

## Meskel Celebration (the findings of the true cross)

A UNESCO registered Intangible cultural heritage.

Meskel is celebrated by Ethiopian Orthodox believers as an important religious event, as it is believed that a piece of the True Cross was brought to Ethiopia. It is kept in Amba Gishen, which itself has the shape of a real cross. Celebrations take place indoors with family and outdoors, with the entire population wearing enormous robes. Meskel is simply the holiday commemorating the finding of the True Cross.

The festival is celebrated on September 27, or September 28 in a leap year according to the Gregorian calendar, at a time when the country is at its most beautiful after the rainy season, when flowers are in full bloom and yellow, daisy-like blossoms cover the hills around Addis Ababa.

It is a special event held on the eve of Meskel to commemorate the smoke that supposedly led Empress Helena to the site of the True Cross.

The True Cross, on which Christ had been crucified, was thrown into a ditch or well and then covered with stretchers until Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine, the first Christian emperor of Rome, discovered the spot where three crosses presumably used in the crucifixion of Jesus lay, as well as two of the crosses on which the two thieves had been executed with him.

The celebrations begin in earnest on September 26, the eve of the feast, when families across the country prepare the Demera, a tall prism of branches meant to commemorate the burning fir tree that led Helen to the cross. Once this is prepared, a cross-made of Demera flowers is placed on the pile and the families return home full of anticipation for the celebrations to begin.

As a sign of goodwill, believers paint their foreheads in the morning with the ashes of the burnt bone fire.

Meskel means “cross” in Amharic and is now on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

**The Meskel square festival takes place every year on September 26 (the date may vary by one day every 4 years)**

## Itinerary

Day 1- Upon arrival at Bole International Airport, you will be greeted by our tour guides and transferred to your booked hotel. Most flights to Addis Ababa arrive in the morning, leaving the remaining hours of the day available for a city tour of Addis Ababa. Full- and half-day tours are available on our website. Learn more about our city tours there.

***If you arrive at night, the next day will be reserved for a full-day city tour of Addis Ababa.***

Day 2 - After a leisurely breakfast, we prepare for the day before the festival itself begins. We head to Friendship Park to make final preparations and enjoy a lunch with vegetarian and vegan options. Then, we head straight from our lunch spot to Meskel Square to secure a good photo spot.

The celebration usually starts at 2:00 PM and ends at 7:00 PM

Farewell Night: After leaving Meskel Square, we enjoy dinner in one of Ethiopia's best jazz or (reggae optional) lounges, or in one of the most beautiful dance and folklore houses with a traditional coffee ceremony. This concludes the two-day tour.

## What does the two days festival tour include?

\*Hotel fees.

\*Air fair for domestic flights. (There are no flights for this section)

\* Pick up and drop off service.

\*Transportation, including fuel and driving.

\*Entrance fees, at all listed places.

\*Professional English speaking tour-guide.

\*Lunch, dinner hot drinks and bottled water.

## What's not included?

\* Alcoholic beverages not listed on the package

\*Tips and Gratitude

## All-Inclusive Meskel festival tours

Total: \$682 (individual price)

\*Group of 2: \$511 per person

\*Group of 3: \$ 459 per person

\*Group of 4-9: \$ 413 per person

\*Group of 10 or more: \$375 per person

From 25% to 45% discount for group tours

