



Information for visitors (City Tour)

Bahir Dar is one of the twelve cities that was conferred the UNESCO Learning Cities Award 2015. Bahir Dar shares this key idea of building a learning city.



Geographically, Bahir Dar (Amharic for “shore side”) is located between 11^o28’94” to 11^o38’29” north latitude and 37^o23’28” to 37^o36’34” east longitude. The city is strategically located at the side of the country’s largest Lake - Tana and the world’s longest River-Abay River, in what was previously **Gojam** province.

The city’s history dates back to 16th or 17th c, when Pedro Paez erected different buildings, one of which two-story structure is seen today in the compound of St. George Church. In the late 18th century, Bahir Dar was used as a camping spot for the army of emperor Tewodros II, where the emperor was forced to shift to Begemdir due to cholera epidemic. Before Italian invasion,



which happened in 1936, Bahirdar was still a village inhabited by finger counted huts of Woyto community.



During the reign of King Haileselassie, different studies were underway to expand different infrastructures of the town but were interrupted due to the invasion by Italy. Instead, it had served as the camping site of Italian army of Gojam province until Italy was defeated in 1941. After the war, Bahir-Dar had served as the capital of the region and the first administrator of the district was *Azaj Zewudu Zemedagegnehu*.

In 1948 the first master plan for the city was prepared by Engineer Tadesse W/Gebriel and different public service institutions were established to server the community. The first school, named as Sertse-Dingil was opened in 1944. The modern master plan that gave current shape of the city was prepared in 1962 by a team of architects led by a German known as Mucks Gutter to accommodate the 300,000 population.



The construction of Tis Abay Hydropower dam was commenced in 1961, which gave Bahir-Dar access to electric power upon completion of the project in 1964. In 1963 the Poly-technique Institute and Felegehiwot Hospital were opened under the support of Soviet Union and Germany respectively.

In the 1956, the total population was 2,500 and with growth rate of 10.5% the population has risen to 24,490 in 1974. The current population of the city is estimated to be around 450,000.



With tremendous tourist attractions and gratification, the city lies at the southern edge of Lake Tana, the outlet of the great Blue Nile River and doorstep to the mystical monasteries found on the islands. Its main boulevard is dotted with beautiful palm trees and vibrant cafes and restaurants. The Blue Nile falls, which is about an hour drive from the city plunges 50 meters over a cliff and is nearly 400 meters wide.



The beautiful town of Bahir-Dar is ranked as one of Ethiopia's best tourist destinations because of the various attractions it offers its guests. In 2002, UNESCO ranked it as first convenient city for dwellers in Africa and 10th in the world and it was awarded the UNESCO cities for peace prize for addressing the challenges of rapid urbanization.



Currently, it is also one of the largest cities in the country and serving as the political center of Amhara National Regional State.

Tourist Attractions: -

- Azwa Mariam Monastery
- Lake Tana
- The Blue Nile Falls
- Monastery of Debre Mariam
- Bahir-Dar weekend open market
- Church of Debre Sina Mariam
- St. George Church
- Bezawit Haileselassie Palace
- Amhara People's Martyrs Memorial Monument



Ethiopian Cultural Food and Drinks

Ethiopians have unique and original varieties of culinary delights; ‘Injera and Wot’ being the most prominent. Injera is at the heart of every meal in Ethiopia. The national dish of Ethiopia is locally known as “Wot” usually a hot spicy stew, which comes in many varieties. Together with the meal, Ethiopians enjoy a variety of drinks like Coffee, Tej, Tella, Areke etc.

1. **Injera**



Injera is a sour and spongy round bread, made of Teff flour, that’s naturally vegan and gluten-free. Sauces and dishes are commonly poured on top of the injera, which is then used as a vehicle to get the deliciousness from table to mouth. Injera has a very strong taste and texture — so when you like it, you love it, and it’s hard to put down.



