



Visions Global Empowerment Ethiopia Service Trip Itinerary

July 29th - August 9th, 2024

Hawassa * Addis Ababa

DAY 1

Monday, July 29th

Addis Ababa

- Target date of arrival at Addis Ababa – Ethiopia’s capital city (anytime during the day is fine, but keep in mind that hotel check-in is typically in the early afternoon so your room may not be ready if you arrive earlier)
 - Private hotel transportation will be arranged on arrival to take you directly to the hotel
- Overnight at [Best Western Plus Pearl Addis](#) or comparable

DAY 2

Tuesday, July 30th

Addis Ababa → Hawassa

- Take late morning domestic flight to the city of Hawassa – capital of the Sidama Region in southern Ethiopia
- Check in to [Haile Resort Hawassa](#) – our home for the next 8 nights
- Introductions to some of our Visions Ethiopia staff and possible visit to the Visions Center for the Deaf and/or Visions Academy School for the Deaf (time permitting)
- Back at the hotel, sort materials and finalize plans as a group for the next several days of service activities in Hawassa

DAY 3

Wednesday, July 31st

Hawassa

- Breakfast (buffet) will be at the hotel restaurant every morning (starting from 6:00am)
- 8:30am departure for Visions Center of the Deaf or Visions Academy School for the Deaf
 - Working in close collaboration with our local staff, we will conduct educational programs for Deaf youth each day and service activities for the wider community for the next week from roughly 9:00am – 4:00pm each day (specific plans will be made depending on the volunteers who join & their particular interests and skill sets)
 - Lunch will be a catered (traditional, vegan-friendly) meal at the Visions Academy everyday

- Upon returning to the hotel each afternoon, we will aim to meet as a group to debrief the day's activities and make plans for the following day when necessary.
- Dinner each night will be at the hotel unless other arrangements are made
- During our stay in Hawassa, we will also plan to do periodic sightseeing. Potential sites to visit include the morning fish market on the shores of Lake Hawassa, visit to the Millennium Park to see various species of monkeys and birds (including the giant marabou stork), short hike up Tabor Mountain, boat tour on Lake Hawassa, a night of traditional dancing at a dance hall, making traditional foods like injera and coffee, etc.



DAY 4

Thursday, August 1st

Hawassa

- Continue service activities with the local community

DAY 5

Friday, August 2nd

Hawassa

- Continue service activities with the local community



DAY 6

Saturday, August 3rd

Hawassa

- Continue service activities with the local community

DAY 7

Sunday, August 4th

Hawassa

- Continue service activities with the local community



DAY 8

Monday, August 5th

Hawassa

- Continue service activities with the local community

DAY 9

Tuesday, August 6th

Hawassa

- Continue service activities with the local community
- Farewell dinner with our Visions Ethiopia staff & new friends

DAY 10

Wednesday, August 7th

Hawassa → Addis Ababa



- Depart on the morning domestic flight back to Addis Ababa
- Afternoon shopping for coffee, spices, honey, souvenirs, etc. and sightseeing. Options for sightseeing in/around Addis include:
 - **Unity Park:** located on the premises of the Grand Palace, it is composed of various historical, natural and cultural sites. The palace covers an area of 40 hectares and contains myriad historical buildings and plants that date back to the time of Emperor Menelik II.
 - **Bole Medhanialem Orthodox Church:** an Ethiopian Orthodox Tewhedo church whose name means “Savior of the World”, it is the second largest cathedral in the whole of Africa and the largest in Ethiopia.
 - **Meskel Square:** While also being one of the busiest and most chaotic intersections in the world, Meskel Square is an important public space and historical site well known for its impressive rows of stairs which constitute the country’s largest communal running track. It is used by hundreds of Ethiopians daily who use the square to train, running across its vast semi-circular amphitheatre. The track starts at the bottom, and you work your way up. By running from one side to the other, without skipping a level, you would have run 26.2 miles – a full marathon. It’s at Meskel Square where the Great Ethiopian Run, the largest athletic event in Ethiopia, begins and finishes.
 - **African Union Headquarters**
 - **Mercato Market:** a large open-air marketplace in the Addis Ketema district, the name also refers to the neighborhood in which it is located. It’s considered Africa’s biggest market, an open-air sprawl of vendors that goes on for kilometers that has nearly everything you can imagine.
 - **National Museum of Ethiopia:** The National Museum of Ethiopia, situated in the heart of the capital, is a repository of the country’s cultural, historical, and archaeological treasures. It is also recognized for housing significant paleoanthropological exhibits. The museum was conceptualized in 1936 with an exhibition of ceremonial costumes donated by the Solomonic dynasty. It later grew out of the establishment of the Institute of Archaeology in 1958, an initiative intended to facilitate archaeological research in northern Ethiopia, primarily conducted by French archaeologists. The museum began showcasing artifacts from these expeditions, gradually diversifying its activities into conservation, documentation, and exhibition and research departments. The National Museum is famous for its archaeological finds, particularly early hominid fossils like “Lucy,” a partial skeleton of *Australopithecus afarensis*. More recent additions to the collection include “Selam,” another archaic fossil dating back to around 3.3 million years ago. The museum houses four main exhibition sections:
 1. The basement is dedicated to archaeological and paleoanthropological exhibits, where visitors can explore the evolution of humanity through the display of ancient hominid fossils.

