

# Walk the walk

## Ecotourism in Ethiopia

Wof Washa (literally meaning Bird's Cave) Forest is located within the [Ankober-Debre Sina Escarpment](#), an Eastern Afromontane Key Biodiversity Area (KBA). Wof Washa Forest (WWF) is approximately 200km from Addis Ababa and can be reached via a good road, by private car or public transport. It is on the way to one of Ethiopia's most popular tourist destinations, Lalibela, home of the rock-hewn churches. The forest is on very steep slopes in (mostly east-facing) narrow valleys, with altitudes ranging from 2,000 m to 3,730 m. It is called as the 'lung' of Amhara region, because it is the last remnant of natural forest in the area.

This KBA supports the only known population of Vulnerable [Ankober Serin](#) *Crithagra ankoberensis*, a species confined to areas between 2,800 m and 3,750 m along the escarpment. The site also hosts the famous [Gelada Baboon](#) *Theropithecus gelada* and potentially (not seen for a long time!) the even more famous, though Endangered, [Ethiopian Wolf](#) *Canis simensis*. A decade ago, the forest cover was more than 16,000ha. Now, it is



*Wof Washa Forest*

reduced to less than 9000ha. The main reason for this is an increasing human population followed by intensive agricultural land grabbing. The cultivation of fields has now expanded onto the steepest slopes that used to be covered with Afro-alpine vegetation.

## Step-by-step conservation

[SUNARMA](#), an Ethiopian non-governmental organisation, aims to address this destructive process by means of a very creative and ambitious idea: a walking route, including community-run eco-lodges, to show people from Ethiopia and all-over the world how beautiful the place is, and how much it deserves to be protected. Funded by the [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund \(CEPF\)](#), this project will support the community by creating new business, and support the forest as the target of the tourist market.

Today, SUNARMA and the local Wof Washa community have on offer: 4 furnished community lodges, campsites, catering of food and local drinks (Teji, Areke), a range of activities such as horse riding, traditional music and dancing, campfires, and – the core of this enterprise - a choice of guided walks/treks to suit anybody's interests, length of stay and level of fitness. Walks will take visitors either along the Rift Valley escarpment edge or through the forest, and take between 2 and 5 days. Wof Washa Forest Eco-Tourism Enterprises will offer guests the chance to visit sites which are off the beaten track. Locally produced crafts will be available for tourists at each campsite.

For more information, please check the [www.wofwashacommunitylodges.com](http://www.wofwashacommunitylodges.com) website, follow SUNARMA on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/wofwashaecotourism/> and read the text underneath this article!

