

Ethiopia - OVERVIEW

Updated: March 13, 2014



Country Name Long Form: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Government Type: Federal Republic

Languages Spoken: Oromo, Amhara, Somali, Tigray, Sidama, Gurage, Welaïta, Hadiya, Afar, Gamo, Gedeo, Silte, Kefficho

National Flag



Ethiopia is a Tier III Country. Significant security measures are necessary.

	Overall Assessment	Political Violence	Crime	Terrorism	Travel Safety
Ethiopia					
Key: (L) Low – (M) Medium – (H) High – (C)Critical					

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Political Violence is rated at LOW

Demonstrations are held on occasion in Addis Ababa that are often large and may take place in or near the city center. Demonstrations must be approved in advance by the government and are typically well covered by local police. Instances of violence have been reported, foreigners are advised to avoid demonstrations and large gatherings.

TERRORISM

Terrorism is assessed as MEDIUM

A number of al-Qai'da operatives and other extremists are believed to be operating in and around Africa. Since the July 11, 2010, terrorist bombings in Kampala, Uganda, for which the Somalia-based, U.S. designated Foreign Terrorist Organization al-Shabaab claimed responsibility, there have been increased threats against public areas across East Africa.

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RULE OF LAW / CORRUPTION

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2013 gave Ethiopia a score of 33, indicating that the country has high level of corruption. The CPI rates countries by the perceived levels of corruption in their public sector, with the least corrupt country receiving a maximum score of 100.

CRIME

Crime is assessed as MEDIUM

Criminals are active throughout Ethiopia. Pickpocketing, “snatch and run” thefts, including from occupied vehicles and other petty crimes are common in Addis Ababa. These are generally crimes of opportunity rather than planned attacks.

Criminal violence and political violence in Addis Ababa and in southwestern and southeastern Ethiopia has resulted in numerous injuries and deaths.

KIDNAPPING

In 2013, an ongoing kidnapping threat against Westerners has been active in the Dolo Odo area of the Somali Region in southeastern Ethiopia.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual Assault cases do occur in Ethiopia though they are not frequently reported.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Ethiopia is a mountainous country, and the high altitude may cause health problems, even for healthy persons. Addis Ababa is the fifth highest capital city in the world at an altitude of 8300 feet. **Individuals with respiratory (including asthma) or heart conditions should consult with a healthcare professional before traveling.**

There is a risk of earthquakes. Buildings are not built to earthquake codes and may collapse in strong tremors.

STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE

- **Altitude sickness is frequently reported among travelers in Ethiopia, particularly in Addis Ababa, which is located in the country's highland region.**
- Stay in groups, travel in a caravan consisting of two or more vehicles, and stay on the main roads.
- Ensure that someone not traveling with you is aware of your itinerary.
- Avoid hotels that do not have adequate security.
- Intercity travel after dark anywhere in should be avoided.
- It is preferable to stay in the main tourist destinations.

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- Pay close attention to your surroundings, especially when walking.
- Official taxis are a suitable means of travel in daylight hours in urban areas. It is highly recommended that taxis be arranged through your hotel, or program office. Negotiate the price in advance.
- Women should be especially careful when traveling alone and avoid staying out late without a trusted male escort.
- Make sensible security precautions to mitigate the risk of petty crime, particularly pick pocketing and bag snatching.
- Carry a photocopy of your passport when traveling to avoid losing it in a robbery.
- Do not resist if you are being robbed and avoid eye contact and do not make any sudden movements. Victims have been killed when they resisted attack or refused to give up their money or other valuables.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times and keep a low profile.
- Never leave your food, drinks or belongings unattended.
- Carry bags close to your body and make sure the fasteners are secure.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash or wearing expensive jewelry or valuables.
- Leave all important documents in a safe or safe deposit box at your hotel and only carry certified copies.
- Trust your instincts. If someone or something makes you uneasy, avoid the situation.

Important Contact Details

International Dialing Code: +251

International Dialing Prefix: 00

Victims of crime should contact the following phone numbers for assistance

POLICE: The local equivalent to the “911” emergency line is: 91

FIRE DEPARTMENT: 93

AMBULANCE: 92

Note: Police, ambulance or fire department response may be unreliable in some parts of the country.

TRAVEL & ROAD SAFETY

- Roads, along with electrical, internet, and water systems are superior in the capital of Addis Ababa and such cities as Mek’ele and Dire Dawa.

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- There are concerns over outages of electricity, water and other services are particularly acute during the country's dry season, which generally last from November through July.
- During portions of the year where rain is plentiful, such as August and September, many roads quickly become difficult to navigate due to the fact that they are paved in either dirt or sand.

