THE BLUE NILE & BEYOND

RECONNAISSANCE EXPEDITION

with

ENCOUNTER OVERLAND

NAIROBI to CAIRO
8 weeks
4,000 miles (6,500kms)

KENYA, ETHIOPIA, ERITREA, SUDAN, EGYPT

ITINERARY GUIDELINE

Week 1: Nairobi to Lake Naivasha, foot safari in Hell's Gate National Park. North from Mt Kenya to Kaisut Desert & Marsabit, into Ethiopia.

Week 2: Ethiopian Rift Valley to Lake Awasa, Shashamene hot springs, Bale National Park & Sof Omar caves.

Week 3: Into the central highlands to Addis Ababa, markets & bazaars of the capital. Mountain roads north to Lalibela & ancient monolithic churches. To Bahir Dar on Lake Tana & source of the Blue Nile.

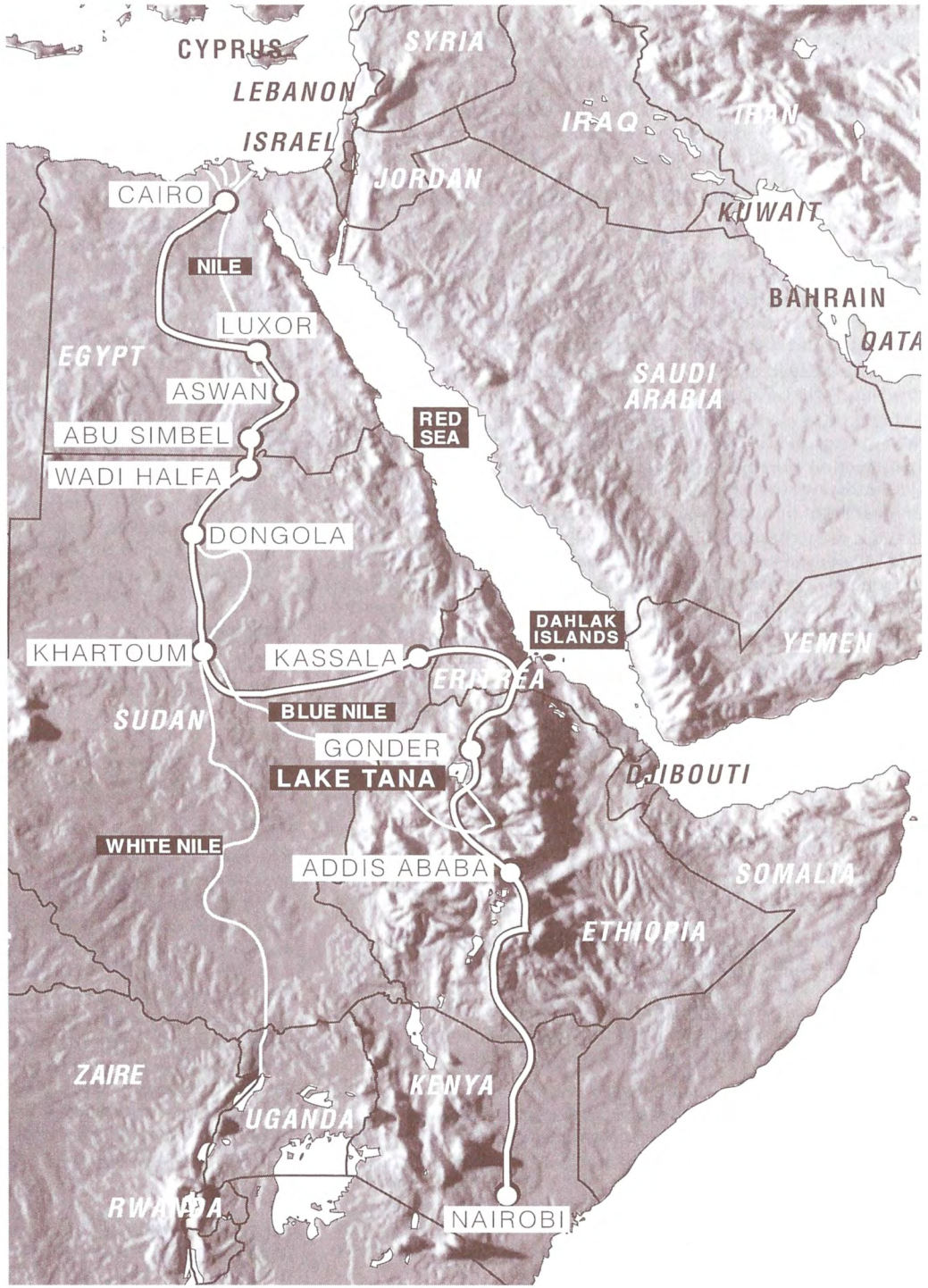
Week 4: Tisisat Falls, castles & palaces of Gonder. 2,000 year old city of Axum, into Ertitrea to Mitsiwa, & the Red Sea.