## Locally driven, locally managed

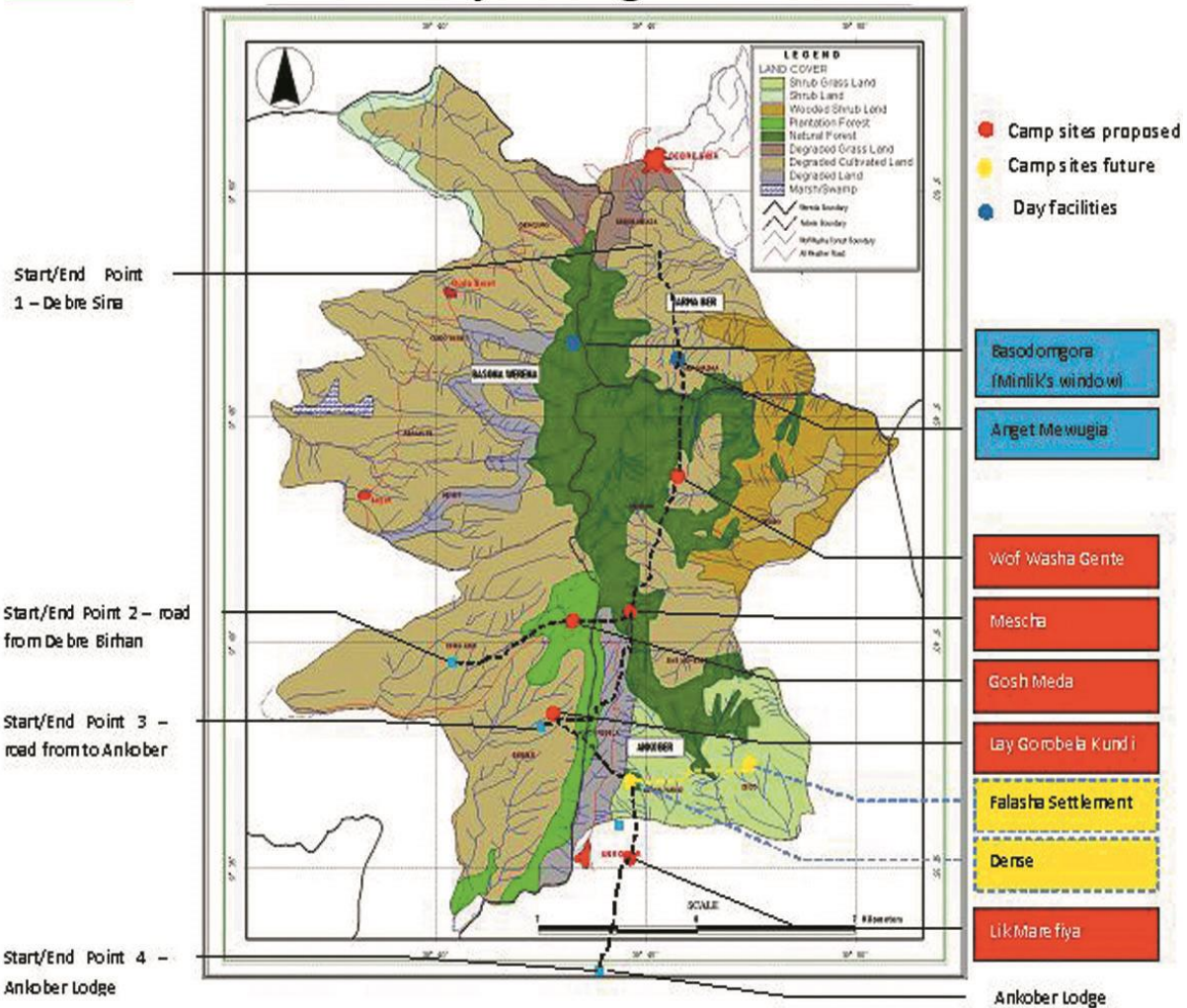
All lodges and campsites are managed and administered by the local eco-tourism enterprise. Local community members have therefore been trained in leadership, literacy, basic book keeping and how to run a business. They, together with SUNARMA staff themselves, participated in experience sharing visits to similar business ventures, including in Kenya. Local youths were recruited and were trained in skills such as hosting, cooking, management, maintenance, guiding, and biodiversity conservation and principles. Nine youths are employed at each site: 1 trekking guide, 1 manager, 4 hosts and 3 guards. From the income they generate, they are obliged to allocate an agreed amount of money for conservation works like tree planting in and around the forest, prohibiting illegal hunting and other activities that will guarantee the long-term survival of their income source, i.e. the KBA and its flora and fauna.

One community member, Wondiwossen Tefera, said: "SUNARMA has remembered the forgotten people and paved the way for business in a sustainable way. It is a true partner for community development". While the project is not even fully completed yet, 3 foreign and 2 local tourists have already stayed for 2 days and 1 night at Kundi lodge, and some money is already being made (the fees are 500 Birr per person per night).



# Location of Wofwasha Community Lodges & Treks

CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM PARTNERSHIP FUND



Be the next visitor-cum-contributor and book here: [www.wofwashacommunitylodges.com](http://www.wofwashacommunitylodges.com).

Enjoy the astonishing landscape views, the tranquil environment, and the local hospitality including the traditional coffee ceremony, in the knowledge that you are supporting the conservation of one of Ethiopia's unique KBAs. It is the most preferred place to see the 'sun rise and sun set'.

**Don't miss it!**

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**Implementer:** SUNARMA (Sustainable Natural Resource Management Association)

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Note: Some hyperlinks may no longer be active

### Notes

*In May 2017, the Tropical Biology Association, together with the CEPF Eastern Afromontane Regional Implementation Team (EWNHS and BirdLife International), organised a training in communication skills for Ethiopian CEPF grantees. This article is one of the products that came out of that training. For other articles, click [here](#).*

See the interactive map of all projects implemented under the CEPF Eastern Afromontane Hotspot programme [here](#).

