



Ethiopia

KAFA Biosphere Reserve

Your Visitors' Guide



KAFA
BIOSPHERE RESERVE



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Off the beaten track: Exploring Kafa

A Unique Natural Heritage

The goal of The Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU) is to protect Kafa's Afromontane cloud forests and their unique biological diversity. This German organisation has been cooperating with the Ethiopian government as well as with other national and international partners since 2006. Numerous projects aim to stop deforestation, promote sustainable regional development, create new sources of income for the local population and raise environmental awareness.

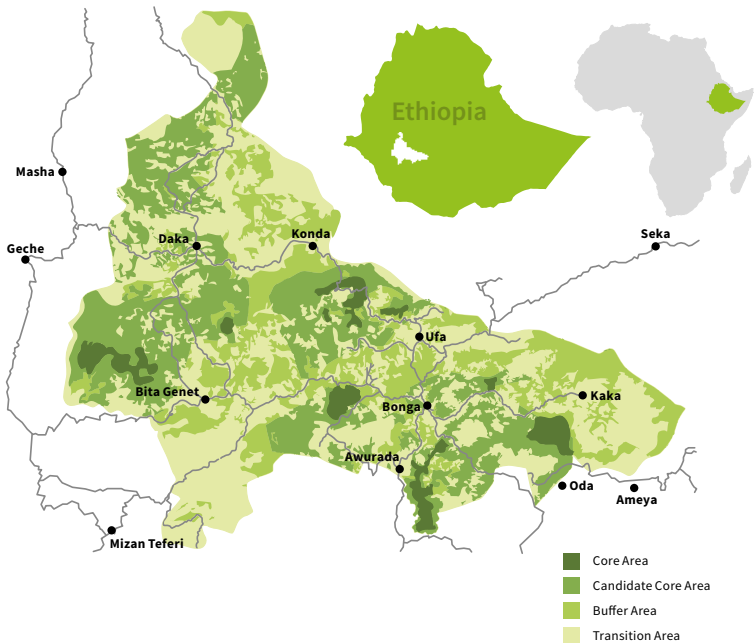


By visiting the Kafa Biosphere Reserve, you will be making an important contribution to conserving this invaluable natural heritage. This booklet will accompany you during your time in Kafa. It provides you with interesting facts and information about the region, the people and various tourist attractions.

Prepare to discover an exotic travel destination, observe rare animal species in their natural habitat and learn about centuries-old traditions!

We wish you a pleasant stay!

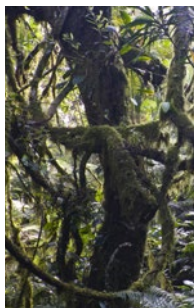
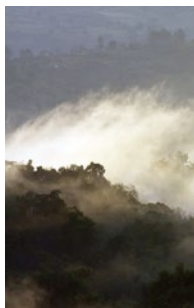




Location

The Kafa Biosphere Reserve, a predominantly highland region, is located in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS), the most ethnically and linguistically diverse region of Ethiopia. It stretches over a total area of 760,000 hectares and forms part of the catchment area of three large rivers, the Gojeb, Dincha and Woshi. In June 2010, Kafa was admitted by UNESCO into the world network of biosphere reserves.

Kafa is home to the last surviving cloud forests with wild coffee trees of the worldwide known species *Coffea arabica* and to more than half of the country's remaining moist montane forests. With its dense primeval forests,



bamboo thickets, grasslands and wetlands, Kafa boasts a rich variety of ecosystems and provides a unique habitat for around 250 plant species, 300 mammal species and 300 kind of birds, some of which are only found here. On account of this huge diversity, Kafa belongs to one of the 34 hotspots of biodiversity worldwide.

Kafa's evergreen forests are Ethiopia's green lungs, and its rivers provide an important source of water for Kafa and surrounding lowlands. The local people live in harmony with nature. Their daily routines follow its rhythms, and their culture and traditions are strongly linked to its particular features.



Kafa Biosphere Reserve in Brief

Location: southwest Ethiopia
(460 kilometres from Addis Ababa)

Surface area: 760,000 hectares
(420,000 hectares of forest)

Altitude: 500 to 3,350 metres
above sea level

Inhabitants: 1 million

Capital of Kafa: Bonga
(22,000 inhabitants)

Largest rivers: Gojeb, Dincha and Woshi

Flora and fauna: 250 plant species
(e.g., wild coffee, African redwood,
bamboo); 600 animal species
(e.g., Colobus monkeys, lions,
hippopotamuses and numerous
bird species)

Diversity: Kafa is part of one of the
34 biodiversity hotspots worldwide

Coffee: ca. 5,000 varieties of wild
coffee grow in the forests, a genetic
diversity with an estimated value of
ca. US\$ 1.4 billion

Green lungs: 600,000 tons of CO₂ are
absorbed by the forests per year

What are Biosphere Reserves?

