



THE HORN OF AFRICA

Somaliland, Djibouti, Eritrea, &
Eastern Ethiopia with TIMKET festival

January 04 - January 20, 2025
Led By Tour Lecturer, Michel Behar

Can be combined with Northern Ethiopia Extension (January 21 - January 26, 2025) **OR** Niger tour (January 23 - February 02, 2025) **OR** South Sudan tour (January 23 - January 30, 2025)

This tour through the Horn of Africa, named so for its protruding shape that resembles a horn, is Shangri-La for those who dare to break the mold of conventional travel and is undoubtedly the “road less traveled” for explorers.

Eritrea, on the shores of the Red Sea, has a history dating back to the Stone Age, but has only been internationally recognized since 1993 following a succession of wars with Ethiopia that spanned thirty years. The major highlight of Eritrea is the colorful diversity of the nine ethnic groups that live within. Asmara, the capital, proudly displays a shining collection of Art Deco, and other, architectural wonders. Massawa, a port city on the Red Sea, is the starting point for visits to the Dhalak Islands, one of the most unspoiled and least known reefs in the area.

Somaliland, while officially a part of Somalia, visitors are welcome here. In addition, it is home to one of the greatest treasures of the Horn of Africa: the 10,000-year-old Laas Geel cave paintings, which were discovered by a French archaeological team in 2002.

Djibouti draws few tourists thanks to its reputation for being the hottest place in Africa (probably true) and for being ridiculously overpriced (also probably true). However, with vistas that will take your breath away, a culture caught halfway between 20th-century France and modern-day Africa, and the opportunity to swim with whale sharks, the smallest country in the region is worth a visit.

*Many of you have joined us on **Ethiopian** tours in previous years, but most likely, you have not visited Harar, a gem of a city in Eastern Ethiopia. Harar is a well-preserved walled city that stands to the east of the Great Rift Valley. It was founded between the 7th and 11th centuries and emerged as the center of Islamic culture and religion in the Horn of Africa. The city contains 99 mosques, including the 16th-century Grand Mosque, over 100 shrines, and a colorful, vibrant marketplace. This exciting adventure comes to an end in Addis Ababa, but not before a chance to witness the Timket Festival known as the feast of the Epiphany, arguably the most colorful festival in Africa. Come along as an observer to this remarkable event marked by spiritual processions and chanting.*

Ihab Zaki
Managing Director

Saturday, January 04
Arrive Asmara (**ERITREA**)



Upon arrival in **Asmara**, the capital city of Eritrea, meet the local representative and transfer to *Asmara Palace Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(D)**

Note: Standard check-in time is 3:00 pm. If you arrive on January 03 or in the early morning of January 04, an extra Hotel night needs to be booked.

Sunday, January 05
Asmara - Keren (1 hr. 30 min.)



After breakfast, begin a scenic drive to **Keren**, which means “Highland” and is one of the major agricultural centers in Eritrea. The town stretches along a broad basin bordered by mountains on all sides. It serves as the capital of the Anseba region and is home to the Bilen ethnic group. Along the way, pass through interesting Tigrigna-speaking villages. Upon arrival in Keren, visit the WWII War Cemetery, which contains over 400 graves divided into Christian, Muslim, Sikh, and Jewish sections. Next, see the Mariam Da’arit shrine, one of Eritrea’s most important religious sites. Thousands of people gather here every year on a pilgrimage. Transfer to *Sabrina Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, January 06
Keren - Asmara (1 hr. 30 min.)



