



# TRAVEL + LEISURE

PARADISE  
PURCHASE



# CONTRIBUTORS

## 1. *Peter Terzian*

AN AUTUMN SONATA (P. 86)

T+L's own features editor grew up an hour away from the Berkshires, but rarely visited as a child. In adulthood, though, he and his husband, author Caleb Crain, have fallen for this corner of Massachusetts. "There's something gentle and accessible about the area," Terzian says. "The landscape is beautiful but in a quiet, subdued way."

## 2. *Meredith Andrews*

STRAIGHT FROM THE SOURCE (P. 30)

Bermuda-based Andrews already knew the subjects of her photographs for this story on young island creatives, some of whom are friends. But she was still able to explore less familiar areas of the small subtropical island. "It had been years since I traveled to Abbott's Cliff," she says. "It was great to return to such a lovely location and shoot my friend, influencer Rachel Sawden."

## 3. *Sarah Khan*

IN THE CITY OF SAINTS (P. 34)

"I went to Harar, Ethiopia, with the specific purpose of learning about Islamic history in East Africa," says the freelance travel journalist, who reports from every corner of the world for publications like the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. "But once in the city, I loved letting go and roaming around the narrow alleys without a destination in mind—the walled city is a candy-colored fever dream."

## 4. *Maheder Haileselassie*

IN THE CITY OF SAINTS

Although the documentary photographer had been to Harar before, she uncovered a new side of the city while on assignment for T+L. "I was able to see the place and learn that it's about so much more than just colorful architecture," says Haileselassie, who's based in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. "Discovering the Enay Abida Craft Center, where traditions are passed on to local young men and women, was delightful."

## 5. *Leanne Shapton*

SKATING AWAY (P. 96)

The Canada-born writer and illustrator tapped in to her sense of nostalgia while skating and snowshoeing the frozen waterways of Ottawa on assignment for T+L last winter. "The canal skating was excellent," Shapton says. "But walking across the frozen surface of Meech Lake at sunset, being just a speck in the landscape, brought me back to my Canadian roots."

## 6. *Nicole Franzen*

AN AUTUMN SONATA

"I loved the Inn at Kenmore Hall," says the Brooklyn, New York-based photographer of her lodgings during her getaway to the Berkshires last October. "The interior is thoughtfully designed. It's full of objects that have been carefully collected over time by its owners, artist and restaurateur Scott Edward Cole and fashion designer Frank Muytjens."



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF PETER TERZIAN; COURTESY OF MEREDITH ANDREWS; MIKIYAS MELESSE/COURTESY OF MAHEDER HAISELESSIE; COURTESY OF NICOLE FRANZEN; KATHY RYAN/COURTESY OF LEANNE SHAPTON; AMISHA PATEL/COURTESY OF SARAH KHAN





## IN THE CITY OF SAINTS

On a journey to Ethiopia, **SARAH KHAN** wanders the ancient alleyways of Harar and finds a new link to her faith—one that makes even the most far-flung place feel familiar.

**M**Y FIRST GLIMPSE of Harar was through a late-afternoon haze, a balmy veil that blurred the pinks, blues, and greens of the old city's walls. It was a few days before Ramadan, and around every corner, residents were rejuvenating sun-blached façades with fresh coats of paint in preparation for the holy month.

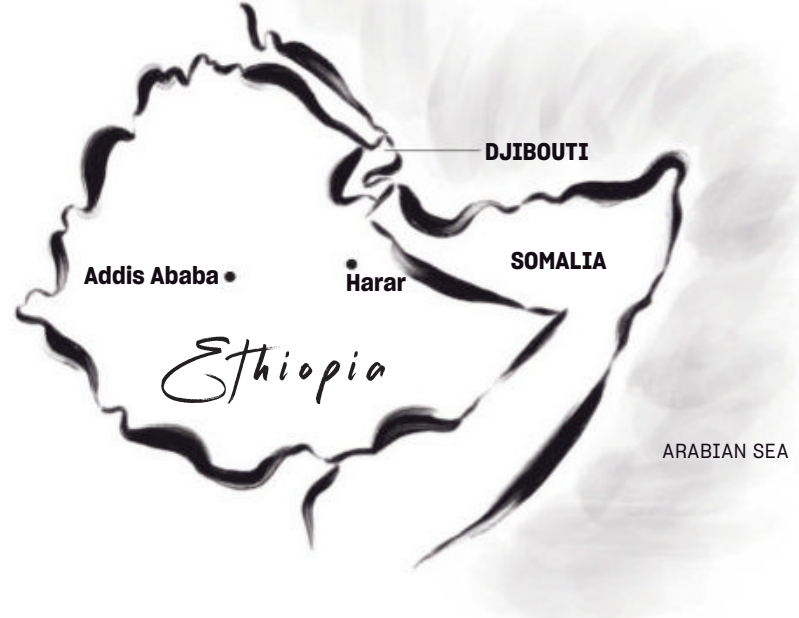
Harar Jugol, the labyrinthine walled quarter, seemed to twist the sunlight like a prism, beaming it out into a rainbow of lanes. One colorful path deposited me at a spice market perfumed with frankincense, berbere, cloves, and cardamom. Another led to a mansion with a grand exterior of mahogany and stained glass. It had wood carvings of the Hindu gods Krishna and Ganesh over the threshold, a legacy of the Indian merchant who built the home.

