

Ethiopia

Endemic Birds & Mammals

2026 Tour Leaflet



Prince Ruspoli's Turaco © Tertius Gous

25 March – 12 April 2026

Ethiopia 2026



ENDEMIC BIRDS & MAMMALS

- Target all Ethiopian endemics
- Search for Prince Ruspoli's Turaco, Ethiopian Wolf and Gelada Baboon
- Birding Africa's Rift Valley and endemic-rich Highlands
- Lodgings with private facilities
- Visit incredible historic site of Lalibela

Archer's/Liben Lark © Tasso Leventis



TOUR LEADER: MICHAEL MILLS



Michael's incredible focus, dedication and ability to locate and show Africa's toughest birds is probably unequalled on the continent. He has led dozens of tours across Africa and his experience in locating birds on just the softest of calls or briefest of views impresses those who travelled with him.

DATES (2026)

Ethiopia 25 Mar – 12 Apr

PROVISIONAL PRICES

Per person sharing	\$TBA
Single supplement	\$TBA

Includes all ground costs except the Addis - Lalibela - Addis flight (c. \$250)

BOOK ONLINE

Visit www.birdingafrica.com
Deposit (\$150) by credit card
Email info@birdingafrica.com



Stresemann's Bush Crow © Don MacGillivray

Our 19-day tour of Ethiopia takes in the best birding sites the country has to offer, with a touch of historical tourism at Lalibela. Known as The Roof of Africa, the extensive highlands of Ethiopia form the largest mountain block in Africa, holding about 30 bird specialties. Add to this the lowland savannas and wetlands of the Rift Valley and far south, and Ethiopia adds up to a truly bird-filled experience. Unrivalled scenery, unique mammals and fascinating cultures enhance the feeling of outlandishness and make Ethiopia a suitable destination not only for hardcore birders but keen generalists.

On our tours we visit a wide range of habitats from mountain peaks and forests to desert plains. Key sites visited are Lalibela, Debre Libanos, Jemma Valley, Melka Ghebdu, Awash National Park and surrounds, Lakes Langano and Awasa in the Rift Valley, the Bale Mountains, Negele and the Liben Plain, the greater Yavello area, and Gibe Gorge. In total we expect to see over 500 species.

TOUR FOCUS

Ethiopia is undeniably one of Africa's top birding destinations. It offers a good list of specials for world listers, and a wide array of species and other wildlife for those with a more general interest. Virtually all birding is done in open habitats, and birds are often quite approachable.

This tour has a strong focus on watching birds, but there are good opportunities too for photography and mammal watching.

Let us know if you have any particular target species. A species checklist will be handed out at the start of the tour and is available beforehand upon request.

The tour is timed to coincide with the start of the main bird breeding season, when there is a strong passage of migrants traveling north to the Palaearctic. We expect to encounter some rain, mostly as afternoon thunderstorms. Days will vary from hot in the lowlands to cold in the highlands.

ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS

Accommodation has improved significantly in recent years, but is still quite basic. That said, all hotels are reasonably clean and comfortable, and have private ablution facilities. Except for the sweltering Awash area you can expect hot water, although plumbing is often problematic and power supply can be erratic.

Meals are generally fairly simple. Most of the tourist areas offer western-style food, but off the main tourism route food is more basic with limited options (spaghetti with tomato sauce is common) or local food. Please advise if you are vegetarian.

Tap water is not potable, so we supply complimentary bottled water.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

This tour starts and ends in Addis Ababa. Please arrive any time on Day 1, and book flights departing after 21h00 on the last day of the trip. Please discuss your planned flight details with us before making reservations.

WALKING

This tour requires a moderate degree of fitness. Most walks are short and close to our bus or lodge. Some of the terrain is rocky and steep, and walking can be more challenging at high altitude on the Sanetti plateau.

GROUP SIZE

Maximum 9 participants, transported in one bus or up to three 4x4s.



Spot-breasted Lapwing © Tertius Gous

INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia is home to one of the most distinctive avifaunas on the continent, with iconic birds such as Prince Ruspoli's Turaco, Blue-winged Goose and Stresemann's Bush Crow among the main drawcards. Birds are often approachable and open habitats make for easy, productive birding. Our 19-day itinerary takes in the best that Ethiopia has to offer, and aims to find all regional specialties. We also visit Lalibela for a touch of culture.

We start off with a flight to the historical town of Lalibela, where highland endemics such as White-billed Starling, Ankober Serin and White-winged Cliff Chat can be seen in surrounds of the spectacular 14th century rock-hewn churches.

