TOUR CODE

QTR

ADVENTURESABROAD

TANZANIA & RWANDA

A Special Tour with Jonathan Hodgson

15 days

Updated 11/12/2013

Day 1 *Arrival in Arusha*

You are met on arrival at Kilimanjaro Airport and transferred to our hotel in Arusha.

Arusha, nestled in the shadow of Mt. Meru, is the starting point for the northern safari routes of Tanzania, and one of the country's most attractive towns. The surrounding area is primarily a highland forest park, and travellers always hope to catch a glimpse of Mount Kilimanjaro in the distance.

Overnight in Arusha. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Arusha - Lake Manyara*

Our route today crosses the floor of the Great Rift Valley and takes us to Lake Manyara, a Rift Valley lake renowned for its unique rainforest microclimate. After stopping to mingle with villagers at the local market in Mto Wa Mbu we continue up the rift escarpment and proceed to our lodge with views over the Rift Valley.

This afternoon after lunch we will enjoy a game drive in Lake Manyara National Park, the smallest of the northern parks in Tanzania (330 sq km, of which two thirds is the actual lake), hosting a wide variety of vegetation, ranging from savannah to ground water forest to riparian habitats. The park is host to thousands of pelicans, ibis and flamingo that can be heard from afar. Other common visitors to this beautiful lake are hippos and the majestic African fish eagle, which can be seen swooping down from its perch to snatch a fish from the still waters of the lake. Wildlife interest at Lake Manyara is not confined to bird life only; many game animals such as buffalo, elephant, giraffe, impala, hippo and a great variety of smaller animals also inhabit the park.

After our game drive here we will return to our lodge for our overnight.

Overnight above Lake Manyara. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 3 *Lake Manyara - Serengeti National Park*

Today we travel from Lake Manyara to the Serengeti National Park. Our route takes us through the 'highlands', an area of immensely fertile coffee and vegetable farms. The area around the central village of Karatu was cultivated as early as 2,000 years ago by the Mbulu or Iraqw, Cushitic groups of people who migrated south from Ethiopia and Yemen and still dominate the area today. The Maasai came fairly recently, in the late 1700's, but were driven into other areas more suitable for cattle herding by repeated wars with their agricultural neighbours, and by the sleeping sickness in their herds. The first European settlers to arrive were the Germans in the late 1800's. Upon arrival at the Ngorongoro crater rim we will stop for a photo opportunity before proceeding around the rim of the crater and onwards to the Serengeti National Park. As we drop down from the Ngorongoro Highlands we will see the Serengeti Plain stretching out endlessly before us.

Indeed the name "Serengeti" derives from a Maasai word meaning "Land-without-end." This is a land of superlatives, both in the vast landscape that surrounds you and the incredible biodiversity it supports. It is here that you have a chance to witness one of the most compelling natural dramas on earth--the annual migration, a sight unparalleled anywhere in the natural world. Our full day game drive provides an excellent introduction to this fantastic landscape and the biodiversity it supports.

The landscape here was originally formed by volcanic activity, and has been sculptured by the concerted action of wind, rain and sun. It now varies from open grass plains in the south, savannah with scattered acacia trees in the centre, hilly, wooded grassland in the north, to extensive woodland and black clay plains to the west. Small rivers, lakes and swamps are scattered throughout. In the southeast rise the great volcanic massifs and craters of the Ngorongoro Highlands. Each area has its own particular atmosphere and wildlife.

Overnight in the Serengeti National Park. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 4 *Serengeti National Park*

Today we will either enjoy a full day of game viewing in the Serengeti, or we may split the day into two half-day game drives.

We will visit the "kopjes," a series of low, incongruous hills dotting the open landscape that often provide a vantage point for hungry predators contemplating the endless stream of hoofed animals parading past them. During this time, up to 1.5 million wildebeest and a half a million zebra embark on a single-minded and perilous quest for water and grazing land. Following this spectacle, of course, are the meat-eating opportunists, hoping to capitalize on the physical toll this journey exacts on the desperate grazers. It is the migration for which Serengeti is perhaps most famous. Over a million wildebeest and about 200,000 zebras flow south from the northern hills to the southern plains for the short rains every October and November, and then swirl west and north after the long rains in April, May and June. So strong is the ancient instinct to move that no drought, gorge or crocodile infested river can hold them back.

Overnight in the Serengeti National Park. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 5 *Serengeti National Park*

Today we will again either enjoy a full day of game viewing in the Serengeti, or we may split the day into two half-day game drives.

You may hear of the Big Five before going on Safari, from an old book, or from a nature documentary. Today, they are five of the animals which people most want to see while on Safari. One hundred years ago, amid pith helmets, mosquito boots, and 'darkest Africa', the Big Five were the most sought after animals to hunt. They were the fiercest, the most dangerous animals; the animals that would hunt the hunter.

