



35 Day Southern Discoverer & Gorillas – Victoria Falls to Nairobi

Day 1: Victoria Falls (B)

Today is spent relaxing or participating in a myriad of Optional Excursions. AT 1700 metres wide and around 100 metres high, Victoria Falls are one of the most memorable sights on this African safari. All year round, flights can be taken in fixed wing planes, micro lights or helicopters. Back on the ground, the falls can be seen from the Victoria Falls National Park with its many viewing points or from the Zambian side. All offer fantastic photographic opportunities.

Optional excursions include trips into the Zambezi or Hwange National Parks, elephant back safaris, horse back safaris, a visit to the crocodile ranch, boat cruises and golf at The Elephant Hills Resort. Adrenalin junkies can bungee from the Victoria Falls Bridge connecting Zimbabwe and Zambia or abseil down the Batoka Gorge - neither activity is for the faint hearted! All year round, flights in fixed wing, micro light and ultra light aircraft or helicopters provide an aerial perspective over this magnificent World Heritage Site. White water rafting on the Zambezi is world class. Beside the excitement of the Grade 5 rapids, there are the 'floats', where there is time to admire the scenic cliffs and the occasional wildlife on the riverbanks.

Day 2: Victoria Falls to Livingstone (Zambia) (B / L / D)

We leave Zimbabwe and cross the Victoria Falls Bridge and the Zambezi River, entering into Zambia at the town of Livingstone. We have the opportunity to view The Falls from the Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park, Zambia. Another fantastic photo opportunity. The day affords us the opportunity to participate in the activities available in Zambia we weren't able to do on the Zimbabwean side of the Falls. Tonight we have the option of enjoying a sunset dinner cruise on the mighty Zambezi.

Day 3: Livingstone to Lusaka (B / L / D)

An early morning start sees us head north through southern Zambia to our campsite on the outskirts of Zambia's capital city, Lusaka. The campsite is home to some local wildlife including Africa's largest antelope - Eland.

Day 4: Lusaka to Chipata (B / L / D)

From Lusaka we head north east to a beautiful little campsite just 10 km before the Zambia/Malawi border. Here we spend the night before heading into Malawi.

Days 5 to 9: Chipata to Lake Malawi Beaches (Malawi) (B / L / D)

Leaving Zambia we cross into Malawi, the 'Warm Heart of Africa'. We stop off in the capital, Lilongwe, a small city distinctively divided into the old town and the new administrative centre. Malawi is a landlocked country with 20% of its total area made up of beautiful Lake Malawi. We travel the full length of the western side of the lake, stopping off at various bays and inlets over the next 5 days.

Spend the days learning the game of bao from the locals, scour the markets for a bargain or simply relax on the pristine beaches. Malawi's temperate climate allows for swimming in the clear blue fresh-water lake all year round. Explore the beautiful shore where you'll happen upon the local fishermen sorting their catch. Traditional fishing techniques are still practiced and to appreciate their boating skills, try to paddle a dug out canoe yourself! The various beachside campsites along Lake Malawi's shores offer many optional Excursions including a variety of water sports, horse back rides and a visit to the local village and school.

Day 10: Lake Malawi to Iringa (Tanzania) (B / L / D)

After a relaxing 5 days, we leave Malawi, entering Tanzania through the border post at Songwe. Taking in the beauty of the Tukuuyu tea and banana plantations, we head towards Iringa where we spend the night in the beautiful rustic 'Farmhouse' campsite famous for its Amarula Hot Chocolates and its steamy showers!

Day 11: Iringa to Dar es Salaam (B / L / D)

The next morning we make our way to Dar es Salaam. We pass through the Mikumi National Park where it is possible to view a range of wildlife from the roadside, totally impervious to the passing traffic. On arrival in Dar es Salaam, we make our way to our lovely seaside campsite and prepare for our departure to Zanzibar the next morning.

Day 12: Dar es Salaam to Zanzibar (B)

A ferry from Dar es Salaam takes us to the 'Spice Island', where we have the option to spend the next 3 nights. Zanzibar is steeped in history and was one of the major starting points for most East African explorers in their quest for new lands. New passengers may join us to replace those that'll leave us at the end of our excursion to Zanzibar.