Begin the day with a visit to the lively **weekly market** in Keren (open on Mondays only). This open-air market is a hive of activity and attracts traders and tribes from the surrounding areas. See a variety of goods, including fruits, vegetables, spices, souvenirs, and products made by local

artisans. There will be an opportunity to purchase items such as **baskets, pottery, and silver**. The market is a photographer’s delight with the vibrant colors and enthusiasm in the bustling market. Also, witness the animated actions at the **camel & livestock market**, then drive back to Asmara and transfer to *Asmara Palace Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, January 07
Asmara



At an elevation of around 7,628 feet, Asmara is the sixth-highest capital city in the world. This UNESCO World Heritage Site contains some fine examples of well-preserved 20th-century Art Deco buildings. Enjoy a guided tour beginning with the early 20th century **Asmara Cathedral**, believed to be one of the finest Lombard Romanesque-style churches outside of Italy. Visit the **Great Mosque**, designed by Guido Ferrazza in the 1930s in a blend of Rationalist, Classical, and Islamic architectural styles. Not far is the **Asmara Synagogue**, the only surviving remnant of the Jewish community in Eritrea. Stop for lunch at a local restaurant and then visit the beautifully designed **Enda Mariam Coptic Cathedral** and **St. Michael’s Orthodox Church**. There will be time to wander the **old market**, which dates back to the Italian colonial times. See the late 19th-century **Governor’s Palace**, also known as **Gibi**, built in Italian art-deco style by Fernando Martini, the first Italian governor of Eritrea. Also, see the early 20th-century **Post Office** and **Opera House**, featuring Romanesque Revival and Neoclassicism architectural styles. Dinner will be at one of the restaurants in town, and then return to the *Hotel* for overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, January 08

Asmara - Massawa (2hrs.)



Begin a breathtaking drive to **Massawa**, situated along the escarpment of the **Rift Valley**. Stop en route for a photo opportunity around **Arbe-Robue** and great views of the mountains, valleys, and the old railway. Upon arrival in **Massawa**, transfer to *Grand Dahlak Resort* by the seaside for check-in and lunch, then transfer by a private boat to one of the many islands in the **Dahlak Archipelago**. Snorkel amongst the beautiful unspoiled reefs and spend some time swimming and exploring the island before returning to the *Resort* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, January 09

Massawa - Asmara (2hrs.)



Begin the day with a walk through **Massawa**, a historical port town eradicated by the Ethiopian army in 1990. Its crumbling **old buildings, palaces, mosques, ottoman, mansions, Italian villas, and marketplace** will give off an eerie feel. Stroll along the famous **port**, then enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. We might be able to visit a **nomadic tribe** of Al-Rashaydeh if they are camping in the area. Drive back to **Asmara** and transfer to *Asmara Palace Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, January 10

Asmara - Addis Ababa (ETHIOPIA)



After breakfast, transfer to the airport for our early afternoon flight to **Addis Ababa**, and upon arrival, meet drive and, transfer to the *Jupiter Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,D)**

Saturday, January 11

Addis - Hargeisa (SOMALILAND)



In the early morning, transfer to the airport for our flight to **Hargeisa**. Upon arrival, transfer to *Damal Hotel or similar for check-in*, have lunch and begin a walking tour of the city. Walk through the **Central Market** to see how local money and gold are exchanged on the streets. Continue to the **Civil War Memorial** commemorating the War of Independence, then the **cattle market** that attracts people from the surrounding areas with their sheep, goats, camels, and cows. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, January 12

Hargeisa - Berbera (2 hrs. 15 min.)



Begin the day with a drive to the port town of **Berbera**, the former capital of **Somaliland** and capital of the British Protectorate. Stop en route to visit the Neolithic **Laas Geel** cave paintings, discovered by archaeologists in 2002, some of the paintings are between 5,000 to 10,000 years old. There are paintings of giraffes, dogs, and antelopes, as well as images of cattle in ceremonial garbs worshipped by men, who appear to be bowing before them. Pass by the **Berbera Port**, a former naval and missile base for the Somali government, then continue to *Damal Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, January 13

Berbera - Sheikh - Hargeisa (2 hrs. 30 min.)



After breakfast, take the scenic route back to Hargeisa, stopping near **Sheikh** town to explore the 16th-century ruins of **Feruda**. Once we arrive in Hargeisa, transfer to *Damal Hotel or a similar hotel* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, January 14

Hargeisa - Harar (ETHIOPIA) (5 hrs.)



