



Ethiopian News

December 2017

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Cooperation on The Nile, Essential for Mutual Benefits.....	2
12 th Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Day celebrated colourfully in London.....	4
Ethiopia's MFA top in Africa for Digital Diplomacy.....	7
IMF Chief Christine Lagarde makes historic visit to Ethiopia.....	8
Ethiopia wins UN Award for excellence in promoting investment.....	10
Harar named National Geographic's best place to visit in 2018.....	13
All Aboard! Addis-Djibouti railway begins commercial operations.....	14
Ethiopian Airlines makes historic all-female crew flight.....	15
Where to go in January for culture.....	18
In the hands of farmers: Ethiopia's push to restore degraded lands.....	20

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Goodbye 2017... Hello 2018!

Best wishes for a prosperous and happy New Year





Editorial

Cooperation on The Nile, Essential for Mutual Benefits



📷 Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi (L), Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir (C) and Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn join hands during a meeting in the Sudanese capital Khartoum in 2015.

For more than two decades, the Ethiopian government has been striving to achieve the socio-economic transformation of the country. The vision to ensure all-inclusive growth and to attain lower middle-income status by 2025 continues to be anchored on executing policies aimed at the overall eradication of poverty through comprehensive development. This vision can also be realized through the utilization of Ethiopia's natural resources, which include the water resources of the Eastern Nile Basin.

The Nile represents the country's most important river basin, with its water resources comprising 70% of its annual surface water discharge. The Nile Basin hosts over 40% of the country's population, covering over a third of Ethiopia's territory. The country experiences some of the highest levels of energy poverty in the world; 65 million people in

Ethiopia do not have access to electricity. So the exploitation of this hydropower potential is not only a priority but an imperative. The construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) in the Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State aims to address these levels of domestic energy poverty, whilst addressing increasing energy demands, which have been rising by 32% annually since 2015.

Though the need to eradicate poverty and backwardness has necessitated the construction of the GERD, its location along a transboundary river has meant the project also represents an integrative opportunity within the region. In its decision to launch the project, the Ethiopian government engaged with countries downstream from the dam, namely Sudan and Egypt, to assure them of the many benefits the GERD will register across the Basin. It is in this spirit that the Ethiopian

Government, in the absence of any legal obligation or customary practice within the Basin, initiated the establishment of an International Panel of Experts (IPoE) to:

“review the design documents of the GERD, facilitate information sharing, support greater understanding of the benefits and costs accrued to the three countries and assess impacts, if any, of the GERD on downstream countries to build trust and confidence among all parties”.

The IPoE, which was comprised of 10 impartial experts (two from each of the three Eastern Nile riparian countries and four international experts) adopted its final report unanimously, submitting their findings to the Governments of Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt in 2013. The report concluded that the project is being constructed in line with internationally accepted design criteria and standards; noted the GERD’s benefits to all three countries; and recommended that additional hydrological modelling and transboundary environmental and social impact studies be made. The governments of Ethiopia and Sudan accepted the findings of the report and engaged the Egyptian government in discussions to follow up on the report’s recommendations to enhance confidence and build greater trust within the Basin. Subsequently, the three countries agreed to move forward with the two recommended studies by selecting two international consultancy companies - France’s BRL and Artelia - which have been mandated to undertake the work as lead- and sub-consultants respectively. The three countries signed a contract document with the consultant also known as the “Consultancy Services Agreement”, and agreed and signed between the three countries, BRL and Artelia in September 2016.

Since these agreements, numerous follow-up meetings involving the tripartite national committee (TNC) and at times the relevant ministers of the three countries, have participated in these meetings that have been held alternatively in Addis Ababa, Khartoum and Cairo. At the 16th and 17th edition of these meetings held in Addis Ababa and Cairo respectively, the Water and Irrigation ministers of the three countries discussed the draft inception report submitted by the international consultants. *Ethiopia and Sudan proposed amendments to the report which would harmonise it with the original contract document.*

This is a common practice in any project life-cycle, but unfortunately, the Egyptian government opposed these amendments and opted to refer the issue to higher officials, but the Ministers of Water still have the capacity to resolve their differences.

Ethiopia and Sudan have repeatedly demonstrated their commitment to the Declaration of Principles (DOP) agreed between the three countries in Khartoum in 2015. The current Egyptian government’s opposition to the proposal “to instruct the Consultant to amend and adjust the draft inception report in line with the Contract Document signed between the TNC and the Consultant” represents a departure, on its part, from its previous commitments to the DOP, in particular, and from the cooperative process surrounding the GERD, in general. Thus, the Egyptian government’s position on the draft inception report contradicts the contract document the three countries signed with the Consultants and is contrary to the principle of cooperating in good faith.