Biosphere reserves are areas of terrestrial and coastal ecosystems promoting solutions to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use. They are internationally recognised, nominated by national governments and remain under sovereign jurisdiction of the states where they are located. Biosphere reserves serve in some ways as 'living laboratories' for testing out and demonstrating integrated management of land, water and biodiversity.

Collectively, biosphere reserves form a huge network: the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR). Within this network, exchanges of information, experience and personnel are facilitated. There are over 650 biosphere reserves in over 120 countries (source: www.unesco.com).

Biosphere reserves are required to fulfil three basic functions. These functions are all interrelated and depend on one another for success.

Conservation function: To contribute to the conservation of cultural diversity and biodiversity, including genetic variation, species, ecosystems and landscapes, and securing services provided by such diversity.

Development function: To encourage economic and human development that is environmentally and socially sustainable and culturally appropriate.

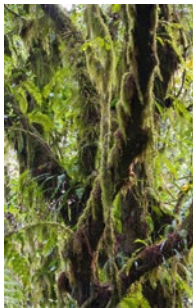
Logistics function: To provide logistical support for research, monitoring, demonstration projects, education and the exchange of information related to local, national and global issues of conservation and development.

Zonation of Biosphere Reserves

Biosphere reserves aim to manage their resources in an integrated manner through taking conservation into consideration in land and resource planning and use. This is achieved through dividing the reserve into three types of areas, known as “zones”:

Core zones: Every biosphere reserve must contain one or more core zones that are highly protected by law. Their aim is to conserve biodiversity in a minimally disturbed ecosystem. Only monitoring, non-destructive research and other low-impact uses (such as education) are allowed to take place in the core zones. Therefore settlement, agriculture, harvesting of any sort of products (except traditionally accepted non-destructive uses) are prohibited. In Ethiopia the core zone must comprise at least 3% of the total area.

Buffer zones: These, as their name suggests, usually buffer or surround the core zones. Their role is to minimise the negative impact of human activities on the core zones. Activities in the buffer zones must be compatible with the conservation of the core zones and contribute to research, education and conservation of traditional land-use models. In Ethiopia the buffer zones should comprise at least 10% of the total area. They play an important role in maintaining anthropogenic, biological and cultural diversity. They also function as essential ecological corridors, connecting ecosystems to allow the movement of wildlife. These zones can only be used for activities compatible with conservation objectives, such as environmental education, ecotourism, recreation and research.



Transition zones: These have a central function in enabling sustainable development. Here people live and make a living. They accommodate more high-impact and economic land-uses and may contain a variety of agricultural activities, settlements and other land use types. Transition zones may contain towns, farms, fisheries and other human activities. Local communities, management agencies, scientists, non-governmental organisations, cultural groups, economic interest groups and other stakeholders work together to manage and sustainably develop the area's resources. In Ethiopia the transition areas must comprise at least 45% of the total area.

In the map on page 6 you can see how the different zones are distributed in the Kafa Biosphere Reserve.



As perhaps the forest's most famous inhabitant, the black-and-white **colobus monkey** is featured in the biosphere reserve's distinctive logo. With their characteristic markings and hands without thumbs, these primates are generally to be found high up in the trees. They live in territorial groups of around nine individuals – one male along with a number of females and their offspring. The newborns are completely white. Colobus monkeys eat leaves, fruit, flowers and twigs. Not including their tail, they are 45 to 72 centimetres in length. Local people appreciate them and, due to their appearance, consider them monks.



Flora and Fauna

Kafa's diverse landscape ranges in altitude from 500 to 3,350 metres above sea level and provides refuge for innumerable plants and animals. The moist and temperate climate offers excellent conditions for lush vegetation. Some 250 plant species grow in the area, 17 of them endemic, which means that they are only found here. Together, they make for a fascinating display of majestic crowns, rich foliage and vivid flowers as well as seeds of all shapes and sizes. Huge fig trees tower over African redwood, dragon trees and forest rothmannia. Closer to ground level, wild coffee, orange desmodium, tree ferns and false cardamom are among the many representatives of Kafa's rich flora.

Equally diverse is the region's fauna with many different kinds of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. The trees and bushes are thronged with gorgeous birds producing a wonderful chorus of beautiful songs. To date, at least 300 bird species have been recorded in the biosphere reserve, 11 of them endemic. These include the wattled ibis, the long-crested eagle, the blue-headed coucal and the scarlet-chested sunbird. Similarly, various mammalian species are to be found in Kafa, including monkeys, lions, leopards, antelopes, bushpigs and hippopotamuses.



