

## 14 Day Gorillas and Game Parks Safari

This trip begins in Nairobi, Kenya and travels to Uganda before heading back in to Kenya and ending in Nairobi.

This trip departs from Nairobi early on Sunday morning. Should you wish to explore Nairobi, an earlier arrival should be planned and accommodation booked through your consultant.

**Pre Departure Meeting:** Held at the Departure Point at 17h00 the day before your departure.

**Departure Point:** Acacia Camp, Magadi Road (off Langata Road), Nairobi.

**Check-In Time:** 08h45

**Departure Time:** 09h30

**Local Payment:** US\$460

### Please Note:

This itinerary should be used as a guide only and may vary from day to day depending on road & weather conditions, political situations and group decisions.

All prices & Local Payments are subject to change.

Due to Tourism Laws in some of the countries we visit, there may be a truck and crew change during the trip.

Your arrival transfer and pre-trip accommodation in a dorm bed is included in your trip price. Should you choose not to make use of these, or in the event that your consultant was not updated with your arrival details, no refund will be paid for services not used.

Please ensure you've received a copy of our pre departure information document with information on what to expect on this overland safari.

For booking purposes please notify our office as soon as possible should you choose not to trek the Mountain Gorillas.

### Day 1: **Nairobi to Masai Mara (L / D)**

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Leaving the hustle and bustle of Nairobi we climb the escarpment to our first stop, a viewpoint overlooking a section of 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, and continue our drive possibly getting a glimpse of some wildlife along the way. We arrive at our campsite, Acacia Camp in the late afternoon. 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 2: **Masai Mara (B / L / D)**

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We depart shortly after sunrise on our game drive into the Masai Mara Reserve. The Masai Mara is well known as one of East Africa's best National Reserves and is home to a wide variety of wildlife species. Most famous for the Annual Migration, that consists of the impressive herds of over 1 million wildebeest, zebra and Thomson's gazelle that cross over from the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania; the Masai Mara is most popular between July and October when these vast herds feast on the fresh grazing here. Following these herbivores are Africa's predators that are often seen at a kill during this period. We game drive through a section of the park in search of the 'Big 5' - elephant, rhino, buffalo, lion & leopard; along with the many other species of animals, reptiles and birds who make call this wilderness home.

After our game drive, we have the option to visit one of the nearby Masai Manyatta's – this is a traditional hamlet where the Masai still live in their traditional way. This evening we sit around the camp fire, and watch the sun set over this "Garden of Eden".



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### Day 3: Masai Mara to Kisumu (B / L / D)

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Leaving the Masai Mara early, we head out of Masai Land pass through the scenic tea plantations of Kericho before descending the Rift Valley Plateau, on our way to Kisumu - Kenya's harbour town on the banks of Africa's largest lake, Lake Victoria. We replenish our supplies and overnight here.

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### Day 4: Kisumu to Kampala (Uganda) (B / L / D)

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This morning, 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 Ruwenzori Mountains in the west and the semi-desert 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.

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### Days 5 - 8: Kampala to Lake Bunyoni (B / L / D)

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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. There is a local transport & handling fee of US\$65 to US\$70 per person (this covers the return public transfer and the Wildlife Authority's booking fee). For trekking in the DRC or Rwanda (the trip leader will advise at the pre departure meeting as to where the permits have been secured, and will assist with the online visa application for Rwanda en-route if needed), we will also have to purchase an additional visa to enter either country, as well as renewing our Ugandan visa upon re-entry. We also advise budgeting a little extra for tips for the local guides and rangers. Please budget accordingly as payment for the permit must be made in US\$ cash at the pre departure meeting.

**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. We wind our way through arguably some of the most picturesque scenery in Africa en-route to the National Park. Dependant on where permits are available, we may spend a night in either Kisoro or in Rwanda. 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 (not including transfer time) 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.



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Depending on where the trek takes place you may also pass through some of the local villages that have settled in this region due to the high number of refugees fleeing from the Rwandan Genocide, or from the continued unrest in the DRC. The villagers in this area are mostly subsistence farmers, and families that farm against the slopes of the volcanoes. It is impressive to see how they have ploughed, planted and harvest their crops in such an unlikely landscape.

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### Day 9: Lake Bunyoni to Kampala (B / L / D)

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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!

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### Day 10: Kampala to Jinja (B / L / D)

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

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### Day 11: Jinja to Nakuru (Kenya) (B / L / D)

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Departing early, we head back to Kenya, stopping for lunch and supplies en route. We overnight outside Nakuru at a lovely campsite on a local farm. Nakuru is Kenya's 4<sup>th</sup> largest town and capital of the Rift Valley Province and lies adjacent to the small but wildlife rich Lake Nakuru National Park.

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### Day 12: Lake Nakuru National Park to Lake Naivasha (B / L / D)

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This morning we begin 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. After our game drive, we head to Lake Naivasha arriving in the late afternoon.

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### Day 13: Lake Naivasha (B / L / D)

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Lake Naivasha, is 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. We spend the day 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.

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### Day 14: Lake Naivasha to Nairobi (B)

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After breakfast, we head back to Nairobi usually arriving by late morning, or early afternoon. On arrival to Acacia Camp, we exchange addresses and part ways, having just experienced a trip of a lifetime!

The rest of the day is yours at leisure to enjoy some of the many options available in this bustling city; visit The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, where you can view the orphaned baby Elephants at feeding time, or head to the Giraffe Centre in Langata, if you haven't had your fill of game viewing, then Nairobi National Park offers some great day trips or if you haven't quite got all those souvenirs you wanted, take a "Matatu" to the local curio markets close by the campsite. This evening why not try the fair on offer at the famous Carnivores restaurant.



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### **Bonus trip**

When you book this trip, you are entitled to receive a BONUS 3 Day Masai Mara Safari the Thursday before or the Sunday after your trip ends. A Local Payment of US\$235 is applicable for this trip. This fantastic offer must be taken up at the same time you book this trip. Ask your consultant for more details. Conditions apply.

