

DISCOVER THE WONDERS

SPIEKERMANN

TRAVEL SERVICE



THE HORN OF AFRICA

Somaliland, Djibouti, Eritrea, & Eastern Ethiopia

October 24 - November 08, 2024

Led by Local Guides

© Gary Krosin

This tour is Shangri-La for those who dare to break the mold of conventional travel and is certainly the 'road less traveled' for explorers. Eritrea, on the shores of the Red Sea, has a history dating back to the Stone Age, but the country has only been internationally recognized since 1993, following a succession of wars with Ethiopia that spanned thirty years. 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. The major highlight of Eritrea is the colorful diversity of the nine ethnic groups that live within it. Somaliland should not be confused with Somalia; visitors are welcome here. In addition, Somaliland 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 (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 definitely 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, as well as over 100 shrines, and a colorful, vibrant marketplace. The surrounding Ahmar Mountains are where Ethiopia's best coffee is produced. Join us on an unforgettable adventure in this fascinating part of the world.

Ihab Zaki
Managing Director

Thursday, October 24

Arrive in Addis Ababa (**Ethiopia**)



Upon arrival at **Bole International Airport**, meet the guide and transfer to the *Jupiter Hotel or similar* for check-in and overnight.

Note: Standard check-in time is 3:00 pm. If you arrive on October 23 or in the early morning of October 24, an extra Hotel night needs to be booked.

Friday, October 25

Addis Ababa



After breakfast, head out on a visit to the **National Archeological Museum** to see some of the fascinating collections housed including **Lucy** (if she is not on tour). The 3.2-million-year-old australopithecine female's remains were discovered in the Rift Valley, Ethiopia, in 1974. Stop at the famous **Tomoca Coffee Shop**, established in 1953 and known for serving Italian-style coffee using Ethiopian coffee beans. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, October 26

Addis - Hargeisa (**Somaliland**)



In the morning, transfer to the airport for the flight to **Hargeisa**, the capital of Somaliland. After passing through customs, transfer to the *Maansoor Hotel or similar* for check-in. After lunch, begin a walking tour of the city, passing through the **Central Market** to see how local money and gold are exchanged on the streets. Continue to the **Civil War Memorial** and then visit the **cattle market**, which 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, October 27

Hargeisa - Berbera (98 miles)



Today, drive to the port town of **Berbera**, the former capital of **Somaliland** and capital of the British Protectorate. Before arriving at the *Damal Hotel Berbera or similar* for check-in, pass by the **Berbera Port**, a former naval and missile base for the Somali government. Dinner and overnight at the *Hotel*. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, October 28

Berbera - Las Geel - Hargeisa



After breakfast, head out to visit the fascinating Neolithic **Laas Geel** cave paintings. The paintings are between 5,000 to 10,000 years old and include paintings of giraffe, dogs and antelope, and images of cattle in ceremonial garb being worshipped by men, who appear to be bowing before them. Continue the drive to **Hargeisa** in the afternoon and upon arrival, transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in, dinner & overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, October 29

Hargeisa - Harar (160 miles) (**Ethiopia**)



Begin the day with an interesting drive across the Somaliland/Ethiopia border at **Tog Wechale**, passing through immigration on both sides of the country. In the afternoon, arrive at the historic walled city of **Harar**, passing through the famous rock formations at **Babile** to enjoy some wonderful landscapes. In the evening, meet with the famous **hyena-feeding man** for an up-close and personal encounter with these amazing creatures. Enjoy dinner at one of the restaurants in town, and then transfer to *Wonderland Hotel*

or similar for check-in and overnight. **(B,Boxed L,D)**

Wednesday, October 30

Harar - Dire Dawa (35 miles)



Begin the day exploring **Harar** with its **markets** and the former residence of French poet, Arthur Rimbaud. From the **Rimbaud Museum**, we can enjoy the view of Harar, the markets and roofs, the countryside, and beyond, through its colorful windows. Also visit the **Harari Museum** that depicts the interior architecture and decoration of the homes of the Harari people. Drive to **Dire Dawa** in the late afternoon and transfer to the *Samrat Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, October 31