According to legend, coffee was discovered more than 1,000 years ago by a goatherd named Kaldi. Whilst tending his animals near the forest, he noticed that they became frisky after eating the fruit of a certain tree. Kaldi himself then tried the berries, discovered their stimulating effect and took them to a nearby monastery. The monks were disapproving and threw the mysterious berries onto the fire. Yet the aroma released by the roasting coffee beans was so enticing that the monks immediately revised their opinion.



Birthplace of Coffee

Kafa is the birthplace of arabica coffee and one of the last areas where it still grows wild. The plant with the Latin name *Coffea arabica* grows at lower levels of the cloud forests, at an altitude of between 1,400 and 2,000 metres. There are some 5,000 varieties here, which represent an enormous genetic diversity and an invaluable biological treasure for mankind.

Perfect soil and altitude along with the right dose of sunshine and rain – Kafa provides ideal conditions for the evergreen coffee plants, enabling them to grow up to eight metres in height. The fruit ripen for nine to 11 months before being harvested by hand. Coffee production – from wild plants as well as from gardens and plantations – is an important source of income for the local population. Today, Ethiopia is the world's sixth-largest coffee producer.



INFO

Coffee first made its way from Ethiopia out into the world in the 13th or 14th century, when it was brought initially to Yemen and later to Arabia. The beans were sold by Arabian merchants in the Yemenite port of Mocha. It was then that they were given the name under which they are still known today: arabica.



The ancient Kafa kingdom existed from the 14th century until its conquest by the Ethiopian emperor Menelik II in 1897. All of Kafa's kings were worldly as well as spiritual rulers. Kafa society consisted of different clans. The kingdom reached its greatest expansion in the 16th century. Its wealth was based on trade in coffee, gold and musk. Though all buildings from that time have been destroyed, visitors can take a look at the former ramparts and historical artefacts at the National Coffee Museum in Bonga.



People

The people of Kafa have strong ties to the region and are proud of their origins. Their warmth, hospitality and friendliness ensure that visitors feel welcome and accepted in their community.

About one million people live and work within the reserve's boundaries. The majority (92%) live in rural areas. The largest city in the Kafa Biosphere Reserve is Bonga, which is also the capital of the Kafa Zone.

Kafa's population consists of different groups of people. Its native inhabitants, the Kafechos, make up the majority and consist of mainly two clans: the Gommero and the Manja. They live in small villages throughout the region and for the most part make a living from agriculture, coffee collecting and pottery. The Amhara and the Oromo make up another 10% of Kafa's people.

INFO

Timekeeping in Ethiopia – The calendar used in Ethiopia is based on the Egyptian calendar, which comprises 12 months of 30 days and, in the case of a leap year, a 13th month with five or six days. It is seven years and six months behind the Gregorian calendar. New Year is celebrated in September. The clock consists of a 12-hour day beginning at sunrise (6:00 GMT) and a 12-hour night starting at sundown (18:00 GMT).



Customs and Traditions

Most of Kafa's rural people still live in traditional round huts made of wood, straw and clay. They live from small-scale agriculture and cattle breeding as well as the collection of wild coffee.

A key part of everyday life is the coffee ceremony. Here, the beans are freshly roasted on an open fire and the aromatic smoke is inhaled by all present. After grinding, the coffee is brewed in a clay pot and served in small cups.

