

Best of East Africa

An twenty eight day exploration of East Africa, from the gorillas of Rwanda and chimpanzees of Uganda to the Spice Island of Zanzibar.

Day 1: This morning connect with the flights to Rwanda from Nairobi or Kilimanjaro, on arrival in Kigali, met and transfer to Chez Lando for overnight on b&b basis. *(this day is flexible and can be designed to fit in with international arrivals.)*

Day 2: Visit the town and the genocide memorial. After lunch in town, follow the road as it climbs to the base of the majestic volcanoes, with spectacular views across the five peaks. Dinner and overnight is at La Palme Hotel.

Day 3: As the first light of dawn breaks through the curtain of mist clinging to the summits of Karisimbi, Bisoke, Sabyniyo, Gahinga and Muhabura, we make our way into the Parc National des Volcans. Tracking the gorillas through the unique vegetation can take several hours of challenging walking in wet and muddy conditions. To see a gorilla, the trek will have been worth the hardship. Overnight La Palme Hotel.

Day 4: This morning depart for Cyanika and the Ugandan/Rwandan border and continue to our campsite overlooking the Kazinga Channel in Queen Elizabeth National Park for dinner and overnight. *(this is our standard camping and have attached a pdf description. We supply everything, including cook of course. No participation necessary.)*



Queen Elizabeth National Park

From open savannah to rainforest, from dense papyrus swamps and brooding crater lakes to the vastness of Lake Edward, it is little wonder that QENP boasts one of the highest biodiversity ratings of any game reserve in the world. Almost 100 mammal species and a remarkable 606 bird species makes this superb safari territory, with elephant, a profusion of hippos, the elusive giant forest hog and handsome Uganda kob all regularly sighted around the tourist village on the Mweya Peninsula - which also boasts a marvelous waterfront setting in the shadow of the Rwenzori Mountains.

Day 5: These days are spent game viewing in Queen Elizabeth National Park, experiencing a launch trip on the Kazinga Channel. Dinners and overnights within camp.

Day 6: After breakfast depart for Kibale National Park with picnic lunch, with the Ruwenzori mountains forming a backdrop. Dinner and overnight at the park campsite, and where the chimpanzee trekking starts from.

Kibale

The most accessible of Uganda's major rainforests, Kibale is home to a remarkable 13 primate species, including the very localised red colobus and L'Hoest's monkey. Kibale's major attraction, however, is the opportunity to track habituated chimps - these delightful apes, more closely related to humans than to any other living creature, are tremendous fun to watch as they squabble and play in fruiting trees.

A network of shady forest trails provides much to delight botanists and butterfly lovers, while birders are in for a treat with 335 species recorded including the endemic Prirgrine's ground thrush. The elusive forest elephant smaller and hairier than its savannah counterpart, moves seasonally into the developed part of the park, while other terrestrial mammals include buffalo, giant forest hog and a half dozen antelope species.



Day 7: Today is spent exploring Kibale National Park, chimp trekking and other guided forest walks, and even the possibility of a night walk. Dinner and overnight at the park campsite.

Day 8: This morning is we towards Kampala then north to Jinja, dinner and overnight within camp on the banks of the Nile.

Day 9: Full day exploring this area, with the option of kayaking, white water rafting or some of the many other activities available here. (These activities are NOT included in the quote)

Day 10: Today we head around the north of Lake Victoria clearing customs and immigration and head towards Lake Nakuru for overnight in the park campsite..

Nakuru

Nakuru means "Dust or Dusty Place" in Masai language. Lake Nakuru National Park, close to Nakuru town, was established in 1961. It started off small, only encompassing the famous lake and the surrounding mountainous vicinity. Now it has been extended to include a large part of the savannahs. Currently, the fenced Lake Nakuru National Park covers around 90 square miles. It has unusual but beautiful vegetation. The forest vegetation is covered with Euphorbia, tall cactus like trees and acacia woodland. The forest region is a host to over 400 migratory bird species from around the world. The park's lake is internationally known for its lesser and greater flamingos. Ornithologists often describe Lake Nakuru as "the most fabulous bird spectacle in the world". The lesser flamingo can be distinguished by its deep red carmine bill and pink plumage unlike the greater, which has a bill with a black tip. The lesser flamingos are ones that are commonly pictured in documentaries mainly because they are large in number. There are estimated to be over a million lesser flamingos. The flamingos feed on algae, created from their droppings mixing in the warm alkaline waters, and plankton. Lake Nakuru National Park is also shared with the white pelicans and the ever-snorting hippos.

