

DISCOVER THE WONDERS
SPIEKERMANN
TRAVEL  SERVICE



THE HORN OF AFRICA

Somaliland, Djibouti, Eritrea and Eastern Ethiopia.

February 15- March 01, 2023

Led By Anthropologist, Elena Dak

Photo Credit Gary Krosin

Can be combined with Niger tour (February 07-15, 2023).

This tour is Shangri-La for those who dare to break the mold of conventional travel, and is certainly the 'road less traveled' for explorers. Eritrea, on the shores of the Red Sea, has a history dating back to the Stone Age, but the country has only been internationally recognized since 1993, following a succession of wars with Ethiopia that spanned thirty years. Asmara, the capital, proudly displays a shining collection of Art Deco, and other, architectural wonders. Massawa, a port city on the Red Sea, is the starting point for visits to the Dhalak Islands, one of the most unspoiled and least known reefs in the area. The major highlight of Eritrea is the colorful diversity of the nine ethnic groups that live within it. Somaliland should not be confused with Somalia; visitors are welcome here. In addition, Somaliland is home to one of the greatest treasures of the Horn of Africa: the 10,000-year-old Laas Geel cave paintings, which were discovered by a French archaeological team in 2002. Djibouti draws few tourists thanks to its reputation for being the hottest place in Africa (probably true) and for being ridiculously overpriced (probably true). However, with vistas that will take your breath away, a culture caught halfway between 20th century France and modern-day Africa, and the opportunity to swim with whale sharks, the smallest country in the region is definitely worth a visit. Many of you have joined us on Ethiopian tours in previous years, but most likely, you have not visited Harar, a gem of a city in Eastern Ethiopia. Harar is a well-preserved walled city that stands to the east of the Great Rift Valley. It was founded between the 7th and 11th centuries and emerged as the center of Islamic culture and religion in the Horn of Africa. The city contains 99 mosques, including the 16th century Grand Mosque, as well as over 100 shrines, and a colorful, vibrant marketplace. The surrounding Ahmar Mountains are where Ethiopia's best coffee is produced. Join us on this unforgettable adventure.

Ihab Zaki

Managing Director, Spiekermann Travel

Wednesday, February 15
Arrive in Addis (Ethiopia)



Upon arrival at Bole International Airport, you will be met by your guide and transferred to the Celeste Hotel (or similar) for check-in. You will start the day of touring with a visit to the **National Archeological Museum** to see some of the fascinating collections housed within, including **Lucy** (if she is not on-tour), the 3.2 million year old australopithecine female whose remains were discovered in the Rift Valley, Ethiopia, in 1974. Head to the famous **Tomoca coffee shop**, established in 1953 and known for serving the locals and tourists alike Italian-style coffee using Ethiopian coffee beans. Return to your **Hotel** for dinner and overnight. **(L,D)**

NB: For any pre-tour / early morning arrivals, an extra hotel night will need to be booked and the cost will be provided at due time.

Thursday, February 16
Addis - Hargeisa (Somaliland)



Enjoy this morning at leisure, exploring Addis as you like, or just relax at the **Hotel**. Have lunch in one of the restaurants in town before you transfer to the airport for your direct flight (ET-374) to Hargeisa, capital city of Somaliland. Upon arrival at the airport, and once you have passed through arrival procedures, you will be met by your Somaliland drivers and guide and transferred to the **Maan Soor Hotel (or similar)**. Late afternoon city tour of the city with a walk through the market where you will see loads of local money and gold for exchange on the streets. Return to your **Hotel** for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Friday, February 17
Hargeisa – Berbera (100 miles)



After breakfast today, visit the cattle market which attracts people from the surrounding areas with their sheep, goats, camels and cows. Afterwards, drive to the port town of Berbera, former capital of Somaliland and capital of the British Protectorate. Transfer to the ocean side **Maan Soor Resort (or similar)** in Berbera, and enjoy late afternoon free time to swim and/or relax in the ocean. Dinner and overnight at the **Hotel**. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, February 18
Berbera – Las Geel – Hargeisa (115 miles)