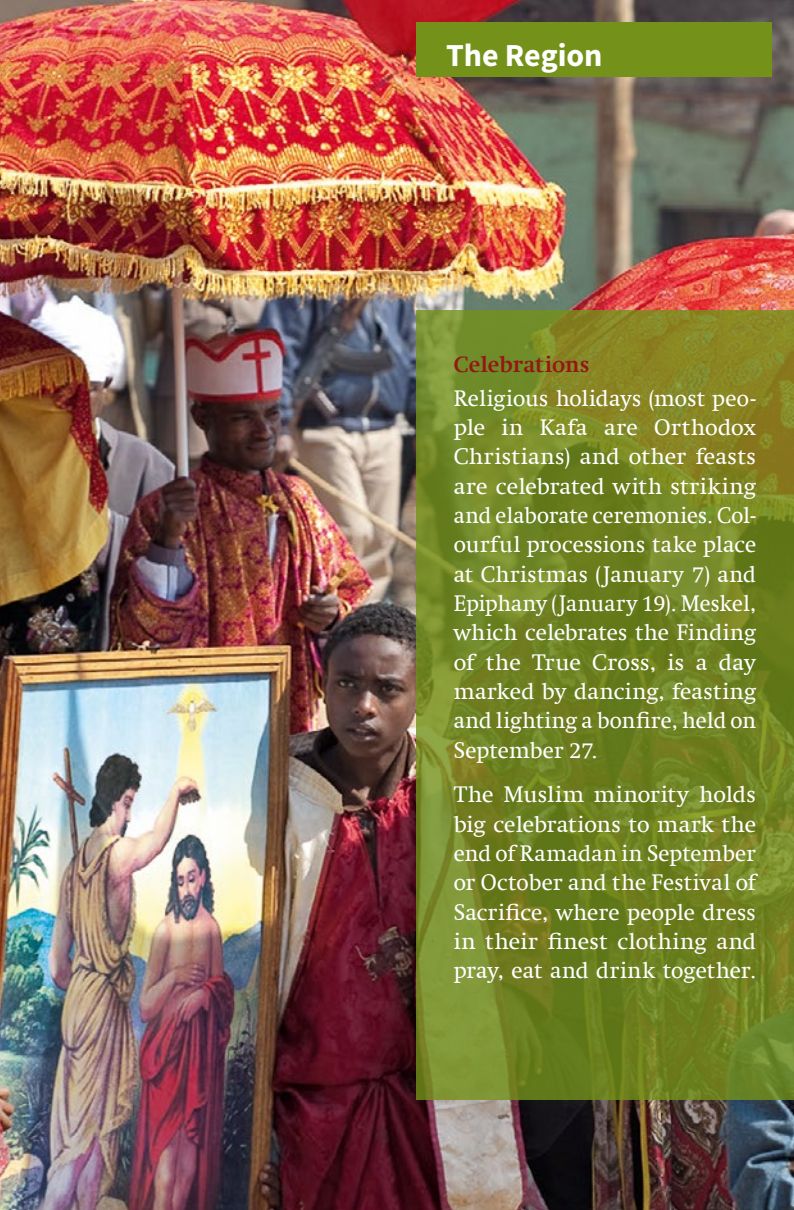
Drinking coffee and eating together are gestures of friendship and loyalty. When a host offers his guests the choicest morsels of a meal, he is showing his reverence and hospitality.

The Region

Celebrations

Religious holidays (most people in Kafa are Orthodox Christians) and other feasts are celebrated with striking and elaborate ceremonies. Colourful processions take place at Christmas (January 7) and Epiphany (January 19). Meskel, which celebrates the Finding of the True Cross, is a day marked by dancing, feasting and lighting a bonfire, held on September 27.

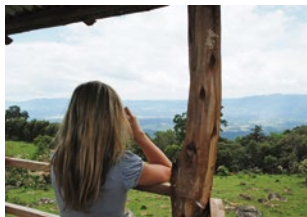
The Muslim minority holds big celebrations to mark the end of Ramadan in September or October and the Festival of Sacrifice, where people dress in their finest clothing and pray, eat and drink together.





Welcome to Kafa!

With its stunning natural beauty and fascinating indigenous culture, the Kafa Biosphere Reserve invites visitors to enjoy a holiday full of adventure and unforgettable experiences. A rich programme of activities includes hiking, horse riding, wildlife and bird watching, a visit to Kafa's museums and a coffee ceremony with local people. Ecotourism supported by NABU makes it possible to visit this unique region in a responsible way and to help preserve its exceptional natural heritage. Discover Ethiopia's hidden treasures and enjoy the hospitality of its people!



INFO

Ecotourism provides a new source of income for local people, who can work in hotels and restaurants, or as rangers, tourist guides and museum staff.





Kafa Biosphere Reserve Information Centre

The visitor information centre is currently being built in the style of a traditional round hut, the so-called tukul. It is located close to the centre of Bonga. Here, visitors will find important information about the biosphere reserve, view exhibitions on various topics and embark on guided tours of the region. A small cafe is planned to serve genuine Kafa coffee, and the shop sells a variety of local products.

National Coffee Museum

Right next to the information centre, the National Coffee Museum is growing. Permanent as well as temporary exhibitions will revolve around Kafa's most famous plant and all its various aspects. Visitors can learn more about the different coffee varieties, harvesting, processing and the cultural importance of coffee for the local population.



Where to find them:

From the crossroads in the centre of Bonga, uphill towards the Orthodox church. After 100 metres on the right-hand side.



Open Air Museum

Kafa's history comes to life in its Open Air Museum. Perched on a hill with a wonderful view over the valley and the town of Bonga, it takes visitors on a journey to the past, when the kingdom of Kafa was at the peak of its power.

The reconstructed palace of the last Kafa king, Gaaki Sharotchi, forms the heart of the museum. It is built according to the drawings of the Austrian researcher Friedrich Julius Bieber and testimonies of old Kafa people.

Many everyday objects and sketches of houses and places of worship give an insight into the daily routines and customs of the king and his subjects.

