

## **Squiz the World goes to... Ethiopia**

Each fortnight, we give the world globe a spin, and see where we land. Then we take the kids of Australia on an audio excursion to visit that country and its people.

I'm Christie Kijurina, and today on Squiz the World we're visiting a country where you'll find one of the hottest spots on the planet, that is known as the 'Cradle of Mankind', and, is cherished across the globe for its coffee.

Can you guess? Strap yourselves into the Squiz Kids Super Fast Supersonic Jetliner as we take off and take a squiz at Ethiopia.

### **JUST THE FACTS**

Ethiopia, in the Horn of Africa, is landlocked - meaning it doesn't have a coastline. It is bordered by six nations, and sits where three tectonic plates meet splitting the landscape into very different regions. The epic highlands known as "The Roof of Africa," form the continent's largest mountain range. But, I mentioned the striking diversity. In the east, lies the Danakil Depression one of the hottest places on the planet with temperatures regularly nearing 50°C, "blue lava" bubbling up through the ground and the Erta Ale volcano—a fiery "Gate of Hell" with orange lava lakes. Sheeesh!

Down south, it's lush farmland, and the famous Blue Nile river begins here, flowing into neighbouring Sudan, to join the White Nile which then flows through Egypt all the way to the Mediterranean Sea - making it the longest river in the world.

"But, it's not just about landscapes—Ethiopia is packed with culture and history too. It boasts more United Nations World Heritage sites than any other African country,

And if you're up for a wild adventure, you have to visit Harar, a town famous for nightly hyena feedings! Known as "Hyena Town," locals feed these giant, spotted scavengers right by hand."

Whenever you travel, it's important to know a bit about the history of the place you're visiting. So, let's do a little bit of...

### **TIME TRAVEL**

"So, I mentioned all the World Heritage sites in Ethiopia... well, they're here because this country has an incredible history!

Ethiopia is often called the "Cradle of Mankind" thanks to Lucy—one of the oldest known direct human ancestors, whose fossilised remains were discovered in 1974. She's around 3.2 million years old and now safely kept in a museum in the capital city, Addis Ababa."

Ethiopia's ancient story goes way back to the Kingdom of D'mt in the 10th century BCE and the Kingdom of Aksum in the 1st century. The ruins of Axum still stand with 2,000-year-old obelisks towering above, telling tales of a rich trade network stretching all the way to India and the Roman Empire.

In the 19th century, Emperor Menelik II defended Ethiopia from Italian invaders, keeping it the only African country never colonised by Europeans.

But Ethiopia's history isn't all triumph. In the 1980s, famine struck, made worse by war and drought. Images from this famine moved the world to send aid. Today, Ethiopia is a federal republic with a bustling coffee trade and a resilient spirit.

That brings us to the present! Now that we've learned a bit about Ethiopia's rich history, it's ...

## TIME FOR SCHOOL

Ethiopia's school year runs from September to July, with a big break in the middle instead of at the end. Days last about six hours, just like in Australia. But only around one-third of primary-aged kids regularly attend school, mainly because uniforms, books, and other supplies can be costly, and in remote areas, schools may not even be nearby. Some kids also stay home to help on family farms.

By high school, even fewer students attend, partly because there aren't enough secondary schools for everyone who wants to go. This affects how many kids learn to read and write—right now, only about half of young people in Ethiopia are literate meaning they know how to read and write. But the Ethiopian government is working hard to improve education so that more kids can gain these important skills and stay in school longer.

Ethiopian schools also have three languages: Amharic, which is the national language, Mother Tongues: one of the more than 80 regional languages spoken in Ethiopia, and English. Imagine learning in three languages in a day!

Speaking of languages, why don't we find out a little more about where they came from...

## LET'S GET CULTURAL

Ethiopia is bursting with culture. It's home to three major religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—sometimes called the “Abrahamic Faiths,” after a shared figure named Abraham. Ethiopia even has its own ancient alphabet, Ge'ez, still used in religious books and looks totally different from English letters.

They also have a unique calendar with 13 months! Twelve months have 30 days, and an extra month, Pagumē, has five days (six in leap years), making Ethiopian New Year fall

on September 11 or 12. This calendar even puts Ethiopia seven years “behind” ours—like a time machine!

Ethiopian music has deep roots too, with traditional instruments like the krar, a lyre-like stringed instrument, filling the air for centuries. Ethiopia also has a rich history of literature, with poets, novelists, and playwrights who’ve shaped its culture for generations.

And speaking of culture, Ethiopia’s food is world-famous. I think it might be...

## DINNER TIME

Ethiopia’s food is a huge part of its culture, and for many families, livestock is essential. Goats, sheep, and cattle are common, but you won’t find much pork on the menu due to religious traditions.

And did you know Ethiopia is known as the birthplace of coffee? Legend has it that centuries ago, a goat herder discovered coffee beans after noticing his goats getting extra bouncy! Today, Ethiopia is one of the world’s top coffee producers, with Ethiopian coffee cherished worldwide.

If you’ve ever had Ethiopian food, there’s a good chance you’ve tried injera—a sour, spongy flatbread made from teff flour. Injera serves as both the plate and the utensil! You tear off pieces of it to scoop up delicious dishes like doro wat (a spicy chicken stew) or shiro (a chickpea or lentil dish). It’s a meal you eat with your hands, sharing from a big plate with family and friends.

## THE S'QUIZ

This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening.

Question 1 Which two colours of lava can be found in Ethiopia's Danakil Depression? (Blue and Orange)

Question 2 True or false? Ethiopia is the only African country, never colonised by Europeans? (True)

Question 3 What is the name of the famous spongy, sour dough flatbread that you'll find on Ethiopian dinner tables? (Injera)

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for staying curious about the world, and joining me on this incredible trip to Ethiopia.

Now get out there, and have a most excellent day. Over and out.