Begin a long driving day to the historic walled city of **Harar**, considered the fourth holiest city of Islam with its colorful **markets** and some 99 **mosques**. Upon arrival, transfer to *Ras Hotel or similar* for check-in, and in the evening, meet with the famous **hyena-feeding man** for an up-close and personal encounter with these captivating animals. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, January 15

Harar - Dire Dawa - Addis



After breakfast, begin the city tour with a visit to the **former residence** of the French Poet Arthur Rimbaud. Learn about his works and enjoy the view of Harar's markets, rooftops, and beyond through the colorful windows of the mansion. Also, visit the **Harar Museum**, which is housed in a traditional Harari home and contains traditional costumes, ancient manuscripts, religious texts, and household items of the Harari people. Transfer to the airport for our flight back to Addis Ababa, and upon arrival, meet & transfer to *Jupiter Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, January 16

Addis - Djibouti (DJIBOUTI)



Transfer early in the morning to the airport for our flight to the historic city of **Djibouti**. Upon arrival, transfer to *Escale International Hotel or similar* for check-in and have lunch. In the afternoon, head out on a city tour to explore Djibouti's **markets**, old French **mansions, the Post Office**, and the old **railway station**. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, January 17

Djibouti (Lac Assal) (1 hr. 20 min.)



Enjoy breakfast, then head to the colorful **Lac Assal**, "*The Sea of Honey*." It lies at the bottom of a crater in Africa's lowest point and is the world's second saltiest body of water. Also, see the "**New Crack**," created by the new Rift formation. Enjoy a picnic lunch along the way and then return to the *Hotel* for a free afternoon at leisure, dinner, and overnight **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, January 18

Djibouti (Whale Shark Excursion)



After breakfast, depart from the **Fishing Point** to **Ras Korali** for the chance to encounter the giant **whale sharks**. Spend about an hour swimming and snorkeling with these gentle giants if you like, then enjoy lunch on the boat. Later

in the afternoon, return to the *Hotel* for dinner & overnight. **(B,L,D)**

NOTE: Be advised that there is no guarantee of sighting whale sharks, even during the peak season.

Sunday, January 19

Djibouti - Addis (Eve of Timket Festival)



Transfer in the morning to the airport for our flight back to **Addis Ababa**, and upon arrival, meet and transfer to *Jupiter Hotel* or similar for check-in and have lunch. In the afternoon, attend the first day (**Eve**) of **Timket Epiphany**, known as **Ketera**, commemorating the Baptism of Jesus Christ at the River Jordan by John the Baptist. On this day, the Tabots (replica of the Ark of the Covenant) are taken from the holiest of churches in Ethiopia and carried by the priests in a procession to a river or water reservoir joined by church members chanting hymns, dancing, beating drums, and blowing horns. The ceremonies continue throughout the night and into the morning when pre-sunrise rituals occur. This unique and exquisite religious jubilation is an incredible spiritual experience. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, January 20

Addis Ababa (Timket) - USA



Spend the day witnessing the **Timket festivities** and the Tabot being returned to the churches. After the holy ark has been safely returned to its dwelling, everyone goes home to feast. The *Hotel* will be available this afternoon to rest and freshen up until your evening transfer to the airport for your onward flight back to the US. **(B,L)**

Special tour remarks:

- Tourist infrastructure and facilities outside the cities are very limited & often quite primitive.
- Hotels may change at the last minute without prior notice due to reasons beyond our control.
- Air-conditioners in this part of the world do not cool a room to American standards of comfort.
- In the more remote areas, hotels may be basic with few amenities, poor service, and possible equipment failure such as no hot water, broken faucets, clogged drains, etc.
- Documentation of yellow fever immunization is required if coming from infected areas.
- Brownouts or blackouts may occur or there may be limited electricity available.
- This trip involves long drives in hot weather over poorly maintained and very bumpy roads. Those with bad spines, knees or other medical conditions may find the drives uncomfortable.
- There are a lack of modern medical facilities and chronic health problems should be discussed with your physician before joining this tour.
- A high level of flexibility, tolerance, respect, open-mindedness, sense of adventure, and willingness to go with the flow if things change is expected while visiting these countries.
- We **HIGHLY** recommend traveling with only a carry-on as the flights to Asmara are notorious for delaying or losing checked bags. If it is necessary to check a bag, be sure to pack a change of clothes, medications, and toiletries in the carry-on.

