Exploring Ethiopia
May 19 – June 2, 2014

Round trip flight to Ethiopia, all permits, food and in-country travel, thirteen nights in hotels, cabins and homes, five days of guided trekking $2390

Trip Overview

Nearly half of the world’s population cooks over an open wood or biomass fire. Illnesses related to this cook smoke will kill four million people this year—more than the death toll of HIV/AIDS and malaria combined. The smoke and deforestation are Africa’s primary contribution to climate change, and gathering the wood puts thousands of women at risk for sexual assault. But there is a clear solution to these problems: clean burning cookstoves. Planned in conjunction with Project Gaia, Inc.—a non-profit dedicated to the use of ethanol cook stoves and community empowering micro-distilleries—this trip provides a rare, direct experience with the impacts of fuel and integrated aid work in Ethiopia.

In preparation for our expedition, we will spend the 2014 spring semester exploring the chemistry of fuel emissions, sustainable models of foreign aid, the impact of alternative fuel on deforestation and temperature change, and gender issues in rural Africa. Our experience will be enriched by meeting women on Mount Entoto who make their living carrying firewood, encountering both pristine beauty and deforestation during week long trek in the Bale Mountains, and engaging with the experts of Project Gaia’s Ethiopian team.

General Schedule

On May 19th we will depart from Washington DC to arrive in Addis Ababa the next morning. A guest house will be our base of operations for the next two days as we explore the capital city and climb Mount Entoto with Project Gaia’s staff. On the 22nd, we will travel by bus or van to Dodola for our five night trek between cabins in the Bale Mountains. Leaving the Bale Mountains for Sekoru, we will take a break at Lake Langano the night of May 28th. After a homestay near Sekoru’s micro-distillery, we will return to the capital for a final chance to explore the city and discuss our experiences before our flight on June 2.

Spring Semester

The group will meet three times a month during the spring semester leading up to our departure. Each of these discussion based meetings will have a unique theme and reading on a different issue. A lecture by faculty, presentation by Project Gaia staff, or participant research will be followed by a group dialogue. Meetings will give our trip context, generate group understanding for each focus, and set the course for the experience.

From the 15,000 foot summit of Ras Dejen in the Simien Mountains to the Afar Depression at 410 feet below sea level, Ethiopia is a country of extremes. This expedition will travel between the chaos of Addis Ababa (A) and the remote Bale Mountains (B), the placidity of Lake Langano and the promise of Sekoru’s new ethanol micro-distillery, or EMD (C).
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Transportation
The price of this trip includes a round trip flight to Ethiopia and all domestic travel. The group will depart from Washington Dulles International airport the evening of May 19th to arrive in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia on May 20th. Most transportation in-country will be provided by either a private, chartered van with a trusted driver, or by foot for the Bale Mountain trekking segment. On June 2nd the group will depart Addis Ababa to return to Washington DC.

Our special group rate ensures that this is the lowest price available. If you’re interested in continuing your travels beyond June 2nd or otherwise need to revise your plans we can reimburse you for your flight. Please contact us as soon as possible if you desire to change your flight itinerary. A valid passport expiring no sooner than January of 2015 is required for participation.

Preparation
Much of our group preparation will be academic, but it is important to understand the physical requirements as well. Participants should be able to hike 4-12 miles a day at 9000 feet. Three to five days a week of walking, running or trekking with a thirty pound pack will help prepare you for the reduced oxygen—anything that elevates your heartbeat will help. A list of required immunizations will be available in January.

Accommodations/ Meals
All meals and housing for the duration of this expedition are included in the price. Accommodation will range from apartments and hotels in the capital city to rustic shelters and homestays in rural Ethiopia. Our meals will consist of a mixture of traditional Ethiopian cuisine and typical camp food. Any snacks, drinks, or extras you desire while in Addis Ababa or other cities are not included in the price.

Weather
May is the beginning of Ethiopia’s rainy season, so we can expect to see a mix of sun and rain. Temperatures in the mountains can drop as low as 30-40 at night, and are typically in the 50’s during the day.