Returning by air to Addis we continue overland, first to the sheer escarpment at Debre Libanos, where Rüppell's Black Chat occurs alongside Gelada Baboon. We then descend into the Jemma Valley to search for Harwood's Francolin and Erckel's Francolin. Next we target Ankober Serin near Debre Birhan. Descending once again into the lowlands, this time to the Awash region, we stop en route at Melka Ghebdu to search for the localised Yellow-throated Seedeater.

Various arid habitats in the Awash area offer excellent birding with the likes of Arabian

Bustard and Sombre Rock Chat. Travelling along the Rift Valley we next visit Lake Langano where highlight may include Black-winged Lovebird and Clapperton's Francolin.

The pattern of alternation between highlands and lowlands continues, as we now climb into the Bale Mountains, Ethiopia's premier national park. Spot-breasted Lapwing, Blue-winged Goose, Abyssinian Longclaw and Ethiopian Wolf will be on our radars in the open moorlands, and Abyssinian Long-eared Owl, White-cheeked Turaco and Abyssinian Woodpecker in Juniper-Hagenia forests.

Back to the lowlands, we break our journey to Negele at Lake Awasa, with numerous waterbirds. As we near Negele we look for the spectacular Prince Ruspoli's Turaco, and at Negele the exceedingly rare Archer's (Liben) Lark and Salvadori's Seedeater. Continuing further south through arid habitats we pause at the Dawa River for African White-winged Dove and Juba Weaver, and in the Yavello area, Somali Courser and Red-naped Bushshrike.

Our journey back north to Addis is broken on the moister southern shores of Lake Langano where Yellow-fronted Parrot is the key target, before we visit Gibe Gorge to find Abyssinian Waxbill and Egyptian Plover.

Gelada Baboon © Tertius Gous



ITINERARY AND MAP

- Day 1 Arrive. Overnight in Addis Ababa.
- Day 2 Addis to Lalibela. Overnight in Lalibela.
- Day 3 Full day in the Lalibela area. Overnight in Lalibela.
- Day 4 Lalibela to Addis. Drive to Debre Libanos. Overnight near Debre Libanos.
- Day 5 Debre Libanos to Gemma Valley. Overnight in Debre Birhan.
- Day 6 Debre Birhan to Melka Ghebdu to Awash. Overnight near Awash.
- Day 7 Full day in the Awash area. Overnight in Awash National Park.
- Day 8 Full day in the Awash area. Overnight in Awash National Park.
- Day 9 Awash to Lake Langano. Overnight at Lake Langano.
- Day 10 Lake Langano to Bale Mountains. Overnight in Goba.
- Day 11 Full day in Bale Mountains NP. Overnight in Goba.
- Day 12 Goba to Awasa. Overnight at Awasa.
- Day 13 Awasa to Negele. Overnight in Negele.
- Day 14 Full day in the Negele area. Overnight in Negele.
- Day 15 Negele to Yavello via the Dawa River. Overnight near Yavello.
- Day 16 Mega, the Soda Plains and Yavello area. Overnight near Yavello.
- Day 17 Yavello to Lake Langano. Overnight near Lake Langano.
- Day 18 Lake Langano to Welkite. Overnight in Welkite or Welliso.
- Day 19 Gibe Gorge and return to Addis Ababa. Tour ends.

Yellow-throated Seedeater © Tertius Gous



DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrive Addis

Welcome to Ethiopia! From the airport we transfer to our hotel for an overnight stay.

Birding in the hotel gardens is excellent if it is still light when you arrive, with top birds including Tacazze Sunbird, Banded Barbet, Montane White-eye, Abyssinian Thrush, Brown Parisoma and Wattled Ibis.

Day 2: To Lalibela

Our brand new itinerary includes a small dose of culture alongside some excellent birding with a strong component of endemics in the Lalibela area. Today we take an early morning flight to the town of Lalibela in the highlands of central Ethiopia, for a two-nights stay. The spectacular town is located among steep cliffs and high mountains, and is one of Ethiopia's top tourist drawcards with its impressive 14th century rock-hewn churches and ancient history.

This afternoon we'll drive about an hour out of town to visit the 10th century cave church of Yemerehne Kirstos. Set in a large grove of

junipers we should see White-billed Starling, Hemprich's Hornbill, Ethiopian Goshawk, Slender-billed Starling, Fan-tailed Raven, Eastern Grey Woodpecker, Ethiopian Oriole, White-backed Black Tit, Montane White-eye and Brown Woodland Warbler. On our way back to Lalibela we'll stop in some arid, open savanna to search for Speckle-fronted Weaver, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver and Abyssinian Black Wheatear.