RECOMMENDED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

- No travel to the Mercato area.
- No use of ATM after dark.
- No bathing or swimming in any lakes, rivers, or still bodies of water.
- No rural travel after dark.
- No deviation from approved travel routes.

HEALTH

Medical facilities are limited in Ethiopia. A small number of private hospitals can be found in the capital, Addis Ababa, while larger public hospitals are present in some major urban centers, including Awasa, Bahidar, Wolayta, and Desse. Hospitals and clinics are generally understaffed, poorly sanitized and lacking basic supplies. Shortages of trained medical specialists and diagnostic equipment further impede the provision of adequate healthcare in the country. English speaking medical services are limited in the country and it is highly recommended that individuals seek interpreter services from their embassy.

- Tap water is generally not safe to drink in Ethiopia.
- It is advised to consume only sterilized or bottled water. This applies to water used for brushing teeth, making ice or washing goods.
- Unpasteurized milk should be boiled before consumption.
- Food from street vendors should be avoided as this carries a higher risk of causing infection.

The following vaccinations are recommended or required if traveling to Ethiopia:

- Hepatitis A (recommended)
- Hepatitis B (recommended)
- Meningococcal meningitis (recommended)
- Polio (recommended)
- Typhoid (recommended)
- Yellow Fever (recommended)

It is also important to ensure that routine vaccinations are up to date for disease including influenza, varicella (chickenpox), measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

SIGNIFICANT DISEASES –

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- **Malaria** – A life threatening parasitic disease transmitted by mosquitoes. The risk of malaria is prevalent in low-lying areas, with the primary transmission period occurring between April and December.
- **Meningococcal meningitis** – An extremely dangerous infection of the fluid and tissues surrounding the brain and spinal cord. The disease is considered endemic in Ethiopia, particularly in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region. Outbreaks are most prevalent during the dry season (November to February).
- **Yellow Fever** – A viral disease transmitted by the bite of the Aedes mosquito. Outbreaks of the disease are periodically reported in the country's low-lying areas, particularly during the rainy season (June to September).
- **Cholera** – An acute intestinal infection caused by ingestion of contaminated food or water. Cholera outbreaks are reported frequently throughout Ethiopia.
- **African sleeping sickness** (Africa trypanosomiasis) - A parasitic disease transmitted to humans by the bite of the tsetse fly. Outbreaks of the disease have been reported in Ethiopia's rural areas.
- **Visceral leishmaniasis** (kala azar) – A parasitic disease spread by the bite of infected sand flies. Outbreaks of the disease are frequently reported in the south eastern regions.
- **Hepatitis E** – A viral disease that is increasingly being reported throughout Ethiopia.
- **Anthrax** – A potentially fatal toxin-producing disease caused by the spore-forming bacterium, bacillus anthracis. Outbreaks of the disease have been reported in Ethiopia's Afar and Oromia regions.
- **Dengue Fever** – An infectious disease carried by mosquitoes. The disease is prevalent throughout the country, particularly during the rainy season (May to October).
- **River blindness** (Onchocerciasis) – An infection spread by the bite of an infected black fly. Outbreaks of the disease have been reported throughout the country.
- **Diarrhea** – A common illness among travelers and can be caused by bacteria, viruses or parasites. One of the most common causes is a bacterium known as E. coli, which is transmitted by ingesting contaminated food and liquids.
- **Measles** – A highly contagious airborne disease caused by a virus in the paramyxovirus family. A severe surge in cases of measles has been reported in Ethiopia in 2011; although the disease has spread throughout the country, areas along the Somali border have carried a higher infection rate.

HOSPITALS –

Bethzatha Hospital
Near Addis Stadium
PO Box 55
Addis Ababa 1110

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Girum Hospital
Gulele District near Swaziland Street
Addis Ababa
Tel: +251 (0)11 275 7676
Fax: +251 (0)11 275 5092

US EMBASSY – CONSULATE LOCATIONS

UNITED STATES EMBASSY

Entoto Street
P.O. Box 1014
Addis Ababa
Tel: +251 11 130-600
Fax: +251 11 124-2401
Email: pasaddis@state.gov

REGIONAL SECURITY OFFICE

Tel: +251 91 151-1683

USF INTERNATIONAL HOTLINE

USF 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 813-317-5815

AXA Assistance 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 1-877-577-9504 / +1-203-399-5130 (Call collect from abroad)

ASSIST ID #: GLMN 04983932. <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/resources/>

* Information derived from CIA World Fact Book, US Department of State, OSAC, and Travel Guard. This travel overview summarizes some of the most important concerns; however, it does not negate the need for detailed trip planning.