



Ethiopia 2026

Monday 9th February - Sunday 22nd February

14 days

Omo Valley, Danakil desert (Afar) and Gheralta (Tigray)



Our photo tours focus on taking you to places which have unique appeal to photographers. We seek the beauty of landscape and seascape, the heritage of cultural diversity and the bustle of streets and marketplaces – effectively photography through geography. We also strive to promote eco photo tourism where we have a sustainable, un-intrusive, approach to our photography.

We strive to seek the best moments, light and opportunities to compose shots which reflect upon those inimitable moments. There is also great value in the immersion in local customs and culture, making the journey and photography more meaningful.

It is recommended that participants bring a laptop or tablet to enable us to review the images or get help with editing if wished.

We welcome participants, whatever their photographic experience, as well as partners or family members who simply would like to join in the journey!



‘It’s not what you look at that matters, it’s what you see.’ – Henry David Thoreau

The **Omo Valley of Ethiopia** is part of the Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Region (SNNPR) and is a relatively isolated area of the country, renowned for its indigenous people or tribes. There are approximately 20 tribes in the region, with many living as they have existed for millennia. It is these tribes that we have come to photograph – in their villages, the bush, roadside and local markets.

The photography

With tribal peoples, photography is different – a very good local guide is necessary but here the precedent of paying villages and/or individuals is almost universal. This was something the tour companies seem to have instigated decades ago when tourism was in its infancy. We always try to give to the village instead of the ‘person’ because it is less discriminating, and we get our local guides to deal with payment to take pressure off photographers. We are sensitive to the impacts that tourism can cause, aiming to make visits sustainable and a positive cultural interaction! It is all a delicate balance, and the local guides are often best in deciding which strategy to adopt.

In some cases when we have visited a Hamar village, for example, we wander around the village without a camera just to become a familiar sight. It is interpersonal skills, which make the moment count. And in that moment, we want to capture light, colour, emotion, insight, character and spirit. We try to shoot in the golden hours or at least where there is shade from the intense African sun. In the right light, at the right time, the ordinary becomes extraordinary – bringing incredible opportunities for portraits of tribal life and street markets. Some of the tribes we will encounter are Arbore, Hamar, Kara, Banna, Ari, Dassenech, Konso and Dorze.

The travel

Villages are sometimes remote and this is what makes the photography rewarding. We travel in comfortable 4X4s (Toyota land cruisers or similar) to get to some of the very best locations. There is always a plan B if plan A has to be abandoned due to the occasional downpour, for example, making unsurfaced tracks impassable. It is also possible that we change the itinerary spontaneously if we hear of a local festival or celebration, such as the Hamar tribe bull jumping.

You do need a sense of adventure for this trip, but I will help with good preparation and packing advice. There are a few essentials, such as a good first aid kit with Malaria prophylaxis, but I will send out a list well in advance. We will be off the beaten track but will not be doing any arduous treks. We walk short distances to and around some of the villages.

I first travelled to the Omo Valley in 2000 and lived in Ethiopia from 2006–2010, so I know the country very well and love it. In the last few years, since living there, I have been back once every 12–18 months to capture those moments unique to the Omo and the Danakil desert.

We will often have very early starts to catch the best light! Where possible we will visit markets throughout the tour.

Day 1 – Monday 9th February: Addis Ababa

ARRIVE in Addis Ababa. Group members gather in the lobby of the Capital Hotel and Spa. Tour overview, briefing and Q&A session at 5:30/6pm followed by a welcome dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight stay at the **Capital Hotel**

Day 2 – Tuesday 10th February: Addis Ababa – Arba Minch (Flight ET171 8:05-09:10)

Visit the Dorze people in the hills of the western side of the Great East Africa Rift valley overlooking Lakes Abaya and Chamo. The market is always enthralling with opportunities to get some bar shots where the older tribes members drink Tej (honey wine).

Stay overnight at the Haile Resort or similar.

Day 3 – Wednesday 11th February Arba Minch - Konso

En route we take a boat trip on Lake Chamo (conditions permitting) to see crocodiles, hippos, fish eagles and pelicans. We visit a Konso village approximately 1000 years old with its fortified walls and terraces. This area is a UNESCO world heritage site.

