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## Ethiopia

*Official Name: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*

LAST UPDATED: JANUARY 27, 2017

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#### Ethiopia Travel Warning

June 13, 2017

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### Quick Facts

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • <b>PASSPORT VALIDITY:</b><br>6 months    | • <b>VACCINATIONS:</b><br>Yellow fever; Polio                   |
| • <b>BLANK PASSPORT PAGES:</b><br>One page | • <b>CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR ENTRY:</b><br>3,000 USD          |
| • <b>TOURIST VISA REQUIRED:</b><br>Yes     | • <b>CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR EXIT:</b><br>200 ETB and \$3,000 |

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#### Embassies and Consulates

##### [U.S. Embassy Addis Ababa](#)

**Entoto Street****PO Box 1014****Addis Ababa, Ethiopia****Telephone:** +(251) 11 130-6000**Emergency After-Hours Telephone:** 011 130-6000**Fax:** +(251) 11 124-2435 and +(251) 11 124-2419[consacs@state.gov](mailto:consacs@state.gov)

#### Destination Description

See our [Fact Sheet on Ethiopia](#) for information on U.S.-Ethiopian relations.

### **Entry, Exit & Visa Requirements**

### **Requirements for Entry:**

- Passport
- Visa
- World Health Organization (WHO) card with yellow fever vaccination.

### **Visas:**

- Ethiopian tourist visas are available to U.S. citizens upon arrival only at Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa. Single entry tourist visas are available upon arrival and cost \$50 for one month and \$70 for 3 months validity. Business visas of up to three months validity can also be obtained at Bole International Airport upon arrival, but only if the traveler has a sponsoring organization in Ethiopia that has made prior arrangements for issuance through the Ethiopian Main Department for Immigration & Nationality in Addis Ababa. A Government of Ethiopia policy prevents travelers born in Eritrea, regardless of their current nationality, from receiving tourist visas at the airport. All visa questions should be directed to the [Embassy of Ethiopia in Washington, DC](#).

### **Ivory Jewelry:**

- Travelers transporting ivory may be detained, imprisoned, or fined and the ivory may be confiscated.

### **Electronics:**

- Laptop computers and video equipment other than for personal use must be declared upon arrival and departure.
- Some recording devices may require special customs permits. If these items are being used for work, you should contact the [Ethiopian Embassy](#) or the [Ethiopian Ministry of Communications](#) before you travel.
- The Embassy cannot assist with obtaining permits or the return of confiscated equipment.

### **Souvenirs, Antiques/artifacts:**

- See the [Ethiopian Revenue and Customs Authority](#) website. Souvenirs that are copies of antiques and religious artifacts require a proper receipt but still may be confiscated.
- Export permits processed by the Export Section of the airport customs office are required for antiques, including religious artifacts, Ethiopian crosses, and animal skins (contact the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority for permit).
- There are limits on the amount of precious stones and minerals that can be exported for personal use. Check with local authorities if in doubt.
- See our [Customs and Import Restrictions information sheet](#).

### **Wildlife Products:**

- All wildlife products transiting Ethiopia must have the appropriate permits and documentation, even if those products are from species that are not endangered and are not restricted by CITES (the Convention on Illegal Trade in Endangered Species). Ethiopia's Revenues and Customs Authority may seize any wildlife product carried by travelers who lack approved paperwork, even if the product was legally purchased in Ethiopia or another country. Other penalties may include imprisonment and fines. Please think twice

before purchasing any sort of animal product souvenirs in Africa, including objects made from horn, hide or bone.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Ethiopia. Please verify this with the Ethiopian Embassy before you travel.

Find information on [dual nationality](#), [prevention of international child abduction](#), and [customs information](#) on our websites.

### **Safety and Security**

See the [Department of State Travel Warning for Ethiopia](#). Ethiopia has been experiencing sporadic and spontaneous unrest for much of 2016, particularly in Oromia and Amhara states. Some demonstrations and marches have ended in violence. You should quickly leave the area if a demonstration is forming, and exercise caution if you're in the vicinity of any large gatherings, protests, or demonstrations.

Keep in mind that the government often curtails or limits mobile telecommunications, internet access, and social media. If this happens, you may be unable to contact family and friends or emergency services.

