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Tours

## 231 Day (33 Weeks) Trans Africa (UK to Nairobi)

**IMPORTANT: PLEASE READ THE TWO NOTICES BELOW CAREFULLY**

- ***If you require any further information - please don't hesitate to contact us.***

Due to the unpredictable nature of this expedition - it is not always possible to follow the itinerary exactly as set out below.

We will always endeavour to visit all the places listed, and often more that are not. All the information regarding the itinerary is given in good faith and is subject to change due to weather, political or country instabilities and general safety / road conditions etc – ***Please also read notice below.*** Any major itinerary changes will be decided by the crew & company directors and will be discussed with the group beforehand whenever possible. It is also possible that the expedition may arrive later than specified into Cape Town / Nairobi or Cairo.

### Weeks 1 & 2

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We begin our journey in Gibraltar or southern Spain where your Trans Africa Crew will meet you from your flight. Our first stop is in **Gibraltar**. Here the weather is warmer, and as it is a duty free port, we can stock up on drinks etc for Xmas and New Year. We cross the **Straits of Gibraltar** by ferry to **Ceuta**, a Spanish enclave on the **North African Coast**. In Morocco we visit **Chefchaouen in the Riff Mountains**, which is set in a valley. We camp on a ridge overlooking this picturesque town with its white roofs and narrow streets. You can wander around this relaxed town and maybe visit one of the old hammam bath houses.

The **Roman City of Volubillis** is next. A remarkably well-kept reminder of the Roman presence in North Africa 2000 years ago. We spend some time wandering around the ancient streets and monuments before driving to the **fortress city of Fez**. Its huge covered bazaar with narrow winding alleys is crammed with craft workshops, restaurants, food stalls, mosques, dye pits and tanneries.

### Weeks 3 & 4

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We spend a few days in **Rabat** organising visas before travelling onto **Todra Gorge**. Its massive red and orange cliffs rise a thousand feet on each side of a sandy river. From Todra we cross the **Sarhro Mountains** and follow the **Draa Valley** past hundreds of scattered Kasbahs until we reach **Marrakech**.

The main square here comes alive at night with **food stalls, storytellers and snake charmers**. After visiting one of the beach resorts on the nearby coast we trek south following the rugged Atlantic coastline towards **Mauritania**, and the **Sahara Desert**.

### Weeks 5 & 6

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After crossing into Mauritania the remoteness and unrelenting heat and harshness of the desert becomes apparent. We have now left civilization behind and are in the desert proper. The security of knowing that our truck is totally self



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sufficient with food, water, fuel and a complete set of spares is a very comforting thought.

We drive off-road for hundreds of miles, occasionally having to dig the truck out of very soft sand and lay sand ladders. We pass through the **Parc d'Arguin**, renowned for its bird and sea life. In **Nouakchott**, the small undeveloped capital, we spend a couple of days. It is quite incredible to think that slavery was only abolished here in 1980 and it is rumoured that it still continues in some outlying areas. From here we drive inland toward **Mali**, one of the poorest countries on earth.

As we get into the Sahel scrublands we find the road conditions only slightly better than before. After a few days of dusty, stony, corrugated roads, smooth asphalt becomes our main desire! We pass slowly through many spread out villages with goats, cattle and hardy chickens, all free range, and some of which we may buy for a spit roast.

Arriving in **Bamako**, Mali's capital, is a welcome relief for most. Lively bars, cold beers, markets with fresh fruit and vegetables and people with different culture, language and dress to those in the Western Sahara. The town overlooks the Niger River and has some good clubs for late night drinking and dancing, often to live bands.

### Weeks 7 to 9

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Following the **Niger River** we visit the old mud built towns of **Mopti and Djenne**. These towns were important trading centres over 500 years ago. Not much seems to have changed as you wander through the narrow alleyways and view the huge mud built mosque, which must be one of the largest and oldest mud, brick buildings in the world. On the remote **Bandiagara Escarpment** we hike out to visit the **Dogon Villages**, which are situated along the 200km long cliff face.