Overnight at Kanta Lodge in Konso

Day 4 – Thursday 12th February

We drive from Konso to Turmi, visiting the Key Afar Market en route. We drive to Turmi, where we are based at Buska Lodge for three nights. An opportunity to recharge batteries and relish being in a small simple lodge. Here we will have an evening photographing the [Hamar](#) tribe. The Hamar are a very resilient and culturally proud tribe. Like most of the tribes, the men often have more than one wife; the first wife is always recognisable by the type of necklace she wears, and the second and third wives wear thinner neckbands and can be readily distinguished from the first. The Hamar women have high cheekbones, wear thick copper/metal necklaces, elaborate beads, and goat-skins and their hair is often coloured with red ochre and butter. The men often use coloured clay on their hair and take real pride in their appearance and culture. Like all the tribes, they are very photogenic and culturally resilient. If we are lucky we may get a chance to see a bull jumping event where a young Hamar man comes of age.

As roads encroach and telecommunications advance it is inevitable that their culture will change and the seeds of homogenisation are already sown.

Tourism is perhaps a way in which the Hamar, and the other Omo tribes, can retain their cultural integrity. Tourism is perhaps leading to a reinvention of their tribal traits and traditions. The tribes must be the change they want to see in themselves. Self-determination is integral to a sustainable future. Can they do this, or will the external forces of change homogenise and result in their demise?

Overnight at [Buska Lodge](#)

Day 5 – Friday 13th February

A very early start from Turmi to visit the [Kara/Karo](#) people in Dus, the second of three village settlements of the Kara tribe. Sited on the banks of the Omo River, the Kara are known for their creative and decorative body chalk painting. Many of the Kara women have pierced lips and insert nails, flowers and pins. In addition to various photographic opportunities in the village and on the banks of the Omo River, we may be able to photograph the ceremonial, communal dances performed by the people of Dus or early morning goat-herding. This is dusty and very atmospheric – photo opportunities abound. In the afternoon we visit a Hamar village (Bull jumping its always a possibility). Overnight at [Buska Lodge](#).

Day 6 – Saturday 14th February

An early start to visit the [Daasanach](#) tribe who live in the fertile Omo River delta, close to Kenya and Lake Turkana where they hunt crocodiles. They are pastoralists, living in one of the more arid areas of the valley. We stop in Omorate to get permits to visit and for this we need our passports! The Daasanach/Dassenech move their villages regularly often in response to grazing needs but also in response to climate change which has exacerbated the flood hazard.

In the afternoon we go to Dimeka market and see the Hamar socializing and buying food. The Hamar women have high cheekbones, wear thick copper/metal necklaces, elaborate beads, and goat-skins and their hair is often coloured with red ochre and butter. The men often use coloured clay on their hair and take real pride in their appearance and culture. Like all the tribes, they are very photogenic. Overnight in [Buska Lodge](#).

Day 7 – Sunday 15th February

Another very early start to visit the [Arbore](#) tribe. We drive approximately two hours to Chew Bahir (Lake Stefanie) to visit an Arbore village and photograph daily life. They are one of the most beautiful tribes. After our visit to the Arbore, we drive onwards to Jinka to visit the Ari and the Jinka Museum, which is great for insight into the lives of the tribes. Jinka is home to the [Ari people](#). They are quite westernised but there are opportunities to participate in a coffee ceremony, watch them making injera (a flatbread made from Tef) and possibly a visit to a flour mill.

The order in which we visit the tribes may change depending on the possibility of celebrations such as the Hamar Bull Jumping.

Overnight at Eco Omo lodge.

Day 8 – Monday 16th February

Today we move to a completely different part of Ethiopia - **Afar** in the North East. Flights (ET270 10:15-11:35 and ET164 15:55-17:15) Jinka to Semera via Addis Ababa.

Overnight at Ruftana Hotel

Day 9 – Tuesday 17th February

Today we drive from Semera to Erte Ale. Erte Ale is one of the most Active Shield Volcanoes on Earth and is renowned for its lava lake. The presence of the lake changes regularly but we will certainly see some volcanic activity. It used to take three hours to get to the crater, it now takes a short walk of 20-30 minutes. It is a sight to behold.

Afar is the hottest place on Earth (average temperatures), hence we are visiting it the coolest time of year but bear in mind that it is still hot!!

