

Ethiopia – November 1997

Having had my latent desire to see more of Africa awakened by my two trips to Tanzania and by using Ethiopian Airways to get there via Addis Ababa what could be more natural than a visit to that country?

So when an article appeared in the times about travel to Ethiopia with a firm called Naturetrek for less than £1,000 I just had to follow through. Fully expecting to be told the price was a misprint I was pleased to find it was not. £990 for ten days so I took it. This was to be the start of a long relationship with Naturetrek.

So 21st November saw me meeting the rest of the group at check in for Ethiopian flight 751 from LHR to Addis Ababa where we duly arrived at 9.30 next day. After immigration etc., we were met by our new guide Tesfaye Alemayoh who was a nice chap but not the experienced Naturalist promised. And so the trip commenced with a drive in a minibus to Debre Zeit where after spotting a few birds we spent our first night in Ethiopia.

I will keep this report short but our route took us next to Lake Awassa with plentiful birds and other animals including watching the local fishermen share their catch with many pelicans etc., that dived to order. Then on south to the forests of Wando Guenet where we met our first large mammals in the form of Spotted Hyena and Colobus monkeys.

Retracing our route we spent a further evening at the arid and brackish Lake Langano where the accommodation was 'rough' to say the least. More birds of course.

Then to Awash National Park for our final few nights in Ethiopia which were spent in semi derelict 'Mobile homes' where ablutions were hand done from a bucket and we needed to spray to keep the ants out. Strangely the food was the best of the trip and a night watch of the dustbins brought forth excellent sightings of Honey Badgers. Dangerous enough but nothing compared to the notorious Afar Tribesmen who live in the Awash Depression.

Photos are few for this report as it was a film camera and pre computer days but here are a few:-



Whilst in Awash we heard shooting and an Afar tribesman came running over to us waving his AK47. Oooer!

It transpired that he thought our telescopes were looking at his wife bathing and was very angry. However Tesfaye reassured him all was OK and we were birding and he calmed down and even allowed photographs.



So all was well in the end. Phew!

Apart from that we wandered around looking for something or other



With the final excitement being that when we returned to Addis Ababa prior for or last evening we found the Hotel had no rooms with single beds..... That caused some consternation and laughter.

But we all survived the experience as the 'group photo' shows.