2. The first floor houses artifacts from ancient and medieval periods, along with regalia and memorabilia from Ethiopia's past rulers, including Emperor Haile Selassie.
3. The second floor offers a journey through African art history, showcasing pieces in chronological order from traditional to contemporary works. One of the most notable pieces is Afewerk Tekle's "African Heritage." This floor also presents a collection of secular arts and crafts, featuring traditional weapons, jewelry, utensils, clothing, and musical instruments.
4. The third floor focuses on ethnographic displays, presenting an overview of the cultural richness and diversity of Ethiopia's people.

- **Mount Entoto:** this highest peak of the Entoto Mountains, which overlooks the city of Addis Ababa, reaches 10,500 feet. It is considered a sacred mountain and has many monasteries. Mount Entoto is also the location of a number of celebrated churches, including Saint Raguel and Saint Mary. The mountain is densely covered by eucalyptus trees that were imported from Australia during the reign of Menelik II, and mostly planted during Emperor Haile Selassie's reign. Thus, it is sometimes referred to as the "lung of Addis Ababa." The forest on the mountain is an important source of firewood for the city and was a source of building material for the city in earlier times.



- Overnight at hotel (TBD)

DAY 11

Thursday, August 8th

Addis Ababa

- Continue sightseeing in Addis Ababa

DAY 12

Friday, August 9th

Addis Ababa → Home

- Day of leisure (or continued sightseeing, if you prefer)
- Depart for home according to your specific flight itinerary

***Please be advised: itinerary is subject to change**

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Deaf persons in Ethiopia face extreme hardship, social exclusion, and prejudice on a daily basis. For most deaf people in Ethiopia, there are virtually no public services or formal opportunities for education, sign language development, employment, or social inclusion & mobility. With a staggering estimate of more than 5+ million persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, the situation for the majority of these individuals is quite dismal. Best estimates show that more than 95% of deaf persons nationwide are left out of formal education entirely and almost none will ever access formal employment. Deaf civil society has not yet taken root in most places throughout the country, especially those in more rural communities. Knowledge of formal Ethiopian Sign Language (EthSL) is very low, even amongst deaf youth and Special Needs Education teachers at public schools in major urban areas.

In an effort to improve the situation for Deaf youth & adults in Ethiopia, Visions Global Empowerment (“Visions”) has been spearheading various initiatives since 2012 aimed at improving education, inclusion and the overall quality of life for Deaf persons. Working in close partnership with our local staff and partners, we have been collectively striving toward the development of thoughtful interventions including increasing the accessibility and quality of life skills training, Ethiopian Sign Language (EthSL) instruction, job training and opportunities, public education and awareness raising, medical care, early childhood education, social activities, and other educational support for Deaf Ethiopians and their families. More details of this ongoing, year-round work can be found on the Visions website (www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment.org) and Visions Ethiopia website (www.VisionsEthiopia.org).

12+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Visions has been organizing group service-learning trips to Ethiopia since 2012, in which over 150 individuals have volunteered their time already. As part of this experience, program participants will be spending time with local leaders who are deaf / work with the deaf community, Visions staff (teachers, interpreters, support staff), and other local SNE (Special Needs Education) teachers; conducting site visits to various ongoing Visions’ projects; conducting training programs for schoolchildren, young adults, & others in the community; and learning about the issues that shape the lives of Ethiopian deaf children and young adults.

Volunteers will also have time for periodic sightseeing and leisure, providing an opportunity to see some of the many fascinating sights that Ethiopia has to offer. Participants will experience some of the historical and archaeological heritage, nature/wildlife, and more. All of this will give volunteers an opportunity to experience Ethiopian culture and engage in what amounts to a powerful cross-cultural exchange and learning experience. This trip also provides an opportunity to gain exposure to Amharic, Sidama, & Ethiopian Sign Language and to share insights & experiences with our Ethiopian counterparts about culture, language, development, and more.



BUILDING LOCAL BONDS

Our program has been designed to work concurrently to develop skills in students, adults, local partners, teachers, university students, other community members, and local & foreign volunteers. Using facilitated learning techniques, team building, and gradual ownership of curriculum and activities leadership, volunteers and children develop confidence, skill, and teamwork capabilities. Our goal of supplementing the educational opportunities for students and professionals in Deaf education in Ethiopia while honoring Ethiopian Sign Language, indigenous language, and the richness of Ethiopian cultures provide an experience for all participants that is both rich and respectful of all. As Visions’ development work continues year-round, we will follow up on any program-specific goals or projects that emerge from this service-learning trip and encourage all participants to stay involved in these efforts long-term.

TRAVEL MAP

