



Ethiopia Cultural Information and Travel Tips

Ethiopia is an eastern African country twice the size as Texas. It is a poverty stricken country at a very high risk of major infectious diseases, a growing rate of HIV/Aids, and the literacy rate is less than one quarter of the population. Our approach in Ethiopia is to partner with existing orphanages and drop-in centers. The directors of these locations are passionate and motivated to *assist*, but they are not able to meet the needs of each individual child in their care due to the poverty stricken economy and lack of government funding. Children's HopeChest is working with orphanages and drop-in centers in the capital city, Addis Ababa. But have also expanded our ministry to cities to the south that are affected by extreme drought conditions. We've created this information to be a resource to you as you prepare to travel to one of the oldest civilizations in the world!

DID YOU KNOW?!?

- The population of Ethiopia is an estimated 83 million people.
- Ethiopia is twice the size of Texas and the 3rd most populous country in Africa.
- There are over 5 million orphans in Ethiopia.
- 27% of children ages 5-14 are engaged in child labor. (www.csa.gov)
- 47% of the population is under the age of 15.
- There are over 80 ethnic groups and over 83 languages and dialects throughout Ethiopia.
- The largest ethnic groups are Oromo, Amhara, Tigre and Sidama-In that order.
- Ethiopia has a rainy season from mid-June through mid-September.
- 45% are Muslim. 33% are Ethiopian Orthodox.
- Ethiopia was the original source of the coffee bean, and coffee beans are the country's largest export commodity.
- The altitude of the Capitol city of Addis Ababa is 8300 feet!
- Ethiopia is an independent Federal Democratic Republic with a President as head of state, and a Prime Minister as the head of government.
- Approximately 800,000 children were orphaned due to HIV/Aids.
- Life expectancy is 56 years old.

(State and information above gathered from UNICEF, CIA Fact book, & www.csa.gov)

The Children's HopeChest Ministry works with children who are all living in unbelievable poverty. Many of the children live on the streets and find occasional care at churches and drop-in centers where they may or may not be able to assist.

You and your group may be driving long distances each day, depending on where your team will be visiting. Travel by car/van in Ethiopia can and most likely will look much different than traveling by auto in the U.S. If you have motion sickness, please bring medicine with you. We will have a hired driver and vehicle for your team throughout your time in country. You will also have staff members who speak the language to assist you as you travel.

It is important to always remember that you are guests in their country. Please be respectful of their culture and refrain from making any jokes or comments about their culture that could be taken offensively. It is absolutely vital that all members of the team are flexible and open to change, as even the most well-planned itinerary will change.

We ask that you refrain from giving certain children individual gifts, while other children do not receive any gifts. We understand that this can be difficult, but it can lead to difficulties for the staff and lots of unnecessary hurt for the children. For example gifts can be stolen, others are left feeling abandoned, etc.

- Please do not give money to beggars while driving in Addis and in other cities due to traffic laws, and because children and beggars risk being hit by a car if they are encouraged to run from car to car to beg for money or food.
- Please do not take photos of prohibited places such as the National Palace, Ministry of National Defense, or the Federal Police, etc.
- To avoid any confusion, please do NOT take pictures for profiling purposes. This is a specific task done by in-country staff only.
- Please do not give your personal contact information to children.
- Please do not give age inappropriate gifts such as lipstick, chap-stick, nail polish, toothpaste and toothbrush, etc. (Because of health issues, training should be given first by the staff)
- Please do not promise children that you will send them gifts or come and see them again, as this creates expectations that otherwise may be broken.
- When visiting churches, monasteries and other religious shrines, women should not expose their upper body with tank tops, and any skirts or dresses should be at the knee or below.
- Many places offer internet access. We will do our best to try and have you stay connected with your family back home, but please remember that you may spend a fair amount of time traveling to your specific sites and have long ministry days.

- For women, the dress code is as follows: Jeans and capri's are acceptable. If you wear a dress or skirt, it should reach the top of your knees. Sleeveless tops are acceptable, but we do not recommend wearing spaghetti strapped tank tops. In dressing for church, a nice, long skirt and nice top would be fine. What you would wear to church at home would also be appropriate for church in Ethiopia.
- For any souvenir shopping, please bring cash. It is best to bring denominations of \$50 and \$100 bills. You will get a better exchange rate. There is 1 ATM in the Bole International Airport. You can change money before you got through immigration and get a good rate. There are only a few ATM's around the city of Addis.
- **It is also good to bring your vaccination records showing that you have received the Yellow Fever Vaccine. It is not required to enter Ethiopia from the U.S. However, if any travelers are entering Ethiopia from another country within Africa that has Yellow Fever, you will have to show proof that you have been vaccinated. It is also good to have this on you in case you are stopped and questioned for any reason.**

IMPORTANT: A visa is required to enter Ethiopia as a tourist. Your passport needs to be valid for at least six months after the end of your trip. The passport must also have a blank page for each visa. A visa for three months can be issued at Bole International Airport. Please bring a new **\$50.00** bill (2007 or newer) to the airport for the purchase of your visa, as this fee is not included in your land package cost.