Regrettably, following this impasse in the talks, the Egyptian government has publicly announced that the technical track has failed, misleading the international community. This unhelpful escalation of talks will not help in any way to expedite the process and risks spoiling the cooperative process. Moreover, the Ethiopian side has a firm belief that the differences prevailing among the three parties can still be solved through *dialogue and negotiation between the concerned parties in line with the principles of the Declaration*. The problem is not beyond the Ministers’ capacity to solve, and restarting the negotiation is and should be the only way out.

To sum up, the Ethiopian government is constructing the GERD as a win-win project, in line with its longstanding principles of utilising Nile water resources in an equitable and reasonable manner. As a responsible, peace-loving nation, Ethiopia remains committed to not causing significant harm in its development of the Nile waters and has demonstrated throughout the construction of the GERD its adherence to generally-accepted principles of international water law and cooperation. Thus, it is incumbent upon Egypt to return to the tripartite process to conclude negotiations for the benefit of the familial people of the Eastern Nile Basin.

ETHIOPIA IN THE UK

Message from the Ambassador



We are immensely proud that Ethio-British diplomatic relations have existed for over 115 years. Association between our two countries long pre-dates this period.

Building on this history, in 2018 the Embassy will seek to strengthen the excellent relations Ethiopia and the United Kingdom continue to enjoy in all domains – diplomatic, political, economic, social, cultural and educational.

Ethiopia deeply appreciates the extensive contribution the people and government of the United Kingdom have made, and continue to make, to Ethiopia's development endeavours.

Ethiopia has undergone a massive transformation in recent years, broadening the political landscape and further embedding the multi-party political system by involving opposition parties more fully in the political process.

Vast economic growth has helped reduce poverty to 20% in last 15-20 years. The past year has allowed us to sustain our continued growth rate, making

Ethiopia one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. And the economy will continue to grow as more industrial parks are built and hundreds of thousands of additional jobs are created. The recent full commencement of services on the Addis-Djibouti Railway will enhance the flow of foreign direct investment into Ethiopia and facilitate exports. These developments will further transform the social fabric of our society and encourage peaceful coexistence both within Ethiopia and beyond.

At this New Year, my wife, Abebetche Zeleke Aweke, and all Embassy staff, join me in wishing the people and government of the United Kingdom our heartfelt best wishes for the year ahead.

12th Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Day celebrated colourfully in London

Wood-panelled and bedecked with Ethiopia's tri-colour, the Porchester Hall in Bayswater, London, was the scene for celebrations of the 12th annual Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Day (#NNPDay2017).



Over 350 Ethiopians representing many of the ethno-linguistic groups in the country, dressed in traditional outfits, and braved snow and sleet on 10th December to attend the Embassy-organised event.

Picking up on the theme of the day, "**Buoyed up by our constitution, our unity in diversity propels our Renaissance**", H.E. Ambassador Hailemichael Abera (Ph.D) reminded invited guests of the historic importance of the 1995 Constitution which

had, for the first time in the country's long history, enshrined in law the equality of the peoples of Ethiopia, guaranteeing their freedom through democracy and their right to self-administration through the establishment of the federal system.



H.E. Ambassador Hailemichael Aberra Afework addressing guests

“The fruits of the Constitution,” the Ambassador said, “are today being reaped in the educational sector where the establishment of new schools and universities has seen the enrolment of over a third of the country's population in formal and informal education.” He also noted the significant gains made in rural development, with millions of farmers benefiting from access to sustainable inputs and climate-resilient agricultural techniques, primary healthcare and market opportunities, made possible through government investments in infrastructure development.

“Our differences and diversity are beautiful and a source of strength”

The Ambassador also announced recent breakthroughs achieved in ongoing negotiations between the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and a plethora of legally registered opposition parties on reforms to the electoral system aimed at enhancing democratisation in the country by increasing the chances of opposition parties gaining seats. The Ambassador concluded by reaffirming to the

audience that the country's “differences and diversity are beautiful and a source of strength”.



Deputy Head of Mission, Mr Ababi Demissie

The Deputy Head of Mission, Ababi Demissie, gave a presentation on the relevance of the celebrations to members of the Ethiopian diaspora and on the raft of measures the Government is deploying to encourage members of the diaspora to contribute to the ongoing development of their motherland. He called on diaspora communities across the UK to engage in the Ethiopian renaissance through investments on the ground, remittances, housing, image-building and the transfer of technology and knowledge. He emphasised the constructive role the diaspora should play in the country's renaissance, urging both young and old to engage and contribute.



The evening concluded with a presentation from the Abeba Foundation, a diaspora youth association, and with traditional music and dancing.

Deputy Head of Mission visits Southampton University

Deputy Head of Mission, Mr Ababi Demissie, visited the University of Southampton on 20th December where he presented an overview of Ethiopia and sectors that require strategic partnerships with the university.