Where to find it:

From the information centre uphill, past the roundabout. First junction behind the school to the right, all the way up to the mountain top (ca. 1.5 km).



Bonga

Bonga is the capital of the Kafa Zone and has 22,000 inhabitants. It is situated on a mountainside. The streets bustle with life. Every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, merchants travel from throughout the region to sell their products on the big market in Bonga. These range from vegetables, fruits and live animals to herbs, spices and goods such as baskets, traditional scarfs, fabrics and decorations.

In Bonga there are numerous places to enjoy a snack, meal or traditionally brewed coffee. Small shops sell food, drinks and various convenience items. Take the opportunity to buy roasted coffee beans and tasty forest honey directly from the manufacturer.





Lookout Points and Picnic Sites

Enjoy the breathtaking view over Kafa's diverse landscape from one of the wooden watchtowers or from the top of the hills near Bonga. Prepare to be amazed by the expanse of wetlands, the majestic rivers and the lush green canopy of the forests shrouded in dense fog. With a bit of luck, you will have the opportunity to watch wild animals.

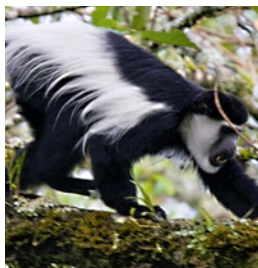
Be sure to take some sandwiches to enjoy in the midst of nature at one of the several picnic sites. Alternatively, take a break from an adventurous tour and experience the special taste of traditional Ethiopian coffee in the cool shade of one of the typical round huts with a straw roof.

Ask your tour guide or at the Biosphere Reserve Information Centre for the best places to visit.

Tour 1

A Walk through the Forest

- **Category:** nature and wildlife
- **Duration:** two hours maximum
- **Difficulty:** narrow paths, sometimes muddy, occasionally steep



Numerous trails lead directly from KDA Guesthouse into the dense forest. These are perfect for an impromptu guided tour. Every now and then, the thickets part to offer a breathtaking vista of Kafa's mountainous landscape.

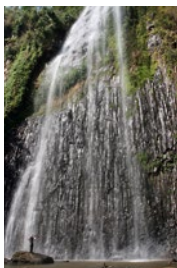
The tour also provides many opportunities to enjoy the region's diverse flora and fauna. Colobus monkeys, the most famous inhabitants of the forest, swing elegantly from tree to tree, showing off their acrobatic prowess.

The thicket at the foot of the majestic trees boasts countless plant species, some of them edible, including mushrooms, berries, wild tomatoes and wild pepper. Seize this opportunity and – with the help of an expert – collect the ingredients for a complete rainforest meal!

Tour 2

Barta Waterfall

- **Category:** nature and wildlife, culture
- **Duration:** half a day
- **Difficulty:** paths in hilly terrain, sometimes muddy



Starting from KDA Guesthouse, you head for the small settlements surrounding Bonga. Once there, coffee farmers give you an insight into their daily life. On the way, you enjoy the lush green landscape and a unique view of the forests. While walking along the edge of the forest, you can observe birds nesting in trees and bushes. In the further course of the tour, a beekeeper tells you about his daily work. Here, you can try Kafa's delicious forest honey.

You then proceed to Barta waterfall. Situated in the middle of the forest, it has a total height of 70 metres. The refraction of light in the spray creates magnificent rainbows. At the end of the tour, you can attend a traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony.

Tour 3

Bird Watching and Dadiban Hot Springs

- **Category:** nature and wildlife
- **Duration:** one day
- **Difficulty:** paths easy to walk, occasionally steep



Early in the morning, you travel by car to the wetland of Alemgono, a mere 10 kilometres away from KDA Guesthouse. The wetland is a habitat for more than 90 bird species. The next stop is Gimbo, a small town near Alemgono. On certain days of the week, you have the opportunity to visit the local market.

From Gimbo you drive to Dadiban. From the road you start to hike to the hot springs. Moving through the forest, you descend by foot or on horseback to one of Kafa's holiest places. Here, the hot springs provide the local population with healing water, which is used as a treatment for all kinds of illnesses. The spirituality of this place is tangible. With a bit of luck, you get to see some de brazza, vervet and colobus monkeys. From there, you return to KDA Guesthouse.

Tour 4

Bird Watching near Gojeb River

- **Category:** nature and wildlife
- **Duration:** one day
- **Difficulty:** starting point reached by car, hiking through the wetland is only possible in dry season



Early in the morning, you make your way to the wetland of the Gojeb river, around 80 kilometres from KDA Guesthouse. This is the region's largest river and marks one of its borders.

