ETHIOPIA

AFRICA

Travel & Possession Not Permitted Under Any Circumstance

Summary

- Cannabis is illegal in Ethiopia for both medical and recreational use.
- Possession, cultivation, and distribution are criminal offenses under Ethiopian law, with penalties ranging from 5 to 10 years in prison and substantial fines.
- No medical cannabis framework exists, and prescriptions from abroad are not recognized.
- Traveling with cannabis in any form (including CBD and hemp) is prohibited and subject to arrest, imprisonment, and fines.

Background

Ethiopia enforces a strict prohibition on cannabis. All forms, marijuana, hashish, CBD, and hemp, are classified as illicit drugs under national law. Penalties are severe: possession for personal use can lead to months or years in prison, while trafficking or cultivation can carry sentences of up to 15 years. Although some Rastafarian communities in Shashamane view cannabis as a sacrament, Ethiopian authorities do not grant exemptions for religious or cultural use. Enforcement can be sporadic in rural areas, but police crackdowns are common, and cannabis fields are regularly destroyed. There are no signs of imminent legalization or medical regulation.

Non-Medical Cannabis

- Consumption: Illegal. Enforcement varies by location but is generally strict.
- Possession: Personal use can result in 6 months to 5 years' imprisonment and/or fines. Larger quantities carry 5–15 years' imprisonment.
- Sale & Distribution: Heavily penalized with long prison terms and large fines.

Traveling to Ethiopia with Medical Cannabis

Bringing medical cannabis into Ethiopia, regardless of prescription or country of origin, is strictly prohibited. Authorities treat all cannabis products, including CBD oil and hemp-derived items, as illegal narcotics. Travelers found with such substances risk arrest, imprisonment, and prosecution under Ethiopian law.

Steps to Take Before Departure:

1. Do not carry any cannabis product.
2. Carry only non-cannabis medications that are legal.
3. Obtain pharmacy-labeled packaging with valid prescription for all legal medications.
4. Do not rely on foreign prescriptions for cannabis. The Ethiopian authorities do not acknowledge them.

Practical Tips

- If you are taking other medications, carry them in original packaging with prescriptions and clinic letters, best to verify legality via embassy.
- Speak to your embassy or consulate regarding your medical needs before planning travel.
- Use alternative, legal permitted medicines during your stay in Ethiopia.

The information provided reflects the most current data available; however, as cannabis laws are continually evolving, this content should not be interpreted as legal advice.

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