Please Note: Accommodation and Meals are for your own account whilst on Zanzibar, as it is our experience that passengers prefer to explore the island on their own. The Trip Leader joins you and can arrange your accommodation, while meals can be enjoyed from a wide selection of restaurants.

* For those not opting to visit the island of Zanzibar, the next 3 days are spent at leisure at the beach campsite in Dar es Salaam.

Days 13 & 14: Zanzibar

History aside, Zanzibar offers a wealth of experiences for the visitor. Today the quiet streets of the old Stone Town still retain their Arabic influence, from the Medina-like shops to the palaces of the Sultans, who founded their vast empires on the spoils of the slave and ivory trade. The island is famous for its spices and an excursion around a spice plantation is always a fascinating experience. Other options include a trip to the beautiful beaches and giant tortoises of Prison Island, a full day scuba dive in Nungwe or a fishing trip in a traditional dhow. Mopeds are available for hire if you'd like to explore the more remote areas of the island. Zanzibar is a seafood lover's paradise. Numerous restaurants offer a great variety of the freshest catch from the ocean - crayfish being a popular speciality. Alternatively, mingle with the locals for dinner at the Forodhani Gardens seafront market, where delicious, inexpensive seafood is on offer.

Day 15: Zanzibar to Dar es Salaam (D)

Leaving Zanzibar, we return to the mainland and another night in Dar es Salaam.

Day 16: Dar es Salaam to Arusha (B / L / D)

From Dar es Salaam we travel through vast sisal plantations to Arusha. On the way, we pass The Pare and Usambara Mountain ranges before driving through the town of Moshi. Moshi is the base for Mount Kilimanjaro climbing expeditions and weather permitting; we may even catch a glimpse of this magical mountain's snowy summit - a photo opportunity not to be missed! Tonight we stay in a lovely campsite in Meserani on the outskirts of Arusha, before heading out on our Optional Excursions to the Serengeti and Ngorongoro Crater.

Days 17 to 19: Arusha / Optional Ngorongoro Crater / Serengeti Excursion (B / L / D)

Arusha is a pleasant town situated at the base of Mount Meru and is the starting point for the optional excursions to Ngorongoro Crater and Serengeti. We conduct these excursions in locally operated 4WD vehicles, which are adapted for safari use.

For those not opting to visit the Ngorongoro Crater or Serengeti National Park, the next 2 days are spent at leisure enjoying the Meserani reptile park, Masai Cultural Museum and the surrounding villages and craft markets. Alternatively the town of Arusha is close by to explore.

The Optional Ngorongoro/Serengeti excursion takes us via the Masai town of Mtu Wa Mbu (Mosquito River) that lies adjacent to the Lake Manyara National Park and up the Rift Valley Escarpment to the higher lying village of Karatu. Karatu offers magnificent views over the surrounding hills and has many well established wheat farms that add to the picturesque panoramas. We spend the evening at a pleasant campsite in Karatu. The following morning we depart early for the Ngorongoro Conservation area and head into the wildlife rich Ngorongoro Crater. This World Heritage Site boasts some of the best game viewing in Africa - including the elusive Black Rhino.

After our game drive in the Crater, we head down the Crater rim and past the 'Cradle of Mankind' on our way to the Serengeti National Park. We cross the vast plains as we game drive through the southern and central areas in the park. Tonight we camp in the bushveld surrounded by the sounds of the African wilderness. In the morning, we head off for another game drive and explore the landscape in search of the resident game. With some luck, we may see some of Africa's 'Big 5'!

After our morning drive, we head back across the plains and the lush Crater rim to our truck at Arusha, where we spend the evening musing over our thrilling wildlife experience.

Day 20: Arusha to Namanga (Kenya) (B / L / D)

After a morning spent exploring Arusha's city centre and vibrant craft markets, we head to lunch just outside of town. After lunch, we travel 120 km to the Tanzania / Kenya border. Once the border formalities are complete, we camp at Namanga just over the Kenyan border.

Day 21: Namanga to Nairobi (B)

This morning we travel 180 km north to the capital city, Nairobi. On arrival, we head to the Hotel Boulevard, where we deliver the passengers who'll be ending their trip here, before heading to our campsite for the night.

