



LALIBELA CULTURAL EXTENSION

06 – 09 APRIL 2024

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Birding Ecotours
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Bet Giorgis is the most famous of the rock churches at Lalibela.

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This short cultural extension to Lalibela, one of Ethiopia's most sacred sites, is a perfect complement to our **19-day Complete Abyssinia** birding tour, where you would have had an amazing diversity of birds and animals. Lalibela's impressive, monolithic churches are carved out of a massive bedrock of basalt and will leave you in awe of the incredible attention to detail and size. The cave church of Yemrehana Krestos will also be visited, which offers something different from the monolithic churches of Lalibela. Of course, our binoculars will never be too far away while we are enjoying the rich history of the area, and while exploring the churches we are likely to find a number of special birds, including **Bearded Vulture, White-winged Cliff Chat, White-billed Starling**, and many Palearctic migrants making their way back north.

This extension to our **19-day Complete Abyssinia** birding tour can also be booked as a stand-alone tour.



A typical scene inside one of Lalibela's many rock-hewn churches.

Itinerary (4 days/3 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Addis Ababa

For those guests on our Complete Abyssinia tour, today will be the day the main tour ends, while for those arriving specifically for the Lalibela tour it will be your arrival day in Addis Ababa. Wandering around the gardens of the Ghion Hotel is a great way to familiarize yourself with the common birds of the area, and the gardens also harbor a few important Ethiopian endemics and near-endemics. You may find **Wattled Ibis, Hooded Vulture** (overhead), **Dusky Turtle Dove**,

Banded Barbet, Abyssinian and Eastern Grey Woodpeckers, White-backed Black Tit, Brown Parisoma, Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, Tacazze Sunbird, Streaky and Brown-rumped Seed eaters, and African Silverbill.

Overnight: Ghion Hotel, Addis Ababa, or similar



Abyssinian Woodpecker may be seen in Addis Ababa.

Day 2. Flight to Lalibela, visiting the northwestern cluster of churches

We will catch the mid-morning flight from Addis Ababa to Lalibela Airport, where we will be picked up and transferred to the small, ancient town of Lalibela. After a bite to eat we will start the tour of the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, visiting the northwestern cluster of churches - Bet Medhane Alem, Bet Maryam, Bet Meskel, Bet Danaghel, Bet Mikael, and Bet Golgotha (please note that entry to Bet Golgotha is not permitted for women, unfortunately).

While enjoying the churches we will also keep an eye out for birds in the area, such as **Bearded Vulture, White-collared Pigeon, White-winged Cliff Chat, White-billed Starling**, and many others.

Overnight: Mezena Lodge, Lalibela, or similar



Bearded Vultures circle above while we explore the churches of Lalibela.

Day 3. Southeastern cluster of churches, Yemrehana Krestos, and Bet Giyorgis

After breakfast we leave Lalibela and take a drive to Yemrehana Krestos for another ancient rock-hewn church. The drive to Yemrehana will also give you the opportunity to view the rural countryside and villages of the Ethiopian highlands. Most people neglect to visit Yemrehana Krestos; however, it is considered one of Ethiopia's best-preserved Late-Aksumite buildings. The church is different because it is built in a cave rather than excavated. Seeing the stepped exterior facade, created from alternating wood and stone layers, will help you understand the design of Lalibela's rock-hewn churches. Interestingly, Yemrehana Krestos is thought to predate Lalibela's churches by up to 80 years!

In the afternoon we will visit the southeastern cluster of churches, which includes Bet Gabriel-Rufael, Bet Merkorios, Bet Amanuel, Bet Lehem, and Bet Abba Libanos. We will end the day by visiting the most famous of all the Lalibela churches – Bet Giyorgis, constructed in honor of Saint George, the patron saint of Ethiopia.

After we have finished our cultural tour we can take a walk around town, which usually has good birds, such as **Black-winged Lovebird**, **Bruce's Green Pigeon**, **Hemprich's Hornbill**, **Ethiopian Bee-eater**, **Thick-billed Raven**, **White-rumped Babbler**, and **African Citril**.

Overnight: Mezena Lodge, Lalibela, or similar



The cave church of Yemrehana Krestos.

Day 4. Flight back to Addis Ababa and tour ends

After some final exploration of the Lalibela area, where we will bird some of the woodland just outside of town for **White-fronted Black Chat** and other species, we will fly back to Addis Ababa, where the tour ends with a drop-off at Bole International Airport.

Overnight: Not included

Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

Duration:	4 days
Limit:	4 - 8
Dates:	06 - 09 April 2024 06 - 09 April 2025
Start:	Addis Ababa
End:	Addis Ababa
Prices:	US\$1,695 per person sharing, assuming 4 - 8 participants (2024) US\$1,713 per person sharing, assuming 4 - 8 participants (2025)
Single supplements:	US\$206 (2024) US\$222 (2025)

Price includes:

Addis Ababa - Lalibela flights (return) if any of your flights into or out of Ethiopia are aboard Ethiopian Airlines, in which case you will apply for an Ethiopian Airlines discount and the Lalibela flights are included in the tour price. If you do not fly on Ethiopian Airlines, the Lalibela flights are an extra US\$150 per person. We can help you navigate the above process, please contact us for further information.

All meals (from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 4)

Bottled drinking water

Accommodation

Transport

Guiding fees

Entrance fees

Airport transfers

Price excludes:

Visa

International flights

Personal insurance

Alcoholic beverages

Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))

Laundry service

Personal expenses such as gifts etc.