Week 5: Inland to Sudan, the jebels of Kassala to Khartoum and the junction of the White & Blue Niles.

Week 6: North through the Bayuda desert, to the oasis of Dongola and the Temple of Kawa. Temples of the Nile and the Nubian Desert to Wadi Halfa & Egypt.

Week 7: To Abu Simbel on Lake Nasser and Aswan. Down the Nile aboard felucca sailing boats from Aswan to Kom Ombo.

Week 8: To Luxor, Karnak & the Valley of the Kings. To the Western Desert and its oases, then to Cairo—the Pyramids & Sphinx.



PLEASE NOTE that since this is a Reconnaisance Expedition the above route and itinerary are intended as a guide only. It is many years since EO trucks were last in northern Ethiopia or northern Sudan, and some of our route is completely new and unknown.

It should be recognised that the constraints of transit permits, road conditions and local restrictions, as well as group interests and wishes, can alter our exact route, its activities and timings.

DELAYS OR FORCED ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

The possibility of some delay en route is planned into this expedition and we expect to arrive on time. But, by the very nature of trans continental travel in Africa, it should be recognised that longer delays outside our control can still happen. It is suggested that you do not make any firm commitments within 8 days of the scheduled end date of the expedition in Cairo.

If we are delayed en route, no additional payments to Encounter Overland will be asked of you.

Major forced changes to our expeditions are unusual in Africa. When they do happen it is because of a border closure or civil insurrection making it impossible or imprudent to enter a particular country or region. In the worst of cases this could involve an overflight or alternative transport to avoid the affected area.

If this were to happen, Encounter Overland would meet the first US$300 per person of the alternative plan. Should more than this be needed, a contribution from you of up to (but not exceeding) US$300 would be required. Any further amount beyond this would again be met by Encounter Overland.

HIGHLIGHTS and ROUTE

Africa's Great Rift Valley is a wide and often dramatic geological fault running from Mozambique and Lake Malawi through Tanzania and Kenya (spawning Mts Kilimanjaro and Kenya on the way) to Ethiopia and the Red Sea, the river Jordan and the Dead Sea.

KENYA

Lake Naivasha, 60 miles/100kms from Nairobi, is one of the freshwater lakes of the Valley, and home to a huge variety of bird species. Joy Adamson (Born Free) built a house here; the small Hell's Gate National Park is one of only two in the country to allow access on foot. The gorge and cliffs protect zebra, baboon, ostrich and gazelle which in turn attract leopard and cheetah.

To Thomson's Falls at 7,900ft/2400m in the cool Aberdare Hills, past the snow peaks of Mt Kenya to the wild and undeveloped tribal territories of the northern frontier. Across the lands of the Samburu to the scrub of the Kaisut desert—canyons and camels, craggy mountains, volcanic craters and sudden oases of forested hills. Marsabit is the town of the north, a market and meeting place for the Rendille, Boran and Galla peoples—clothed in hide, wearing multicoloured beads and necklaces, fierce in tradition and independence of ways.

ETHIOPIA

Climbing roads lead into the central highlands of Ethiopia (7-10,000ft/2-3,000m) along the chain of Rift Valley lakes. It is a beautiful lush land, a temperate climate of woodlands and eucalyptus, small towns, wheat and tobacco.

To the hot springs at Shashemene and highland antelope in the beautiful Bale National Park, to the Sof Omar caves and Addis Ababa beneath Mt Entoto. The market is one of the largest and liveliest in Africa, with everything from beer and vegetables to gold and silver jewellery, frankincense and myrrh. In the mountains north of Addis is Lalibela, where beautiful monolithic churches were built in the 12th and 13th centuries and remain today as one of the unrecognised wonders of the world.

