

THE ROAD TO WOLDIA

By Josh Billig, in his 7th year as an undergraduate. He also makes his own hummus.

The question that I get most frequently, usually asked in a pejorative tone, is, 'Why did you go to Ethiopia?' I generally respond with the fact that I had never before been to Ethiopia. Sometimes I tell people that I want to see the world alphabetically and now I've finished off the letter E. The simple fact is that an opportunity arose to do something that had a good chance of being extraordinary. That's not the sort of thing I can pass up.

One day I remember particularly well: Joe and I were traveling from a small town called Mekele to a smaller town called Woldia, with the intention of eventually getting to a larger town called Lalibela, famed for its rock hewn churches. Joe awoke that morning to some stomach ailments that suggested this day was not optimal for a long bus ride.

"Joe, not a big deal. We can chill here for the day and head through to Woldia tomorrow," I assured him.

We were actually on a pretty tight schedule at this point, bus trips taking days longer than we had anticipated. Joe took the reins, deciding it was a big deal. He'd been living in the developing world for years now and had dealt heroically with every stomach virus and parasite that came his way and he would not bow down to this East African joke of a bug.

We considered a minibus, though slightly more expensive, would be speedier and more comfortable than the regular bus. The price ended at forty burr a piece (about \$4.50) and we gave a hundred burr note, expecting our change in a bit. We wedged ourselves in, hoping for a quick 100km trip.