One of the most fascinating areas of Africa, the Dogon were some of the few tribes who resisted the spread of Islam when its missionaries and forces swept across North and West Africa a thousand years ago. They still maintain most of their traditional religious beliefs. We take a guide and spend a few days hiking along the escarpment and staying in Dogon villages. The guide will be able to explain some of the history and culture of the area as well as take you to some of the old abandoned cliff dwellings and organise food and lodging over night.

Passing through the friendly country of **Burkina Faso** we stop at the capital **Ougadougou**. This is a little heard of nation and is one of the poorest countries in the world. However, it is recognised as having a small thriving film industry, excellent musicians and dance bands and an enthusiastically supported national soccer team. Here we will have time to listen to, and enjoy, some of the best music in West Africa. In **Ghana** we notice another change in people and culture. Especially the language!

For the first time in two months we are in a country where English is the main Language. We spend a night in **Mole National Park** in northern Ghana and game drive in our expedition vehicle hoping to view some of the numerous **elephants** that inhabit this park – among a host of other wildlife.

We then camp near Accra, (the capital) for a few days and **relax on its palm-fringed coastline**. Here too we can collect



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post from home and say goodbye to members of the group who have been able to travel this far and say hello to new recruits joining.

*Those people travelling on the 9 week trip to Ghana finish here.*

### Weeks 10 to 12

Travelling through **Togo and Benin** doesn't take long as they are only 50 miles wide. **Voodoo** is the main religion here, basing its beliefs in the power of the dead. You can visit an interesting **fetish market** as well as some good African restaurants in Togo. In Benin you can take canoes out to **Ganvie village**.

**It is built on bamboo stilts on Lake Nakoue.** Next we enter **Nigeria**, Africa's most populous country with well over 100 million people. The pace of life here tends to be more hectic than we have become used to, full of hustle and bustle. We stop for several days in **Abuja**, the capital before moving through mountains and lush jungle toward **Cameroon** & near Mount Cameroon, we spend a few days camping at 6 Mile Beach, near **Limbe**.

Here you can choose to climb **Mount Cameroon**, visit a **chimpanzee orphanage** or **relax on the beach**.

### Weeks 13 to 15

Leaving the Cameroon coast we travel inland and south on rugged roads. We skirt a number of **Pygmy villages** and pass the occasional waterfall and eventually after a couple of days the lush jungle scenery leads us to the lively market town of **Ambam**. We replenish our food supplies before crossing the **Ntem river into Gabon**, a country that consists mostly of Tropical Rain Forest.

We visit the capital city **Libreville** where we obtain more visas for countries further south and while here we can visit some of the laid back local beaches, such as **Cap Esterias** and try some of the many restaurants that serve African cuisine.

The next town of any size that we come to is **Lambarene**. Situated on an island in the middle of the Ogooue River, Lambarene's claim to fame is it's hospital built in 1913 by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Albert Schweitzer. Situated 8kms away in the forest, it is still the main hospital in Gabon and also has an interesting museum of it's, and Albert Schweitzers past. Here you can also take **pirogue trips** ( wooden dugout canoes) up the river into the tropical jungle. From Lambarene we continue south toward Congo.

### Weeks 16 & 17

One of the main highlights for most people who visit **Congo** is the friendliness of the people, particularly in the countryside. However, when we arrive at the coastal city of **Ponte Noire** the atmosphere here is also very relaxed and friendly. Besides the beaches which are a great place to relax and meet local people, Ponte Noire also has many night clubs which host some of the top African musicians and bands.



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While in Ponte Noire it is possible to visit the **Jane Goodall Chimpanzee Sanctuary** an hour out of town. From Ponte Noire it is only 40 kms south to the border of **Cabinda**. This is a small oil rich province of Angola, only 150 kms wide, whose recent history has been largely influenced by western oil companies.

### Weeks 18 to 20

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From Cabinda we drive into the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), formerly known as Zaire**. The roads here will probably be the worst we will encounter on the whole trip. However, amazing sites such as the 10 km wide mouth of the Congo river as it enters the sea, and charming towns and villages with names like Banana and Songololo make this an interesting and unique experience.

We will only be in DRC for a few days before entering Angola proper. We cross the Congo river into **Angola** entering the northern province called Zaire.