This meeting will pave way for further discussions, in the new year, to explore agreed areas of collaboration between the university and universities and institutions in Ethiopia.

The University of Southampton is ranked among the top 1% of universities worldwide and is a research-led founding member of the prestigious Russell Group.

Some of the faculties already have links with Addis Ababa University, and with Gondar and Jimma Universities.

Life-changing Manchester University scholarship available to Ethiopian students

Manchester University's life-changing Equity and Merit Scholarships are now open to exceptional students from Ethiopia.

The University's Chancellor, Lemn Sissay, a poet of Ethiopian heritage, launched the scholarship at a special ceremony at the British Embassy in Addis Ababa on 20th December 2017.



He said: "I am very happy that during my time as the University's Chancellor the Equity and Merit Scholarships have been extended to Ethiopia, a country that I know well and love. I have seen first-hand what a difference these scholarships make to people."

The Equity and Merit Scholarships programme funds students on a postgraduate course that isn't available in their home country.

Now into its eleventh year, Equity and Merit has helped more than 200 students who have a desire to learn skills that will transform their home countries, build their careers and implement projects which have benefitted thousands of local people.

Equity and Merit applications for Ethiopia close on 31st January 2018. Visit the dedicated web page for more information and to apply - bit.ly/MCRET

Jamaican music legend, Luciano, visits Embassy

On 21st November, Jamaican music legend, Luciano made a courtesy visit to the Embassy ahead of his trip to Ethiopia, where he was going to perform at the Great Ethiopian Concert. The Ambassador and staff were treated to a live impromptu performance by Luciano.

The Great Ethiopian Concert was held on 26th November, a day after the Great Ethiopian Run – Africa's biggest road race – in order to extend the Run's festival atmosphere.



While in Ethiopia Luciano took part in a press conference with Ethiopian running legend and founder of the Great Ethiopian Run, Haile Gebrselassie, where he shared his views on why sport and good uplifting musical entertainment go hand in hand, hence the creation of the Great Ethiopian Concert.



Luciano with Haile Gebrselassie

Luciano also attended the opening ceremony of the Run, which he described simply as “amazing”.

The Concert featured an array of top class acts from Ethiopia, Europe and Jamaica.

British athlete, Christine Ohuruogu, visits Embassy

We were honoured to welcome British track and field athlete, Christine Ohuruogu, at the Embassy on 8th December, ahead of her trip to Ethiopia in the new year.



Christine successfully bid for the holiday to Ethiopia during the Voice Newspaper’s #BoltMillsLondon event in July 2017.

Ethiopian Airlines will be hosting Christine during her visit, where she hopes to meet some of Ethiopia’s famous long-distance runners, while also enjoying Ethiopia’s myriad of historical sites.

Watch our exclusive interview with Christine on our YouTube page at bit.ly/ChrissyO.

LOCAL NEWS

Ethiopia’s MFA top in Africa for Digital Diplomacy

In the latest Digital Diplomacy review of Ministries of Foreign Affairs around the world, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, was ranked 25/209, making Ethiopia the top country in Africa in Digital Diplomacy and a big improvement from last year’s ranking of 76.

For the full rankings, visit digital.diplomacy.live/DDR17/

IMF Chief Christine Lagarde makes historic visit to Ethiopia

Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), made an historic visit to Ethiopia from 13th to 15th December, where she met senior Ethiopian officials, including Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and President Mulatu Teshome, to discuss ways to further strengthen the partnership between Ethiopia and the IMF. Ms Lagarde is the first IMF head to visit Ethiopia in the IMF's 72-year history.



In her meeting with Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, Ms Lagarde commended the Prime Minister for the high, sustained economic growth over the years, including improvements in living conditions and successful management of droughts.



The IMF Chief also met with President Mulatu Teshome and commended his ambition of making Ethiopia a lower middle-income country in the next decade. President Mulatu and Lagarde also discussed the pro-poor and inclusive development activities being implemented in the country, and President Mulatu thanked the organization for the support it has provided for the economic growth

registered in Ethiopia. Ms Lagarde stressed her commitment to enhancing the policy dialogue and engagement between Ethiopia and the IMF.

Ms Lagarde also visited the Eastern Industrial Park in Addis Ababa where she saw the dynamism and enthusiasm of the people working there and the commitment of private investors to Ethiopia.

Following the visit, she said, "I am really pleased to have seen some international companies manufacturing to international standards for export purposes...The integrated training, employment and value-added manufacturing activities all will, hopefully, help to ensure sustainable exports."



Lagarde also said it was important to note that the government of Ethiopia is striving to achieve the Second Growth and Transformation Plan.

Lagarde told journalists that one of the main targets of her Ethiopia visit was to witness the development of industrial parks in the country and the determination of the Ethiopian government to reinforce the country's economic growth. She stressed the International Monetary Fund's full support for Ethiopia's development agenda.