2. Doro Wot (Chicken Stew)



This rich chicken stew is one of Ethiopia's most famous dishes. It's known that when an Ethiopian girl wants to marry, she has to make *doro wat* for her fiancé's family as a demonstration of her culinary proficiency and thus worthiness to be chosen as a wife. While this traditional cooking exam may still hold in rural areas, it is quickly dying out in Ethiopian major cities.

Doro wat takes forever to make, which is why it is often only served during holidays and on special occasions. It involves slow cooking red onions, *berbere* and chicken parts for hours, until just the right consistency and blend of flavors has been achieved.



3. Yetsom Beyaynetu (Vegetarian Mixed Plate)



Also known as a fasting platter, *yetsom beyaynetu* is a mixed vegetarian plate that usually includes several types of lentil and split pea stews (e.g., *misir wot*, *alecha kik* or *mesir kik*) with kale (*gomen*) and a spicy tomato stew (*sils*). Talk about a vegetarian – if not a vegan dream.

4. Shiro wot





Shiro is a delicious chickpea powder-based dish (sometimes also including lentils and broad beans), slow-cooked with Ethiopia's popular and spicy red berbere sauce. There are several kinds of shiro to enjoy, from the soupy thin **shiro wot** to the thick and glob-like (but still delectable) **shiro tegamino**.

5. Maheberawi (Meat



Ethiopian meat-based mixed plates usually combine several stews like *key wot* (beef stew), *tibs* (lamb, beef or goat cubes cooked with nitter kibeh and herbs like rosemary), and *kitfo* (raw ground beef). We highly recommend ordering one of these and sharing it with at least two to three people.

6. Kitfo





Kitfo is a big treat for the ordinary Ethiopian. The leanest meat is reserved for this dish, which is then minced and warmed in a pan with a little butter, *berbere* and sometimes *tosin* (thyme). It can be bland and disgusting, or tasty and divine. If you're ravenous after a hard day's travelling, it's just the ticket, as it's very filling. A tip? Ask for a heap of *berbere* on the side. Traditionally, it's served just *leb leb* (warmed not cooked), though you can ask for it to be *betam leb leb* (literally 'very warmed', ie cooked!). A *kitfo* special is served with *aib* and *gomen* (minced spinach). In the Gurage region (where it's something of a specialty) it's often served with *enset* (*kotcho*; false-banana 'bread'). *Kitfo beats* (restaurants specialising in *kitfo*) are found in the larger towns. Another favourite meat dish of ours is *siga tibs*, which consists of small strips of fried meat served with onions, garlic and spices.

Ethiopian Cultural Drinks

1. **Tejj** (Honey Wine)



T'ej is a honey wine (mead) that has been brewed in Ethiopia for centuries. It is bittered with gesho leaves and twigs. Gesho is kind of like a hop and falls into the buckthorn family. The gesho also gives it a unique direction of flavor. T'ej is usually homebrewed in Ethiopia. However, there are tej betoch (Tej houses) throughout the country. Traditionally, it is served in



a birele container but a pint would be just fine. It is best served chilled and goes well with spicy food. This is one of the more delicious weird alcoholic drinks that can be brewed at home.

2. Tella



Tella is an Ethiopian home-brewed beer, which differs from the others in some respects. First it is brewed with barley or wheat, hops, or spices. Secondly, it has a smoky flavour due to the addition of bread darkened by baking and use of a fermentation vessel, which has been smoked by inversion over smoldering wood. Tella is not processed under government regulations hence the alcohol content varies but is usually around 2% to 4%. Filtered Tella has a higher alcohol content ranging from 5% to 6%.

How to Get Here: -

Bahir-Dar, a town in northern Ethiopia, is 578 kilometers from Addis Ababa, Ethiopian Airlines operates daily flights between Bahir-Dar and the capital city. The most common and convenient way of traveling in Bahir-Dar is cycling. Taxis also provide efficient transportation in the city. Intercity bus service provided by the Sky Bus line and Abay Bus transport system which operates daily to and from the capital. Its climate is somewhat tropical and different from the typical highland climate of northeastern Ethiopia.