

## 28 Day Gameparks & Gorillas

### Tour overview

Catch a glimpse of East Africa's diverse landscapes while game-watching on the endless plains of the Masai Mara and Serengeti, Gorilla trekking in Uganda's mystical rainforests, and relaxing on the magnificent beaches on the Indian Ocean island of Zanzibar.

### Highlights

Great Rift Valley

Lake Nakuru, Kenya

Lake Victoria

Kampala, Uganda

Mountain gorillas

Lake Bunyonyi, Uganda

Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya

Zanzibar, Tanzania

Serengeti National Park, Tanzania

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

### Meals

22 Breakfasts, 23 Lunches, 21 Dinners

### Accommodation

Camping in 2-person dome tents

### Day 1 – 6

### Nairobi – Nakuru – Eldoret – Jinja – Kampala

We depart Nairobi and descend into the 'Great Rift Valley', an enormous cleft in the Earth's surface stretching from the Red Sea to Mozambique, but with particularly marked escarpments in Kenya. After stopping en route to admire the view of Lake Naivasha, our first stop is Lake Nakuru National Park. The shallow soda lake here attracts a huge variety of birdlife – especially flamingos, which form a strikingly pink 'fringe' around the lakeshore. The park is also home to lion, rhino, leopard, warthog, baboon, antelope, and a variety of smaller animals, and is a delightful introduction to East Africa's diverse wildlife. From Nakuru we continue northwest to Eldoret, and then the Uganda border.

Uganda is a wonderfully fertile country of green terraced hillsides, lush banana plantations, steep mountains and tangled forests. We spend our first couple of nights on the grassy banks of the River Nile, near the town of Jinja. It was in 1862 that the British explorer John Hanning Speke recognised Lake Victoria as the 'source of the Nile', settling a long running dispute about Africa's (and the world's) longest river. Our camp overlooks a dramatic set of rapids known as Bujagali Falls. It is here that we have the option to try a number of activities including white-water rafting, quad-biking, village walks and even bungee jumping! 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. 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.



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### Day 7 – 14

#### Gorilla Trek - Nairobi

From Kampala, we skirt Lake Victoria and cross the equator and head into the mountainous region of southwest Uganda. We stop at picturesque Lake Bunyonyi, before our excursion into the dense forests of the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. This region of Africa is home to the world's remaining 700 mountain gorillas, half of which inhabit Bwindi or nearby sanctuaries. 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.

The usual procedure is to trek in small groups into the rainforest, and on the day of our trek we gather in the early morning to meet our local guide and tracker. 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. Once we have located the gorilla 'family', we squat or sit down and simply observe them for around an hour – the time set to minimise the human impact on the gorillas' habitat. We may spend several days in the area while all members in our group complete the trek and viewing. Community visits and forest walks can be taken around this beautiful area when not visiting the gorillas. We return to Kenya via Kampala and Eldoret and cross the Rift Valley to Nairobi.

### Day 15 – 18

#### Nairobi – Masai Mara National Reserve

We switch to smaller and more suitable safari vehicles and cross the Rift Valley once again to spend two nights camping on the edge of the world-renowned Masai Mara National Reserve. We spend our days exploring the sweeping grassy plains, open horizons, low slung Acacia trees and dramatic outcrops of rock on game drives. The Mara's plains are crossed every year from July to October by large herds of wildebeest, zebra and other hoofed animals that migrate from the adjoining Serengeti National Park in Tanzania, on a continuous circular migration. Predators (lion, cheetah) and scavengers (hyena, vultures) follow the huge herds and together form a spectacular sight. But the Mara is excellent for game viewing at any time of year and with luck we hope to spot an inspiring array of animals and birdlife. From the Mara, we spend another night in Nairobi on our way south into Tanzania.

### Day 19 – 23

#### Arusha, Serengeti National Park, Olduvai Gorge, Ngorongoro Crater

Arusha is situated mid-way between Cape Town and Cairo, and is very much Tanzania's 'safari capital', with busy streets and colourful markets, all nestling in the shadow of the brooding Mt Meru (4556m). After exploring the curio markets, we head to our camp where there is the opportunity to walk (or ride a camel) to one of the local Masai villages, visit a local school or clinic, the small Masai Museum, and the Meserani Snake Park.

Switching to smaller 4x4 vehicles, we drive west and enter the Ngorongoro Crater Conservation Area. After driving around the Crater rim and stopping at the Olduvai Gorge - made famous by Drs Louis and Mary Leakey for archaeological explorations - 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. Game viewing here can be superb and camping out in the designated (but unfenced) campsite where lion and hyena roam nearby is an unforgettable experience.

The following day we ascend the outer wall of the Ngorongoro Crater again where we spend the night camping on the rim (you may need a jacket; it can be cold at night). At 326 square kilometres, the Ngorongoro Crater 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) is equally enjoyable. All the major mammals are present, and we descend the steep access road for an early morning game-drive, before we retrace our steps to Arusha and our camp for the evening.



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### Day 24 – 28

### Dar es Salaam - Zanzibar

After driving in the shadow of Mt Kilimanjaro (Africa's highest peak at 5895m), we camp for the night next to the beach in Dar es Salaam; Tanzania's lively capital and main port on the Indian Ocean coast. We take the ferry to the 'Spice Island' of Zanzibar: evocative and exotic, the island is world-renowned for its idyllic, sandy, palm-fringed beaches, romantic winding cobbled alleys and lush tropical forests. It also has an intriguing history, and Zanzibar was the base for the great 19th century explorers such as Speke, Burton and Livingstone, and was once a major trading centre for spices.

Our time on the island is at leisure. The best way to explore the bazaars, shops, mosques, palaces, courtyards and alleyways of Stone Town is on foot. 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. 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.

After three nights we cross back by ferry to the African mainland and Dar es Salaam, where our tour ends.

**NB** Depending on the availability of gorilla permits the tour itinerary may vary from the above, which is based on the brochure itinerary. From time to time we may trek outside Uganda in neighbouring countries, such as Rwanda, and this may entail extra visa requirements and fees, although we shall endeavour to advise you before departure of any significant change to the tour itinerary.

**NB2** Accommodation in Nairobi on nights 14 & 15 is not included in the tour price or your Local Payment. Please put aside between US\$25-35 per night for meals and accommodation here.

**NB3** As we leave the truck on the mainland, food and accommodation on Zanzibar is not included in the tour price or Local Payment, and your time is free to enjoy the island's activities. Your tour leader will be happy to assist booking accommodation in Stone Town and/ or at the beach – if you wish - please budget approx \$30-35 per night. You are of course free to arrange your own accommodation in advance.

### Includes

- \* Fully equipped safari vehicle
- \* Camping and cooking equipment
- \* All road tolls and vehicle taxes
- \* All ground transportation
- \* Services of two crew
- \* Sleeping mattress
- \* Meals as indicated
- \* Snake Park entrance
- \* Masai village walk



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### Excludes

- \* Local Payment excursions
- \* Visas
- \* Travel insurance
- \* Flights
- \* Departure taxes
- \* Departure airport transfers
- \* Sleeping bag
- \* Optional activities
- \* Tips, drinks, items of a personal nature
- \* Meals & accommodation on Zanzibar (3 nights)
- \* Meals & accommodation in Nairobi (2 nights on days 14 & 15)

