

Title: *Trek on the Bale Mountains National Parks*

Tour code: FKLM BM

Duration: 4 Days/ 3 Nights

Accommodation: Hotel

Transportation: Surface

DESCRIPTIONS

The Bale Mountains National Park is located in southeastern Ethiopia, 400 km southeast of Addis Ababa and 150 km east of Shashamene in the Oromia Regional National State. It belongs to the Bale-Arsi massif, which forms the western section of the southeastern highlands. The boundary of the BMNP lies within five woredas: Adaba (west), Dinsho (north), Goba (northeast), Delo-Mena-Angetu and Harena-Buluk (southeast). The park area is encompassed within geographical coordinates of 6°29' – 7°10'N and 39°28' – 39°57'E.

The Bale Mountains were formed prior to the formation of the Rift Valley from lava outpourings, which covered all underlying rock formations between 38 and seven million years ago. The rocks of the volcanic outpourings are pre-dominantly trachytes but also include rhyolites, basalts and associated agglomerates, and tuffs. The main Bale highlands consist of a vast lava plateau with at least six volcanic cones, each more than 4,200 meters high, which have been considerably flattened by repeated glaciations.

There have been at least two glacial periods in the history of the mountains and they were glaciated as little as 2,000 years ago. During the last ice age, the Bale Mountains were one of the most extensively glaciated areas in Ethiopia with a total area of ice in Bale of approximately 180 km². There was a 30km² ice cap around the peak of Tulu Dimtu (the second highest mountain in Ethiopia) on the Sanetti Plateau and individual glaciers of considerable thickness reached down to 3,200 meters. As a consequence, the landscape as we see it today is the lava outpourings much modified by over 20 million years of erosion by water, wind and ice.

There are certain geological features that remain an enigma to geologists and glaciologists such as the striations that appear on shallow hillsides on the Sanetti Plateau. Boulder grooves (large stone sorted stripes two to four meters wide and eighty meters long), till ridges and numerous glacial valleys, such as the Togona Valley on the northeast facing slopes of the Sanetti Plateau, provide evidence of the ice-age effects on the landscape of BMNP. Until the beginning of deglaciation (13,000 to 14,000 years ago) the snowline was at 3,700 meters and the upper tree limit in the Bale Mountains was well below 3,000 meters. Fluctuations in climate over the last

historical period, including the last 3,000 years, have dramatically affected the vegetation and other biodiversity in the highlands.

MORE

More than any other park in Ethiopia, this soon-to-be World Heritage site is known for its wildlife, but it's a very beautiful place, too. As you approach from Doodle, ridges to the east are punctuated with fortress-like escarpments, standing out from the gentler, rounded rock pinnacles to the north, and the great wildlife watching commences right from the start when the road cuts through the Gaysay Grassland in the valley between them, which is home to the densest concentration of large mammals in Ethiopia.

Up in the hills, accessible by footpath and road, are deep gorges, alpine lakes, rushing streams, several waterfalls, lava flows and views that go on almost forever. If it weren't located in such a remote corner of the country it would probably be as popular as the Simien Mountains.

INTRODUCTION

Nominated in 2009 to the World Heritage Tentative List, **Bale Mountains National Park (BMNP)** is a national park in Ethiopia with one of the highest incidences of animal endemism of any terrestrial habitat in the world. The Park encompasses an area of approximately 2,150 km², and is divided into five distinct and unique habitats: the Northern Grasslands (Gaysay Valley), Northern Woodlands (Park Headquarters), Afro-alpine Meadows (Sanetti Plateau), Erica Moorlands, and the Harenna Forest. The park is known for being home to the largest populations of both the endemic and endangered Ethiopian wolf (*Canis simensis*) and Mountain Nyala (*Tragelaphus buxtoni*), as well as the endemic Bale monkey (*Chlorocebus djamdjamensis*) and giant mole rat (*Tachyoryctes macrocephalus*). The endangered Painted Hunting Dog, *Lycaon pictus* once existed in the Park (with relict packs reported in the 1990s), but may now be extirpated due to human population pressures in this region.

