



## 46 Day Ultimate African Adventure - Nairobi to Johannesburg

### DAY 1 - 2: Nairobi - Nakuru - Eldoret

Kenya is East Africa's most popular destination and has a long tradition of tourism and of welcoming visitors. Very often the first word you hear is the Swahili greeting '*Jambo*' (hello), often followed by '*Hakuna matata*' (no problem!). We recommend you arrive the day before the tour departure in order to relax and overcome any jetlag before your trip. Nairobi has seen rapid growth in recent years but has a comparatively small city centre, a highly interesting city market (great for sharpening your bargaining skills!), as well as craft shops, book shops and plenty of cafes and restaurants to sit and relax in. We depart Nairobi and descend into the 'Great Rift Valley', an enormous cleft in the Earth's surface stretching from the Red Sea to Madagascar but with particularly marked escarpments here in Kenya. Our first stop is Lake Nakuru National Park, a relatively small park (by African standards) located on the Rift Valley floor.

Nakuru's shallow soda lake attracts a huge variety of birdlife - especially flamingos, which may gather in such numbers that from the nearby viewing point they form a strikingly pink 'fringe' around the lake-shore. But Lake Nakuru is not simply a bird sanctuary, it is also home to lion, rhino, leopard, warthog, baboon, antelope, and a variety of smaller animals. A delightful introduction to East Africa's wildlife diversity. From Nakuru we continue northwest to Eldoret, and the Uganda frontier.

### DAY 3 - 6: Jinja - Kampala

We cross into Uganda, Winston Churchill's 'Pearl of Africa'. This is a wonderfully fertile country of green terraced hillsides, lush banana plantations, steep mountains and tangled forests. But we spend our first couple of nights on the grassy banks of the River Nile, near the town of Jinja. It was the 19th century British explorer John Hanning Speke who recognised Lake Victoria as the 'source of the Nile' settling a long running dispute about Africa's (and the world's) longest river. From this modest monument, marking the historic spot, the Nile begins its 4132 mile course through Uganda, Sudan and eventually Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea.

Our camp overlooks a dramatic set of rapids known as Bujagali Falls. It is here that we usually have the option to try rafting - an exciting day out for those enjoying the thrill of 'white water'. There is also the opportunity to make some difference to local children at a local school project: 'Softpower' is a locally run voluntary programme aimed at building and improving schools in the Jinja area to which your contribution of a few hours of painting or plastering is always most welcome. Other activities at Jinja include quad biking, village walks and even bungee jumping! From Jinja, we move on to Uganda's capital Kampala, an attractive hilly city bustling with African street life - roadside traders, markets and busy matatu (mini-bus taxi) stands.

### DAY 7 - 14: Gorilla Trek - Nairobi

From Kampala, we travel south and west, skirting Lake Victoria and heading into the mountainous region of southwest Uganda. Although a long drive, the scenery is very rewarding as we cross the equator and pass through areas of thick papyrus which give way to mountain valleys and ancient forests. Heading deep into the Kigezi Highlands we stop at picturesque Lake Bunyoni, an ancient flooded valley, before arriving at Bwindi National Park. This region of Africa is home to the world's remaining 700 mountain gorillas, half of which inhabit Bwindi. [Occasionally we may travel into neighbouring Rwanda to trek for the gorillas.] On the day of our trek we gather in the early morning to meet our local guide and tracker. Walking in small groups we trek into the thick rainforest. The trekking can be demanding at times with uneven terrain and hilly rainforest but the privilege of spending time with a family of these gentle apes makes the effort well worthwhile. To many people, even those who stay in Africa longer than this two week tour, the day's trek and time with the gorillas remains their most exciting wildlife encounter in Africa.

The usual procedure, once we have located the gorilla 'family', is to squat or sit down and simply observe them for around an hour - the time set by the Uganda Wildlife Authority (the national body charged with controlling and maintaining the gorillas in Uganda). Gorillas are sociable creatures, living in groups between 12 and 20 individuals, usually led by an 'alpha male' (the 'silverback' - so called because of the silver hair on his back which grows once the male gorilla attains maturity). Most people find that the gorillas are remarkably human-like at close quarters - particularly in the social interaction between family members and in 'play' activity in which the young engage. Photography is permitted (although not with a flash and there are restrictions for those who wish to use a video camera.)

Your permit allows you one trek and gorilla viewing (time limited to one hour). However because the authorities maintain strict limits on the number of visitors allowed to view the gorillas each day we may spend several days in the area while all passengers in our group complete the trek and viewing.

