

Heritage, Tourism, and Urbanization: Understanding the Landscape and Development of Lalibela, Ethiopia

Participants

Students from all GSAPP programs are eligible to participate

Faculty

Erica Avrami, James Marston Fitch Assistant Professor of Historic Preservation
William Reynolds, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Historic Preservation

Partners

World Monuments Fund (WMF), US State Department, Ethiopian Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage, University Addis Ababa, Ethiopian Orthodox Church



Bet Giyorgis, image courtesy of World Monuments Fund (WMF)

Dates

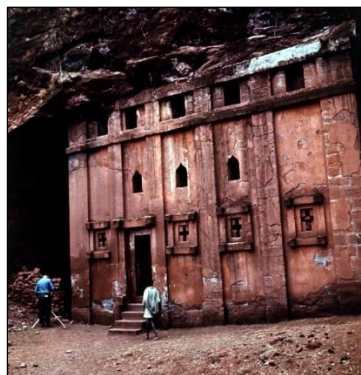
Dates under determination with partners, anticipating 10 to 12 days in the second half of July

Background

The eleven Rock Hewn Churches of Lalibela have stood for more than eight hundred years, serving as a sacred landscape and site of religious pilgrimage. One of the first sites to be designated as UNESCO World Heritage, Lalibela has long attracted visitors from afar and is now one of the top tourism destinations in Ethiopia. Work to conserve the churches themselves has been accompanied by urban growth, tourist development plans, infrastructural upgrades, and resettlement of the local community to areas outside of the site's buffer zone.



Biet Medani Alem is now sheltered as part of conservation measures



Biet Abba Libanos in the 1960s and laser scanned in 2008



Images courtesy of World Monuments Fund (WMF)

Studio Scope

In order to assess the current implications of these changes as well as the actual conditions surrounding the site, students will conduct a rapid survey to characterize relationships among the protected heritage site, buffer zone, and growing urban landscape; meet with stakeholders (government, religious community, tourism industry, university, etc.) to evaluate perspectives and visions for the future of Lalibela; and identify key issues that may be positively or negatively impacting the heritage values of the site and the long-term quality of life within the Lalibela community.



Inhabitants of traditional "tukuls" and other modern structures within the heritage buffer zone have been relocated to areas developing beyond the site, images courtesy of UNESCO

Studio Deliverables

The workshop will produce an illustrated report of findings as well as survey data. Together, these results will provide a point of departure for the Fall 2016 Advanced Studio (joint HP/UP), exploring the 50 year history of conservation, tourism development, and urbanization that has occurred in and around the churches to ensure sustainable practices for its growth and development.



Tourism promotion and concerns in Lalibela

BBC

Africa | Arts & Architecture

Is tourism undercutting Ethiopia's rock-hewn churches?

After 700 years, Lalibela's 11 Unesco-listed churches may be meeting their greatest foe: travellers.



By Finlo Rohrer
12 February 2014