

RWANDA & KENYA

with Gorilla Trek

14 days

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Day 1 Arrival in Kigali

Today we arrive in Kigali, the capital and the largest city of Rwanda, situated in the centre of the nation. It has been the economic, cultural, and transport hub of Rwanda since it became capital at independence in 1962.

NOTE: It is possible that your arrival today and transfer to the park tomorrow will be managed by a local agent. If we have travellers joining from our longer tour that includes Uganda, you will meet your leader and other travellers tomorrow upon arrival at the park.

Overnight in Kigali.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Kigali - Parc National des Volcans

Today we transfer to the Parc National des Volcans (+/- 3 hours).

"In the heart of Central Africa, so high up that you shiver more than you sweat," wrote the eminent primatologist Dian Fossey, "are great, old volcanoes towering up almost 15,000 feet, and nearly covered with rich, green rainforest - the Virungas". Situated in the far northwest of Rwanda, the Parc des Volcans protects the steep slopes of this magnificent mountain range--home of the rare mountain gorilla--and the rich mosaic of montane ecosystems, which embrace evergreen and bamboo forest, open grassland, swamp and heath.

Upon arrival, you will meet any travellers joining us from our tour of Uganda.

Overnight at Parc des Volcans.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 3 Parc National des Volcans: Twin Lakes & Village Walk

We'll start our day with a scenic drive to the picturesque Twin Lakes of Burera and Ruhondo. Upon arrival at Virunga Lodge, we'll enjoy a short walk, taking in the stunning views of the surrounding mountains and the tranquil waters.

We'll then head to the bustling Musanze market. As we wander through the vibrant market, we'll immerse ourselves in the local culture, experiencing the sights, sounds, and smells of this bustling marketplace. We'll have the opportunity to interact with local vendors and learn about their products, from fresh produce to handcrafted souvenirs.

After a leisurely lunch, we'll embark on a cultural immersion experience, visiting a nearby village. We'll witness firsthand the daily lives of the locals, observing their farming techniques, beekeeping practices, and traditional clothing-making processes. We'll also have the chance to explore their homes and gain a deeper understanding of their way of life.

Overnight near Parc National des Volcans.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 4 Parc National des Volcans: Gorilla Trekking

Early this morning we drive to the park headquarters where we are briefed by the guides of the Parc des Volcans before we start our gorilla trek. This 13,000-hectare national park protects the Rwanda sector of the Virunga Mountains, a range of six extinct and three active

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volcanoes which straddle the border with Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Bamboo forest is interspersed with alpine moorland, grassland and marsh.

Tracking the gorillas through the light mountain forest on the slopes of the Virungas is a magical experience. If you are lucky you will get to the gorillas, spend an hour with them, and be back at the base in time for a late lunch. Some gorilla families however are more elusive, and tracking can take a full day... especially when wet and muddy.

The Mountain Gorillas in the Parc National des Volcans are part of a worldwide population of just 740 individuals. The gorillas we are allowed to track belong to one of five habituated family groups. For up to five years each, these groups have undergone an extremely delicate process that has gradually brought them to tolerate the presence of humans for a brief period every day and allowed a few privileged visitors to interact with them in the wild.

The gorillas are by no means tame, and are completely wild animals. However, experienced guides will accompany us on our tracking, many of who have been involved in the habituation process themselves. The guides will use their knowledge of the gorillas' habits and information from the previous day to locate the group's whereabouts. Because of this, the time taken to track the gorillas varies enormously, from as little as 1 hour to as much as 8 hours before one returns to base. Once the gorillas are located, our group will be allowed a maximum of one hour with them.

Please remember that the mountain gorillas are a wild animal and are not enclosed in any form and free to move as they please. For this reason actual sightings of the gorilla groups cannot be guaranteed. For more information on gorilla tracking in Rwanda, go to www.ortpn.gov.rw.

Overnight near Parc National des Volcans.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 5 Parc National des Volcans - Kigali

Today, we'll embark on a 5-hour journey back to Kigali, making a significant stop at the Kigali Genocide Memorial. This poignant memorial, established in 2004, commemorates the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. While the genocide was a complex event with multifaceted causes, it remains a dark chapter in Rwandan history.

Visiting the Genocide Memorial is a powerful and thought-provoking experience. It offers a sobering look at the tragic events of 1994, highlighting the resilience and strength of the Rwandan people. As we learn about the history and the impact of the genocide, we'll gain a deeper appreciation for the country's journey toward healing and reconciliation.

Overnight in Kigali.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Kigali, Rwanda - Fly to Nairobi, Kenya

Today we fly to to Nairobi, Kenya.

Part of Maasai land when the British arrived, Kenya's modern capital grew with the development of the railway. Derived from a Maasai word meaning "Cold Water," Nairobi is a pleasant mix of colonial British with modern and traditional African influences.

* NOTE: This flight is included if you purchase your international air through Adventures Abroad. Land Only passengers can purchase this for an extra charge (pricing is subject to change without notice, but it has historically been in the range of USD\$350 per person).

Overnight in Nairobi.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Nairobi - Ol Pejeta Conservancy

Today we travel from Nairobi, through the "White Highlands," so called because of the large number of Europeans who settled here, northwards to the lower slopes of Mt Kenya, rising to 5199 m (16,728 feet), Africa's second highest peak. Our (+/- 4 hour) drive will take us into the Central Highlands, the heartland of the Kikuyu people. This is a very fertile region, well-watered, intensively cultivated, and thickly forested. The land was coveted by the Europeans who began arriving in ever-increasing numbers once the railway through the area was completed. The settlers established coffee and tea plantations on the eastern slopes of Mt Kenya and cultivated wheat on the western slopes.