We return to Kenya via Kampala and the Rift Valley to Nairobi where we have a day to relax.

**NB** Depending on the availability of gorilla permits the itinerary on this section of the tour may vary in day to day running order from the above. Also we may visit neighbouring countries, eg Rwanda, for the gorilla trek (instead of Uganda) and that may entail extra visa fees, although we shall endeavour to advise you before departure of any significant change to the tour itinerary.

#### **DAY 15- 17: Nairobi, Masai Mara National Reserve**

After a day to relax and replenish our supplies we depart Nairobi and make our way across the Rift Valley to the Masai Mara National Reserve. We spend two nights camping on the edge of the Reserve and explore the park on morning and afternoon game drives. The sweeping plains, distant horizons, low slung acacia trees, occasional coppices of vegetation, and plentiful wildlife form a deeply evocative introduction to this wonderful continent. Predators (such as lion, cheetah, leopard) are well represented as are 'scavengers' (hyena, vultures) and the grazing animals - zebra, giraffe, buffalo, impala, gazelle as well as abundant birdlife. From the Mara, we back across the Rift Valley to Nairobi, where we overnight on our way south to Tanzania.

**NB** In Nairobi the price of accommodation on nights 14 & 15 is not included in the tour. Please put aside between US\$20-25 per night for meals and accommodation here.

#### **DAY 15- 19: Arusha, Serengeti National Park, Olduvai Gorge, Ngorongoro Crater**

After crossing the border at the busy Namanga frontier we come to Arusha. Situated mid-way between Cape Town and Cairo, this is very much Tanzania's 'safari capital' - a bustling city with colourful markets, shops, vehicles and people, all nestling in the shadow of the brooding Mt Meru (4556m). After exploring the curio markets, we head to our camp outside Arusha on the open plains to the west of the city. There is the opportunity to walk or take a camel to one of the local Masai villages and to visit the very informative Snake enclosure. It is from here that we prepare for our two night/three day excursion by 4x4 to Serengeti National Park and the Ngorongoro Crater.

Stopping to see the Olduvai Gorge, made famous by Drs Louis and Mary Leakey for their explorations into early man we descend onto the open plains and wide horizons of the Serengeti. Green after the rains, brown and burnt in the dry this is home to an enormous variety of grazing animals, predators, and birdlife. Flatter and larger than the Masai Mara the Serengeti is simply huge - indeed the name 'derives from the Masai word *Siringitu* - 'the place where the land moves on forever'. Game viewing here can be superb and camping out in an unfenced campsite where lion and hyena roam nearby is an unforgettable experience.

The following day we drive out of the plains and ascend the outer wall of the Ngorongoro Crater. We spend the night camping on the rim (you may need a jacket as it can be cold at night). At 326 square kilometres in area the Ngorongoro is Africa's largest intact caldera and is a World Heritage Site. If the view from the rim (2400 metres above sea level) is spectacular, the site from the Crater floor (some 600 metres below the rim) is equally enjoyable. All the major mammals are present, except giraffe (which cannot manage the steep slopes leading down one to the Crater floor). We descend the steep access road for a morning of excellent game driving in this dramatic location.

After lunch we drive back up the access road for a final view over the Ngorongoro before we retrace our steps back to Arusha and our camp for the evening.

#### **DAY 20 - 28: Dar es Salaam - Zanzibar**

We have time in Arusha to replenish our stores before continuing past the shadow of Mt Kilimanjaro (Africa's highest peak at 5895m) to Dar es Salaam and the Indian Ocean. 'Dar' is Tanzania's main port and is a hub of commerce and industry - a hot, humid and bustling city. We set up camp at our campsite on the beach just outside of the city centre, usually having time to browse curio markets - best known for ebony wood - and prepare for our trip to Zanzibar.

Evocative and exotic, Zanzibar conjures up images of idyllic, sandy, palm fringed beaches, romantic winding cobbled alleys and lush tropical forests. You will find all of these and an intriguing past on the island. Zanzibar was once a major trading centre for spices and slaves as well as base for the great 19th century European explorers such as John Hanning Speke, Richard Burton and David Livingstone. Indeed the spice trade is centuries old: Zanzibaris have traded with the people of the Arabian peninsula for generations, plying the ocean in simple dhow sailboats relying on the annual trade winds for passage. The Arab influence is evident in the architecture and diverse street stall offerings of the capital, Stone Town. In fact it can be seen right along the East African coast with the Swahili language and culture displaying the mixing of Arab and African cultures over many centuries.

Our time on the island is not structured and your time is at leisure. Perhaps the best way to see Stone Town is on foot: explore the bazaars, shops, mosques, palaces, courtyards and myriad intricate alleyways of the old town. Spices are grown in plantations nearby and you can take day-tours to visit some and have your senses dazzled by the tastes and scents experienced. But if it's white sand, sparkling ocean and hot sun you prefer - head for the northern beaches and enjoy the Indian Ocean at its best. Try snorkelling and diving, indulge in some sumptuous seafood, or simply relax beneath a coconut palm with a cocktail and a good book.

Eventually we cross back to the mainland to Dar by ferry.

**NB** As we leave the truck on the mainland, food and accommodation on Zanzibar is not included in the price or Local Payment. The time is yours to enjoy at leisure. Your tour leader will assist (if you wish) by booking suitable and well priced accommodation in Stone Town or on the beach (budget approx \$30-35 per night), unless you would like to book something independently in advance.

#### **DAY 29 - 34: Mikumi National Park - Lake Malawi Beaches - Chipata**

After returning from Zanzibar we spend one further night in Dar es Salaam before driving across country towards Malawi on the main road running through Mikumi National Park. We enter Malawi - the 'warm heart' of Africa - at its northern tip and almost immediately catch a glimpse of the enormous Lake Malawi. Covering almost a fifth of the country's area, the lake provides a source of livelihood for many of the Malawi people and fishermen, fish traders as well as canoe and net makers are common sights along the shoreline. Freshwater and safe for swimming the lake is also a major attraction for visitors.

We camp along the lake shore, usually by one of the wonderfully peaceful beaches. There is usually a range of water sports available and time to indulge or simply to relax. The Malawi people are well known amongst travellers as being amongst the friendliest in Africa and there is usually the opportunity to meet some of the local people from the communities near the beach.

#### **DAY 35 - 39: Lusaka - Livingstone - Victoria Falls**

Leaving Malawi we cross into Zambia. We drive over the Luangwa River and pass through the capital city, Lusaka, to Livingstone and Victoria Falls, arriving on day 37 of the tour. Our camp is on the banks of the mighty Zambezi River, one of Africa's major rivers, the largest flowing eastward into the Indian Ocean. Time is at leisure. Take advantage of the wide range of optional activities typically available here: white water rafting, bungee jumping, abseiling, gorge swinging, canoeing, elephant and horse riding, lion walks, game drives and scenic flights. Naturally a visit to the Victoria Falls themselves is a 'must'. At over a mile wide and 100m deep, the 'Falls' is the largest curtain of falling water in the world. Depending on the time of year the spray from the Falls can be seen from 20 or 30 kilometres - hence the local name Mosi au Tunya - the 'smoke that thunders'.

**NB** For the sake of practicality, meals in the Livingstone/Victoria Falls area are restricted to breakfasts. This allows you to take on half day or full day activities (some of which include lunch) without having to be back with the group at mealtimes. The Waterfront camp restaurant overlooks the Zambezi River and offers a selection of reasonably priced meals and snacks throughout the day (we suggest you allow US\$30-\$40 per day). Alternatively Livingstone town is a short taxi ride away, where you can eat out at one of the local restaurants.

**DAY 40 - 46:** Livingstone - Chobe National Park - Greater Kruger National Park - Johannesburg  
After a final day in Livingstone, we travel the short distance into Botswana and the Chobe National Park. This park is home to some of the largest populations of elephant in all of Africa, as well as to lion, hippo, and abundant birdlife. In the late afternoon, we take a Fish Eagle Cruise on the Chobe River to see hippos in the water and hopefully buffalo or elephant on the banks for a drink at dusk.

The following day we cross the vast grasslands of southern Botswana via Nata and Francistown to enter South Africa and one of Africa's most famed reserves, the Kruger National Park. The fences between the park's borders and private game reserves on the fringes of the national park have recently been removed to allow the wildlife to roam the entire area 'Greater Kruger' area. Taken together this is an area of over 24,000 square kilometres and it is home to a wealth of animals, from the dwarf mongoose to the famed 'Big Five'.

There is also a diversity of birdlife and flora to be seen. We spend two nights within the Kruger area and explore by game driving some of the best known (and some of the lesser known) areas.

Finally, on day 46 we leave the Kruger for our last drive of the trip to Johannesburg, where our tour ends (approximately 18:00-19:00).