Day 3: Lalibela area

We have a full day in the surrounds of Lalibela town, birding in the early morning and late afternoon and visiting a few of the most famous rock-hewn churches during the middle of the day. We'll start off with a visit to a high ridge above town to look for the localised and little-known Ankober Serin. Other cliff-side birds we could see include White-winged Cliff Chat, Erckel's Francolin, Nyanza Swift, Lammergeier, Little Rock Thrush, Rock Martin, plus White-rumped Babbler, Black Saw-wing, Mountain Wagtail and Baglafaecht Weaver.



Harwood's Francolin © Tertius Gous

Day 4: to Debre Libanos

Today we take a morning flight from Lalibela back to Addis, before driving north to Debre Libanos. Near the airport of Lalibela we'll look for Yellow-breasted Barbet and White-fronted Black Chat. In the late afternoon we'll bird around the spectacular cliffs at Debre Libanos where Erckel's Francolin, Little Rock Thrush, Egyptian Vulture, Nyanza Swift, White-winged Cliff Chat, Blue-breasted (Ethiopian) Bee-eater and Rüppell's Black Chat are possible, plus Gelada Baboon. Overnight near Debre Libanos.

Day 5: Jemma Valley to Debre Birhan

A very early start from Debre Libanos will see us descend into the Jemma Valley, where we'll search for the localised Harwood's Francolin after first light in small patches of thickets among cultivated fields. Here we can also find Red-collared Widowbird, Black-winged Lovebird and Singing Cisticola. As we descend into the valley we'll keep an eye out for Fox Kestrel and Long-billed Pipit. A walk along a river in the valley itself will hopefully turn up Black-billed Barbet, Abyssinian White-eye, Crimson-rumped Waxbill and Foxy Cisticola, and if we are very fortunate, the scarce Red-billed Pytilia and Yellow-rumped Seedeater. In the afternoon

we'll drive to Debre Birhan, watching out for Erlanger's Lark, Black-winged Lapwing, Black-headed Siskin, Red-breasted Wheatear, Thekla Lark and Ortolan Bunting, making a detour to a nearby area for Ankober Serin if we failed to find it at Lalibela. Gelada Baboon is possible again today. Overnight in Debre Birhan.

Day 6: Melka Ghebdu to Awash

Today we descend the highlands to the east into the Great Rift Valley, stopping at Melka Ghebdu, the prime site for the endemic Yellow-throated Serin. Along the river we'll search for Half-collared Kingfisher, and there are also chances for Red-winged Pytilia, Eastern Grey Plantain-eater and Abyssinian Wheatear. During the heat of the day we'll use a new road to cut across to the Awash area, where we overnight at Doho Lodge. Some afternoon birding around Doho should produce a good list of new species and could include White-throated Bee-eater, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Olive Bee-eater, Black-throated Barbet, African Orange-bellied Parrot, White-headed Buffalo Weaver, Superb Starling, Rüppell's Weaver, Red-fronted Warbler, Grey-headed Batis, Nile Valley Sunbird, Shining Sunbird, Slender-tailed Nightjar, and if we are lucky, Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse and Three-banded Courser.

Church of Saint George, Lalibela © Michael Mills





Arabian Bustard © Don MacGillivray

Day 7: Ali Dege plain to Awash

An early start sees us making our way to the nearby Ali Dege Plains. These rich open plains are home to Grevy's Zebra, and top birds include Arabian Bustard and Somali Ostrich. Nearby we'll visit the now-defunct Bilen Lodge where we hope to find African Collared Dove, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse and Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark, before driving to Awash town for lunch. In the afternoon we'll make our way to into Awash National Park, settling in at our rustic lodge next to Awash Falls before heading out in the afternoon in search of bushveld birds such as Buff-crested Bustard and Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse.

Day 8: Awash National Park

The bird-rich Ilala Sala Plain of Awash National Park will be our main focus of the day. In the early morning we hope to find Red-winged Lark, Singing Bush Lark, Arabian Bustard, Kori Bustard, Abyssinian Roller, Isabelline Wheatear, Pied Wheatear, Somali Fiscal, White-bellied Bustard and Lesser Kestrel. There are plenty of birds

to find in the bushy areas too, including Gillett's Lark, White-bellied Go-away-bird, Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Yellow-breasted Barbet, Slate-coloured Boubou, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit, Grey Wren-Warbler, African Grey Flycatcher and White-throated Robin or Irania.