U.S. citizens are strongly advised to review their personal safety and security posture, to remain vigilant, and to be cautious when visiting prominent public places and landmarks while traveling in Ethiopia.

U.S. citizens should strongly consider the risk of attending or being near large public gatherings and venues where westerners gather on a routine or predictable basis. Such gatherings or venues can provide vulnerable targets for violent extremist or terrorist groups. You should avoid, if possible, using public transportation, including mini-buses, and should vary your travel times and routes. Avoid unattended baggage or packages left in any location, including in taxis.

#### **Safety Precautions:**

- Avoid demonstrations and public gatherings, as they have the potential to turn violent.
- Monitor [consular messages](#).
- Avoid travel outside of major towns, particularly along border areas (Kenya, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan).
- Avoid walking alone.
- Do not display cash and valuable personal property.
- Secure your valuables and travel documents.
- Drive with doors locked and windows closed or rolled up enough at all times to prevent theft while stopped in traffic.

**Terrorism:** Al-Qa'ida and its regional affiliate, the Somalia-based al-Shabaab, maintain a presence throughout East Africa. Current information indicates that terrorist organizations continue to plan terrorist attacks against U.S. persons and Western targets and interests in the East African region, as well as against high-profile targets within those countries that contribute troops to the African Union Mission in Somalia, to include Ethiopia.

**Border with Kenya:** Banditry and ethnic conflicts are common.

Border with Eritrea: The border is closed and remains disputed. The border area is a militarized zone where armed conflict could erupt. Banditry, the threat of kidnapping, and landmines are also present.

Border with South Sudan and Sudan (Gambella Region): Sporadic inter-ethnic clashes are common along the western border area with South Sudan. Several hundred were killed during an armed incursion by elements of South Sudan's Murle community and others in April 2016 in the Gambella Region. Tensions remain high with the possibility of further clashes. In late January and early February 2016, ethnic tensions in Gambella city and surrounding areas resulted in a number of casualties. Federal authorities have been deployed and a curfew imposed. The number of refugees has significantly increased as conflict within the Republic of South Sudan has intensified. Like

other border areas, there is a threat of landmines along Ethiopia's western boundary.

**Somali Region:** Civilians have been killed and injured in ongoing military operations against armed groups in the volatile Somali region of eastern Ethiopia and in the Ogaden and Hararge areas. Al-Shabaab maintains a presence in Somali towns near the Ethiopian border, presenting a risk of cross-border attacks targeting foreigners. There are also landmines in this region.

**Crime:** Pick-pocketing, purse snatching, theft from vehicles and other petty crimes are common in Addis Ababa. Thieves are active throughout the city all times of day and night, but particularly on Bole Road and in the Piazza, the Merkato, and other areas frequented by tourists and foreigners. Violent robberies have also occurred in this area, with victims stabbed or beaten.

See the [Department of State](#) and the [FBI](#) pages for information on scams.

**Victims of Crime:** U.S. citizen victims of sexual assault should first contact the U.S. Embassy. Report crimes to the local police at 011 111 0111 and contact the U.S. Embassy at 011 130-6000. Dial 011 111 0111 to contact the police in an emergency in Addis and throughout Ethiopia. **Remember that local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting crime.**

See our webpage on [help for U.S. victims of crime overseas](#).

We can:

- help you find appropriate medical care
- assist you in reporting a crime to the police and contact relatives or friends with your written consent
- explain the local criminal justice process in general terms and provide a list of local attorneys
- provide our information on victim compensation programs in the United States
- provide an emergency loan for repatriation to the United States and/or limited medical support in cases of destitution
- help you find accommodation and arrange flights home
- replace a stolen or lost passport

**Domestic Violence:** U.S. citizen victims of domestic violence may contact the Embassy for assistance.

**For further information:**

- Enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) (STEP) to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada, or 1-202-501-4444, from other countries from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).
- See the [State Department's travel website for Worldwide Caution](#), Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts.
- Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) .

See [traveling safely abroad](#) for travel tips.

## **Local Laws & Special Circumstances**

**State of Emergency:** On October 8, 2016 the Ethiopian government declared a State of Emergency that included measures and restrictions that may affect travelers. U.S. Citizens traveling to or within Ethiopia are advised to monitor changes to the State of Emergency.