Dire Dawa - Djibouti (Djibouti) (187 miles)



In the morning, drive to **Djibouti**, passing by the old Dire Dawa railway and crossing the border at **Dewele**. After passing through immigration and crossing into **Djibouti**, meet the car and driver and continue to the town of **Ali Sabieh** to enjoy a late lunch. Continue the drive and upon arrival in **Djibouti city**, transfer to *Ras Dika Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, November 01

Djibouti (Lac Assal) (125 miles)



Begin the day with an excursion to the colorful **Lac Assal**, “*The Sea of Honey*” in Arabic. It lies at the bottom of a crater at the lowest spot in Africa, and it is the second saltiest body of water in the world. Also see the ‘**New Crack**’, which was created by the new Rift formation. Enjoy a picnic lunch along the way and then return to the *Hotel* in Djibouti for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, November 02

Djibouti (Whale Shark Excursion)



After breakfast, depart from the fishing point to **Ras Korali** for exciting encounters with the magnificent **whale sharks**. Spend about 45-60 minutes swimming and snorkeling followed by lunch on the boat. Later in the afternoon, return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Note: There is no guarantee to see the whale sharks, even during peak season.

Sunday, November 03

Djibouti - Addis - Asmara (Eritrea)



Begin the day with city tour to explore Djibouti’s **markets**, old French **mansions**, **Post Office**, and the old **railway station**. Afterwards, transfer to the airport for the flight to **Addis** connecting on the flight heading to **Asmara**, the Capital of Eritrea. Upon arrival meet the local representative

and transfer to *Asmara Palace Hotel or similar* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, November 04

Asmara (Keren) (60 miles)



After an early breakfast, head out to visit the lively weekly **Market in Keren** (open on Mondays only). The city is one of the major agricultural centers in Eritrea and stretches on a wide basin bordered by mountains on all sides. It serves as the capital of the Anseba region and is home to the Bilen ethnic group. Pass through the interesting Tigrigna-speaking villages, **Blen**, and **Tigre**. The **open-air market** is a hive of activity and attracts traders and tribes from the surrounding areas selling and buying fruits, vegetables, and spices, as well as souvenirs and products made by local artisans. There will be an opportunity to purchase items such as **baskets**, **pottery**, and **silver**. This is also a photographer’s delight filled with the vibrant colors and enthusiasm in the bustling market. Stop to visit the **camel** and **livestock market** before driving back to **Asmara** and return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, November 05

Asmara



After breakfast, begin the day with a visit to **Asmara Cathedral**, inaugurated in 1923. It is believed to be one of the finest Lombard Romanesque style churches outside of Italy. It features a tall Gothic bell tower containing eight bells, it also has four clocks and a small building that used to be a school for Lawyers. Enjoy lunch at Gibabo Restaurant and continue exploring Asmara. Visit the **Great Mosque**, built in 1938 and considered one of the three prominent edifices of the city, as well as the **Synagogue**, built in 1906 and the only surviving remnant of the Jewish community in Eritrea. Also visit the 19th century **Enda Mariam Coptic Cathedral** dedicated to St. Mary, **St. Michael’s Orthodox Church**, and the **old market**. **Gibi** is a significant public building, built in 1897 in Italian art-deco style by Fernando Martini, the first Italian governor of Eritrea. Now, it serves as the president’s office. Next, visit the early 20th century **post office** and **Italian Opera House**, which emerges the rudiments of Romanesque Revival and Neoclassicism. Dinner will be at one of the restaurants in town, and then return to the *Hotel* for overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, November 06

Asmara - Massawa



Begin the day with a breathtaking drive to **Massawa**, along the escarpment of the **Rift Valley**. Stop for a photo opportunity around **Arbe-Robue** offering great views of the mountains, valleys, and the old railway to Massawa with the

railway tunnels in view. Once we arrive in **Massawa** transfer to *Grand Dahlak Resort* by the seaside for check-in and lunch, then take a boat to one of the many islands in the **Dahlak Archipelago**. Spend half the day swimming and snorkeling among the beautiful, unspoiled reefs and exploring **Green Island** then return to the *Resort* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, November 07