In addition to the economic development that the east African country presently pursues, Lagarde also lauded Ethiopia's role in the Horn of Africa region, mainly with regard to the country's handling of refugees and for its efforts to maintain peace and stability in the neighbouring countries.

During her time in Ethiopia, she also delivered keynote addresses at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Union (AU).

Ethiopia joined the IMF, an organization of 189 countries, on 27th December 1945. During the past 72 years, the IMF has provided financial, technical and other support, including training, to Ethiopia.

Two new geothermal power plants to be built

Ethiopian Electric Power has signed two agreements worth \$4 billion, to build two geothermal power plants, to be run by the country's first privately-owned utility.



The two plants - Corbetti and Tulu Moya - will produce a combined 1,000MW of power upon completion in eight years' time.

Azeb Asnake, CEO of Ethiopian Electric Power, said during the signing ceremony that the government has identified 22 sites that are sustainable for geothermal power development across the country.

According to the Ethiopian Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Electricity, Ethiopia now has 4,300MW of installed power generation capacity, and projects with a total capacity of over 9,000MW are under various stages of construction. Others with over 3,000MW capacity are at the preparatory stages.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), currently under construction on the Blue Nile River, is around 70% complete, according to the Ministry. The project will be Africa's largest dam upon completion, with a generating capacity of 6,450MW.

Studies show that Ethiopia has an estimated 10,000 MW of geothermal energy potential.

...EEP CEO named PowerGen International Woman of the Year

Azeb Asnake, CEO of the Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation, was named the 2017 POWER-GEN International Woman of the Year, in recognition of her great work advancing power generation in Ethiopia.



Asnake is responsible for the construction and operation of generation plants, transmission lines and sub-stations as well as overseeing the sale of electricity to neighboring Sudan, Djibouti and border towns of Kenya. When she first entered the industry, Ethiopia's electricity was mainly hydro based and the generation capacity was 2,430 MW. Since then, generation has grown to 4,500 MW. One goal of Ethiopian Electric Power under her guidance is to become a power hub of Africa and reach a generation capacity of 17,000 MW by 2020 to create a system that will carry and sustain the economy level of a middle-income country.

As CEO of a key aspect of Ethiopia's economic sectors - power generation - Asnake is demonstrating not only that women can lead in engineering, but also that they can do so with great success.

Ethiopia launches refugee integration program, furthering their protection

On 28th November 2017, Ethiopia formally launched the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), effectively paving the way for the implementation of the nine pledges it made at the Leaders’ Summit on Refugees in September 2016 in New York.



Through the pledges, which serve as a vehicle for implementing the CRRF in the country, Ethiopia seeks to promote refugees’ self-reliance through an improved and sustainable response that combines wider support to host communities, furthering peaceful coexistence and inclusion of refugees into national development plans.

Speaking at the ceremony, Solomon Tesfaye, State Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, reconfirmed the government’s commitment to a significant shift in the way it responds to the needs of refugees, including a gradual transition from a camp-based protection model to supporting refugees directly within host-communities.

“The Government of Ethiopia, while maintaining its doors open to refugees, envisages to gradually put an end to the encampment policy in the next ten years and progressively advance the out of camp and local integration options”, he said, calling upon the international community to renew “its firm commitment to maximize its support for the realization of the nine Pledges”.

Ethiopia is one of the 193 UN Member States that adopted the New York Declaration in September 2016 and pledged to undertake a number of policy

measures to transform the lives of refugees including through the expansion of its Out of Camp Policy, issuing work permits and other vital documents to refugees and allowing them to engage in gainful employment, including through job creation in its industrial parks.

Mr Daniel Endres, UNHCR’s Director of the CRRF Task Team, said CRRF has already started transforming the lives of refugees in Ethiopia as witnessed by the increase in the overall school enrolment rate of refugees and the issuance of vital documents, including birth certificates to refugee children. “The pledges Ethiopia made and the actions it’s taking today are exemplary and inspire many African States,” he said and added that the country needs to be supported to realize its ambitious objectives.

Representing the donor community, H.E. Mr Michael Raynor, the US Ambassador to Ethiopia, described the launch of the CRRF as a significant milestone and pledged on behalf of the US government and the donor community to support the government and UNHCR in their effort to implement the pledges.

The launch event at the Hilton Hotel in Addis Ababa was attended by representatives of a wide range of stakeholders, including refugees, government line ministries, diplomatic missions, humanitarian and development organisations as well as UN agencies who all voiced support for the initiative and expressed readiness to help Ethiopia and UNHCR and its partners successfully implement the nine pledges.