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation. More information on CEPF can be found at [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net).

[BirdLife International](#), together with the [International Union for the Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) and the [Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society](#) (BirdLife in Ethiopia) form the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) investment in the Eastern Afromontane Hotspot (2012-2017). The investment will support civil society in applying innovative approaches to conservation in under-capacitated and underfunded protected areas, Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and priority corridors in the region.

Read more [NEWS](#) from the Eastern Afromontane Hotspot!

## About the Wof Washa Trekking Tours

After driving to Debre-Birhan (130km asphalt road from Addis), you can camp to our 4 furnished community campsites and contribute for the conservation efforts made by the community by enjoying the gifts at tranquil sites. The following area the lodges with some briefs of the elegant attributes found at each sites.

**Goshu-Meda lodge** is the highest lodge from Wof Washa Community lodges in altitude of 3540masl. You can access the lodge in the way to other lodges, found in the first track of the trekking roots. It is found 6km off to the main road and access it by horse or may be possible to take a walk on foot. In the amid of the lodge, across the lodge trek, you can view an wonderful landscape and possible to watch birds and even wildlife, like antelope, Ethiopian Wolf, Chilada Baboon, etc. while arriving at the lodge, you can see the down streams easily and have a chance to seat 'pick of the mountain found in this particular area called as Hail-Sillassie(3532masl), the pick where Emperor Haile-Selassie was supposed to sit on the peak to watch the lowland peoples activity. There is also a cave known as Dejach Mengesha cave, named by the governor of the area. It was used to make meetings and also for recreation purpose. From this campsite, it is possible to elongate the trip or the trekking along to Mescha, Wof Washa Genet and also Kundi.



*View of Goshu Meda*



*Campsite views*

**Kundi lodge** is known as the seat of the king of Ethiopia since 1800, by the then king called as Wessen Segend. The presence ruins of the palace at the top of the lodge can verdict this story too. The place situated at 3517masl, which is the second highest lodge of Wof Washa Community lodges build by SUNARMA and CEPF. There is also cave used for meeting hall and also as a fortification during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, in 1935. In addition to these, the site is much known as home many heritages from the Wereda, Ankober. Next to the lodge, you can access the highest mountain from Wof Washa with 3700mas. You can easily watch lots of birds at the lodge and the down streams too. Note that the lodge is found 1km off to the main road with 25/20 minute to lodge on foot. It is from this campsite, visitors can make the trekking to Mescha or Liq-Marefiay campsite.



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*Kundi campsite*



*Historical Kosso tree planted by the then King of Ethiopia at about 1809*

[Liq-Marefiya lodge](#) is located in Ankober Wereda in altitude of 2498masl across the Ankober Palace lodge in a distance of 12km off to the main road. There is an access of road to use vehicle. The place has got its name by the late 19th, while the then king of Ethiopia, Menelik II, has let the intellectuals, mainly the foreigners, to live in this area. Hence, the name of the area has been driven from the presence of the intellectuals. To cement this story, you can find the Tomb of a well-known Italian geographer and explore, Antinori. It is also a place where Jewish people, called Falasha communities, mean the exodus from Israel are living. In addition, there are amazing and interesting gifts in the area like caves available in the forest, small ponds with many birds living, the ruins of first Flour Mill and Mortal Machine found. From this campsite, it is also possible to make the trekking inside the jungle forest towards Wof Washa Genet or Mescha as well.



*Trekking road towards the lodge*



*The epicentre of the forest trekking road*

[Mescha lodge](#) is known as the place where ‘Miracle Food That Saved the People of Mescha, /Manna/’, like a miracle Mosses has received from God a supernatural food. Hence, the name has driven from this episode. It is located in one of the rift valley lines of the KBA with altitude of 2794masl. The campsite is adjacent to the forest with possibility of observing fascinating landscape, watching birds and also seeing of wildlife. In addition to this, area is very known by the ‘Map of Ethiopia’ depicted inside the forest, alleged to be in drawn in the late 19th century. It has a distance of 13km from the main road off and possibly used to walk through the valley either on foot or possibly use horse. You can back to Wof washa genet or Goshu-Meda lodge,

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rather than returning to the same trek. The trekking will be alongside to the gentle forest of Wof Washa Natural Forest.



*Mountain chains viewed at the campsite*



*The view of the lodge*