Angola is still recovering from over two decades of civil war and is one of the poorest countries in Africa. We travel slowly south to **Luanda** the capital, passing through many small towns and villages. We also visit **Parque Nacional Da Quicama**, old Portuguese Forts, waterfalls, deserted beaches and lots of friendly people. As hardly anyone we encounter in small villages and beach communities speak English, we need to do a lot of improvisations with hands, face and voice, but usually with a lot of good humour we all seem to somehow communicate successfully.

After the southern town of Lubango we head to the Namibian border.

### Weeks 21 & 22

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Crossing into **Namibia** and into the region of the Owambo people – we pass through the country's second largest town – Ondangwa. This town is one of the main suppliers of beer and supplies to Northern Namibia – hopefully there will be enough left for us!!!!

Heading west into what is known as the **Kaokoveld** – we enter one of Africa's lesser visited areas. By some it is classed as prime safari territory due to its inaccessibility and nearly non existent infrastructure. We may be fortunate enough to see one of **30 remaining desert elephants** – who have adapted to the harsh arid conditions of this area in search of the underground water reserves of the ancient riverbeds. **Black Rhinos** also inhabit this area – but their secrecy makes viewing them in the wild that little bit more difficult.

The Kaokoveld is also home to the **Himba people** – a tribe of nomadic pastoralists who to this day have shunned the advances of the modern world to keep with their tradition of leading nomadic lifestyles. The men and women of the tribe traditionally wear little clothing except for goats skin or modest cloth – opting to rub their bodies and hair with red ochre and fat which ultimately protects them from the sun and represents the distinctive look associated with the Himba people.

We hope to visit a local Himba village to allow us a greater understanding into one of Africa's most visually unique people. We then head towards the **Brandberg Mountain region** – home of Namibia's highest peaks. Known as the

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Matterhorn of Namibia – the **Spitzkoppe** is part of the Erongo Mt range and was formed over 100 million years ago after the collapse of a gigantic volcano. The scenery is striking from every angle – even more stunning as the granite massifs turn red at sunset.

Next we stay for a night or two in the capital, **Windhoek** our first taste of western civilization we would have experienced in a few weeks. This will give you the chance to take a walking tour of the town – with its influence of old world German architecture and twentieth century modernity side by side. The hustle and bustle of the capital could not seem more far away from what we have experienced for the last few weeks.

From Windhoek we head south east into **Botswana** and cross the centre of the **Kalahari Desert**, home of the **San Bushmen** where we will spot various buck and wild ostrich as well as enjoy camping out in the freedom of the vast desert. We also pass through some diamond mining settlements in southern Botswana before entering South Africa

### Week 23

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Our first stop in the Northern Cape is the diamond town of **Kimberly**. Here we can visit the Mine Museum and the **Big Hole**, an excellent introduction into Kimberley's fascinating history. There is also the opportunity to take a trip almost 1km down an operating modern Diamond Mine. Further south we visit **Addo National Park, home to the big five** where we should spot Elephant, Hippo, Rhino, Buffalo, loads of various types of monkeys and buck as well as baboons and if we are lucky, Lion, and if very lucky, Leopard.

We continue heading towards the **Outeniqua Mountains** to the **Little Karoo**. Here we visit the **Cango Caves** recognised as amongst the worlds finest network of Calcite caves. We also visit an **Ostrich farm** to learn more about the worlds largest bird, as well as have the opportunity to ride one! We spend the following couple of days winding our way along South Africa's famous **Garden Route**, visiting **Tsitsikamma Forest**, where you will be able to hike along the coast and maybe spot **dolphins and whales** in the ocean.

Optional excursions in this region include **mountain biking, ziplining and the mother of all bungee jumps** at Bloakrans Bridge - the biggest in the world at 216 metres. The Southern most tip of Africa at **Cape Agulhas** is the dividing line between the cold Atlantic and the warmer waters of the Indian Ocean. You may be lucky enough to spot **Southern Right and Humpback Whales** as they feed in the nutrient rich waters of the southern coast.

When then have a short drive to the vibrant city of Cape Town and for some the final destination of their trip. There is plenty to do in and around Cape Town, **from climbing Table Mountain to abseiling down it, shark diving ( In ocean cages - or at the Two Oceans Aquarium ), great shopping and nightlife, scuba diving courses, a tour to Robben Island, a wine tour, great night life, the list goes on!**

We spend 3 days here in Cape Town affording you enough time to experience most of these activities.