**Criminal Penalties:** You are subject to local laws. If you violate local laws, even unknowingly, you may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Convictions for possessing, using, or trafficking in illegal drugs result in long jail sentences and heavy fines. Owning ivory is illegal, including in jewelry, and penalties may include confiscation, fines, or detention. Furthermore, some laws are also prosecutable in the United States, regardless of local law. For examples, see our website on [crimes against minors abroad](#) and the [Department of Justice](#) website.

**Photography:** It is illegal to take pictures of government buildings, military installations, police/military personnel and key infrastructure such as roads, bridges, dams, and airfields. If you are caught photographing prohibited sites, you could be fined, your photographic equipment could be confiscated, and you could be detained and/or arrested. As a general practice, it is always advisable to avoid taking pictures of individuals without their clear consent.

**U.S. - Somali Dual Nationals:** U.S.-Somali dual citizens have been detained by Ethiopian security services in Addis Ababa for extended periods without charges. You should prepare for this contingency by carrying copies of all important documents and contact information for the U.S. Embassy.

**Arrest Notification:** If you are arrested or detained, ask police or prison officials to notify the U.S. Embassy immediately. See our [webpage](#) for further information.

**Phone Service:** Cellular phones are the norm, as other telephone service is unreliable and landlines are nearly non-existent. It may be possible to purchase a SIM card locally and use a U.S.-compatible cell phone. As noted, cell phone access may be cut off without warning.

**Currency:** The Ethiopian Birr (ETB) is the currency of Ethiopia and, with the exception of international hotel bills, payment for commercial transactions in any other currency is illegal. Credit cards are accepted at only a very few outlets in Addis Ababa

**Ethiopian Refugee Camps:** All access must be preapproved by the UNHCR and Ethiopian government. You may be detained and deported if you attempt to gain access without proper permissions.

**Calendar:** The Julian calendar is used in Orthodox Christian areas in the highlands, and some Ethiopians set their clocks differently to standard practice elsewhere, resulting in significant time differences. Double check bookings and appointments to avoid confusion.

**Faith-Based Travelers:** See our following webpages for details:

- [Faith-Based Travel Information](#)
- [International Religious Freedom Report – see country report on Ethiopia](#)
- [Human Rights Report – see country report on Ethiopia](#)
- [Hajj Fact Sheet for Travelers](#)
- [Best Practices for Volunteering Abroad](#)

**LGBTI Travelers:** Consensual same-sex sexual activity between adults is illegal and punishable by imprisonment under the law. There are some reports of violence against LGBTI individuals; reporting is limited due to fear of retribution, discrimination, or stigmatization. There is no law prohibiting discrimination against LGBTI persons. Ethiopians do not identify themselves as LGBTI due to severe societal stigma and the illegality of consensual same-sex sexual activity between adults.

Activists in the LGBTI community in Ethiopia have stated that they have been followed and at times fear for their safety. There have been periodic detentions and interrogations of some LGBTI persons, and alleged physical abuse. Outside the major international hotels, same-sex couples may be unable to share a room. See our [LGBTI Travel Information page](#) and section 6 of our [Human Rights Report](#) for further details.

**Travelers Who Require Accessibility Assistance:** See The [Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development](#) guidebook with information on accessible hotel accommodations and transportation (including the new Addis Ababa metro). Persons with disabilities have limited access to transportation, communication, accommodations, and public buildings. There are few sidewalks and no curb-cuts, and most buildings lack functioning elevators. Landlords are required to give persons with disabilities preference for ground floor apartments.

**Students:** See our [Students Abroad](#) page and [FBI travel tips](#)

**Women Travelers:** Domestic violence, including spousal abuse, is a pervasive social problem. Domestic violence and rape cases often are delayed significantly and given low priority. Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is illegal, but the prohibition is not actively enforced. Many women and girls have undergone FGM/C. It is much less common in urban areas.

See our travel tips for [Women Travelers](#).

**Earthquakes:** Ethiopia is located in an active seismic zone.

## Health

Consult the [CDC website for Ethiopia](#) prior to travel.

Health facilities are very limited and are adequate only for stabilization and emergency care. There is a shortage of physicians and other qualified medical personnel. Emergency, ambulance services, and psychiatric services are also limited. Medications are in short supply.

**Medication:** Carry prescription medication in original packaging, along with your doctor's prescription. If the quantity of drugs exceeds that which would be expected for personal use, a permit from the Ministry of Health is required.