After breakfast, enjoy a tour of **Berbera**. Although it does not have a lot to offer, we will see some of the remaining Ottoman, Arab, Indian and Jewish architecture, some of which are in a state of decay. Afterwards, drive back towards Hargeisa and head to visit the fascinating Neolithic **Laas Geel** cave paintings along the way. The

paintings are between 5,000 to 10,000 years old and were discovered by archaeologists in 2002. There are paintings of giraffe, dogs and antelope, and images of cattle in ceremonial garb being worshipped by men who appear to be bowing before them. Continue the drive back to Hargeisa in the late afternoon and transfer back to the **Maan-soor Hotel (or similar)** in Hargeisa for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, February 19
Hargeisa – Harar (Ethiopia)



Begin your day with an interesting drive back to Ethiopia, crossing the border at **Tog Wechale**, where we will check-out through Somaliland immigration and check-in through Ethiopian immigration. The drive will pass Somali people who live in both Somaliland and Ethiopia. We will have a boxed lunch along the way. In the afternoon, drive to the historic walled city of **Harar**, passing through the famous rock formations at **Babile**, and see some wonderful landscape. In the evening, we will meet with the famous **hyena-feeding** man for an up-close and personal encounter with these amazing creatures. Enjoy dinner at one of the restaurants in town, and then transfer to **Wonderland Hotel (or similar)** for check-in and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, February 20
Harar – Dire Dawa (35 miles)



Today we will explore the walled city of **Harar** with its Christian and Muslim **markets**, the former residence of the French author, **Arthur Rimbaud**, and the **Harari Museum** that depicts the interior architecture and decoration of the homes of the Harari people. Drive to **Dire Dawa** in the late afternoon and check-in to the **Sam-rat Hotel (or similar)**. **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, February 21
Dire Dawa – Djibouti (Djibouti) (187 miles)



Today's drive will take you to Djibouti passing by the old railway in the city of **Dire Dawa** and crossing the border at **Dewele**. Here at Dewele you will check-out with the Ethiopian immigration and check-in at the **Djibouti** side for a visit to another small but interesting country in the Horn of Africa. Your drive through Djibouti will be via one of the major towns, **Ali Sabeh**, where you will have a late lunch. In the afternoon, drive to **Dikhil** and continue on to Djibouti. Check-in to the **Hotel Accasia (or similar)** for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, February 22
Djibouti (Lac Assal) (125 miles)



Enjoy breakfast, and then have a day-excursion to the colorful **Lac Assal**, which is the lowest spot in Africa. Lac Assal, ('The Sea of Honey' in Arabic) is used as a source of table salt and we may see

some salt mining while we are there. We will also see the 'new crack', which was created by the new Rift formation. Enjoy a picnic lunch along the way and then return to your *Hotel* in Djibouti for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, February 23 Djibouti (Whale Shark Excursion)



After breakfast, depart from Fishing Point in Djibouti and head to **Ras Korali** to experience an encounter with **whale sharks**. We can swim and snorkel for 45-60 minutes with these huge creatures. Whale sharks feed almost exclusively on plankton and small fish so they pose no threat to humans. Lunch and snorkel/diving equipment will be provided on the boat. At the end of the day, head back to Fishing Point and transfer to the brand new resort on **Moucha Island** in the late afternoon for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Note: Whale sharks are wild animals & diving companies cannot guarantee seeing them, even during the peak season.

Friday, February 24 Djibouti – Addis (Ethiopia)



In the morning, we will have free time to relax on the beautiful island before we cross back to **Djibouti** city for lunch. In the late afternoon, transfer to the airport for your return flight to **Addis**. Upon arrival, transfer back to the *Celeste Hotel (or similar)* for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Saturday, February 25 Addis – Asmara (Eritrea)