*A woman walks through Harar Jugol, the ancient walled heart of the city.*

Elsewhere in the medina, I took respite from the heat under a sycamore tree and murmured a prayer at the tomb of Harar's patron saint, Sheikh Abadir. A stroll down Mekina Girgir—a street that gets its onomatopoeic name from the rhythmic rattle of sewing machines—ended at a busy square, where I caught a marching band parading past, led by a baton-twirling majorette.

When I began plotting a side trip from Addis Ababa, Harar hadn't initially been on my radar. I wanted to see the rock churches of Lalibela, the palaces of Gondar, the expanse of the Danakil Depression—but that dream Ethiopian itinerary required two weeks, and I only had two days to spare. Then someone mentioned a millennia-old walled town to the east, said to be Islam's fourth-holiest city. It wasn't what I'd expected to find in one of the oldest Christian countries on the planet, but then, the Muslim world is more





#### PLAN YOUR TRIP

Harar is a one-hour flight from the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. On the ground, the city's mazelike layout and lack of addresses can make navigation tricky, so a guide is essential. Habtamu Bekele of **Adinas Agera Tour & Travel** ([adinastour.com](http://adinastour.com)) can plan both multiday Ethiopian itineraries and one-off city tours.

of a nebulous idea than a cartographic reality. As a practicing Muslim, I've found that Islam has become one of many lenses through which I see the world, as much a part of my travels as food or art. Whether I'm seeking out peaceful interludes at mosques in Buenos Aires or Minneapolis or exploring predominantly Muslim destinations like Zanzibar or Bosnia, I try to infuse my travels with a bit of local Islamic history and culture.

Many places vie for the title of Islam's fourth-holiest city (after Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem), but Harar Jugol, founded by Arab traders in the 10th century, has UNESCO credentials bolstering its claim. It is said to have the world's highest concentration of mosques, with at least 82 scattered across 118 acres. The many shrines have earned Harar the nickname City of Saints.

Islam has been woven into the fabric of Ethiopia as long as the religion has existed. Fleeing persecution in 613 B.C., followers of the Prophet Muhammad sought refuge in the kingdom of Axum, in northern Ethiopia; when Harar was founded centuries later, it became an important locus for the faith in East Africa.

At sunset, the familiar Arabic summons of the *adhaan* swelled above torrents of Harari and Amharic chatter in the streets. *Hayya as-salah*, *Hayya al-falah*. Hurry to prayer, hurry to

salvation. I felt the joyful flutter of recognition.

At the Sherif Harar City Museum, I browsed coins from Axum, Austria, India, Great Britain, Egypt, and Italy—evidence of Harar's heyday as a trading hub. While the city has a handful of interesting museums, the better way to find traces of its multicultural background is by sampling its street food. One vendor fried falafel under a faded blue awning. Nearby, a woman bent over a basket of glistening samosas. A young boy plucked *bombolini*, piping-hot Italian doughnuts, from a cauldron, stringing them like pearls along a skewer. I had *ful medames*, a fava-bean stew, for breakfast, then stopped at a pharmacy to chase it with a macchiato.

As a crossroads where the Harla tribe, Arab emirs, European explorers, and Indian merchants converged, Harar appears frequently in the footnotes of history. Look up Haile Selassie and you'll find a nod to Harar as the emperor's childhood home (his onetime residence now houses the aforementioned city museum). Read about Richard Francis Burton and you'll learn how the British explorer breached the city—closed to non-Muslims until the late 19th century—disguised as an Arab merchant. Search for Arthur Rimbaud and there's a mention of the French poet's turn as a Harar-based gunrunner (the Arthur Rimbaud Center showcases his photos of the city).

On Ethiopia's tourist circuit, Harar has become known for its spotted hyenas—and the “hyena men,” who hand-feed raw meat to the wild animals, a tradition that began generations ago as a way to deter attacks on livestock. “Humans and hyenas have been living side by side for centuries,” said my guide, Biniyam Fiyato, as he led me to one of the city's feeding grounds to watch the nightly ritual. “Even when the walled city was locked, hyenas would enter through drainage holes and roam the alleys.”

At the sound of a whistle, dozens of hyenas slinked out of the darkness, their eyes lit by the headlights of idling vans. These feedings have become the city's tourist calling card, but the spectacle of it all left me wanting a last glimpse of Harar that was free of theatrics or artifice.

I found what I was seeking the next day in the 16th-century Jama Mosque, in the quiet hours between Zuhr and Asr, the afternoon prayers, when the hall stood silent. I prayed in solitude amid the white and green arches, reciting words I've repeated everywhere from Hyderabad to Honolulu—and now, Harar. No matter where I am, in a mosque, I'm home. 🌙

Street vendors frying bombolini in Harar's old city.