**You are responsible for all medical costs.** U.S. Medicare does not cover you overseas.

All care providers, both public and private, require payment or a cash deposit in Ethiopian birr before treatment is performed.

**Altitude:** Altitude may cause problems for travelers in/transiting Ethiopia (Addis Ababa is located more than 7,000 feet above sea level), particularly those who suffer from respiratory or heart conditions. Travelers may experience shortness of breath, fatigue, nausea, headaches, and sleep problems.

The following diseases are prevalent:

[diarrheal diseases](#)  
[cholera](#)  
[malaria](#)  
[rabies](#)  
[schistosomiasis](#)

**Vaccinations:** All travelers should be up-to-date on [vaccinations recommended](#) by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. Most travelers should get Typhoid and Hepatitis A vaccinations because you can contract these diseases by consuming contaminated food or water. A pre-exposure Rabies vaccination series is recommended for prolonged stays and shorter stays for adventure travelers, hikers, cyclists and cavers. Bites or scratches from dogs, bats, or other terrestrial mammals should be taken seriously and post-exposure prophylaxis sought even in those already immunized. Some travelers will need Yellow Fever, Meningitis, Hepatitis B vaccination and Malaria chemoprophylaxis. See the [CDC website for Ethiopia](#) for more information.

**Medical Insurance:** If your health insurance plan does not provide coverage overseas, we strongly recommend [supplemental medical insurance and medical evacuation plans](#).

#### **Further health information:**

- [World Health Organization](#)
- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

#### **Travel & Transportation**

**Road Conditions and Safety:** Traffic accidents occur regularly in Addis Ababa and throughout the country and are sometimes fatal. Roads are ill maintained, inadequately marked, and poorly lit. Excessive speed, erratic driving habits, pedestrians, stray animals, and lack of vehicle maintenance pose other hazards. Travel with other vehicles outside of cities during daylight hours only, due to the threat of roadside bandits and be sure to carry additional fuel, a spare tire, and provisions. Professional roadside assistance service is not available.

**Traffic Laws:** You will need an Ethiopian driver's license to drive in Ethiopia. The U.S. Embassy can assist with notarizing the [affidavit](#) required to obtain a driver's license. Use of cell phones while driving is prohibited. Use of seat belts is required. It is illegal to give money to beggars who approach vehicles stopped in traffic.

**Accidents:** In the event of an automobile accident, remain inside the vehicle and wait for police. It is illegal to move your vehicle before a police officer arrives. If a hostile mob forms or you feel your safety is in danger, however, leave the scene and proceed directly to the nearest police station to report the incident.

**Public Transportation:** Avoid all travel by public transportation, and hire private transport from a reliable source. Any form of public transportation, except for the light rail system in Addis Ababa, is unregulated, unreliable, and unsafe. Buses are in poor mechanical condition and are often filled well beyond capacity.

While taxis are available in Ethiopia, most do not meet U.S. safety standards. In Addis Ababa, green and yellow metered taxis are generally newer and in better condition than other taxis.

Please refer to our [Road Safety page](#) for more information. Also, we suggest that you visit the website of Ethiopia's [national tourist office](#) .

**Aviation Safety Oversight:** The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the government of Ethiopia's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Ethiopia's air carrier operations. Further information may be found on the [FAA's safety assessment page](#) .

The Ethiopian government has closed air routes that cross the border with Eritrea and has referred to the border airspace as a "no-fly zone."

General aviation flights transiting Ethiopian airspace must file a flight plan with the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority. Flights originating outside of Ethiopia are generally authorized to land only in Addis Ababa or Dire Dawa because those are the only airports with permanent customs and immigration staff. For more information, consult the [Ethiopian Civil Aviation Administration](#).

[Please see the Fact Sheet for this country.](#)

## Assistance for U.S. Citizens

U.S. Embassy Addis Ababa  
**Entoto Street**  
**PO Box 1014**  
**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

- Telephone  
+(251) 11 130-6000
- Emergency After-Hours  
Telephone  
011 130-6000
- Fax  
+(251) 11 124-2435 and  
+(251) 11 124-2419
- Email  
[consacs@state.gov](mailto:consacs@state.gov)
- [U.S. Embassy Addis  
Ababa](#)



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