Our destination is Sweetwaters, a luxury tented camp clustered around a water hole and set in the pristine calm of the private Ol Pejeta Conservancy, a non-profit organization supporting endangered species, tourism and community outreach. Ol Pejeta is East Africa's largest Black Rhino sanctuary, the only place in Kenya to see chimpanzees, and holds some of the highest predator densities in Kenya.

This afternoon we'll enjoy our first game drive within the conservancy.

Overnight at Sweetwaters.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 8 Ol Pejeta Conservancy

Ol Pejeta is a mosaic of grass plains, wooded grassland, acacia woodland and evergreen thicket extending for over 350 square kilometers. The conservancy boasts an astounding variety of animals, including the "Big Five."

We will have morning and afternoon game drives today, as well as a chance to visit the Sweetwaters Chimpanzee Sanctuary -- the only place in Kenya where this highly endangered and remarkably intelligent species can be seen. The facility was initially established to receive and provide lifelong refuge to orphaned and abused chimpanzees from West and Central Africa. Here the chimpanzees are carefully nursed back to health so they can enjoy the rest of their days in the safety of a vast natural enclosure.

Overnight at Sweetwaters Camp.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 9 Ol Pejeta - Great Rift Valley - Lake Nakuru National Park

This morning we travel to Lake Nakuru, a shallow soda lake in the Rift Valley (+/- 5 hours). The Rift Valley was created millions of years ago under the strain of enormous volcanic eruptions which resulted in a giant split in the earth's surface from Syria to Mozambique. Lava flowed into the valley, forming escarpments on either side of the gigantic trough which can be up to 80 km (50 miles) wide, big enough to be visible from space. At the lake, depending on the water levels, we may have the opportunity to see flamingos,* in addition to the over 340 species of birds that have been recorded in the Rift Valley!

Lake Nakuru is very shallow and can fluctuate up to five metres (12 feet) each day. When the water is low, you can see a white band of crystallized soda along the shoreline. This is also one of the best places in Kenya to view the rare White Rhino as we explore the park on our afternoon game drive.

* This, and other Rift Valley lakes, have been known in the past for huge numbers of flamingos; however, this can be very "hit and miss" owing to seasonal variations in rainfall and water level, and the increasing frequency of drought. The best we can do is hope for the best!

Overnight in Lake Nakuru National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 10 Lake Nakuru - Maasai Mara National Reserve

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Early this morning we depart from Lake Nakuru National Park and continue our journey through the Rift Valley, passing by Lake Naivasha and nearby Mount Longonot, a relatively young volcanic reminder of the Rift's violent past. We arrive at our lodge (via bad road) in the Maasai Mara National Reserve in time for lunch (+/- 6 hour drive).

The Maasai Mara is a natural extension of the Serengeti eco-system and has an amazing concentration of wildlife. The largest population of lions in Kenya is found here, along with large herds of plains game. The Maasai Mara may also be the best place in Kenya to view cheetah. Later this afternoon we enjoy another game drive.

Time-permitting, we may be able to visit a Maasai village to witness the local way of life and meet its residents. If time does not permit, we will attempt this visit the village on our way back to Nairobi.

Overnight in the Maasai Mara.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 11 Maasai Mara National Reserve

The Maasai Mara National Reserve consists of rolling grassland and is located at the northern end of the Serengeti Plain. Considered the best of Kenya's parks, it is on the pathway of the yearly wildebeest migration, which comes north from Tanzania about the end of June and returns to Tanzania around the end of September. "The Mara" sustains all of the "Big Five" -- lion, elephant, leopard, rhinoceros and buffalo -- as well as an astonishing wealth of herding animals and other wildlife. You can see the stately Maasai men and youth along the road tending their cattle and goats.

We have a full day in the reserve, with morning and afternoon game drives.

In the Mara you will also have an optional opportunity to ascend over the northern Serengeti at daybreak in a hot air balloon (optional expense). From over 300 m (984 feet) above, you will be able to view the vast land and the myriad animals that inhabit the Maasai Mara. Today or tomorrow are the best days to participate in this activity - details sent upon booking.

Overnight in the Maasai Mara National Reserve.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 12 Maasai Mara National Reserve

We enjoy another full day with game viewing in Maasai Mara. Depending on the season and current game locations and viewing conditions, we may divide our day into morning and afternoon drives, or take our lunches with us in order to venture further into the reserve if conditions warrant.

Overnight in the Maasai Mara National Reserve.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 13 Maasai Mara - Nairobi

After breakfast we depart for Nairobi (+/- 6 hours including stops). En route, just outside the capital, we visit the Karen Blixen Museum. Baroness Karen Blixen-Finecke emigrated from Denmark to Kenya in 1918 and, in 1937, wrote under the pseudonym, Isaac Dineson, "Out of Africa." The novel tells the tale of the Baroness's experiences on a Kenyan farm. Her home is now a museum, restored to the style in which she maintained it.

Overnight in Nairobi.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Departure

Departure from Nairobi.

SAFIRI SALAAMA!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast