



T.E.S.F.A. Newsletter

Volume 2 June/July 2007

Dear Friends

Once again thanks to you all for your continued support to TESFA and the communities in Meket, who have had a great 6 months.

And it has been quite an exciting time. Most importantly the communities have had their best yet January to June, with the third site beginning to really make money for their community. They have raised over 11,000 birr in fees from 62 guests since the start of 2007.



The Aterow tukuls at the end of the day (picture by Langdon Family)

Yadukulay our fourth site has just been completed - (see website) and the first guests are due to stay there at the end of June. With current reservations and bookings it seems the 250th guest of the Community Tourism sites may visit Meket before the sites close for the rainy season. This year, for the first time, TESFA have taken bookings for next season. The most satisfying figure is that the total money raised in guest fees including predicted bookings for June 07 for the Meket Community Tourism is now 133,785 birr (equivalent to over \$15,000 USD).

There has also been a real increase in media attention to the work TESFA is doing, with articles in papers and magazines around the world - 'VSD' in France, 'Outside' in the USA, 'The Times' in the UK, 'Le Temps', Geneva.



Mequat Gelada Baboons - The Big Boss- (picture by Kevin Perry)

Community Tourism Guiding Enterprise:

TESFA has now established an office in Lalibela. Based out of this office two independent guides are setting up a guiding business to support the Communities. The guides: Kidanemariam and Mulugetta have been guiding guests since January.

The office is located behind the Roha Pastry, next door to the Lalibela Hotel, in the lower part of town. This is very convenient for guests staying at the Jerusalem Guest House, Tukul Village, Lal Hotel, Heaven Guest House, the Roha (Ghion chain) and a host of small hotels.

To contact the new office / Guiding Enterprise Tel: 033 336 1094/5 ; Email: tesfalal@ethionet.et



The Timkat procession begins at Abuna Aragawi church, Aterow. Picture by Robin Bronen

Timkat and the Ethiopian Millennium

Timkat is the most important Orthodox festival in many parts of Ethiopia. In Meket communities really celebrate this festival in style. Timkat is often described as 'Ethiopian Epiphany' which can be confusing as Epiphany in the West is most known as commemorating the visiting of the Magi or "Wise Men" after the Nativity. However in Ethiopia the feast commemorates the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River by John.

Epiphany's origin (a Greek word meaning "appearance" or "manifestation") is indeed complex and intriguing. The original celebration of Epiphany, particularly in the Eastern Church was a general celebration of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and included the commemoration

of his birth; the visit of the Magi, who arrived in Bethlehem; all of Jesus' childhood events, up to and including his baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist; and even the miracle at the wedding of Cana in Galilee. However, it seems fairly clear that the Baptism was the event predominantly commemorated and indeed Timkat is Amharic for baptism. For more information regarding Timkat please see our website page for 'Festivals'.

Thus the Millennium Timkat is of special significance: 2,000 years since the manifestation of Jesus Christ! And what could be better than to become part of this unique ceremony along with the communities in Meket who are thrilled to host guests for the special day.

This year, Mark led a group of guests through the Meket communities during Timkat. He says of the trip: *"With a backdrop of stunning landscapes, we joined local communities celebrating the most important celebration in their year. It falls when the harvest is in and collected and the hard work is done. The communities celebrate with dancing and singing, at which we were welcome guests."*

"I fell in love with the people with whom we connected, the beauty of the Earth and the ancient wisdom that enveloped us" says Robin Bronen one of the Timkat guests from this year.



The Wajela community celebrate Timkat

"..far better than watching people from a car like on a screen, with this trek you are in the screen." says French journalist Catherine Henriette. **Mark will organise a few groups to spend millennium Timkat (Jan '08) with the participating Meket communities. Book your place quickly as places are limited and will fill up fast.**

Extending TESFA's work

In the coming year, Ethiopia's Millennium year, TESFA has big plans to extend the community tourism work to other communities beyond Meket. The first priority for TESFA is Abuna Yoseph.