Day 9: To Lake Langano

This morning we commence our birding on the lava flows adjacent to Lake Basaka, the best site to search for the localised Sombre Rock Chat. Here we may also find Blackstart and Graceful Prinia, before continuing along the Rift Valley towards Lake Langano. Depending on water levels we will stop at Lake Ziway and wetlands around Koka, where a wide range of waterbirds may be seen, including Black Crowned Crane. Arriving at our lodge we will bird around the lodge grounds on the shores of Lake Langano, where a good selection of bushveld birds can be seen and Verreaux's Eagle-Owl and Spotted Eagle-Owl day roosts are often known. After dark we'll look for Northern White-faced Owl.

Day 10: To Bale Mountains

The very birdy surrounds of our lakeside lodge will be the focus of our birding this morning. It is the best site to see Clapperton's Francolin, and other birds may include Red-throated Wryneck, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Von der Decken's Hornbill, Black-billed Wood Hoopoe, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, African Orange-bellied Parrot, Western Black-headed Batis, Northern Puffback, White-winged Black Tit, Red-faced Crombec, African Thrush, Northern Black Flycatcher, White-winged Cliff Chat, Chestnut Sparrow and Red-headed Weaver.

After breakfast we'll drive into the spectacular Bale Mountains, looking for Cape Eagle-Owl en route. At the national park headquarters at Dinsho a walk in the juniper forests could turn up a good list of sought-after birds, including Abyssinian Long-eared Owl and Africa Wood Owl on day roosts, White-backed Black Tit, Abyssinian Woodpecker, Abyssinian Ground Thrush, Abyssinian Catbird, Cinnamon Bracken Warbler, Brown Woodland Warbler and Mountain Nyala. In the late afternoon we'll drive to Goba for a two-nights stay.

Day 11: Sanetti & Hareenna

The breathtaking scenery of the Bale Mountains provides a backdrop to some of Ethiopia's best birding. We'll spend a full day examining the alpine moorlands and Hagenia forests of the area. In the early morning we'll cross the Sanetti Plateau quickly, stopping for Chestnut-naped Francolin and Rouget's Rail as we go, before dropping into the Hareenna Forest. At Hareenna we'll hope to find African Hill Babbler, Abyssinian Crimsonwing, African Olive Pigeon, Abyssinian Woodpecker, Abyssinian Oriole, Abyssinian Catbird, White-cheeked Turaco, African Emerald Cuckoo, Scarce Swift, Silver-cheeked Hornbill, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Sharpe's Starling, Abyssinian Ground Thrush, Yellow-bellied Waxbill and Yellow-crowned Canary, before climbing back up to the very high Sanetti Plateau once it has warmed up. On the plateau itself we'll be watching out for the striking Ethiopian Wolf, and its favourite food, two species of rodent. Birds we hope to find include Spot-breasted Lapwing, White-collared Pigeon, Blue-winged Goose, Ruddy Shelduck, Abyssinian Longclaw and Moorland Francolin. Leaving the plateau we'll look for the local race of Brown Parisoma.

Yellow-fronted Parrot © Tertius Gous





Ethiopian Wolf © Tertius Gous

Day 12: Bale to Awasa

After some final birding in the Bale Mountains we'll drop back into the lowlands, avoiding the very rough road from Harennna to Negele by returning to the main Addis-Nairobi road that runs down the Rift Valley. In the afternoon we'll bird around the shores of Lake Awasa, where we stay overnight.

Day 13 : Awasa to Negele

The lake shore of Awasa adjacent to our hotel is very birdy, with more interesting waterbirds including White-backed Duck, African Pygmy Goose, Pink-backed Pelican, Little Rush Warbler, Lesser Swamp Warbler, African Swampphen, Allen's Gallinule and Lesser Jacana. The wooded shores hold Double-toothed Barbet, Banded Barbet, Eastern Grey Woodpecker, Red-throated Wryneck Brown-throated Wattle-eye, African Spotted Creeper and Blue-headed Coucal. Over the rest of the day we'll drive to Negele, where we stay for two nights. En route we will watch out for Thick-billed Raven and

stop to search for the spectacular Prince Ruspoli's Turaco in its favourite habitat.