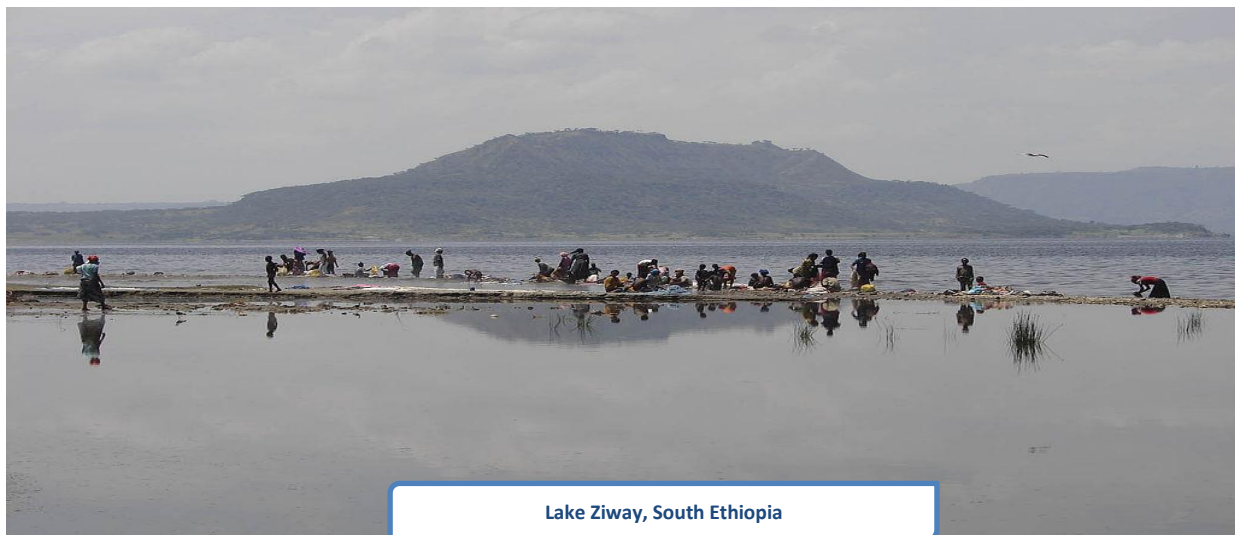
ITINERARY

Day 1: Addis Ababa - Goba 447 km/ 8 hr

After breakfast we pick you from your hotel for a full day drive to the Bale Mountains. En route we stop at Lake Ziway to watch the many water birds at its shore. The headquarters of the Park are situated in Dinsho where we have to finalize some formalities before we proceed to Goba, our base for the next days.

THINGS TO DO

- **Bale Mountains National park**
- **Dinsho Park**
- **Wildlife**
- **Fauna and Flora**



Lake Ziway, South Ethiopia

Day 2: Goba (visit Bale Mountains NP)

The whole day is spent to explore the Bale Mountains. This is going to be a day of extraordinary scenery and of course we search for the endemic species of which many are found in this area. Among them the mountain nyala, Menelik's bushbuck, Ethiopian wolf and many birds.

THINGS TO DO

- **Bird Watching**
- **Common and Endemic Mammals**

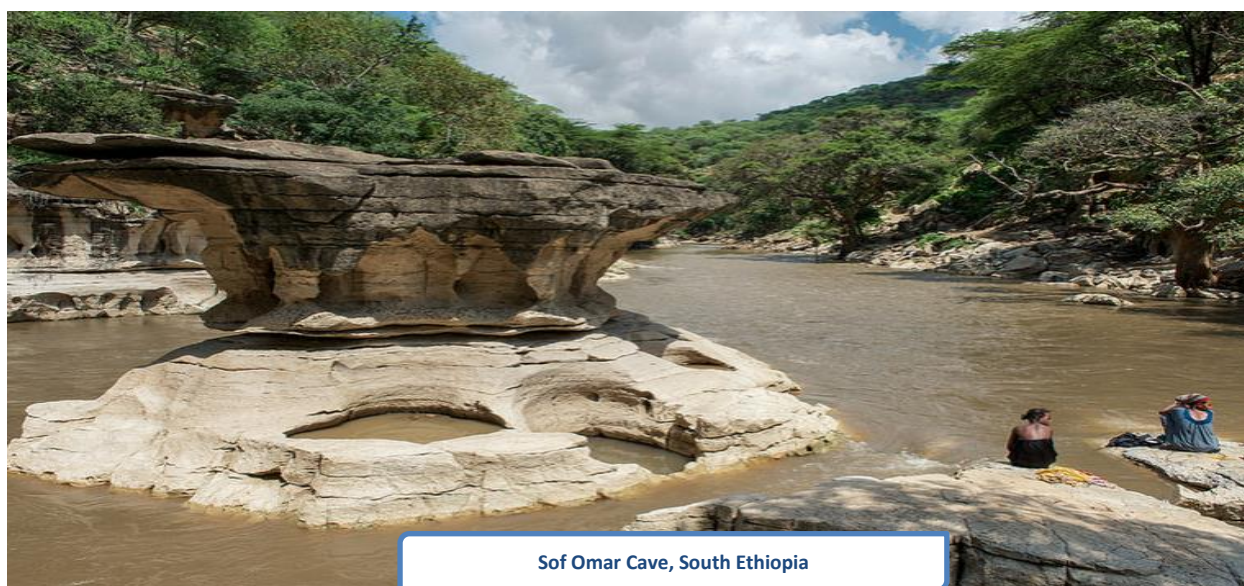


Day 3: Goba (visit Sof Omar caves)

This day, weather permitting, we travel to Sof Omar, 100 km/ 2 hrs and 30 minutes to the east. Here we admire what is believed the largest network of limestone caves in Africa. The Web River flows through the cave system and when the river is too high the caves are not accessible. In that case we explore more of the Bale Mountains.

THINGS TO DO

- Sof Omar Cave
- River Flows



Day 4: Goba - Addis Ababa, 414 km/ 8 hr.

We are leaving the mountainous area behind and travel down to the bottom of the Rift Valley by a different, very scenic road, via Asela. Late afternoon we drop you at your hotel in Addis Ababa.



Greenish Assela Area, South Ethiopia

(About 115 km (2,5 hr) before Addis Ababa we pass the hot spring resort of Sodere which could make a nice relaxing overnight break if you have another day to spent)



Monkeys inside Sodere Resort, Ethiopia