Ethiopia

LEGENDARY LAND OF CHURCHES
AND CULTURES

June 12 to 30, 2020

a program of the stanford alumni association
Ethiopia is both breathtaking and extraordinary, a country perched on a high plateau in a region known as the Horn of Africa. Its independence and regional role in Africa has endured for more than 2,000 years. A country of surprising contrasts, it has held fast to its autonomy and its cultural, religious and artistic traditions. Ethiopia is home to an indigenous Christian church centered in Lalibela, where churches were carved out of red volcanic rock some seven centuries ago. Its rich history is matched by amazing natural wonders, such as the Tis Isat Falls and the Simien Mountains, and the indigenous peoples who thrive to this day in southern Ethiopia’s Omo Valley. Dr. Rachael Hill, PhD ’19, an expert on the social and cultural history of the central and northern highland regions of Ethiopia, will provide us with penetrating insights. Join the adventure!

BRETT S. THOMPSON, ’83, DIRECTOR, STANFORD TRAVEL/STUDY

Highlights

ADMIRE the Royal Enclosure in Gondar, surrounded by high stone walls and containing five castles linked by tunnels and raised walkways.

WATCH for an array of wildlife—including the Gelada baboon and the Simien fox—in the scenic Simien Mountains National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

EXPLORE the amazing 13th-century rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, carved below ground from the red lava soil.

DISCOVER the vibrant cultures of several of the Omo Valley communities, taking in their intricate face painting, jewelry, clothing, dances and customs.
Faculty Leader

RACHAEL HILL, PHD ’19, a visiting assistant professor at San Francisco State University and former graduate student instructor at Stanford, specializes in the social and cultural history of health and medicine in Ethiopia and conducts research on the social etiology of disease and indigenous African therapeutic practices. Her interest in Ethiopia was sparked by its rich literary tradition, its indigenous Christianity and its avid support of African liberation. “After studying the Amharic language at Addis Ababa University and living and working in the country for a year and a half,” she recalls, “I have returned to Ethiopia every year and visited various regions of the country. I continue to be impressed by its cultural and ecological diversity and find that there’s always something new to learn about a region as complex and varied as Ethiopia.” During our program she’ll discuss such topics as the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Indian Ocean trade during the Axumite Empire era and the impact of Ethiopia’s current politics on ethnic conflicts.

— Visiting assistant professor, 2019; adjunct professor, 2018—San Francisco State University
— Managing co-editor, Ex Post Facto, history student journal, San Francisco State University, 2010
— Recipient: Excellence in First-Time Teaching as a TA, Stanford University, 2012; Joseph Mullin Prize in History Writing, San Francisco State University, 2011
— BA, 2008, and MA, 2011—both in history, San Francisco State University
— PhD, 2019, African history, Stanford University

“Nothing beats a Stanford Travel/Study program. The lecturers are really first-rate and so accessible throughout the trip. You very soon have new friends in academia.”

STANFORD TRAVELER
Itinerary

FRIDAY TO SUNDAY, JUNE 12 TO 14
DEPART U.S. / ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
Depart the U.S. on an overnight flight to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia’s largest city and the third-highest capital in the world at an elevation of 8,000 feet above sea level. Upon arrival on Saturday evening, transfer to our hotel. On Sunday afternoon, enjoy a brief orientation tour that includes a visit to the Holy Trinity Cathedral, the country’s largest Orthodox church, and a stop at nearby Africa Hall, the headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. This evening gather for dinner at a local restaurant. HYATT REGENCY HOTEL (B,L,D)

MONDAY, JUNE 15
ADDIS ABABA
In this ancient capital, tall office buildings, elegant villas and marble theaters vie for our attention alongside traditional homes formed of “wattle and daub,” a 6,000-year-old building method in which lattices of wooden strips are held together with clay, sand, animal dung and straw. Begin the day going to the summit of 10,500-foot Mt. Entoto, which offers spectacular views of Addis Ababa in all directions. Continue to the Maryam Church and the remains of Emperor Menelik II’s palace. Stop at Entoto Beth Artisan, a social enterprise dedicated to providing fair-wage employment to local women. After lunch, visit the National Museum and explore the Mercato, Addis Ababa’s biggest shopping area, where grain, spices, clothing, ironware and baskets are sold. Enjoy a welcome reception and dinner this evening. HYATT REGENCY HOTEL (B,L,D)