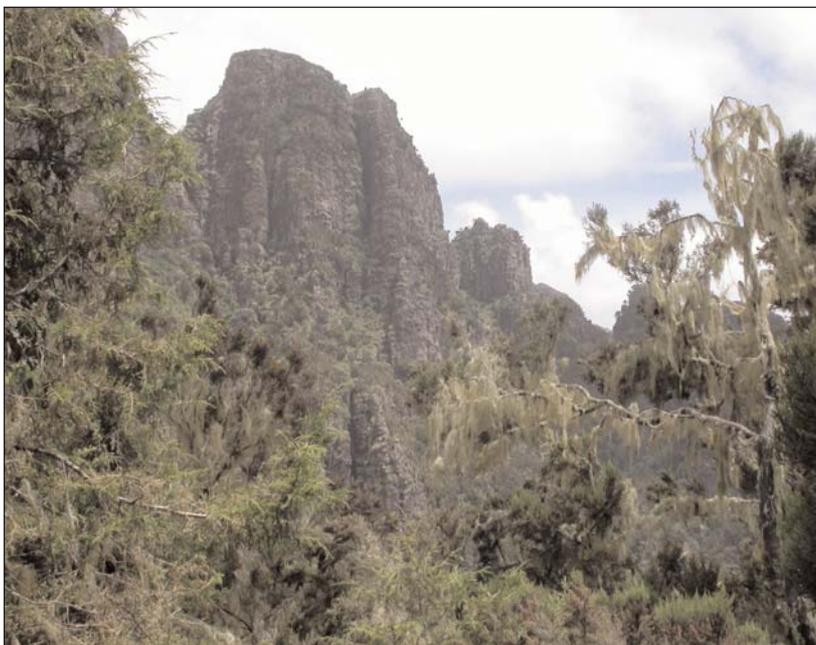
Abuna Yoseph

Abuna Yoseph is quite likely Ethiopia's 3rd highest massif, after the Simien and Bale mountains, with its peak at around 4,300masl. It is home to two packs of Ethiopian Wolves, the most endangered canid in the world, only surviving in a few remaining mountain tops with remnants of the afro-alpine ecosystem they need for survival.



Ethiopian Wolves (taken by Martin Harvey in Bale)

In the case of Abuna Yoseph the very existence of these packs is threatened. TESFA is concerned that unless mechanisms can be developed with the communities that graze their livestock on the afro-alpine vegetation to reduce the pressure on the environment they might disappear soon. Funding for such work is short but the German Embassy in Addis Ababa has recently provided additional funding that will allow TESFA to start the work alongside Frankfurt Zoological Society who work on conserving the Ethiopian Wolf habitats across Ethiopia. However more funding is being sought to allow TESFA's work on Abuna Yoseph to have a bigger impact.



Moss covered Juniper & Giant Heather(Erica) in Wof Washa

Wof Washa Forest

TESFA is seeking to develop community based tourism in a forest some 170km from Addis Ababa. Wof Washa (Wof means bird, Washa means cave), is Ethiopia's oldest state forest, having been set aside by the Shoan King Zeray Yacob in the 14th century. It is currently at 8,200ha, but has shrunk from 9,200ha in 1994. TESFA will work alongside a local environmental NGO SUNARMA to give local communities an incentive to conserve their forest. Again funding is required to begin this project.

The forest is stunning, with mixed tree types at altitudes from 3,500m to 2,650m (that was as far down as we got!). The area is verdant with carpets of flowers visited by a myriad of butterflies even in May!



Experience the Real Ethiopia



Hemprich's Hornbill in Meket

TESFA's Millennium Calendar

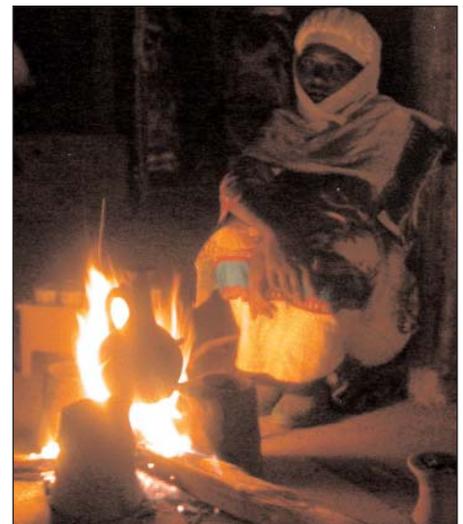
TESFA is launching a calendar to mark the millennium which will be available later in July. It will illustrate the Ethiopian Calendar, juxtaposed with the western dates, using western lettering. The ancient Ethiopian Calendar, with its 13 months, monthly saints' days and special annual/bi-annual saints' days, has been a mystery for most non-Ethiopians living here.

Now with the calendar's workings clearly illustrated and lovely photographs taken from Meket at different times of the year it will come alive. Starting in September 2007 - Meskerem 2000 - it will run for 12 months. Anyone wishing to make a donation towards TESFA's work with communities will be sent a calendar, while we have them in stock. For more information contact Hanna in the Addis office on tesfactb@ethionet.et.

TESFA and the Communities mark the Millennium

TESFA staff, members of the Meket Communities and the guides who link guests to the community-run sites, will participate in the Millennium Great Ethiopian Run on 9th September 2007 (see www.ethiopianrun.org).

Each community will be sponsored for two of their number to come to Addis and participate in the 10km road race, Africa's biggest mass participation run. We hope to have around 16 participants in this special run. TESFA will be seeking sponsorship for this event to raise money for the work on Abuna Yoseph. If you would be happy to sponsor a runner please contact Mark or Hanna.



Coffee Ceremony -Aterow Community



Meket Women collecting water in 'ensera' clay pots. Pic by Kevin Perry

What the Meket Guests are saying about their experience with the communities:

"Many thanks indeed for an absolutely exceptional couple of days walking in the highlands of Ethiopia and meeting the communities. It was the best experience I have had since arriving in Ethiopia ... you are catalysing a genuine positive difference in the lives on the communities .."

Extract from a letter from Mr Bob Dewar, British Ambassador to Ethiopia

In the last issue we stated that the Ethiopian calendar is the Julian Calendar. In fact it is neither the Julian nor Gregorian as both are 12 months calendars and the Ethiopian calendar has a short 13th month called Pagume. It is utterly unique! The new millennium starts on 12th September 07. For more information please see our website's millennium page on www.community-tourism-ethiopia.com