Overnight Camping.

Day 10 Wednesday 18th February

We again visit the crater of the Volcano before departing and traveling through the desert to Ahmedila. Bring shorts or swimming costumes as there is a small pool en route.

Overnight Camping.

Day 11 – Thursday 19th February

We spent the full day exploring the desert and the sulphur pools of Dallol. Truly an amazing sight. The landscape is quite bizarre and is formed as a result of a sub surface volcano creating geo thermal activity at the surface with hot pools and solfataras (hot bubbling springs). The Danakil desert is largely comprised of salt flats formed as a result of evaporation of the red sea which formerly covered this area. The desert is approximately 120 meters below sea level which helps to explain why it is so hot. Salt pillars are found in Dallol and the salt flats have polygonal patterns created by the salt drying out after rises in the water table. If we are very lucky we may see and get to photograph some of the camel trains that used to be commonplace here.

We will also try to visit an Afar or Issa village. The people are very resilient and their adaption to the aridity is remarkable. Their tribal culture is truly unique and if they allow is to photograph its incredible.

Overnight Camping

Day 12 – Friday 20th February

We drive from Ahmedila through Berhale to Hawzien in Tigray. Today we rise out of the Afar Triangle and the Great Rift valley of East Africa. Again we may get a chance to photograph some of the very colourful Afar and Issas. Some have small tattoos on their cheeks. They are a very proud and resilient people and are not always easy to photograph. But we will try.

Overnight at Gheralta Lodge.

Day 13 – Monday 21st February

An morning visit to the Rock Hewn churches of Tigray. We seek light coming from windows and doors as flash is not permitted but the atmosphere is unforgettable. A good opportunity to experiment with auto-ISO. There are many of these ancient churches, some with old frescoes and the priests are always will to be photographed for a small fee of course! Some of the churches are in spectacular locations in the Gheralta mountains.

Day 13 – Monday 22nd February

We drive from Hawzien to Mekele again stopping at some of the churches en route. We fly from Mekele to Addis Ababa and have Capital Hotel day-use if needed. Flight (ET191 18:25-20:00) and connecting international flight. Evening dinner at a local restaurant and then transfer to Bole Airport for your flight home. It may be sensible to pay for an extra night in the Hotel if you feel there isn't enough time.

Services included

- Meals – breakfast, lunch and dinner for the time of the tour. Meals may occasionally be local depending on location but for the most part, the food is simple and mostly western. Meals will also include water and soft drinks.
- Entrance fees/permits for villages.
- Transfer to and from Bole airport to the hotel.
- Accommodation as stated but the nature of the destinations that we operate in, may sometimes mean that we need to change hotels, but we'll always endeavour to keep the same standards. Please be aware that in parts of Ethiopia, hotel standards may not be the same as you're used to elsewhere.
- Photo tour leaders and local guides.
- Travel by Toyota land cruisers (4x4) or similar.

The cost of the main tour is €7600 To reserve a place there is a deposit of €2000 The single supplement for the main tour is €350

It is highly recommended to fly with ET as ET discounts internal flights substantially when flying long haul with them. A surcharge of **€205pp** is applicable if your international flight is not with ET. Please note that you may fly to a European destination on another airline as long as you arrive in Addis on ET. Payment is possible by Bank Transfer and also by PayPal, in this case, an additional **5%** will be added to cover the transaction fees (PayPal). The final balance is due three months prior to departure. The cost above includes internal flights when ET is used for the international flights.

Services not included / additional costs

Alcohol and paying for photographs if there is a special ceremony – eg Bull Jumping. We will try, where negotiable, to pay a lump sum to the village but sometimes this is not possible. **I recommend approximately €300 per person for ‘photo fees’**. This needs to be converted to small notes (Birr) on arrival in Addis Ababa (I will try to do this in advance so that you can get the money directly from me in new notes). Some photographers take thousands of photos! **The local guide/s will handle payments**. You will also need some extra money for tips for drivers, cooks, guides etc. Approximately **€30** for each driver, guide and cook per day. This is shared between all participants.

I will send out medical forms, gear lists, additional information on the tribes, travel liability forms at a later stage.

If you have any questions, please contact me by email trevcole1@me.com or phone/WhatsApp +353 872 82 5851





‘The land of origins’

