of down to -15 degrees.
- Sleeping in a tent for 7 nights

Should I take gifts or clothes for the locals?

It is a nice gesture to give the local children small gifts, perhaps pencils and exercise books, but we actively discourage the giving of sweets or money, however small, as this encourages begging. Please give your gifts to the guide to distribute fairly. We will be investing money into a local community project to help improve local living conditions.

Luggage allowance and valuables

As no formal clothes are needed, luggage should be kept to the absolute minimum – details of what to pack are provided in your Kit List. You will need to carry a daypack during the day while the muleteers load your main rucksack on the mules. You will need a day rucksack of about 35-litre capacity. NB. You should take a soft-sided bag or rucksack for the mules to carry as they are easier to load. Your main pack should be 70-80 litres capacity. The maximum weight of each bag is 15kgs. On your outward journey, please wear your trekking gear, hiking boots, and carry a spare change of clothing in your hand luggage.

While we will do everything possible 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. The rucksack should not contain valuables and items not required on the mountain. Excess items may be left at the hotel to be returned to you once you have climbed the mountain.

Climate

Early mornings will feel chilly at first, but warm up considerably as soon as the sun rises. Whilst we have chosen the best seasons for trekking, rain and cloud, and even hail, cannot be ruled out. Night skies are usually clear and starry. As soon as the sun sets, the temperature drops radically and may drop below zero degrees. On the mountain, you will be trekking in very clear air and will need strong UV protection in particular for your skin & eyes.

Leadership

We employ a number of qualified challenge leaders, all of whom speak English. There will also be a first aid qualified medical officer. They will ultimately be responsible for the running of the itinerary and the safety of your group. The itinerary is there as a guide and may change due to unusual weather patterns, the strength of the group, and so on. We will do our very best to keep to the set itinerary. However, we cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes that may occur. In all such circumstances, your challenge leader will have the final say.

Group Size

Each group is intended to be a minimum of 16 people in order to run and a maximum of approximately 25 people.

Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you have a suitable travel insurance policy whilst participating on the challenge. We have a special policy which covers among other things, medical (emergency, evacuation and repatriation)

arrangements, cancellation and curtailment of the challenge, and more specifically for the adventurous activities undertaken on this challenge. If you have your own travel insurance policy, you must ensure that it provides at least the same level of cover as our recommended policy, including protecting the charity in the event of your cancellation 56 days or less prior to departure. If you choose not to purchase our recommended policy when you book we will send you a disclaimer which you should complete and return.

For more general travel insurance questions, please refer to our main [FAQs page](#).

Flights

You will be flying with Ethiopian Airlines from London Heathrow Airport Terminal 3 to Addis Ababa Airport (via Rome) and returning from Addis Ababa to London Heathrow Airport Terminal 3 (via Athens). Your flight tickets will be issued to you at the airport on the day of departure. If you choose to book your own flights you must confirm with the Charity Challenge office before paying otherwise you may be liable for your included group flights (please contact flights@charitychallenge.com for further assistance).

Vaccinations

For up to date vaccination information please check the NHS Government website 'Fit for Travel at: <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home.aspx>. Malaria precautions are essential in all areas below 2000m, all year round. Please seek advice from your doctor.

Visa

You will need a passport and a multiple entry tourist visa. The tourist visa is obtainable in the UK and costs approximately £22. We will supply you with the application form & a copy of the flight ticket. The visa allows a stay of up to three months and is valid from the date of issue so make sure you do not apply too early otherwise it will run out before you arrive in Ethiopia. Your passport must have at least six months to run from the end of your challenge. When applying you will need to provide your visa form, a copy of your flight ticket, a recent bank statement, 1 passport photo and the fee. Also see Travel Tips.

Money

Currency: Ethiopian Birr (ETB) divided into 100 cents. For up to date currency exchange, go to www.xe.com. The Ethiopian Birr is a soft currency and you cannot obtain Birr before leaving the UK. All exchange transactions should be undertaken with banks, including branches, which may be found at major tourist hotels and at the airport in Addis Ababa. Ethiopian Birr cannot be exported, therefore should be reconverted.

Cash: There are ATMs available at the airport. This is the best source of obtaining currency whilst you are in Ethiopia.

Credit cards: Credit cards are not generally accepted in Ethiopia

Exchange: There are limited opportunities to exchange foreign currency outside the major cities. On arrival at the

airport in Addis Ababa, there is a foreign exchange bureau where you can change cash or travellers' cheques at the prevailing free market exchange rate.

Spending money: You will not need to bring large amounts of money, and other than at the start and end of the challenge, you will be in the mountains away from any foreign exchanges or banks. We recommend that you take a sufficient amount of cash to exchange into local currency. Dollars are recommended. Travellers' cheques should be accepted at the banks and at Addis Ababa airport. Credit cards are not accepted. Somewhere in the region of £200 in US dollars should be sufficient to cover presents, tips, drinks and so on.

Tips: Tipping is personal and at your sole discretion. You should only tip if you feel that you have received good service. We recommend approx. US\$100 per person, and this should be given to the challenge leader at the end of the challenge, who will distribute it among the support team. In the event that a particular member of staff is extremely helpful you might leave him spare climbing gear. Make sure you have plenty of small Birr notes or US\$1 bills for tipping elsewhere.



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The Simien Mountains contain some of the most spectacular scenery I've ever seen - it just got better and better.

Dan Salmons

“

I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone involved for making the trek so memorable. Our trek leader was outstanding as were all of the members of our Ethiopian support. They all worked so hard and are to be commended for making the trek an amazing experience for the whole team.

Catherine Husted

“

The Simien Mountain trek was insanely tough at times but how else could we have witnessed such unimaginably beautiful scenery and a way of life? A 'trip of a life time' on every level.

Alison Bockh

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Any more questions?

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