You continue your journey via Saja, where you can stop at a campsite right next to a core zone with its impressive fern trees. Thereafter you pass Boginda until finally reaching Konda, where you can stop at a picnic site. Dense forests line your way, broken here and there by clearances revealing a fantastic view of the river lowlands. The wetland itself is a habitat for more than 100 species of birds. With a little luck, you also get to see hippopotamus and water buffalo in their natural element. If the conditions allow, you can further explore the area and its diverse flora and fauna.

Tour 5

A Cultural Walk to Bonga

- **Category:** culture
- **Duration:** two hours
- **Difficulty:** paths easy to walk



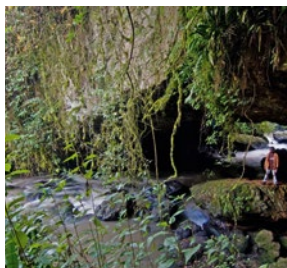
This tour offers diverse impressions of the daily lives of Ethiopian farmers. Starting from KDA Guesthouse, you can follow the main road to Bonga or walk along sidestreets, where shacks made of sheet metal give way to tukuls. Time seems to stand still as you pass the simple farmsteads. Cows, sheep or goats graze peacefully beside your trail. Quite often, visitors are invited to take a rest and drink a cup of freshly roasted coffee.

In Bonga, the Cultural Open Air Museum and soon the Biosphere Reserve Information Centre and the national Coffee Museum are worth a visit. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays the local market (see page 32) provides an opportunity to do some shopping. You can end the tour with a traditional meal in one of the local restaurants and food stores around the town centre.

Tour 6

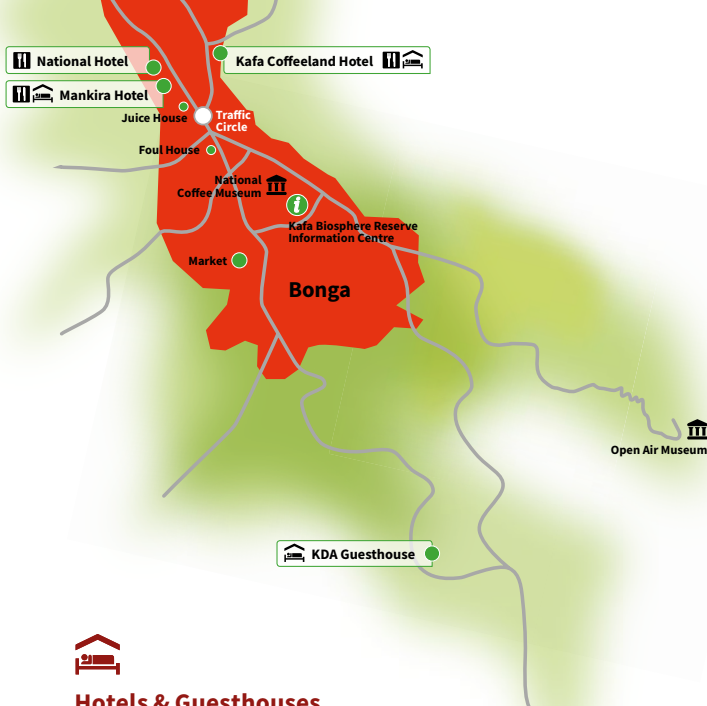
The Mankira Coffee Forest

- **Category:** nature and wildlife
- **Duration:** one day
- **Difficulty:** paths occasionally steep, occasionally leading through thickets



From KDA Guesthouse, you head, either by car or bike, for the birthplace of arabica coffee. Having reached Mankira forest, you continue on horseback. Via narrow paths, you make your way to God's bridge, an impressive natural crossing that spans a wild, rushing stream.

As you advance deeper into the forest, your guide tells you interesting facts and stories about traditional coffee-growing. After 10 kilometres (by foot or horse), you stand in front of the oldest coffee tree in Kafa, known locally as "Mother Coffee Tree". Some 20 feet tall and eight inches thick, it is reputed to be the oldest coffee tree in the world. Along the way, there are also a church and a mosque that you can visit.



Hotels & Guesthouses

In and around Bonga, there are several hotels and pensions with rooms for tourists.

Kafa Coffeeland Hotel

Simple but clean bedrooms with private or shared bathrooms; restaurant in the hotel garden with traditional and Western food.

Mankira Hotel

Simple bedrooms with private or shared bathrooms, some with great view over the forests; restaurant with mainly traditional food.



KDA Guesthouse

KDA Guesthouse is situated two kilometres outside of Bonga, within a beautiful hilly landscape. It is the ideal place to stay during your visit to Kafa and a perfect starting point for different tours of the region. The complex stretches over 3.5 hectares. It includes two bungalows, each with five cosy rooms and private bathrooms as well as a common room with fireplace and terrace. There is also a site for campers to put up a tent or park a van. Facilities with toilets and showers are available onsite. KDA Guesthouse offers the option to hire a cook for a meal or even the entire holiday.