Day 14: Negele area

The overgrazed Liben Plain near Negele holds perhaps Africa's most threatened bird, the rare Archer's (or Liben) Lark. This species will form the main focus of our visit, but we also hope to find several other specialties, including Somali Crow, White-crowned Starling, Ethiopian Swallow, Shelley's Sparrow, Black-winged Lovebird, Somali Short-toed Lark, Pectoral-patch Cisticola, Speke's Weaver and Plain-backed Pipit. Grey-capped Social Weaver breeds on the edge of the plain. A bit further out of town, and area of dry thornveld is one of the best places to search for the localise Salvadori's Seedeater, which can be seen alongside Golden-breasted Starling, Shelley's Starling, Yellow-necked Spurfowl, Reichenow's Seedeater, Red-and-yellow Barbet, Acacia Tit, Somali Crombec and Purple Grenadier. After dark we'll search for Donaldson-Smith's Nightjar.

Day 15: Negele to Yavello

We'll set off early this morning, taking the direct route from Negele to Yavello via the Dawa River. The river is the most accessible site to search for Juba Weaver and African White-winged Dove, and offers the chance for the localised Black-bellied Sunbird. Other more widespread birds include Red-naped Bushshrike, Pringle's Puffback, Yellow-vented Eremomela and Pale Prinia. As we make our way to Negele we'll keep a lookout for roadside Vulturine Guineafowl. In the late afternoon we'll arrive at our lodge on the outskirts of Yavello for a two-nights stay. Stresemann's Bush Crown occur in the lodge grounds, and after dark we'll look for African Dusky Nightjar, Donaldson-Smith's Nightjar and African Scops Owl.

Day 16: Yavello area

The Yavello area offers some of the best dry country birding in Africa, and we have a full day to explore the open plains of Soda and the Commiphora bush between Yavello and Soda. On the plain itself we watch out for Somali Courser, Black-capped Social Weaver, Somali Fiscal and Short-tailed Lark, and in the more grassed areas, Boran Cisticola and Desert Cisticola. Commiphora thickets offer an entirely different set of birds, including Northern Grosbeak-Canary, Bare-eyed Thrush, Kenya White-eye, Black-throated Barbet, D'Arnaud's Barbet, Pygmy Batis, Bare-eyed Thrush, Tiny Cisticola, Three-streaked Tchagra and Scaly Chatterer. Brown-tailed Rock Chat is possible in some of the rocky areas.

Day 17: Yavello to Lake Langano

After some final birding in the Yavello area we'll make the long drive back north along the Rift Valley to Lake Langano, where this time we stay overnight at a lodge on the south-eastern shores of the lake. This area is moister with taller trees and small patches of forest, and new birds in this area may include the endemic Yellow-fronted Parrot, Bare-faced Go-away-bird, Bruce's Green Pigeon, Narina Trogon, White-cheeked Turaco, Grey-backed Fiscal, African Goshawk, Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike and Greater Honeyguide.

Day 18: Lake Langano to Welkite

Today we bird near our lodge before breakfast, before driving back into the highlands west of Addis to stay overnight at Welkite, near Gibe Gorge.

Day 19: Gibe Gorge to Addis

The final day of the tour sees us visiting Gibe Gorge for the morning. Tall-grass acacia woodland on the escarpment above the river are home to Gambaga Flycatcher, Long-crested Eagle, Lesser Blue-eared Starling, Black-bellied Bustard and Moustached Grass Warbler. Along the river itself we'll look for Black Crowned Crane, Egyptian Plover, African Wattled Lapwing, Bar-breasted Firefinch and flocks of Abyssinian Waxbill. In the afternoon we'll drive back to Addis where the tour ends.

Egyptian Plover © Clive Prior



INCLUDED IN TOUR PRICE

- Services of Birding Africa tour leader and local guides
- Entry fees and activities as per itinerary
- Ground transportation
- Accommodation and all meals starting with dinner on the first night and ending with lunch on the last day
- Airport transfers
- Bottled water in the vehicle and one soft drink per meal
- General tips
- Note: return internal flight between Addis and Lalibela is billed separately

BOOKLET AND CHECKLIST

Birding Africa provides:

1. Tour leaflet with detailed itinerary (this document).
2. Tour Information Pack, emailed to you.
3. Tour Booklet with checklists, provided in hard copy at the start of the tour.

QUESTIONS?

Please email the office, info@birdingafrica.com, to reserve a place or ask questions.

HOW TO BOOK

1. Complete our easy online booking form.
2. Secure your booking deposit by credit card on our 3D secure online payment site (\$150).
3. Settle the balance by bank transfer 150 days before the tour. We will email you a reminder and the banking details.

