



Reg. No: EIA-PT 01/4032/07

FROM: STRAWBERRY FIELDS ECO LODGE
RE: THANKYOU FOR JOINING!

Dear Participant,

Thanks for booking your place on the 25th PDC at Strawberry Fields Eco Lodge, Ethiopia Konso, to be facilitated by Alex McCausland and Tichafa Makovere, from February 13th to 25th 2012. Congratulations! So you are coming to Konso. This is to let you know what you will now need to do to get here and get the best out of the experience.

Getting to Ethiopia: It is best to arrive in Ethiopia at least 3 days before the start of the course. If you intend to travel down in our car, it will usually depart Addis for Konso early morning 2 days before the course. The drive is very long, and the participants will get a day to rest before Day 1 of the course. Please let us know your flight details as soon as you can, so that we can coordinate movements and send someone to meet you etc. You can look at www.opodo.com if you don't know where to start with flights.

Getting to Konso: If you are coming from somewhere other than Addis, then you will have to go under your own steam and you should arrive at the site by the day before the PDC begins. You can travel down by bus, plane or car.

Bus: It takes one full day and probably a bit more, depending on what time you make it to Arbaminch. We can help you with getting bus tickets the day before you travel down. If the bus gets in by 4pm you can get a minibus on to Konso the same day. However, it may not arrive till later and you may miss the last minibus to Konso, in which case you will have to overnight in Arbaminch. There are lots of cheap rooms around the bus-station, but not generally very clean. For a more comfortable alternative, the Tourist Hotel is your best bet (around 250Birr). You then go on to Konso in a minibus or a bus the next morning (2-3 hours).

Plane: You can also fly from Addis to Arbaminch on Sundays (or Wednesdays). The plane is a less gruelling option, though somewhat unreliable as it is often late and sometimes even cancelled at the last minute. See the Ethiopian Airlines website for details of the flight, cost etc. At the moment it is pretty cheap to travel by plane (\$50) though prices fluctuate. You can travel on to Konso by minibus from Arbaminch (2 hours journey).

Car: See the information sheet which is attached with the registration form.

Finding the Lodge: We are about 400m out of town on the Arba Minch road as you come into Karat Konso town. Just tell the minibus drivers you want to stop at Strawberry. If they don't know where that is say the China Water Pump which is just opposite to our site. If you are already in town, head west along the main road from the roundabout going towards Green Hotel. When you reach Green Hotel take a right and go down the hill for about 400m. You will see it on your left hand side at the bottom of the hill.

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Facilities and Living Conditions

Facilities in Konso are basic but clean and comfortable. Our accommodations are local style Konso houses which are circular thatched huts with wattle-and-dorb (mud) walls. Students may take single or twin rooms in the lodge or go into the dormitory which sleeps 6. There have been occasional complaints of too many insects in the rooms, which we think is natural. There are mosquito nets so they won't crawl on you in your sleep. There are also often lizards in the rooms, though we personally don't consider this a problem as they eat insects including mosquitoes, which we all know are a pest and spread malaria. We have now installed mud-brick platforms in the rooms and re-painted them with white-wash (gypsum) which repels insects as well as fumigating the grass roofs with the smoke of local toxic plants (Euphorbia) and painting the inside of the thatch with deasil (this is not very Permaculture but is very effective and an easy solution – the smell goes away after one or two days but the effect is long term and its not toxic to people like insecticides are).



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There are composting toilets and (compost heated) shower facilities. You will be served breakfast, lunch and dinner, tea and coffee. Drinking water is NOT provided free of charge. We sell bottled water in the lodge which you can buy from us at the usual rate. Alternatives are to drink the tap water, which may lead to you getting typhoid or dysentery, unless you bring water purification tabs, which is a good idea OR to buy a supply of bottled water for yourself in town or in Arbaminch which is about 30% cheaper than the price we sell bottled water for in the lodge. Some people also bring water filters which seem to stop the water-born illnesses.

We do not sell alcohol in the lodge. You can buy and consume alcohol in Konso town if you wish. However if you go out drinking local brew in the drinking dens you cannot reasonably hold us responsible for your health. Bringing your own water flask would be a good idea, also mugs and camping equipment (for the field and for if you want to go trekking around Konso). If you have everything *you* need it will make life easier for all of us.