Rooms & Prices:

	Double/twin room		Single room	
	Ethiopian	international	Ethiopian	international
per night	450 ETB	600 ETB	300 ETB	450 ETB

Breakfast is included.

Contact:

Kafa Development Association Guesthouse
Bonga Town, SNNPR, Ethiopia
bonga.guesthouse@gmail.com



Restaurants & Bars

Walking through Bonga, you will find numerous places to have a snack or a meal. Enjoy traditional Ethiopian food in a variety of restaurants, all of which are at a short distance from one another.

Kafa Coffeeland Hotel

Traditional and Western food

Special recommendation: Cornis – platter with different types of meat and side dishes in typical Ethiopian style.

Mankira Hotel

Traditional food

Special recommendation: Gomenbezega – green cabbage with meat.

National Hotel

Traditional food

Special recommendation: Beyenatu – vegetables prepared in typical Ethiopian style.

Try a traditional breakfast in one of Bonga's 'Foul Houses' near the main crossroads. It consists of bean stew with deep-fried bread and a cup of tea.

For a coffee break, look out for one of the small coffee places round Dashen Bank.

Also ask the local people for their recommendation and discover the culinary specialities of Kafa!

Service



Eating in Kafa

Ethiopian food is rich in spices and flavours as well as unique in preparation. It consists mainly of delicate stews with meat (beef, lamb or goat) or vegetables. Dishes with raw meat – such as kitfo, containing raw minced beef spiced with chilli – are also common and very tasty. Large pancakes called injera are generally served with meals. These are made of gluten-free flour, and their partly fermented dough gives them their typical sour taste. In the local custom, they serve as plates: food is placed directly on them, and small pieces are torn off and eaten by hand. On the Ethiopian fasting days (Wednesday and Friday) a delicious variety of vegetables is served. Instead of injera you can also ask for bread.







Travel Period

Kafa has a temperate climate with an average annual temperature of about 20 °C. The rainy season is from May until the end of September, when 40% of the region's annual rainfall occurs.

The best time to visit is the dry season, which runs from October to April. In late September, nature is in full bloom after the rains. During October and November, visitors can witness the coffee harvest, when local farmers collect, prepare and dry the precious crop.

Visitors to Kafa in January or September should be sure not to miss the colourful festivals of Timket (January 19) and Meskel (September 27).

INFO

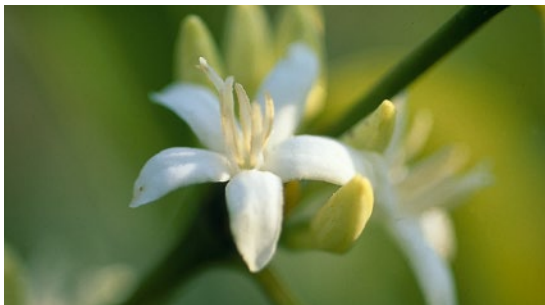
Language – The native language spoken in Kafa is Kafinoo, but most of the people speak Amharic, too. Some English is spoken and understood in Bonga, but especially in the villages it is good to have a guide as an interpreter in order to be able to communicate. Ask your tour company or at the Biosphere Reserve Information Centre.



Money and Travelling

Foreign visitors require a tourist visa for Ethiopia. The local currency is the Ethiopian Birr. Exchange from U.S. Dollar or Euro to Birr is possible at the airport of Addis Ababa or in banks. In Bonga, you can draw money on your credit card at the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. Be sure to carry enough cash when going on a longer tour within the region.

For travelling in Kafa and getting to various attractions, hiring an off-road vehicle is recommended. This must be done in Addis Ababa, as there are no vehicle rental agencies in Bonga. Some of the guided tours feature horse or mule rides as a welcome and adventurous alternative.



Health

Though major health problems are rare, adequate medical precautions should be taken before and during the trip, including up-to-date vaccinations against hepatitis A and B, polio, meningococcal disease and typhoid. Make sure that your health insurance is internationally valid and covers repatriation. For malaria prevention, you should wear long trousers and a shirt, apply insect repellent and use a mosquito net. In order to avoid diarrhoea, use only bottled water from a safe source for drinking, cooking, cleaning teeth etc.

In any event, it is worth bringing a well-equipped first-aid kit. Ask your local doctor for help and advice.

