

Enkwanaderasachu - *The traditional Amharic holiday greeting - the Ethiopian New Year started on 11th Sept.*

With the rainy season (Kremt) ending and the new holiday season starting TESFA is embarking on an ambitious expansion.

TESFA will have expanded the number of operational sites from four to seven

between April and November this year, with two new community sites being completed in Meket over the coming weeks, and the first site on Abuna Yoseph already operational. **In the coming year TESFA plans to add another five community sites across three zones: North Wollo (the existing area of operation) East Tigray and North Shoa** (see map on page 2). This expansion will enable TESFA to offer visitors a more varied itinerary of community-based tourism experience that mixes culture, landscapes and wildlife.



The community at Timkat - Mequat Mariam (Mark Chapman Jan 08)



Mark surveying basalt pillars by Zigit peak - Abuna Yoseph -(Rita/Girma)

With some luck the beautiful endemic and endangered Ethiopian Wolf. Through this development the communities using the mountain will earn an income from tourism and become involved in the conservation of the eco system.

You will need to be fit as the climb from Lalibela takes your breath away as you go from 2,500m to 3,500m to reach the Ad Medhane Alem site. The next day be ready for a long trek up to the afro alpine moorland at around 4,000 meters. The wolves are easiest to see late in the day, which means arriving back at the site after dark (take torches). Once TESFA and Frankfurt Zoological Society have built a second site on the edge of the wolf habitat, the round trip will become easier.

Abuna Yoseph

This month TESFA is able to offer trekking on Abuna Yoseph, Ethiopia's third highest massif. The Ad Medhane Alem site on the mountain is the first site outside Meket and means clients can trek from Lalibela town and use this site as a base for exploring the afro alpine heights. Add another two nights on to your stay and you can climb a number of rocky peaks, the highest standing at some 4,300 meters, with views (on a clear day) to match. You will see large troops of Gelada baboons, birds of prey soaring above and perched on rocks, notably the stunning Augur Buzzard, and with some



Experience the Real Ethiopia



A glade of Giant Heather (Erica arborea) in Wof Washa forest

TESFA is continuing to develop additional sites in North Wollo and, in addition to Abuna Yoseph, is opening an **Eastern Meket** route which starts nearer Lalibela reducing vehicle hire costs, but again involves some tough trekking. Future sites will link Eastern Meket to Lalibela and Abuna Yoseph and other interesting parts of the surrounding country.

Nearer Addis, TESFA will begin developing community tourism sites around **Wof Washa Forest**. TESFA will begin work on the first two of three accommodation sites in late 2008. This will provide guests with the opportunity to trek through a varied forest along the Rift Valley edge, with Afro-alpine vegetation at the top and dense forest lower down. A variety of wildlife can be seen including Colobus Monkeys at lower altitude and Gelada Baboon higher up.



Map showing existing and planned project sites in Ethiopia (in green)

Tourists often miss out **Eastern Tigray** on their tour of northern Ethiopia, but Eastern Tigray is home to more than 130 rock-hewn churches. Many of these churches predate those in Lalibela and are carved into the red sandstone mountains that rise out of the Tigrayan plateau. Some of these churches are an adventure to reach with long treks or steep climbs, while others are a simple walk.



Eastern Tigray - Sandstone cliffs surround the farm land in valley

The ancient Tigrayan culture is a part of this landscape with ox-plough farming and irrigation making a stunning contrast to the red sandstone cliffs. TESFA will use the local architectural style of the Hedemo (traditional farm house) to develop simple accommodation allowing guest to stay with local communities and explore the stunning landscape with visits to local rock churches and time to participate in the local community. TESFA hopes to have initial sites ready in early 2009 in Ganta Afashum and Hawzein woredas.

To book please contact Hanna at TESFA Technical Support Unit in Addis Ababa (see bottom of page 3). The charges are 450birr per day, this covers accommodation, food, tea/coffee, pack animals and guides, but does not include bottled drinks and transport.



Experience the Real Ethiopia

Community Tourism making a real impact

Mequat Mariam community decided to start using some of the proceeds from their tourism work to help them withstand the increasing prices of grain. They sent two members to a province where grain is cheaper (Gojam) and bought 10,600kgs of maize at 4.95birr a kg. This grain has been sold back to 212 households in the community - 50kgs each for 255 birr each (ie 5.10 birr a kg). In the local market maize costs 6.5 birr a kg, and so each household has had a saving of 70birr. The community at the same time has been able to cover all the costs of the grain purchase such as transportation and have almost finalised the construction of a grain store. Additional grain purchases are planned, and soon they will operate a grainbank which will enable them to buy grain from farmers at better prices after the harvest when prices are depressed and release grain back to the community at below market price later in the season when they have become inflated, and yet cover all costs.