Day 11: This morning explore Nakuru before departing for the Masai Mara with picnic lunch, rest of the day game viewing, dinner and overnight within our standard camp.

Masai Mara

The Masai Mara consists of open grasslands with patches of acacia woodland, thickets, and riverina forests. In the dry season from July through October the reserve is a major concentration area for herbivores. The Masai Mara is Kenya's finest wildlife sanctuary. Everything about this reserve is outstanding. The wildlife is abundant and the gentle rolling grassland ensures that animals are never out of sight. Birds too are prolific, including migrant birds and 57 species of birds of prey. The first sight of this park is breathtaking. Here the great herds of shuffling elephants browse among the rich tree-studded grasslands with an occasional sighting of a solitary and ill-tempered rhino, Thompson's and Grant's gazelle, topi and eland and many more species of plains' game offer a rich choice of food for the dominant predators; lion, leopard and cheetah which hunt in this pristine wilderness. In the Mara River, hippos submerge at the approach of a vehicle only to surface seconds later to snort and grumble their displeasure. The main attraction in the Masai Mara is when a large number of wildebeest and zebra migrate from the Serengeti National Park and enter the Masai Mara around the end of July drawn by the sweet grass raised by the long rains of April and May. It is estimated that more than half a million wildebeest enter the Mara and are joined by another 100,000 from the Loita hills east of the Mara. Driving in the midst of these great herds is an unimaginable experience.

Day 12: Today is spent exploring the Masai Mara, either full day game viewing with picnic lunches, or morning and afternoon game drives with lunch in the camp. Dinner and overnight within camp.

Day 13: This morning game viewing in Masai Mara before departing for Isebania border post and clearing customs and immigration and departing for Speke Bay Lodge on the shores of Lake Victoria for dinner and overnight. Here you can visit the local Wasukuma villages, head out onto the lake in a dugout canoe, or walk in the private conservation area. Dinner and overnight at Speke Bay Lodge.



Day 14: After breakfast this morning leave the shores of Lake Victoria and head towards the Serengeti with picnic lunch to spend the day game viewing en route to the campsite either in the Seronera valley or further east at the Moru Kopjes for dinner and overnight. (This is a private campsite using our standard dome tents, with camp beds, mattresses and all bedding as well as private shower and toilet tents. Upgrade to full service camping is available)

Serengeti National Park

Arguably the most famous National Park in the world, the Serengeti Ecosystem (the name comes from "siringit" the Masai word for "endless plains") consists of some 35,000 square kilometres. It extends into the Masai Mara in neighbouring Kenya and provides a vast eco-system for the wildebeest migration that takes place each year. The famed plains are found to the south of

the park east of the Seronera Valley, rolling hills in the less visited Lobo area to the north and wooded riverine valleys to the remote east around Kirawira and Grumeti.

The park itself is about 14,763 sq kms in area and encompasses the main part of the Serengeti ecosystem. The ecosystem is defined by the annual migration of over 1,500,000 million wildebeest, zebras and associated predators, which occurs throughout the year and extends into the game reserves, game controlled areas and conservation area surrounding the park boundaries. As in all ecosystems, the vegetation and type of animals you will find are closely correlated, although it is impossible to say exactly where different species will occur, it is possible to build up a picture of the most likely species to be found in each area.



Short grass plains

The short grass plains occur east of the Naabi Hill gate and extend almost to Olduvai Gorge in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. The area is characterised by large sweeping plains with a short covering of grass which completely withers during the dry season. On the northern fringes of the plains are granite kopjes, large rocky outcrops which in themselves form unique habitats. On the border of the Serengeti and Ngorongoro Conservation Area is Lake Ndutu. The lakes here are surrounded by acacia forests and it is here that all the accommodation and campsites are to be found. It is also from here that it is possible to do some walking with one of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area rangers on the lake shore. It is on the Short Grass plains during mid December through to mid January that the wildebeest herds congregate in large numbers to give birth to nearly 400,000 calves in the first two weeks of February. This is a defense mechanism, as giving birth to large numbers in a very short period overwhelms the predators following the herds. The herds stay in the area till mid to late May, depending on the rains, before splitting up into smaller herds numbering in the tens of thousands of wildebeest all heading west in long straggling columns up to 40 kilometres in length. This is without parallel and is definitely the best game viewing to be had anywhere at anytime in the world! Not only are the massive numbers of wildebeest beyond comprehension, but the prides of lions and groups of cheetahs provide outstanding viewing opportunities.

Days 15 and 16: Full day exploring the Serengeti, either with picnic lunch or early morning and late afternoon game drives and lunch in camp. Dinner and overnight within camp.

Day 17: This morning depart for Ngorongoro with picnic lunch, game viewing en route and visiting Ol Duvai Gorge. Late afternoon ascend the crater walls to the Simba campsite for dinner and overnight.

Ngorongoro Conservation Area

Ngorongoro Conservation Area is the name given to the 8,300 square kilometer piece of land that surrounds the famous Crater and the Highlands of the same name. The Crater was once the headquarters of Serengeti National Park of which it was an integral part, but in 1956, after intense pressure and lobbying from the local Masai community who were dispossessed of the lands when the National Park was set up, Ngorongoro was designated a Conservation Area.

The 210 square km Crater is now one of the principal attractions on the Northern Tanzanian Safari Circuit and the reputation of the Crater Highlands is slowly developing as a premier trekking destination. The Crater is all that it is made out to be, the hyperbole about Garden's Of Eden, Eighth Wonder Of The World etc all justified by its perennial animal population. This cross-section of wildlife is about as convenient as you will find, dispersed amongst an amazing array of eco-systems within the Natural Amphitheatre created by 600 metre high cliffs around it. It is home to one of the few remaining populations of black rhino in Tanzania and just about every other East African mammal, with the exception of giraffe (walls are too steep) and impala, all unafraid and used to the constant retinue of vehicles.

The crater has the highest density of lions in Africa, with over 30 lions per 100 sq kms, compared to the Serengeti, which has about 14 lions per 100 sq kms; and Kruger National Park in South Africa with about 10 lions per 100 sq kms. In Ngorongoro it is not uncommon to find the lions lying in the shade of the parked tourist vehicle!

The Ngorongoro Conservation Area is unique in that the area is shared between the pastoralist Masai tribe and the wildlife the area was established to preserve.

Day 18: Early this morning head into the crater for game viewing with picnic lunch, before heading to the Tarangire-Manyara ecosystem for dinner and overnight at Ol Tukai Manyara.

Day 19: These days are spent on walking safaris, game drives in the Tarangire and Manyara ecosystem. Dinners and overnights at Ol Tukai Manyara.



Tarangire National Park and Conservation Area

This park represents perhaps the closest approximation to people's expectations of Africa. Savannah lands, acacia stands, clusters of baobab trees, large herds of elephant and large tracts of rarely visited game lands make this perhaps the epitome of the safari experience. The park is approximately 2,600 sq kms within an ecosystem of over 20,000 sq kms on the Masai steppes, and during the height of the dry season is second only to Ngorongoro in density of wildlife. Tarangire is also arguably the best park in Africa for elephants with a population of over 3,000; and during the season, these are concentrated around the permanent waters of the Tarangire River during the heat of the day.