*Those people travelling on the 23 week trip to Cape Town finish here.*

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### Weeks 24 & 25

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We leave Cape Town and head north through Namaqualand and cross the Orange River into Namibia. From here it is only a couple of hours north to one of Africa's most sensational natural features, **Fish River Canyon**. We camp next to this massive gorge, where you can hike along the canyon rim and soak up the sun and fabulous scenery.

A one day drive then takes us to the **Namib-Naukluft Park**, a vast expanse of desert which contains some of the **highest sand dunes in the world**. At **Sossusvlei** we have a chance to explore this vast sand desert. We are also lucky enough to experience either sunrise or sunset from **atop Dune 45**.

Our next stop is the adrenaline fuelled atmosphere of **Swakopmund** - you now have the choice of a multitude of activities to indulge in, **including quad biking, dune sledding, deep sea fishing, sky diving, horse riding or a desert flight**. Swakopmund is also good place to relax in one of its colonial German café's or interesting museums. We also visit the world famous **Cape Cross Seal Colony** at the Skeleton Coast Recreational Area where thousands of these mammals - and their accompanying odour pervade the coastline.

After visiting a **local cheetah park** – we will continue to one of the draw cards of Namibia – **Etosha National Park**. Etosha is recognised as one of the world's greatest wildlife viewing areas and here we can also **game watch by night at one of the floodlit watering holes as well as go on several game drives**, hoping to spot some of the many and varied wildlife from **elephant, giraffe and zebra to rhino and leopard**.

Bidding farewell to the west coast of southern Africa we begin our journey inland towards the edges of the Kalahari in Botswana - one of the worlds most arid deserts. But in saying this – the area is also home to one of the worlds largest inland waterways!

These waters would have travelled nearly 9 months from their source in Angola to nourish and settle in the Okavango Delta basin. Maun used to be a rural frontier town – but is now the major gateway to the **Okavango Delta**. From here you will have the chance to experience an over flight – one of the best ways to spot herds of wildlife which otherwise may seem elusive in the vast extensive waterways of this unique desert wetland.

### Weeks 26 & 27

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Our next stop is the **Chobe National Park** where it is possible to take a 4x4 jeep safari and cruise on the **Chobe River** - a less intrusive way to view wildlife, particularly the **hordes of elephants**. From here you can see the convergence of three countries – Botswana, Namibia and Zambia. Leaving behind the arid landscapes of Botswana – we arrive in one of the adventure playgrounds of the world - **Victoria Falls**.

For some **Mosi oa Tunya 'The Smoke That Thunders'** is one of the highlight's of their trip. When you first see Victoria Falls you are surprised at it's enormity – over one mile wide and hurling over 5 million cubic metres of water a minute into the **Zambezi Gorge** below, this is the setting for the most awesome **grade five white water rafting in the world**.

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There is something here for everyone, **from grade 5 white water rafting and canoe trips, the Flight of Angels or a Sunset Cruise, or even daring the world's 2<sup>nd</sup> highest commercial Bungee Jumps, plus jet boating, gorge swings, abseiling and a whole lot more!**

From Vic Falls we drive to Bulawayo - home of The Shona & Matabele people & resting place of the British Imperialist, Cecil John Rhodes.

**Bulawayo** is where you have the option of leaving the truck for a day and use a local safari company to venture into **Matopos National Park**, where you may well see the elusive **Black Rhino amongst hordes of other game**. There is also the opportunity to **visit Cecil Rhodes's grave and Ancient Rock Paintings**. Then, only a couple of hours drive away – we arrive in **Gweru** and stay at a **privately run horse and game ranch**, where you can go **game viewing on elephant and horseback**.

There is also the chance to go **walking with lion cubs** that are up to 10 months old, which is always a thrill and a big highlight! From Gweru we then travel to the **Great Zimbabwe Ruins**, once the greatest medieval city in Sub-Saharan Africa and from where the name Zimbabwe is derived. Another short drive will see us safely in the capital of Harare – where we will have time to relax for a few days.