Meket shepherding boys (Carolyn Knapp)

Summary of bookings & community incomes from Jul 06 - Jun 08																	
Period / Quarter	ttl gst	ni- ghts	guest nights	Total Fee	25% CTGE	15% TSU	No Grp s	Av Grp size	Mequat		Wajela		Aterow		Yadukulay		
									Gst	Profit	Gst	Profit	Gst	Profit	Gst	Profit	
Quarter 4 2006	63	58	151	39,960	9,225	5,535	19	3.32	48	5,939	53	5,652	45	4,547	Not		
Quarter 1 2007	66	63	137	41,700	10,425	6,255	20	3.30	63	8,110	59	6,754	19	1,937	Operation'l		
Quarter 2 2007	72	86	174	51,280	12,450	7,470	28	2.57	62	7,695	64	5,737	49	4,125	5	524	
Quarter 3 2007	16	12	34	8,800	2,900	1,740	5	3.20	8	534	8	762	16	720	2	164	
Quarter 4 2007	201	230	551	149,190	36,248	21,749	50	4.02	167	18,960	174	16,742	150	15,445	65	6,680	
Quarter 1 2008	159	221	459	135,600	33,900	20,340	43	4	143	17,483	145	14,114	136	15,127	39	3,475	
Quarter 2 2008	141	181	383	114,300	27,975	16,785	43	3	99	13,177	116	12,132	103	9,685	53	6,070	
Jul 06-Jun07	201	207	462	132,940	32,100	19,260	67	9	173	21,744	176	18,143	113	10,609	5	524	
Jul 07-Jun08	517	644	1,427	407,890	101,023	60,614	141	14	417	50,155	443	43,751	405	40,977	159	16,390	
Last year in USD				45,321	11,225	6,735				5,573		4,861		4,553		1,821	



Mequat Community sorting out payments (Berry Family)

Bookings & income up to June 2008

This was the best season ever with 1,427 guest nights generating 407,890 birr in revenue. Visitor numbers peaked at the end of 2007. Bookings are down with many tour operators linked to the economic uncertainty across the world. However TESFA remains confident that business will remain buoyant in the coming season, with early figures for October baring this out.

TESFA's work over the last 12 months has been supported by Irish Aid, Save the Children UK, the British Embassy, the German Embassy, Responsibletravel.com, the Tresillian Trust, the Ambassadors' Wives' fund, ICAP and a number of private individuals. A big thanks for this great support allowing us to reach more communities .



Experience the Real Ethiopia

A Bird Enthusiast's Paradise

One of Ethiopia's foremost bird experts, Antenah Shimelis has just completed a training programme with the guides on bird identification. Most of their time was spent in the field, and in the process they made some exciting sightings. Top of the list is the very rare Harwood's Francolin, which Antenah spotted in the Tekeze area. This Francolin has previously only been seen further south and west in the Blue Nile area.



Harwood's Francolin
courtesy of Birdlife
International & EWNHS

Another endemic bird that is rare and whose range is restricted is Ruppell's Black Chat. Antenah has only seen this once before, but he spotted five individuals in one day in Meket and says that Meket must be the best place to see this bird. Among the other birds seen include the endemic White-billed Starling, again difficult to see in other parts of the country, the endemic Abyssinian Catbird, a migratory Red Tailed Shrike, and the African Grey Cuckoo. On



Hemprich's Hornbill

Antenah's list of 75 birds spotted are a number of raptors: the Lammergeyer, the African Harrier Hawk (Gymonogene), Augur Buzzard, Tawny Eagle, and for Antenah a raptor enthusiast the most exciting was the Black Eagle. Also on Antenah's list are the Red-chested Sparrowhawk and the Common Kestrel.



Abyssinian Ground Hornbill here seen on the cliffs near Mequat, more commonly seen in the lower lands



Lammergeyer

Antenah says Meket is a great birding location and plans to come back soon. The guides he trained are excited to have seen so many birds and look forward to sharing their new found knowledge with their clients.



Pelicans in Meket! A stop over on a migration

Feedback from guests about their community trek:

Rita Wittmann, (Austria - June 2008), said: "We stayed at all 5 sites and it was an amazing experience that I would recommend to anybody coming to Ethiopia. The scenery is truly breathtaking and varies every day with stunning views from every site. We would not want to miss any of the sites! During the trekking we saw lots of wildlife, amongst others hundreds of Gelada baboons and even Ethiopian wolves on Abune Yoseph! What made our experience unforgettable, however, were definitely the warm and welcoming people of the villages, the fun we had with the children and, of course, Girma, our excellent guide who made sure that we were perfectly looked after on every day of the trek.



Rita & Evelyn on Abuna Yoseph (Rita/Girma).

If the sites in Meket were amazing, Abune Yoseph was beyond expectations! The site of the new tukuls of Ad Medhane Alem with its view on Lalibela is truly stunning and so is the landscape and wildlife on this unique mountain. At the same time it was obvious how important and valuable this project is for providing sustainable income to farmers in order to ensure the conservation of this fragile afro alpine ecosystem and of the habitat of the rare Ethiopian wolf.

Congratulations for your work on this innovative project which is a perfect model for responsible tourism-programmes in Africa! Trekking in Meket and on Abune Yoseph was definitely the highlight of this trip to Ethiopia!"

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