The highland town of Bahir Dar lies on the shores of Lake Tana, source of the Blue Nile. Islands in the lake are dotted with monasteries dating from the 17th century. We drive via the impressive Tisisat Falls on the Blue Nile to the old capital of Gonder. This was once part of the ancient Axum Empire, of the Queen of Sheba, and trade with Egypt, Greece and India in ivory, silks and spice. Then Axum faded and Gonder rose.

Castles and palaces, showing influences from Europe, North Africa and Arabia were built by the emperors during the height of Gonder's power in the 17th and 18th centuries. Monasteries and beautifully muralled churches reflect the area's 1,700 year association with Christianity.

ERITREA

We are at the moment still applying for permission to enter the newly formed country of Eritrea, travelling to Mitsawa on the Red Sea and then by boat across to the reputed beauty of the Dahlak Islands.

Inland again, across the escarpments and wild, rugged hills of northern Eritrea we reach the border with Sudan at Kassala.

SUDAN

Kassala is a pleasant city of mango, banana, guava and pomegranate orchards—overlooked by the bizarre sugarloaf mountains and jebels that dominate the horizon from a long distance. From Wadi Medani we travel alongside the Blue Nile again, into Khartoum and its sister city of Omdurman. Here is the confluence of the two Niles, where the twin cities were founded on the slave trade between Black Africa and Turkey.

North from Khartoum we travel across the Bayuda desert, to the welcoming sight of palm groves and water in the oasis of Dongola. Here also is the ancient Temple of Kawa. Following the Nile northwards on its course through the Nubian desert the landscape is punctuated by the many ancient Egyptian temples and sites—a wealth of treasures at every turn in the river. We reach Wadi Halfa, a remote and distant port on the southern limits of Lake Nasser.

EGYPT

Across the wastes of the eastern Sahara are the great statues of Ramses and Nefertari and the Sun Temple at Abu Simbel, isolated and alone in the sands. Fronting this incredible rock temple, four colossal statues of Ramses II guard the southern approaches to Egypt.

At Aswan, where the Nile flows in its full majesty out of Lake Nasser, the river is studded with rocks and islands, amongst which glide graceful white feluccas—traditional shallow draft Nile sailing boats. On one of these islands are the lovely temples of Philae. Boarding feluccas we sail slowly down stream to Kom Ombo's temples and tombs of the 'Old Kingdom'. Then by road to Luxor; the great temple of Amun at Karnak (Thebes) and the Valleys of the Kings and Queens.

Here joining desert piste we head west to the oasis towns of Kharja and Dakhla as we chart our route throught the great Western Desert. Then north to Cairo—the Treasures of Tutankhamun, the Pyramids and inscrutable Sphinx.

GROUP SIZE and STAFF

21 max including EO staff. Plus local guides in Hell's Gate National Park, Bale National Park, Valley of Kings and Queens, Pyramids and Sphinx.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

The high heat of the Sudan and Upper Egypt, together with minimal facilities throughout much of the expedition's route can take their toll. Living a nomadic/camping lifestyle for two months under these conditions requires a flexible and adaptable approach, and cannot be recommended to many people over the ages of 40-45. Water for personal washing will occasionally need to be restricted in desert regions.

INCLUDED IN EXPEDITION COST

All transport food, camping equipment and supplies, local guides, camping fees, tolls, entrance fees and activities as detailed from published starting date of expedition until final arrival in Cairo. There are no kitties or similar en route payment funds.

EXPEDITION COST DOES NOT COVER

Flights to Nairobi and homewards from Cairo and transfers to/from airport and airport taxes in connection with same; vaccinations, visas, personal insurance, laundry, snacks, drinks, occasional lunches in major centres (minimal cost), personal clothing/equipment and items of a personal nature. Some individual entry fees to museums/sights (minimal cost). Accommodation and meals in Nairobi/Cairo before/after expedition.

EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED

Standard EO truck equipment including 2 person tents, campbeds, kitchen/dining tent, tables and stools, light, cooking equipment and utensils, mosquito nets, 1st aid kit.

WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING

A medium or lighweight sleeping bag, a medium sized bag or backpack with detachable or internal frame and a daypack. Personal clothing, strong footwear, water bottle, personal medicines and toiletries etc. No specialised clothing or equipment is necessary and you probably already have most of what is needed. A complete suggested clothing list is included in our pre-departure information. Soft bags or frameless backpacks are the most suitable kinds of luggage to bring. Most flights into and out of Nairobi and Cairo have a 44lbs/20kg baggage limit.

TRANSPORT

EO expedition truck, on foot in Hell's Gate National Park (day hike), Nile feluccas between Aswan and Kom Ombo (1 day).

ACCOMMODATION

Camping throughout; on deck aboard Nile feluccas between Aswan and Kom Ombo (1 night). Occasional and basic campground facilities exist in some cities and centres, usually extending to simple washing/showering and toilet arrangements only. Otherwise open "bush" camping with no facilities other than standard EO truck equipment. (Your involvement is needed in camp setup, domestic and day to day routines etc).

MEALS, COOKING and FOOD

Camp cooked breakfasts and evening meals, picnic lunches. Expedition members are involved in daily fresh food shopping and meal preparation. (Fresh vegetables, fruit, meat where available and safe, eggs, bread, cereals, cheese, preserves, supplemented by truck supplies of canned and dried goods in areas where fresh supplies are unavailable or severely limited. We frequently bake our own bread).

Meals are prepared by felucca crews on Nile (1 night). In a few larger cities where a day is spent in individual sightseeing or activities away from the truck, lunch will sometimes be at your own expense. The cost of these occasional lunches is minimal. Vegetarians usually have no great difficulty maintaining an adequate diet in Africa, though it must be accepted that for a few days at a time in remoter desert regions fresh supplies may not be available, and your meals may need to rely heavily on canned and dehydrated vegetables, cereal staples, canned fruit etc. Please advise EO in advance if you are a strict vegetarian.

PASSPORTS and VISAS

You will need a passport that is valid for not less than 6 months after the end of the expedition, and which contains not less than 10 blank pages. Your passport must also be free of any evidence of having visited Israel. Visa requirements and costs vary according to your nationality, and even then are subject to sudden change. Some visas need to be obtained before departure, others en route. EO or your agent can advise you of all the up to date visa requirements applicable to you, and their costs.

We can also help you in obtaining any visas you may require before departure. Visas en route are applied for as a group with the assistance of your leader/driver.

INSURANCE and MEDICAL

Everyone must have individual personal travel insurance. Various policies are available, but they must include a minimum of £20,000 or US$30,000 for medical, hospital and additional expenses including emergency repatriation. Insurance should also cover 'cancellation and curtailment', and personal effects loss. EO or your agent can direct you to, or provide you with, responsible insurance underwritten for expedition travel.

You will need to obtain vaccinations against Yellow Fever and Meningitis. Several other vaccinations are strongly recommended though not required by law for travel through Africa. Their up to date details are given in our pre-departure information.

Malaria pills are supplied on the expedition. Malaria is virulent in Africa and on the increase worldwide. You must be willing to accept a strict regime of malaria tablets as well as the use of our mosquito nets in areas of known malarial risk. A sensibly comprehensive medical/first aid kit is carried on the truck. It is there for whenever it is needed, but it should not be considered a travelling pharmacy.

It is a good idea to bring along your own small supply of band-aids, aspirin, insect-repellent, lip salve etc. Insect bites and minor tropical sores should be anticipated in central Africa. We suggest a dental check up before you leave home.

PERSONAL SPENDING MONEY

You will need personal spending money to cover personal day to day expenditure en route—drinks, snacks, laundry, occasional lunches in major centres, (average) en route visa costs, individual museum entry fees and some souvenirs. You should budget a further £25/$40 per day that you spend in Nairobi or Cairo before or after the expedition to cover hotel, meals etc.

Ethnic crafts can be tempting, attractive and good value in Africa. Posting them, or getting them home may not be. Good buys can include East African ebony and hardwood carvings, bracelets, baskets, weaving and jewellery; Kelims, rugs, tapestry, hand beaten brass and copperware in Egypt. Many small 'treasures' need not cost much at all. Carpets and the best hardwood carvings start at about US$80. Credit cards are generally accepted only in a few of the larger cities.

Apart from this, and your en route visas, EO has no hidden expenses, funds or kitties to surprise your spending money in Africa.

ARRIVING AND LEAVING

There will be a pre-departure meeting at our Nairobi hotel at 6.00 pm two days before expedition departure date. This meeting is also your latest arrival time.