### Weeks 28 & 29

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After our welcome stay in Zimbabwe - We cross into Mozambique and follow the infamous 'Tete Corridor' which was well known in civil war days as the 'Gun Run'. Thankfully these days things are a lot different!

It takes a relatively short amount time to cross through Mozambique and before we know it we are crossing into **Malawi**, where start following the shores of **Lake Malawi**. This enormous fresh water lake dominates the country and is Africa's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest. We spend several days at small laid back campsites on the edge of the lake where most people choose to relax on the sandy beaches or try their hand at **snorkelling or windsurfing**. There is also the chance to buy some great **wooden carvings** along the way.

Passing rivers & lush mountains we enter **Tanzania's hinterland** where we pass through the peaceful national park of **Mikumi**. It is possible to see **Elephant, Giraffe, Zebra & Antelope** from the roadside. For the next few nights we will find suitable bush camps where we can get back to basics – before arriving into the capital of Dar es Salaam.

Here we base ourselves at a beach campsite just outside Dar. From here most people take the ferry out to **Zanzibar** for the full four days and venture into the narrow bustling streets of **Stone Town** and its exotic **spice markets, old slave forts and dungeons**. There is also time to relax on **Zanzibar's famous white beaches, try scuba diving & snorkelling, and view stunning coral and fish or swim with dolphins!** On returning to the mainland we enjoy a BBQ back at camp.

### Weeks 30 & 31

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After **Zanzibar** we have a one-day drive passing through small towns & villages as well as the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro, bringing us to the bustling town of Arusha. During our time here there is the option, to visit a local **Maasai Village on foot or by Camel** as well as check out the craft stalls selling locally made batiks and ebony carvings.

We then proceed up onto the massive extinct volcano which is **Ngorongoro Crater** from where you can choose to use a local safari company to guide us down onto the crater floor where you can spend the day viewing wildlife including **Elephant, Lion, Cheetah, White Rhino, Hippo, Antelope, Crocodile and Pink Flamingos**. Next day we continue into the **Serengeti National Park** where we camp the night and do several game drives in our vehicle during the day, hoping to spot vast herds of **Wildebeest** roaming the plains, amongst hoards of other game. We then continue westwards from the Serengeti towards **Lake Victoria** and drive around the southern edge of the lake and enter **Rwanda**.

**The Virunga range** of volcanic mountains and the rainforests on these mountain slopes are our next destination as they are home to several families of **Mountain Gorillas**. Once your guide has found the Gorilla family you will be allowed to view them for 1 hour. We usually spend 2 or 3 days at the base camp so allowing everyone in our group enough time to complete their trek to the gorillas. There is also the chance to visit the **genocide museum** in Kigali, which is a moving and interesting experience.

**If we are unable to view the gorillas in Rwanda we will view them in Uganda**

If we do view the gorillas from Uganda we will be based near **Kabale**, Uganda's highest town and we will visit either **Bwindi or Nkuringo National Parks** to view the mountain gorillas. There is also the opportunity to **paddle out onto Lake Bunyoni in canoes** and visit some of the nearby islands or hire mountain bikes to visit nearby villages & schools.

### Weeks 32 & 33

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After viewing the gorillas from either Rwanda or Uganda we will then continue eastwards to Kampala, the capital of Uganda. As we head east we pass through swamps, patches of forest and fertile green countryside. We also pass through a number of small towns & villages where you will see **roadside stalls manufacturing and selling traditional musical instruments** & where we can buy **fresh rotisseries, roasted meat & vegetables, as well as roasted bananas**.

We also stop at the spot where our route crosses the **equator**. In Kampala we have a free day to spend in local cafes and nightspots and get to know the local people, there is also the opportunity to spend the day visiting a local **Chimpanzee Sanctuary and rehabilitation centre** on one of the islands on **Lake Victoria**.

From Kampala it is a short drive to **Jinja**. Here, on the edge of **Lake Victoria**, the Nile begins its 6700km journey to the sea. We spend the next few days at **Bujagali Falls**, just downstream from the source of the Nile. This is a spectacular area, and with one kilometre of raging water below Bujagali Falls, a superb place to go **whitewater rafting**. We can also organise **quad biking or a visit to a local school**. Time & weather permitting we may also visit **Sipi Falls**, on our way to Kenya which is in a picturesque setting of hills & bush.