TUESDAY, JUNE 16
ADDIS ABABA / BAHIR DAR
This morning fly to Bahir Dar, a town located at the southern shore of Lake Tana, the largest lake in Ethiopia and source of the Blue Nile. This area is the traditional homeland of the Christian Amhara people, who make up approximately one-third of Ethiopia’s population. During a boat cruise around Lake Tana, discover the area’s historic churches and island monasteries, including Ura Kidane Mehret with its colorful frescoes of biblical scenes. Enjoy an excursion to Tis Isat (“Blue Nile” from the Amharic) Falls, where the Blue Nile plunges over a 150-foot-high rock face. Learn about the Woito people who live by the lake and pay a visit to one of their lakeside communities. KURIFTU RESORT AND SPA (B,L,D)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17
BAHIR DAR / GONDAR
Today drive to Gondar, founded in 1635 by Emperor Fasilidas. Gondar is home to Moorish- and Portuguese-style castles and imperial buildings that are some of Ethiopia’s most fascinating structures. Visit the Royal Enclosure, where high stone walls surround five castles and a complex of connecting tunnels and raised walkways, and Fasilidas’ castle, a mid-17th-century melange of Portuguese, Axumite and Indian influences. Stop at the small Debre Berhan Selassie Church, perhaps the country’s most famous house of worship whose ceiling is covered with the winged heads of 80 Ethiopian cherubs. At day’s end, meet with the director of Yenege Tesfa (Hope for Tomorrow), an organization that works to provide the street children of Gondar with shelter and education. GOHA HOTEL (B,L,D)

THURSDAY, JUNE 18
GONDAR / SIMIEN MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK / GONDAR
Depart in the early morning for the spectacular Simien Mountains, whose highest peak stands at 15,157 feet. Simien Mountains National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is home to a large variety of wildlife, including the Gelada baboon and the Simien fox. Enjoy a scenic walk along the mountain ridge and a lovely picnic lunch. GOHA HOTEL (B,L,D)

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, JUNE 19 & 20
GONDAR / AXUM
This morning fly to Axum, Ethiopia’s oldest city, the capital of the far-reaching Axumite Kingdom that dominated the vital crossroads of Africa and Asia for almost 1,000 years. During our two days here, attend a religious ceremony at the Church of St. Mary of Zion, where according to legend, the Ark of the Covenant resides. View the city’s famous obelisks and monolithic stelae, and tour the Axum Museum with its fine display of inscribed tablets. Just outside of town, visit King Ezana’s inscription (330 to 350 C.E.); the inscription is Ethiopia’s “Rosetta Stone,” a pillar inscribed in Sabean, Ge’ez and Greek. Then explore the nearby tombs of King Kaleb and Gebre Meskel, noted for the refined precision of the joints between the stones. SABEAN HOTEL (B,L,D—BOTH DAYS)
SUNDAY & MONDAY, JUNE 21 & 22
AXUM / LALIBELA
Fly to Lalibela, set among wild, craggy mountains and vast rocky escarpments in the mountains of Lasta at an altitude of 7,000 feet. The 12th-century king, Lalibela, gathered together the world’s greatest craftsmen and artisans to carve a number of churches below ground level, connected by a tangled maze of tunnels and passages. In the eastern cluster of churches, visit Bet Medhane Alem, the largest monolithic rock-hewn church in the world, and Bet Golgotta with seven life-sized reliefs of saints carved into its walls. The western churches were excavated from a vertical rock face, incorporating existing caves or cracks in the rocks. Explore Bet Gebriel-Rufael, surrounded by a 15-foot-deep rock trench; Bet Emmanuel, considered to be the finest and most precisely hewn church in the world, and Bet Giorgis, carved in the shape of a symmetrical cruciform tower.

TUESDAY, JUNE 23
LALIBELA / ADDIS ABABA / AWASA
Fly back to Addis Ababa and travel by four-wheel-drive vehicles to Awasa in the southwestern part of the country. En route, stop at Melka Kunture, an important Paleolithic site extending more than three miles on both sides of the Awash River with numerous sites dating back some 1.7 million years ago. Enjoy a sweeping view of Lake Ziway, one of the five lakes of the Great Rift Valley, a deep fissure that extends for more than 3,700 miles—the string of five lakes is the most visible manifestation of these subterranean tectonic forces. Stop at the town of Shashemene, the unofficial Rastafari capital of Africa. Arrive in the early evening at Awasa, capital of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region. HAILE RESORT – AWASA (B,L,D)