Day 22: Nairobi to Masai Mara (L / D)

This morning we collect the passengers who'll be joining us on the final leg of our trek. Leaving the hustle and bustle of Nairobi we climb the escarpment to our first stop, a viewpoint overlooking the spectacular Great Rift Valley. Descending into the Rift Valley, we enter Masai land where these habitual pastoralists are often seen tending their cattle from the side of the road. We pass through the town of Narok, before arriving at our campsite, Acacia Camp. Acacia Camp looks on to the Meguarra hills and the stream that meanders by on the bottom end forms a natural border to the Masai Mara National Reserve.

Day 23: Masai Mara (B / L / D)

We spend the day driving through nature as it was intended to be - huge plains, rolling hills and an abundance of game matched nowhere else on earth. We keep an eye open for the Big 5 - elephant, rhino, buffalo, lion & leopard. If travelling between July and October, we may get to witness the impressive herds of over 1 million wildebeest, zebra and Thomson's gazelle in their Annual Migration. Sitting around the camp fire, watching the sun set is the perfect way to finish a day's game viewing in this 'Garden of Eden'.

Day 24: Masai Mara to Kericho (B / L / D)

Leaving the Masai Mara early in the morning, we travel to the scenic tea plantations of Kericho, situated on the edge of the Rift Valley Plateau. We spend the night at a campsite on the edge of a Tea Estate and time permitting, can partake in a tour.

Day 25: Kericho to Kampala (Uganda) (B / L / D)

Today, we cross the border into Uganda where we overnight in the capital city, Kampala. Uganda is a small country of striking physical beauty. Its landscapes vary from the fertile green areas around the northern shores of Lake Victoria to the snow capped Rwenzori Mountains in the west and the semidesert region in the north. The political instability that has haunted Uganda in the past has actually had the positive effect of leaving the country free of the over commercialism so common in other parts of Africa. The current administration under President Museveni has devoted considerable effort and funds to return Uganda to its former status as one of Africa's most prosperous and, from a tourist's point of view, one of the most appealing and interesting countries to visit.

Days 26 to 29: Kampala to Lake Bunyoni (B / L / D)

After an early morning departure from Kampala we drive west into the depths of Uganda to our base at the tranquil Lake Bunyoni.

Lake Bunyoni, the deepest Crater Lake in Africa and home to a large and varied number of beautiful birds, is the base from which the optional Gorilla trek takes place. Dependant on where trekking permits are available, we trek in the Magahinga or Bwindi National Parks in Uganda, the Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo, or the Ruhengeri National Park in Rwanda. The prices of trekking permits fluctuate and may change without prior notice - currently they are priced at US\$500 depending on where we trek. There is a local transport & handling fee of US\$65 to US\$70 per person (this covers the return transfer and the Wildlife Authority's booking fee). For trekking in the DRC or Rwanda, we will also have to purchase an additional visa to enter either country, as well as renewing our Ugandan visa upon re-entry. Please budget accordingly.

Trekking Procedures: The mountain gorilla (Gorilla Gorilla Berengei), of which there are still only about 700 remaining, are one of our closest living relatives. A visit to these gentle giants in their natural environment is a unique and wonderful experience - one you'll never forget. The park rangers monitor the gorillas on a daily basis and have a fairly good idea of where they are. However, they are free roaming animals, and their sighting cannot be guaranteed. As the gorillas share much of our DNA, anyone with even the slightest cold or transferable illness will not be permitted to trek. Trekking is also only open to people over 16 years old.

Due to the restrictions on the daily numbers of visitors to these incredible animals, we depart from our base in Bunyoni in small groups over 3-4 days, depending on the group size. Winding our way through arguably some of the most picturesque scenery in Africa, we head to the town of Kisoro where we spend the night (Should we be trekking in Rwanda our overnight will be in Ruhengeri). The following morning, after packing our picnic lunch, we are transferred to a ranger's station where the trek commences. Your rangers will lead you through the cultivated lands and then into the dense rain forest and on to a gorilla family. Trekking can take anywhere from 45 minutes to 8 hours and it can be quite strenuous, so a reasonable level of fitness is required. To ensure the gorillas do not get too used to the presence of humans and because they share many of our genes (and therefore able to catch our diseases), the maximum time permitted to spend with them is 1 hour. You will have plenty of time to watch their activity and to take photographs. The rangers will be able to provide you with a background to the family you are visiting. Once your hour is up, you trek back out of the rain forest to your meeting point where you will be transferred back to the Lake Bunyoni campsite.