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Entering **Kenya** we then travel through hills covered in tea plantations and will start to view and drive along one of Africa's greatest natural features, the **Great Rift Valley**. Stretching from the Dead Sea in Jordan down to Mozambique in Southern Africa, our first view is from the top of an escarpment. The valley floor seems to sweep on forever & is dotted with peaks, shimmering rivers & countless springs.

Our journey takes us into the valley to **Lake Nakuru National Park**. Nakuru is home to a wide variety of wildlife including **Black Rhino, Hippo, Lion, Leopard, Hyena and Giraffe**, it is however a soda lake and most famous for its pink inhabitants, a flock of almost a **million Pink Flamingos**.

We will do several game drives whilst here. Nearby is **Lake Naivasha**. We camp near the lakeshore where **Hippos** sometimes feed at night! Here you can walk to **Elsamere**, the house of **Joy Adamson of Elsa the Lion and Born Free fame**, and enjoy a film of her life - and cream teas! You can also **hire mountain bikes and cycle or walk through Hells Gate National Park or Crater Lake Sanctuary** - the only game reserve in Kenya in which this is allowed!

It is then only a short drive to Nairobi, where we pay a visit to **Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage**, Oasis helps support one of the elephants (**Kamboyo**) and it is great to see the amazing work the centre does with rescued and injured elephants. We can also visit the nearby **Giraffe Centre** to learn more about and hopefully get up close and feed these gentle and majestic creatures, we also have a couple free days to relax and catch up with emails, laundry and English language newspapers and also arrange our Ethiopian visas.

End of Tour.

**PLEASE NOTE:** expect to follow the same route again, if the section of the route through DRC/Angola appears to be unsafe we would ship our vehicle from Cameroon to either, Namibia, South Africa or Kenya. This will necessitate a flight from Cameroon to either Nairobi (where you will be met by another one of our vehicles) or to Namibia or South Africa to rejoin the Trans Africa vehicle. However every safe and reasonable effort will be made by us to drive all the way and keep the continuity of the trip. If we do have to fly and ship we will miss Gabon, DRC, Congo & Angola. We will also endeavour to take in other places of interest if we have time spare. While your supplier will cover all ground and transport costs - the cost of flights are not taken into account, in the pricing structure. Therefore any flights will have to be paid for by each individual.

At present, flights from Cameroon to Kenya or Namibia cost approximately £260 to £330 if bought locally in Cameroon. The decision to drive all the way, or ship and fly, will not be finally taken until the expedition reaches Ghana or possibly Cameroon. Our intention, however, is to drive all the way.

There is also the option that if we cannot pass through DRC & Angola and should the present political and civil unrest in the Darfur region of Sudan abate we will travel from Cameroon north into Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia and down into Kenya & continue with the trip to Uganda to view the Mountain Gorillas. We would then continue from Nairobi with the same itinerary but in a southerly direction and ultimately finish in Cape Town, South Africa.



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### TREKKING TO THE MOUNTAIN GORILLAS

The walk to find the Gorillas can take several hours. For much of the walk you will be in high grass or thick vegetation and it could well rain. So wear protective clothing (to prevent being scratched) and waterproofs as well as good walking boots or shoes.

Once your guide has found the Gorilla family you will be allowed to view them for 1 hour. One group of eight people per day are allowed to visit each Gorilla family. The trek starts around 08:30 and your group will be accompanied by a tracker/guide and an armed park ranger. You may see a variety of monkeys, chimpanzees and buffalo on the hike as well.

**Please note:** If we are unable to do the Gorilla trek in Rwanda (if they are booked out, for example), we can do the trek just over the border in Uganda. During our stay at the base camp we may buy a pig from one of the villages for a spit roast. If we view the gorillas from Uganda there is also the opportunity to paddle out onto Lake Bunyoni in canoes and visit some of the nearby islands or hire mountain bikes to visit nearby villages & schools. If we view the gorillas in Rwanda there is the chance to visit the genocide museum in Kigali, which is a moving and interesting experience.



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