If you are arriving early: Nairobi is an interesting city with plenty to do—National Museum, Nairobi National Park, Karen Blixen's house, Snake Park and Railway Museum, Bomas of Kenya (traditional dance and songs), cinemas, shopping along Kenyatta Avenue and city market, Indian Ocean at Malindi—1 day's bus or train from Nairobi, or Lamu Island—1 hr by air. Room reservations at our Nairobi hotel before departure may be made through EO, with payment by you directly to hotel on arrival.

Ending: Even though serious delays en route are unlikely, we would prefer that you not have any firm commitments for up to 8 days after scheduled expedition completion date in Cairo.

INTERESTING READING

Uhuru (Robert Ruark), Born Free (Joy Adamson), In Search of the Forty Day Road (Michael Asher), Gods, Graves and Scholars (C.W. Ceram), The Blue Nile (Alan Moorehead).

A full list of recommended reading in history, guidebooks and fiction is given in our pre-departure information.

SPECIFIC DETAILS

On Mailing Lists for receiving letters from home, the best ways to organise and carry your spending money, clothing lists etc are all contained in our Pre-departure information.

CLIMBING MT KILIMANJARO

The walking climb of Kilimanjaro (19,337ft/5,894m) is a challenging but very worthwhile experience not to be missed if you are fit, in the area, and have the inclination and time! The climb, including hotel in Moshi at start and end, takes 7 days/6 nights. A further travelling day should be allowed at each end to get between Nairobi and Moshi, just across the border in Tanzania at the base of the mountain.

The cost of the climb including all government, hut, and entry fees, guide, porters, food, hotel and meals before and after the climb is approximately US$520. This is payable direct to the climb operators in Moshi on your arrival. The climb may be started on any day of the week. If you like, EO can make a confirmed reservation for you. (There is a reservation charge by EO of US$50 for this). Reservations are recommended as only a limited number of people at a time are allowed on the mountain. If you think you might be interested, ask for our information dossier on Climbing Kilimanjaro.

Southern & Central Kenya 'Short Rains' Nov/Dec. 'Long Rains' March-May. (Hot & humid on coast)

PLAINS

		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
CELSIUS	High	28	28	27	26	25	25	25	25	27	27	27	27
Daily Average	Low	18	18	18	18	17	17	17	16	17	17	17	17
FAHRENHEIT	High	83	82	81	79	78	77	77	78	80	81	80	80
Daily Average	Low	65	65	64	64	63	63	62	61	62	63	63	63
Relative Humidity		54%	56%	62%	69%	72%	69%	66%	66%	65%	64%	63%	62%
Rainfall in mm		46	61	130	175	147	74	46	86	91	97	122	99

Northern Kenya & Ethiopia. Warm days, cool nights in the Highlands. Most rain June—Sept. Hot at lower altitudes in Kenyan desert and southern Ethiopia.

HIGHLANDS

		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
CELSIUS	High	24	24	25	25	25	23	21	21	22	24	23	23
Daily Average	Low	6	8	9	10	10	9	10	10	9	7	6	5
FAHRENHEIT	High	75	76	77	77	77	74	69	69	72	75	73	73
Daily Average	Low	43	47	49	50	50	49	50	50	49	45	43	41
Relative Humidity		33%	39%	37%	44%	43%	59%	73%	72%	64%	39%	37%	29%
Rainfall in mm		13	38	66	86	86	137	279	300	191	20	15	5

Sudan & Egypt. Warm Winters, very hot Summers. Rainfall higher in north.

NILE

		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
CELSIUS	High	23	26	31	36	39	42	41	41	39	37	31	25
Daily Average	Low	10	11	14	19	23	26	26	26	24	22	17	12
FAHRENHEIT	High	74	78	87	96	103	107	106	106	103	98	87	77
Daily Average	Low	50	52	58	66	74	78	79	79	75	71	62	53
Relative Humidity		29%	22%	17%	15%	15%	16%	16%	18%	19%	21%	26%	31%
Rainfall in mm		0	0	0	0	3	7	53	71	18	5	0	0

AGENT'S STAMP

OTHER COSTS/EXPENSES

Flights to/from Nairobi & Cairo .....

Visas .....

Vaccinations .....

Insurance .....

Personal spending money .....

TOTAL_____