After an early breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight to **Asmara**, the capital city of Eritrea. You will be met and transferred to *Asmara Palace Hotel (or similar)* for check-in. Enjoy a morning visit to the **Asmara Cathedral**, which was built in 1922. The Lombard-Romanesque style of the building is simply amazing. It features a tall Gothic bell tower and is visited by many people from all over the world. Enjoy lunch at Gibabo Restaurant before we continue exploring Asmara, with a stop at the **mosque**, built in 1938. Its blocks of dark stone, arranged in various geometrical patterns on the façade, are beautiful. The **Synagogue** of Asmara, built in 1906 is another important point of interest. We will also visit **Enda Mariam Coptic Cathedral**. Other attractions are **St. Michael's Orthodox Church** and the **old market**. **Gibi** is a significant public building, built in 1897 as the former palace of the government. It was the seat of the first Italian governor of Eritrea. Eritrea's "White House", which is the office of the president, is also very beautiful. We will visit the **old post office**, and the **Italian Opera House**, and then have some free time after lunch. Dinner will be at one of the restaurants in town and then return to your hotel in Asmara for overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Sunday, February 26 Asmara – Keren (60 miles)



In the morning, enjoy a walk through the beautiful streets of **Asmara** with **coffee stops** in some of the beautiful, historic buildings. In the afternoon, embark on a very **scenic drive** to Keren. Your drive will pass through the interesting Tigrigna-speaking villages, **Blen** and **Tigre**. Check-in to the *Hotel Sabrina (or similar)* in **Keren** for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Monday, February 27 Keren – Asmara (60 miles)



This morning, after breakfast, we will visit the vibrant weekly

market in Keren (open on Mondays only). The open-air weekly market is a hive of activity. Stalls sell fruits, vegetables, and spices, as well as souvenirs and products made by local artisans. We will have the opportunity to purchase items such as **baskets, pottery and silver**. It is a photographer's delight with vibrant colors and excitement. We will see the camel and **livestock market** before returning to **Asmara**. Check back in to the *Asmara Palace Hotel (or similar)* for dinner and overnight **(B,L,D)**

Tuesday, February 28 Asmara – Massawa



This morning, you will have the opportunity to join a **church service**. Today is the monthly festival of St. Mary and you can join a service at the Church of St. Mary in **Asmara**. After breakfast (and the optional service), embark on a breathtaking drive to **Massawa**, along the escarpment of the **Rift Valley**. Stop for photo opps around **Arbe-Robue** from where you will have great views of the mountains, valleys and the old railway to **Massawa** with the railway tunnels. Arrive in **Massawa** and transfer to the sea-side but basic **Grand Dahlak Resort** for check-in and lunch. After lunch, head by ferry to one of the many islands in the **Dahlak Archipelago**. Enjoy the ride, and then snorkel amongst the beautiful unspoiled reefs; spend half the day swimming and snorkeling and exploring the island before returning to your hotel in **Massawa** for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, March 01 Massawa – Asmara – return to USA



In the morning have some free time in **Massawa** before driving back to **Asmara**, stopping to take some photos along the way. You will share some day-use rooms in **Asmara** today so that you can freshen up and rest before your transfer to the airport for your return flight home to the USA. **(B,L)**

"We reserve the right to change the order of activities or places visited due to unforeseen schedule conflicts or in order to make the itinerary run more smoothly or in case of any unforeseen situations particularly as it relates to the several border crossings between nations of HOA"

Special Trip Remarks:

These countries are poor and the tourism infrastructure is lacking in many areas. Some meals may be simple, food may be slow coming, some hotels will be basic (even those considered to be the best in the area) and you may encounter issues like power outages, lack of hot water, poor internet service etc.). Some roads are in need of re-paving, some sites can be closed without prior notification. These drawbacks require a sense of tolerance and acceptance, and visitors are reminded that they are pioneering in uncharted terrain and this is the real attraction of these destinations. In addition, the internal flights are unpredictable and could be cancelled at the last minute or rescheduled and thus require flexibility and humor, and sometimes the purchasing of new tickets. ***Please be aware: If additional expenses are incurred due to situations beyond the control of Spiekermann Travel, all travelers will be asked to cover their own extra costs.*** This journey is an adventure for those prepared to accept some uncertainties as well as gain the rewards of travel to a region where Americans are seldom seen. The trip also requires participants to be in fit physical condition and be able to walk and climb and endure sightseeing in the heat (usually between upper 80s to mid-90s during the day). By joining this tour, you fully accept the conditions explained above and agree to abide by a spirit of adventure and flexibility throughout the tour.