Tour Overview



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A Walk through the Forest
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Tour 2
Barta Waterfall
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Bird Watching and Holy Springs
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Tour 4
Bird Watching near Gojeb River
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Tour 5
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Tour 6
The Mankira Coffee Forest
(page 31)



Museum



Watchtower



Information



Place of interest



Picnic site



Camping area



Restaurant/Bar



Hotel/Guesthouse



Wetland



Waterfall



Bonga city



Road



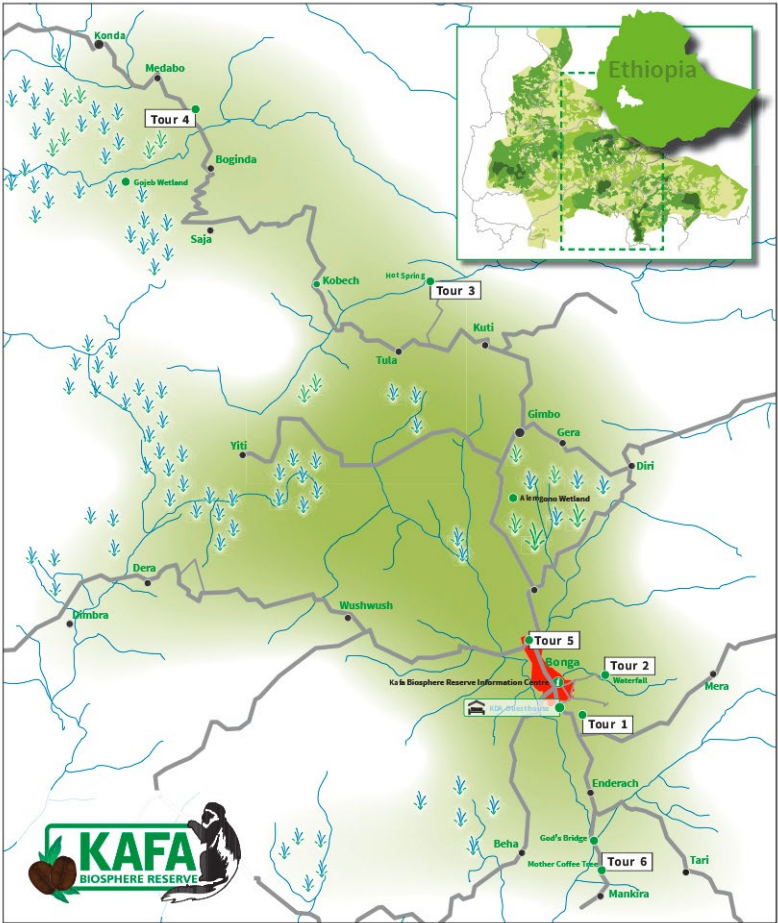
River

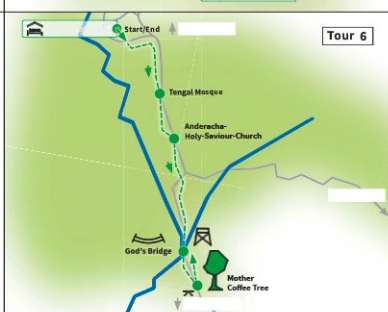
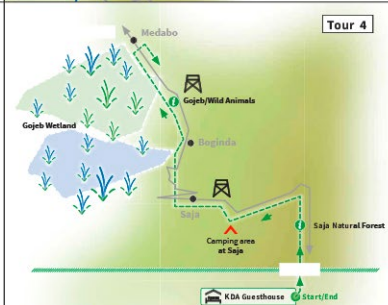
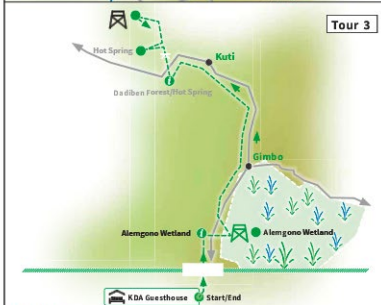
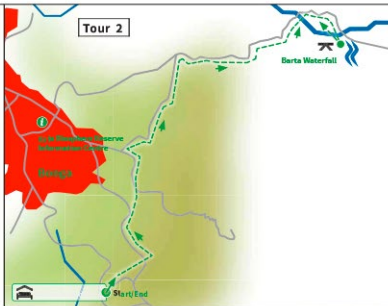
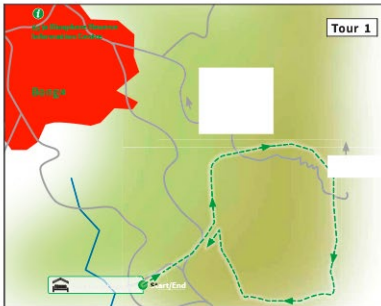


Tour



Walking direction









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NABU

Charitéstraße 3
10117 Berlin, Germany
Tel. +49 (0)30.28 49 84-17 0
Fax +49 (0)30.28 49 84-37 20
info@NABU-International.de
For further information:
www.kafa-biosphere.com