Ms Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochie, the UN Resident Coordinator in Ethiopia, congratulated the Government and UNHCR for successfully launching the CRRF, which serves as a vehicle for implementing the government’s pledges. “Ethiopia’s practical pledges are proof of the fact that generosity has little to do with wealth but it only needs a big heart.” She also pledged support and commitment on behalf of the UN in Ethiopia.

Working under the overall supervision of the Office of the Prime Minister, the government has developed a road map to guide the implementation of the pledges and a Steering Committee has been set up to oversee the process. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the

Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs co-chair the Steering Committee together with UNHCR. The Pledges are in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Ethiopia's second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II).

The CRRF was adopted within the framework of the New York Declaration, where endorsing States reaffirm their commitment to the rights and obligations of refugees under international law.

In July 2017, a new and enhanced Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) was rolled out country-wide to enhance the registration of refugees. The new system is another step forward for Ethiopia towards its commitment to deliver better protection and assistance to refugees.



Ethiopia also begun civil registration for refugees from 27th October. All refugees in the country are now able to register their vital life events, including birth, death, marriage and divorce, directly with national authorities.

Currently, Ethiopia hosts some 890,000 refugees, mainly from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan.

Over 1.3m Students to Benefit from School Feeding Programme

More than 1.3 million students are set to benefit from Ethiopia's national school feeding programme during the first half of 2018.

The government has allocated over 289.4 million Birr for the programme, which helps students stay in school and reduces the burden on parents.

The Minister of Education, Dr Tilaye Gete, said that students who are displaced from their villages due to the drought and the recent clashes will get special attention.



In addition to students affected by the drought and clashes, the programme will be implemented in areas where education coverage is low.

Noting that primary students were the major focus groups of the programme, Tilaye said this year, the programme will embrace secondary school students.

Ethiopia is implementing the national school feeding programme at schools as part of the National School Health Nutrition Strategy.

The programme, implemented in collaboration with partner organisations, is targeted at minimising school dropout rates, absenteeism and poor academic performance.

5 specialised cancer treatment centres to be established

Ethiopia is to set up five specialised cancer treatment centres across the country with an \$80 million budget.

The five centers, under construction in Hawassa, Gonder, Mekelle, Jimma and Haramaya cities, will be finalised within the coming Ethiopian 2018-2019 fiscal year.

Currently, Black Lion Referral Hospital in Addis Ababa is the only health care institution providing cancer treatment and care.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Ethiopia wins UN Award for excellence in promoting investment

The Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC) received the 2017 United Nations Award for Promoting Investment in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The award was presented at UNCTAD's Investment, Enterprise and Development Commission in Geneva, Switzerland.



The Ethiopian Investment Commission was recognised for its instrumental role in facilitating the development of Hawassa Industrial Park as an eco-friendly textile and apparel facility with efficient use of water and energy, waste treatment, and renewable energy. The Commission also attracted high-quality investments to the park, which employs more than 12,000 people, over 80% of which are young women who can use onsite social facilities, including health care and education services.

Agencies from Mauritius (Mauritius Board of Investment) and Spain (COFIDES) were also presented with the award.

“The award-winning agencies have demonstrated that leading inward and outward investment promotion agencies are acting proactively on the SDGs and achieving noteworthy results,” Mr James Zhan, UNCTAD's Director of Investment and Enterprise, said at the awards ceremony. “Developing countries face an annual investment gap of US\$2.5 trillion in SDG-oriented investment, and foreign direct investment can play a critical role in filling this shortfall.”

These awards, Mr Zhan said, can help spur more efforts at the national and international levels to promote more quality investment in the SDGs.

The investment promotion awards have been presented annually since 2002 as part of UNCTAD's investment promotion and facilitation programme to honour and disseminate best practices among investment promotion agencies and celebrate their achievements. The awards for 2017, 2018 and 2019 have been dedicated to promoting investment that contributes towards the SDGs in order to mainstream the goals into investment policies and promotion.

Uniqlo to open first African manufacturing plant in Ethiopia

Japanese casualwear retailer, Uniqlo, will open its first African manufacturing plant in Ethiopia, Uniqlo joins fashion giants such as H&M Hennes & Mauritz and Calvin Klein, who are already manufacturing in Ethiopia.



The chain aims to begin test production of T-shirts and other tops in the country as early as 2018, with more products joining the mix if the plant shows that it can handle the volume and meet quality standards.

Announcing the plans, Tadashi Yanai, chairman and CEO of parent Fast Retailing, said they hope to take advantage of the low labour costs and create an export hub for the U.S. and European markets as Ethiopia sits closer to Europe, which Uniqlo considers a key market for growth. Ethiopia is also an ideal location as clothing intended for export to the U.S. would not be taxed.

\$341 million earned from crop exports

More than \$341 million was earned from coffee, tea and spices exported between July and November 2017, according to the Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Development and Marketing Authority, with coffee taking the lion's share bringing in \$334.59 million from the 92,136 tonnes exported.