*"We reserve the right to change the order of activities/visits or sites due to unexpected events such as flight cancellations or changes of schedule, or any other reasons beyond our control or in case of any unforeseen situations particularly as it relates to the several border crossings between nations of HOA"
We will do our best to ensure that any necessary changes when/if needed to meet the needs of our clients.*



Tour Cost (Land Only): \$11,995.00

Per person sharing in double occupancy

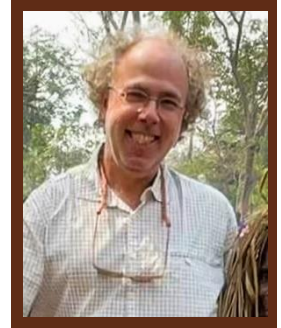
Single Supplement: \$995.00

Price based on group size minimum of 8 participants and maximum of 12 participants

Trip Grade: III Lodging Level: *-***

as a leader/photographer for many prestigious museums, universities, and other institutions. He has traveled extensively throughout the world and visited all 21 Arab countries and for the last 20 years has turned his passion for photography into a second career. In addition, he has dabbled in journalism and has done freelance work for travel guides. Michel is also an expert in Sahara led tours such as Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, the Horn of Africa, and West, Central, and Southern Africa. His tour leading skills are the perfect mix that allows him to share this special tour with you.

About your Tour Manager, Michel Behar... boasts an impressive list of credentials that will pique your interest and want to share the road with him. A Dutch citizen, after his studies of Russian and Arabic in the Netherlands he took a course of advanced Arabic at the University of Khartoum in Sudan. Fluent in 12 languages including Farsi, English, Turkish, and Hebrew, he has an understanding of seven others. He has been a tour manager since 1987 leading groups for US, Dutch, Swiss, German, and British companies. Michel has accompanied custom tours



Tour includes:

- All transfers and ground transportation in a/c vehicles.
- Flights between the HOA countries (provided arrival/departure flights are on Ethiopian Air).
- Day-use room in Addis Ababa on the last day.
- Meals as mentioned in the itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch and D: Dinner).
- Daily bottles of water on tours and non-alcoholic drinks with meals.
- Entrance fees to all sites mentioned.
- Porters (if minimum number of travelers is reached).
- English speaking, professional guide in each country.
- Scouts and police officers where necessary.
- Additional security in Somaliland.
- Boat trips & whale shark excursion.
- Government taxes on all included services.
- Escort of a tour Lecturer throughout the trip (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).
- Gratuities to guide, drivers, and porters (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).

Trip Grade:

III Challenging: Parts of the trip are physically challenging, involving hiking on rough terrain or in sand. There may be very long drives on rough roads, weather conditions with high heat or humidity, and the presence of insects. You may have simple picnic lunches, primitive bathroom facilities along the road and remoteness from modern towns or cities.

Lodging Level:

**** Basic:** Comfortable yet on the Spartan side, usually small but generally with private facilities. Some such lodges and motel-style are in need of repairs, added cleaning, and improvements but they are suitable for one-night stays even if they lack western style amenities. (2 or 3 stars).

***** Superior:** Lodges and hotels with additional amenities, refined service, and comfort level acceptable to western standards. (3 or 4 stars).

Tour does not include:

- International airfare USA-Asmara / Addis-USA.
- Visa Fees: **Ethiopia** (Obtainable in Washington DC - multiple entry - \$150.00), **Somaliland** (Obtainable on arrival - \$60.00), **Eritrea** (Obtainable on arrival or through Washington DC - \$150.00), and **Djibouti** (Obtainable in Washington DC - \$150.00) - all subject to change.
- Beverages and alcoholic drinks with or without meals.
- Items of a personal nature (camera fees, laundry, excess luggage, etc.).
- Transfers if not arriving/departing on tour dates.
- Dayroom/overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules or misconnections.
- Gratuity to your tour Lecturer (Optional).
- Trip surcharge to operate below required minimum participants.
- Travel insurance (HIGHLY RECOMMENDED).