Massawa - Asmara



Enjoy a walking tour in the **old city** of Massawa. An amazing, eerie city, destroyed completely by the Ethiopian army in 1990, the town has an amazing feeling with its crumbling **old buildings, palaces, mosques, Ottoman mansions, Italian villas, and marketplace**. Walk along the famous **port** and after lunch, visit the nomadic **tribe of Al-Rashaydeh** (if there is a camp in the area). Take the mountain road towards **Asmara**, passing through many picturesque **villages**, and over the railroad tracks and Italian bridges stopping en route to see the baboons and upon arrival in **Asmara**, transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, November 08

Asmara - USA



Enjoy breakfast and then transfer to the airport for your flight back to the US. **(B)**

Note: Check-out time is 12:00 PM, if your flight leaves later in the day, a day use room needs to be booked.

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".

Special Tour Remarks:

These countries are poor, and the tourism infrastructure is lacking in many areas. Some meals may be simple, food may be slow coming, some hotels will be basic (even those considered to be the best in the area) and you may encounter issues like: power outages, lack of hot water, poor internet service etc.). Some roads are in need of re-paving; some sites can be closed without prior notification. These drawbacks require a sense of tolerance and acceptance, and visitors are reminded that they are pioneering in uncharted terrain, and this is the real attraction of these destinations. In addition, the internal flights are unpredictable and could be cancelled at the last minute or rescheduled and thus require flexibility and humor, and sometimes the purchasing of new tickets. Please be aware: If additional expenses are incurred due to situations beyond the control of Spiekermann Travel, all travelers will be asked to cover their own extra costs. This journey is an adventure for those prepared to accept some uncertainties as well as gain the rewards of travel to a region where Americans are seldom seen. The trip also requires participants to be in a fit physical condition and able to walk, climb and endure sightseeing in the heat (usually between upper 80's to mid-90's during the day). By joining this tour, you fully accept the conditions explained above and agree to abide by a spirit of adventure and flexibility throughout the tour.



Tour cost (Land only): \$9,995.00

Per person sharing in double occupancy

Single Supplement: \$995.00

Price based on group size minimum of 6 participants and maximum of 12 participants

Trip Grade: III Lodging Level: *_***



Tour includes:

- Airport / Hotel / Airport transfers.
- Travel by A/C 4WD and motor coaches.
- Accommodation at mentioned *Hotels* or similar on bed and breakfast basis.
- Meals as mentioned in the itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch and D: Dinner).
- Non-alcoholic drinks with meals.
- Daily bottles of water on tours.
- All activities described in the tour and entrance fees to all sites mentioned.
- English speaking, professional guide in each country.
- Scouts and police officers where necessary.
- Boat trip & whale shark excursion in Djibouti including the snorkel/diving equipment.
- Government taxes on all included services.
- All Portorage, gratuities to guide, drivers, and porters (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).

Trip Grade:

III Challenging: Some of the tours involve 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 roads and dusty drives.

Lodging Level:

***Simple:** One or more properties on the trip are very basic, and primitive.

*****Superior:** Lodges and hotels with additional amenities, refined service, and comfort level acceptable to western standards. 3 – 4 stars in the main cities.

Tour does not include:

- International airfare into Addis and out of Asmara.
- Ethiopia multi-entry Visa (\$70.00), Somaliland (\$80.00), Eritrea (\$150.00 including processing fee) & Djibouti (\$130.00 including processing fee).
- Any required pre arrival or pre departure PCR tests if needed.
- Items of a personal nature (camera fees, laundry, phone calls, excess luggage, etc.).
- Transfers if not arriving/departing on scheduled flights/tour dates.
- Dayroom/overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules.
- Trip surcharge to operate below required minimum participants.
- Travel protection insurance. (HIGHLY RECOMMENDED)