THURSDAY, JUNE 25
ARBA MINCH
This morning we visit the tribes of the southern Omo region. Some tribes number tens of thousands, others no more than 500, each one culturally unique. These culturally diverse tribes live with little influence from the outside world. This morning we visit the Dorze people, whose territory is high in the Guge Mountains and consists of nine villages. The Omotic Dorze are famous for their beehive-shaped huts constructed with vertical hardwood poles and woven bamboo, and are widely recognized as cotton weavers. Our visit concludes with a performance of their traditional dance. After lunch enjoy a boat trip on Lake Chamo, possibly sighting some of the hundreds of hippos that emerge in the morning and afternoon to graze along the grassy shores. Birders can keep an eye out for kingfishers and African fish eagles, just two of the lake’s many bird species. HAILE RESORT – ARBA MINCH (B,L,D)

FRIDAY, JUNE 26
ARBA MINCH / KONSO / TURMI
Drive to Turmi this morning, stopping at Konso for a specially arranged visit at the home of Kala Gezahegn, chief of the clan of the Konso people, whose population is around 300,000 and who live in this isolated region of basalt hills and hard, rocky slopes. After lunch, visit the Tsemay who dwell in the semi-arid region of the Omo Valley. The agro-pastoralist Tsemay use both livestock herding and agriculture to survive. Like the Hamar, Tsemay boys have to successfully complete a bull jumping event, making it across multiple bulls four times without falling, in order to become a man. End the day at a traditional Hamar village. The 15,000 to 20,000 members of the Hamar make their living as cattle herders and farmers on public land that is free for cultivation and grazing. BUSKA LODGE (B,L,D)

SATURDAY, JUNE 27
TURMI / OMORATE
This morning travel to Omorate to visit the semi-nomadic pastoral Dassanech people who live on the banks of the Omo River. Board a dugout canoe to cross the river
to visit one of their villages. After lunch visit a village inhabited by the Karo, a small tribe with an estimated population of between 1,000 and 2,000 who live along the east banks of the Omo River in conical huts. Men of high status show their position by wearing a clay headpiece with an ostrich feather; a man’s number of wives is indicated by the number of earrings worn in one of his ears.

BUSKA LODGE (B.L.D)

SUNDAY, JUNE 28
TURMI / JINKA
Visit the villages of the Bena people, approximately 45,000 in number, who are thought to have originated from the Hamar tribe centuries ago. The Bena practice ritual dancing and singing, with the men often dressing up their hair with a colorful clay cap decorated with feathers. Women wear beads in their hair which is held together with butter. Both the men and women wear long garments and paint their bodies with white chalk. The Bena look very similar to the Hamar and are often called the Hamar-Bena. Continue to Jinka, then visit the village of Yetnebarsh, home of the hospitable Ari people, to sample areke, their liquor made from sorghum, garlic and maize.

ECO-OMO LODGE (B.L.D)

MONDAY, JUNE 29
JINKA / ADDIS ABABA
This morning, drive to Mago National Park to visit with the Mursi, a pastoralist ethnic tribe. The Mursi, who call themselves Mun and number less than 10,000, live in an area designated a UNESCO World Heritage site. Often described as nomads, they are in fact transhumant (i.e., people who tend migrating animals). During the dry season they live mainly along the banks of the Omo River. When the rains come they return to the grasslands east of the river to live close to their cattle and enjoy the fresh milk. They have a rich oral tradition that preserves their history, philosophical knowledge and moral stories. After lunch, transfer to the airport for a flight back to Addis Ababa. This evening enjoy our farewell reception and dinner at an art gallery/restaurant.

HYATT REGENCY HOTEL (B.L.D)

TUESDAY, JUNE 30
ADDIS ABABA
Depart on flights to the U.S., arriving home the same day. (B.L)
DATES
June 12 to 30, 2020 (19 days)

SIZE
This program can accommodate 24 participants. Single accommodations are extremely limited; please call for availability.