You needn't feel like you're exploiting these animals. The ever-growing number of tourists trekking them each day play a vital role in their survival. For years they have been ruthlessly hunted for their hands and heads, which have been sold as ashtrays and lampshades! In addition, large numbers have been killed whilst trying to stop poachers stealing the babies for sale to zoos, where they have never lived long. 100% of the gorilla permit cost is used to by the parks authorities to finance patrols that are instrumental in protecting the gorillas from poachers and their lethal snares and on promoting these wonderful animals.

Lake Bunyoni

For those of us awaiting our day of gorilla trekking, the choice is yours, visit a local village or church, hike in the surrounding hills, canoe, go on a bird watching walk, visit the local markets of Kabale or just spend the days relaxing or swimming in this tranquil lake.

Day 30: Lake Bunyoni to Kampala (B / L / D)

After marvelling at the experience of our gorilla encounters and enjoying the peaceful Lake Bunyoni, we begin our drive back to Kampala. We cross the Equator for the second time and stop for the classic 'one foot in each hemisphere' photo opportunity. We overnight in Kampala and have the opportunity to sample its night life!

Day 31: Kampala to Jinja (B / L / D)

Today we have the option of visiting the Ngamba Island Chimpanzee Sanctuary or transferring to Jinja for a selection of adventure activities including white water rafting at the source of the White Nile, quad biking or volunteering at a community project. Spend the afternoon relaxing on the banks of the river, or ticking off the wide variety of water birds in this area.

Day 32: Jinja to Nakuru (Kenya) (B / L / D)

Today we head back to Kenya, stopping for lunch and supplies en route. We overnight in Nakuru, Kenya's 4th largest town and capital of the Rift Valley Province.

Day 33: Lake Nakuru National Park (B / L / D)

This morning we head in to Nakuru Town to stock up on supplies before beginning our exploration of the Lake Nakuru National Park - famous for the thousands of lesser and greater flamingos that flock to this soda lake's edge. The numbers vary depending on the water level, and when it's low, the lake almost turns pink. A truly spectacular sight! The park was established as a sanctuary for black and white rhino, which are often seen. We spend the day searching for these pre-historic looking beasts as well as the elusive leopard, encountering buffalo, giraffe, various antelope and the occasional hippo along the way. We overnight at a bush camp within the Park.

Day 34: Lake Nakuru National Park to Lake Naivasha (B / L / D)

Moving south-east, we head to Lake Naivasha, home to a multitude of bird life, the most magnificent being the African Fish Eagle with his regal cry. At 1880 m, this is the highest of the Rift Valley lakes. Time permitting; we spend the afternoon enjoying optional excursions like Elsamere (former home to Joy & George Adamson of Born Free fame), a boat ride to the Crescent Island Game Sanctuary or a bike ride around Hell's Gate National Park. Tonight is spent in a lovely campsite on the banks of the lake.

Day 35: Lake Naivasha to Nairobi (B)

After breakfast, we head back to Nairobi. On arrival we exchange addresses and part ways, having just experienced an African overland safari of a lifetime!

Optional excursions

Victoria Falls, National Park Entry Fee - US\$ 20
Victoria Falls, White Water Rafting on the Zambezi - US\$ 95
Victoria Falls, Bungee Jump - US\$ 90
Livingstone, Zambezi Sunset Dinner Cruise - US\$ 40
Lake Malawi, Village Walk & Meal - US\$ 10
Lake Malawi, Water Skiing - US\$ 15
Zanzibar, Accommodation - US\$ 20 p/p/p/n
Zanzibar, Stone Town Spice Tour - US\$ 25
Arusha, 3 Day / 2 Night Serengeti/Ngorongoro Crater - US\$380
Masai Mara, Masai Village Cultural Visit - US\$ 5
Uganda, Rwanda or DRC, Gorilla Trek - US\$375 to US\$500
Kampala, Ngamba Island Chimpanzee Sanctuary - US\$ 50
Jinja, White Water Rafting on the Nile - US\$ 95
Jinja, Softpower Community Project - US\$ 25
Lake Naivasha, Elsamere High Tea - US\$ 10
Lake Naivasha, Crescent Island Sanctuary - US\$ 25

(All prices are approximate and are subject to change)