The amount of coffee supplied to overseas markets surpassed the target for the reported period by 4,000 tonnes. It also increased by 17,000 tonnes compared to same period the previous year.

During the current fiscal year (7th July 2017 to 6th July 2018), the country aims to earn \$1.18 billion by exporting 291,000 tonnes of coffee, tea and spices.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Harar named National Geographic's best place to visit in 2018



Ethiopia's historic walled city of Harar was named the top place to visit in *National Geographic Traveler* magazine's annual list of 21 must-see destinations to visit in 2018.

Traveler editors selected their top picks for places in three key categories: Cities, Culture, and Nature.

The "most surprising city in East Africa", Harar was selected for its cultural aspect. The "City of Saints" boasts 82 mosques, as well as Ethiopia's best beer and highest quality coffee.



Harar's old town is a maze of alleys lined with colourful walls. Photo by David Kirkland

FUN FACT: Hyenas are welcome night visitors in Harar, where they eat food waste and are fed by 'hyena men.'



Best Trips 2018 is featured in the December/January 2018 issue of *Traveler* magazine, now available on newsstands and online at NatGeoTravel.com/BestTrips2018.

Background:

Muslims regard Harar as the world's fourth-holiest city after Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. Harar is also Ethiopia's most important repository of Islamic landmarks, with 82 mosques and 438 Awaach (shrines of important Islamic scholars) crammed into its 48 hectares. The city's lively markets and unique *gey gar* (city houses) are relicts of the many centuries when Harar served as the most important trade emporium in the Horn of Africa, linking the ports of the Somali coast to the fertile Ethiopian interior. Harar Jugol was inscribed as a UNESCO, World Heritage Site in 2006.

For travel inspiration, visit the Ethiopian Tourism Organisation website at www.ethiopia.travel

All Aboard! Africa's first electrified railway from Addis to Djibouti begins commercial operations



The Ethio-Djibouti railway line has started commercial operations for passengers and freight.

The launching ceremony on 1st January 2018 was attended by high-level government officials, including the Chinese and Djiboutian Ambassadors.

The railway, which is Sub-Saharan Africa's first electrified railway, connects Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa with the port of Djibouti. Travel time will be cut from around 3 days to 10 hours.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Berhanu Beshah, Chief Executive Officer of Ethiopian Railways Corporation, said the railway, Ethiopia's national flagship project, could be a model for modern transport industry.

Ahmed Shide, Ethiopia's Minister of Transport, hailed the project as a milestone in China-Africa cooperation as well as in the history of Ethiopia's and Africa's transport sectors.

In addition to further enhancing economic ties as well as people-to-people links between Ethiopia and Djibouti, it will make a significant contribution

to the ongoing development efforts of building a new Ethiopia, said the minister.

Commending China as well as other stakeholders for their contribution towards the successful realisation of the rail project, the minister urged local people, especially residents living by the line of the rail to take care of it for its successful and sustainable operation.

Ambassador of China to Ethiopia, Tan Jian, noted that the project would contribute to the industrialisation and diversification of the Ethiopian economy, and also towards successful implementation of the country's growth and transformation plan.

"It is the first trans-boundary and longest electrified railway on the African continent. We, the Chinese, see this as earlier harvest project of the Belt and Road initiative. It is regarded by many as a lifeline project for both countries, for Ethiopia and for Djibouti. And we see this as a railway of development; as a railway of cooperation; and as a railway of friendship," he said.

The ambassador has reiterated China's commitment to further cooperating and closely working with Ethiopia and Djibouti on the railway's smooth operation.

The Djibouti Ambassador to Ethiopia, Mohamed Idriss Farah, said the railway project would make a significant contribution to the economic integration between Djibouti and Ethiopia.

"This is an important corridor, important railways between Djibouti and Ethiopia; we are working for our economic integration between our two countries. And this project was part of the economic integration, but not only economic integration but also connecting the peoples of Djibouti and Ethiopia," said the ambassador.

...fares announced



According to Engineer Tilahun Farka, Director-General of Ethio-Djibouti Railway Transport Share Company, the tariff for passengers is 0.68 birr per kilometre. The tariff from **Addis Ababa-Djibouti** on a hard seat is 503 birr, while travellers on sleeper classes will pay 671 birr for the upper, 922 birr for the middle and 1,006 birr for the lower beds. For VIPs where each room accommodates two bunk beds, upper bunk beds cost 1,258 birr, while the lower ones cost 1,341 birr. (Note: Please check online for fares to other destinations)

Freight rates start from \$0.051 per kilometre for a tonne of goods.

The Ethiopia-Djibouti project was constructed with a total investment of almost \$4 billion and is the first modern electrified railway line in East Africa.

The project is jointly owned by the governments of Ethiopia and Djibouti and constructed by China Railway Group and China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC).