What to Bring

We also strongly recommend you to bring the following:

- **Cash:** We recommend you to bring at least US\$500 (or equivalent Euro/£) worth of spare cash (or travellers cheques) with you, in case you need it for emergencies. If you want to travel a bit in Ethiopia before or after the PDC, then you should have a bit of money with you. Ethiopia is pretty cheap, but as a *ferenji* you will be subject to a lot of price discrimination. Budget travel around the country can be done on as little as US\$20-30 per day, but then you should be prepared to rough through some fairly grim conditions. Staying in nice hotels and going on tours and things it will cost a lot more. We can help you get the best deal though, of course! So make sure you discuss any ideas you may have. (If you want to keep valuables in our safe that is no problem.)
- **Your own padlock:** This is a good one for your room, as this will give you piece of mind. Not that there is much risk of theft, but better safe than sorry.
- **Medical Kit:** plasters, bandages, iodine, gloves, syringe, painkillers, anti-malarials, water purification tabs... etc. (we have got medical supplies, but best to bring more just in case.)
- **Toiletries:** sun cream, mosquito repellent, soap etc. but don't bring lots of unnecessary plastic bottles with you please...
- **Mosquito Net**
- **Compass** (NSEW type)
- **Foot-wear:** Sandals, shoes *and* boots may all come in useful while you are in Ethiopia due to the very large range of climactic conditions that exist.
- **Sleeping bag:** with liner. The liner may be just as useful as the bag.
- **Clothes:** long and short.
- **Stationary:** note book, pen, pencil, ruler, coloured pens, compasses, etc.
- **Books:** Any interesting books you can bring along to share with the group will be much appreciated. The course text is Rosemary Morrow's *Earth User's Guide to Permaculture* (2nd edition) so try to get a copy if you can. Other Permaculture titles or magazines will also come in useful for the group. If you feel generous perhaps you would like to photocopy some material and donate it to some of the community members who will be taking the course alongside you.
- **Information on your own site/project:** Photos, plans, maps, drawings of your own place, whether digital or on paper can be interesting and informative for the course group.
- **Seeds:** We have a limited range of species available to us here at the moment, but from what we have got there are some surprising results. Pumpkins, lettuce and carrots grow remarkably well. If you have any seed of different varieties or species you would like to try out, bring them along. You could be providing a new food-source for the local population. And we don't know what's really going to thrive till we wack it in the ground! But be a bit discreet about it as there are regulations on taking seeds across borders...

Vaccinations and Health and Safety Issues

Before coming you should arrange your own travel insurance and make sure that it covers you to undertake activities such as working on farms, adventure tourism activities etc. You should also consult your doctor/physician about what vaccinations you should receive before coming.

Malaria is present in Konso though it is not high risk. However if you are coming for a short term visit using prophylaxis is wise. Malarone is the drug usually recommended these days, though we recommend you use *Doxycyclin*. Doxy is much cheaper and also available locally. You can buy a month's supply in Addis for just a few dollars. Doxy is an antibiotic and will not only protect you from *Malaria*, but also from *Typhus/Typhoid* which are high risk in our area. The disadvantage of *Doxycyclin* is that you must take it every day. You are also advised not to drink alcohol while using it. This may not be a bad thing though, since we believe that drinking local brew and honey-whine in the town are the main sources of contamination for these illnesses to begin with. You should also get yourself vaccinated for typhoid and typhus before you come. We also recommend bringing antiseptic hand cream/gel which you can use to clean your hands before eating.



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Strawberry Fields has refurbished its rooms and it's upgraded its sanitation facilities to reduce the risk of such illnesses to our guests. We have run workshops for our staff in improving sanitation in the Kichen and through better house-keeping practice. However it is impossible for us to guarantee 100% that you will not get sick during the program, therefore we insist that you take full responsibility for your health and follow all reasonable precautions before and after coming to Ethiopia. If you do get sick we will insist that you are treated in the clinic immediately. We understand some people have issues with conventional medicine, however it is not simply a matter of personal choice as a sick person can quickly contaminate the rest of the group when they are not diagnosed and treated with the appropriate medicine promptly.

Other conditions that sometimes occur in the area are *Jiardia* and *Amaoeba* which are got from drinking contaminated water. Medicine to treat these (*tinidizole*) is cheap, effective and available locally, still it's better to avoid them if you don't want to end up having to rush to the toilet in the night, as that is an experience most of us rich westerners find hard to deal with and prefer to avoid whenever possible! So we also recommend you bring **water purification tablets with you if you do not want to pay for bottled water**. You should bring a medical kit with antibiotics including Ciprofloxacin as well as oral rehydration salts in case you get sick during your time here. We do have all of these medicines available on site and in the local clinics, but you are wise to bring your own too in case you need it when you are not on site. Follow these precaution and use common sense and all will be fine!

Communications

Internet and telephone communication, while technically possible in Konso, is **VERY unreliable**. If you need an internet connection and have a laptop **with a dial-up modem** you can get online in town but the network is not always on. There are also internet cafes, but don't imagine you'll be surfing a lot. We have a wireless phone in our reception which can receive international calls, sometimes. And you can make international calls from the telecommunications centre in town. Ask us and we can show you the way there.

OK then...

Right so, that's all for now, please let us know what your plans are and we're all very much looking forward to meeting you here and welcoming you to Strawberry Fields and the land of Konso!

Please stay in touch.

All the best,

Abdurrahman "Alex" McCausland
STRAWBERRY FIELDS ECO LODGE
(Director)