COST*
$11,795 per person, double occupancy
$12,995 per person, single occupancy
*Stanford Alumni Association nonmembers add $300 per person

INCLUDED
17 nights of deluxe hotel accommodations  ▪ 16 breakfasts, 16 lunches and 16 dinners ▪ Welcome and farewell receptions ▪ Gratuities to guides and drivers for all group activities ▪ All tours and excursions as described in the itinerary  ▪  Internal flights: Addis Ababa/Bahir Dar, Gondar/Axum, Axum/Lalibela, Lalibela/Addis Ababa, Jinka/Addis Ababa ▪ Transfers and baggage handling on program arrival and departure days ▪ Minimal medical, accident and evacuation insurance ▪ Educational program with lecture series and pre-departure materials, including recommended reading list, a selected book, map and travel information ▪ Services of our professional tour manager to assist you throughout the program

NOT INCLUDED
International and U.S. domestic airfare ▪ Passport and visa fees ▪ Immunization costs ▪ Meals and beverages other than those specified as included ▪ Independent and private transfers ▪ Trip-cancellation/interruption and baggage insurance ▪ Excess-baggage charges ▪ Personal items such as internet access, telephone and fax calls, laundry and gratuities for nongroup services

AIR ARRANGEMENTS
You are responsible for booking and purchasing airfare to the start location and from the end location of the program. These air purchases are NOT included in the program cost. To assist you in making these independent arrangements, we will send you details with your confirmation materials on when to arrive and depart.

WHAT TO EXPECT
We consider this to be a physically demanding, strenuous program, suitable only for travelers in excellent health and with greater-than-average stamina. Ethiopia’s tourism industry outside the major cities is still developing, thus patience with local services and standards will greatly improve one’s enjoyment of the trip. Most of the walking takes place at ancient sites, where paths can be rocky and uneven. In some instances, stairs carved out of rock do not have handrails. Our journey requires several hours of travel by motor coach, the longest drives being up to five and a half hours. Roads may be winding, bumpy and unpaved, and travel may be slow. Accommodations used throughout our program are the best available, but may not meet some travelers’ expectations of comfort. Travelers should be prepared to handle their own luggage in those airports where porters are not permitted. In many ways, the challenges of this program are part of the learning experience. We expect that participants will be a self-selecting group whose interest in the places we visit outweighs the need for creature comforts. We welcome travelers 15 years of age and older on this program.

Deposit & Final Payment
A $1,000-per-person deposit is required to reserve space for this program. Sign up online at alumni.stanford.edu/trip?ethiopia2020 or call Travel/Study at (650) 725-1093. Final payment is due 120 days prior to departure. As a condition of participation, all confirmed participants are required to sign a Release of Liability.

Cancellations & Refunds
Deposits and any payments are refundable, less a $500-per-person cancellation fee, until 120 days prior to departure. After that date, refunds can be made only if the program is sold out and your place(s) can be resold, in which case a $1,000-per-person cancellation fee will apply.

Insurance
Stanford Travel/Study provides all travelers who are U.S. or Canadian citizens with minimal medical, accident and evacuation coverage under our group-travel insurance policy. Our group policy is intended to provide minimal levels of protection while you are traveling on this program. You may choose to subscribe to optional trip-cancellation and baggage insurance. Information will be provided to travelers with their welcome materials. The product offered includes special benefits if you purchase your policy within 14 days of written confirmation of your participation on the trip.

Eligibility
We encourage membership in the Stanford Alumni Association as the program cost for nonmembers is $300 more than the members’ price. A person traveling as a paid guest of a current member will not be charged the nonmember fee. To purchase a membership, visit alumni.stanford.edu/goto/membership or call (650) 725-0692.

Responsibility
The Stanford Alumni Association, Stanford University and our operators act only as agents for the passenger with respect to transportation and exercise every care possible in doing so. However, we can assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity in connection with the service of any automobile, motor coach, launch or any other conveyance used in carrying out this program or for the acts or defaults of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the program. We cannot accept any responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, force majeure or other causes beyond our control. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger as tour rates provide arrangements only for the time stated. We reserve the right to make such alterations to this published itinerary as may be deemed necessary. The right is reserved to cancel any program prior to departure in which case the entire payment will be refunded without further obligation on our part. The right is also reserved to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the program. No refund will be made for an unused portion of any tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. Baggage is carried at the owner’s risk entirely. The airlines concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission or event during the time that passengers are not on board their plane or conveyance. Neither the Stanford Alumni Association, Stanford University nor our operators accept liability for any carrier’s cancellation penalty incurred by the purchase of a nonrefundable ticket in connection with the tour. Program price is based on rates in effect in November 2019 and is subject to change without notice to reflect fluctuations in exchange rates, tariffs or fuel charges.
"The educational experience is what makes Stanford Travel/Study trips so wonderful."

MARTA MACKENZIE, ’59, KINGDOM OF MOROCCO, 2018