Ethiopian Airlines makes historic all-female crew flight

Ethiopian Airlines made history, again, on 16th December by becoming the first airline to operate an all-female crew for an intra-African trip.



The flight from Addis Ababa Bole Airport to Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos, Nigeria was operated by women in all roles - from the pilots and cabin crew to in flight ramp operations as well as flight dispatchers on the ground.

Under the supervision of Captain Amsale Gualu and First Officer Tigist Kibret, the 13-member crew flew 391 passengers to Lagos on Boeing B777-300 ER. Speaking at the reception in Lagos, Captain Gualu, who called on women to have passion in what they do, said flying aeroplanes was her childhood dream.

Ethiopian Airlines hopes this will encourage more women participation in the aviation industry.

Back in 2015, Ethiopian was also the first airline in Africa to fly an all-female crew out of Africa.

Congratulations to everyone involved!!

...Mobile App available for download

Ethiopian's mobile application is now available for download in the App Store and on Google Play. With the App, customers will be able to book flights, check-in, issue boarding passes and check flight status, among other things.



Group CEO, Tewelde GebreMariam, said: “As a customer focused airline, we have been investing heavily in a comprehensive digitalisation of our organisational operating system. The mobile applications for iOS and Android devices will enable us to avail a high degree of personalised experience to our esteemed customers...We will continue to invest in the latest technology with a view to enhancing our customers’ travel experience and meeting their growing expectations.”

SPORTS

Over 44,000 participants take part in Great Ethiopian Run

The 2017 TOTAL Great Ethiopian Run was held in Addis Ababa on 26th November. More than 44,000 runners, including over 500 foreign nationals from 26 countries, took part in the annual 10km race.



Ethiopian athletes won both the men and women events. In the men’s category, Solomon Berega, Moges Tiumay and Dawit Fekadu finished the race first, second and third, respectively.

In the women’s event, Zeyneba Yimer, Girmawit Gebregziabher and Foten Tesfaye finished the race first, second and third.



Great Ethiopian Run winners Selemon Berega and Zeyneba Yimer with running legend Haile Gebrselassie

DIASPORA CORNER

Victims of Grenfell Tower fire remembered

14th December marked six months since the horrific fire at Grenfell Tower, where 71 people perished including eight British citizens of Ethiopian origin.

Head of the Diaspora Department at the Embassy, Mr Fekadu Beyene, joined hundreds of relatives, survivors and rescue workers at the National Memorial Service at St Paul's Cathedral in London, in honour of the victims. Members of the Royal Family as well as political leaders were also in attendance.



(l-r) mother and son Berikti and Biruk Habtom; Hashim Kidir, his wife and their three children; and 5-year old Isaac Paolos

The multi-faith service included performances and messages of support for the bereaved, offering strength and hope for the future. A pre-recorded montage of voices from the local community was also played during the service.



The service began when a banner was carried through the congregation to the pulpit by a Catholic priest and Muslim cleric

Our thoughts and prayers remain with all those affected.

ETHIOPIA IN THE NEWS

Travel in 2018: These 10 breath-taking destinations are a must on your travel bucket list

ht Hindustan Times features 10 destinations that are every traveller's dream come true.

The best way to look forward to a new year is by planning your travel and making a bucket list.

4) Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



Holy Trinity Cathedral, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Head to this buzzing city to experience Ethiopia's rich culture and traditional crafts. Visit the National Museum where prehistoric fossils are on display. When in Addis Ababa, drink a macchiato at Tomoca Coffee, share a plate of injera, and soak into the Ethio jazz scene.

Read more at <http://bit.ly/VisitET3>

ANCIENT BEAUTY: The architectural mastery of Ethiopia's ancient churches



Ethiopia is legendary for its medieval, rock-hewn churches, the cruciform and colorful frescoes of which have attracted tourists from across the world. The ancient kingdom of Abyssinia, was probably the site of the first Christian nation, and the churches still serve as religious sanctuaries and draw pilgrims celebrating the Ethiopian Christian calendar...These captivating pictures are a testimony to the architectural

mastery and uniqueness of Ethiopia's medieval and post-medieval civilizations.



"Ethiopia: The Living Churches of an Ancient Kingdom" celebrates the unique artistic and architectural achievement of 66 of these churches with more than 800 color photographs. The book delves into their history, documenting not just their exteriors, but their interior artwork, the panoply of religious festivals they host, and the lives of the monks and priests who call them home.

Read more at bit.ly/VisitETH

Where to go in January for culture



In some parts of the world January means hunkering down and hibernating to avoid the chill, but elsewhere hotter climes mean the cultural offerings are just warming up...Visit Ethiopia and celebrate Christmas (again!) and Timkat in ancient sites, like the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela.