As in all ecosystems the vegetation and the types of animals you find are closely correlated. The principle features of the ecosystem are grasslands and floodplains, Acacia tortillas and baobab parkland, riverina woodland, acacia commiphora woodland and combretum woodland. Three swamps form very important all year water sources for the large elephant populations, Silale and Gursi within the park, and Goswa within the conservation area. Tarangire is also one of the only places in Tanzania where you are able to combine the traditional game viewing from vehicles with other activities such as night drives, walking safaris and fly camping. For avid birders, to be able to walk in the Conservation Area with one of the trained Masai guides is incredibly rewarding as it is at this pace it is far easier to spot and observe the many bird species. Night drives also enable visitors to see the nocturnal animals such as African wildcat, Serval cats, genets, civets and bat eared foxes. The larger predators are also active at night and it is not uncommon to spot leopards hunting in the woodland margins or lions on the plains. For birders, species to note include Hildebrandts Starling, the endemic Ashy starling, Yellow collared lovebird and Orange bellied parrot. Also seen around the camp are Brown parrots, Von der Deckens Hornbill, Northern pied babbler, Northern white crowned shrike, white bellied go away bird, plus a variety of rollers, woodpeckers and other species. On the night drives we also have the chance to see some of the many owls in the area, as well as two banded coursers and Montane nightjars.



Day 20: Morning departure with picnic lunch for Mkomazi National Park, afternoon spent game viewing in the park en route to the campsite at Ibaya for dinner and overnight.

Mkomazi National Park

The Mkomazi National Park is Tanzania's newest park and is located in a wild and beautiful stretch of land behind the Pare and Usambara Mountains and forming the Tanzanian extension of the Tsavo National Park of Kenya. The Transborder National Park is the largest of its type in the world, over 26,000 sq kilometers. The acacia and baobab habitat is home to over 400 bird species as well as dozens of large mammals usually found in the Somali - Masai habitats including gerenuk and kudu. The landscape is dominated by a ring of mountains. The reserve is also home to migratory mammals from Tsavo at the beginning of the short rains in December but mainly during the long rains in April and May.



Thousands of elephant, buffalo, oryx and zebras are common during this period, as well as excellent chances of spotting lions and leopards. African Wild dog and black rhinoceros have been reintroduced into the reserve and are to be found in a semi-captive environment near Kisima. Mkomazi is one of the few areas in northern Tanzania where we are able to talk with armed rangers, and makes for exciting game viewing!

Day 21: Full day spent exploring Mkomazi on walking safari with a ranger and game views, dinner and overnight at Ibaya.

Day 22: After breakfast this morning we break camp and head south east along the main road to the port city of Tanga. Dinner and overnight is in private camp on the beach at Tambarani just south of Tanga. *(note that this is not a resort type beach, but is located near Swahilli villages on white sand and mangroves, and we can take local Ngalawa outriggers to offshore sand islands for picnics and skin diving)*

Days 23 and 24: Today is spent exploring the Swahili coast. Dinner and overnight at Tambarani.

Swahili coast

Tanga is the second largest port in Tanzania but its decaying grandeur is only a remnant of its heyday during the German colonial administration at the start of the 20th Century. From Tanga we will be visiting the Amboni caves as well as the atmospheric fourteenth century Swahili trading town of Tongoni. Tanga seems to have missed the developed experienced elsewhere in East Africa during the last half of the 20th century, and the buildings lining the streets all date back nearly a century. The central market is one of the few left which is typical of what was in every town in East Africa. there will be opportunities for heading out on the local Ngalawa sailing boats, deep "v's" with dhow set sails, visiting offshore sand islands for picnic and swimming. Tanga is also the location of the first land engagement of WW1 in East Africa when British and colonial troops attempted an amphibious landing in November 1914.



Days 25: Today catch a local Dhow for the three or four hour sail across the Pemba channel to the north of Zanzibar and the Kilima Kidogo Guesthouse in Nungwi for overnight on b&b basis.

Days 26 and 27: These days are spent relaxing on Zanzibar, overnights at Kilima Kidogo Guesthouse.

Day 28: Transfer to Stone Town early this morning for the flight to Dar Es Salaam to connect with international flights.

End Of Services

INCLUDED: This is a private safari with all game viewing in 4WD land rover or Land cruiser with English speaking guide, all full board accommodation throughout, all park fees and conservation fees, unlimited kilometers on game drives, all walking safaris and night drives as stated. Includes one gorilla permit per person. Includes flight ZNZ to Dar Es Salaam and flights Nairobi to Kigali.

NOT INCLUDED: soft and alcoholic drinks, all items of a personal nature, visas and international flights.