About your Lecturer... Elena was born in Venice in 1970 and has been working for more than 20 years for Italian tour companies leading trips in Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. Elena is one of the most passionate tour leaders and loves her work, loves the subject matter and thrives when she feels in charge of educating a group and inspiring them about the destinations they visit. She is deeply interested in nomadic peoples and she has conducted several research studies

on them (the Touareg in Niger, the Wodaabe in Tchad, the Tigrin in Ethiopia and the Rabari in India). She is a graduate of the University of Ca' Foscari in Venice in Conservation of Cultural Heritage with Ethnographic Orientation. At the moment, she is studying in Bicocca University in Milan for her M.A in Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences. She has written four books: "La Carovana del Sale" (The Salt Caravan)(Corbaccio editor, 2007),"Io Camino con i Nomadi" (I walk with Nomads) (Corbaccio editor 2016), "Sana'a e la Notte" (Sana'a and the Night) (Poiesis editor, 2019) and "Ancora in Camino" (Still Walking) (Crowdbooks editor 2020). Two of her books have been chosen for a course of Modern and Contemporary Studies at Cà Foscari University. She has given lectures in Cà Foscari and Bicocca University and she currently contributes articles to Africa Magazine and Erodoto108 Magazine. She held a Ted Talk in Milan in October 2018 and her performance was very well received by her audience. Our first tour using Elena's expertise was our Chad program in November 2018 and our travelers were very happy to have her on board and loved her and her contagious charisma and enthusiasm, as well as her excellent abilities as a tour manager and overseer of the operation.

Tour cost (land only): \$9,995.00
per person sharing in double occupancy

Single Supplement: \$995.00
 Price based on group size minimum of 6 participants and maximum of 12 participants

Trip Grade: III Lodging Level: *..***

Tour includes:

- All transfers and ground transportation (A/C 4WD coaster bus, fuel, insurance, and English speaking drivers).
- Accommodation on a full-board basis (bed, breakfast, lunch and dinner)
- Flights between the HOA countries.
- Day-use room in Asmara on March 01, before departure.
- Non-alcoholic drinks with meals.
- Daily bottles of water on tours.
- Flights within the Horn of Africa starting in Addis and ending in Asmara, as per the itinerary.
- All entrance fees, as per the program.
- English speaking, professional guides in each country.
- Scouts and police officers where necessary.
- Additional security in Somaliland.
- Boat trip & whale shark excursion in Djibouti.
- Government taxes on all included services.
- Gratuities to guides, drivers, porters, hotel and restaurant staff

Tour does not include:

- International airfare into Addis and out of Asmara. (itinerary is based on the flight schedule of Ethiopian Air departing from/to Washington DC's Dulles airport).
- Visas - current costs: Ethiopia (E-Visa = \$70.00), Somaliland (\$80.00), Eritrea (\$150.00 including processing fee) and Djibouti (\$130.00 including processing fee)
- Any unexpected additional dayrooms required, hotel overnights, new flights due to airline schedule changes/cancellations.
- Items of personal nature: beverages, laundry, phone calls, email, souvenirs, camera fees, etc.
- Flight from Asmara to Addis on the last day in case you must leave from Addis.
- PCR test fess.
- Travel insurance (**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**)

Trip Grade:

III Challenging: Parts of the trip are physically challenging, involving hiking on rough terrain or in sand or at high altitudes. There may be very long drives on rough roads; weather conditions with high heat or humidity, presence of insects. You may have simple picnic lunches, primitive bathroom facilities along the road and remoteness from modern towns or cities.

Lodging Level:

***Simple:** One or more properties on the trip are very basic, and primitive.

*****Superior:** Lodges and hotels with additional amenities, refined service and comfort level acceptable to western standards. 3 – 4 stars in the main cities.