"There's nowhere quite like Ethiopia: the religion, the languages, the food, the coffee – oh, the coffee..."

Even clocks and calendars throw up quirks: new year is 11 September, but it's on 7 January that Christmas (Leddet or Gena) is celebrated by throngs of devotees among the frescoed subterranean churches of Lalibela...A bigger spectacle still is Timkat, commemorating Jesus' baptism; it's most dramatic among the 17th-century castles of Gondar...Away from the gladdened crowds there's space to explore Ethiopia's other wonders in this dry, cool month. North of Gonder loom the ancient stelae (obelisks) of Aksum, and trails meandering among gelada monkeys and precipitous ridges of the Simien Mountains, while to the south lies Lake Tana, lined with medieval monasteries."

Read more at bit.ly/LPNewsET2

Get a glimpse into the traditional lives of indigenous Ethiopian tribes

Lonely Planet interviews French photographer Eric Lafforgue, who has captured some stunning photography during a trip to rural Ethiopia. While there, he spent time with indigenous tribespeople, catching a glimpse into their culture and way of life.

For Eric, it's the locals who make the country so fascinating. "The most interesting thing about Ethiopia is its people," he says.

"In the south, tribes like Nyangatom, Dassanech, Mursi, Hamar and Bodis still live a traditional way of life, with very beautiful ceremonies. In the north are the Afars who are nomads."



Dassanech man during dimi ceremony to celebrate circumcision of teenagers, Omo valley, Ethiopia

Read more at bit.ly/LPNewsET

Travel: Ethiopia – Paul Gains discovers an abundance of extraordinary wildlife in the Simien Mountains

The Herald “Ethiopia may be overshadowed by wildlife tourism offered by some of its neighbours but it is quickly gaining ground as my adventure would prove... [On the first day’s hike], we spotted Gelada baboons foraging on grassy hillsides...An added bonus was seeing a trio of Klipspringers, a species of antelope found only in the highlands of East and Southern Africa...



Equally compelling was the beautiful landscape we encountered throughout the hike. Erosion over millions of years has carved these rocks and cliffs which descend into valleys some 1,500m below. I was reminded of northern Arizona and Utah...The Simien Mountains are filled with landscapes and wildlife found nowhere else on earth and as I flew back to Addis I was delighted I had experienced such a fantastic journey. No doubt more adventure travellers are bound to visit in coming years.”

Read more at bit.ly/VisitET

Hot lips: Eyes and a smiling mouth are spotted in Ethiopian volcano

MailOnline A smiling face has been spotted forming within volcanic lava at the hottest place on earth - the Danakil Depression in the Afar region, Ethiopia, by photographer Chris Horsley.

Chris was on an expedition when he caught the lava from the volcano forming two eyes and a mouth.

Temperatures at the Danakil Depression reach as high as 60 degrees.



What a lava-ly smile!

Read more at bit.ly/DMVisitET

Hugh Dennis [on travel and the surprising beauty of Ethiopia]



TRAVEL In this interview by Sarah Ewing in the *Telegraph*, British comedian Hugh Dennis, recalls..."Ethiopia was a pleasant surprise - ...for it's beautiful country and fantastic people. I drove from Addis Ababa to Aksum, where they have the Ark of the Covenant, to the Simien Mountains in the Highlands. I love how the country has a distinct identity and historical borders that weren't randomly carved up by explorers"

Read more at bit.ly/VisitET2



In the hands of farmers: Ethiopia's push to restore degraded lands



In Ethiopia, land is life and preserving it has become a national priority...In 2011, the Bonn Challenge was launched with the goal of restoring 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land by 2020 and 350 million hectares by 2030. The idea is to use the approach of FLR, Forest Landscape Restoration, which aims to restore ecological integrity to degraded lands, while at the same time improving human well-being.



Ethiopia responded to this Challenge with a pledge to restore 15 million hectares of degraded forests, woodlands and production landscapes.

Ethiopia's 'enclosure' method, also known as 'social fencing', requires communities to close off areas of land to human and domestic animal disturbances for a certain time period. This allows native vegetation to regenerate and reduces land degradation.

Much of the land in Tigray, where the government began promoting exclosures as early as the mid-1980s, has been degraded. So, communities had two choices: move to a more fertile area, or restore their land. Most chose to stay and fix the problem using enclosure techniques”.

The experience in Ethiopia has brought some lessons regarding the mobilization and engagement of communities in landscape restoration. Over the past few years, during the dry season and soon after the harvest, smallholder farmers have contributed up to 30 days of free labour for restoration of agricultural or forest land...rural communities in Ethiopia are becoming increasingly proactive, and understand what they need to do to move forward...The community members work together with local government to identify areas to be restored and even elect community members to guard the exclosed land against trespassers who may try to steal wood or bring livestock to graze.”

Read more at bit.ly/ETLand

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