Explorers of East Africa went home with stories of lions and leopards in the tall African grass, of rhinos that would charge at the mere smell of a person, of the Cape Buffalo hidden in the bushes, and of the terrors of an enraged elephant. Today, of course, the hunting is done with camera lenses, but that doesn't take away from the thrill of seeing your first lion or hearing a buffalo walk past our camp at night. These big mammals are each far more interesting than the early explorers knew.

As a result of the biodiversity and ecological significance of the area, the park has been listed by UNESCO as one of the World Heritage Sites.

Overnight in the Serengeti National Park. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 6 *Serengeti National Park - Ngorongoro Crater*

Our departure from the Serengeti today sees us travelling back to the Ngorongoro Crater. En route we will make a stop at Olduvai Gorge, site of the Leakey excavations in the 1960s and 1970s that established this region as the prehistoric habitat of some of the earliest species of hominids with some finds dating back 1.8 million years. Pundits in the life sciences have argued that the Olduvai contribution to the story of human origins remains unsurpassed by any other prehistoric site in the world. A small museum on site outlines the unique geological and human history of the area.

Time permitting, we may enjoy our half-day tour in the Ngorongoro Crater this afternoon (See Day 7).

* NOTE: Due to an extreme shortage of accommodation presently in Tanzania, we may have to make some adjustments to our final itinerary. We occasionally need to juggle the nights at Ngorongoro, Tarangire and the Serengeti National Park or elsewhere. Overall sightseeing content and the number / duration of game drives is not affected. Any such changes will be indicated on your final hotel list sent as part of your final documents.

Overnight in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 7 *Ngorongoro Crater - Ngorongoro Highlands*

Today we enjoy a half-day tour in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. After an early breakfast we descend into the crater far below for a game drive in this incredible setting, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We explore the Ngorongoro Crater, 20 km (13 miles) wide and 700 m (2,300 feet) high where we may see the "Big Five" as well as many herbivores like wildebeest, gazelle, zebra and hippopotamus, as well as thousands of flamingos.

After our game drive we will depart the Ngorongoro Conservation area and continue on to Karatu on the outer slopes of the Ngorongoro Crater. Our journey takes us through dramatic rolling green fields and tiny traditional villages. Our final destination today is Gibbs Farm where we arrive in time for a late lunch. Founded during German colonial times and still privately owned, Gibb's Farm is now a small hotel perched on the outer slopes of the Ngorongoro Highlands, surrounded by coffee plantations with long views over lush and beautiful agricultural country.

Overnight in the Ngorongoro Highlands. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 8 *Ngorongoro Highlands*

Today we will drive to Lake Eyasi, a mildly alkaline lake stretching for about 50 km (31 miles) to the southwest. Few tourists get the chance to visit this wild, still nearly unexplored landscape. The region always impresses those who venture here. To the northeast, as far as your eyes can see, the horizon is dominated by the impressive Crater Highlands. Further to the north are the plains of the Serengeti.

This area is inhabited by small groups of "Bushmen", more properly the Hadza and Watindiga. The Hadza live in groups, hunt game with bows and arrows, gather edible plants and honey, and move from place to place whenever the weather changes, or the wild herds migrate. As hunter-gatherers, their way of life today is reminiscent of the way humankind lived in the Stone Age. Over 100 years ago, when the stronger Maasai tribes and their cattle moved into the Ngorongoro and Serengeti, the tribes made the area around Lake Eyasi their home. Another interesting tribe in the area is the Datoga, (also called the Barabaig or Mang'ati). These are the last remaining tribes of Bushmen in East Africa. The Hadza language is only spoken along the southern shores of Lake Eyasi, with less than a thousand speakers today. They

are a click-speaking people whose language most closely resembles that of the Koisan Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert almost 2,000 miles to the south.

These groups permit us to accompany them as they introduce us to the rituals of their daily life and hunting methods. Hopefully we will have the chance to go hunting with these real Bushmen, and thus experience how they survive in the wilderness! We will learn about their unique way of life, customs and traditions. Our local guide will interpret the different hunting methods used, and explain the amazing techniques they use for food gathering and natural medicines.

We will also do some sightseeing around Lake Eyasi where large flocks of flamingoes can be observed. At the end of our day we will drive to back to the Ngorongoro Highlands and return to our lodge for dinner.

Overnight in the Ngorongoro Highlands. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 9 *Ngorongoro Highlands - Tarangire National Park*

We depart early as our destination today is Tarangire National Park. Along the way to Tarangire, giant baobab trees and umbrella acacias dot the rocky hills and verdant valleys. The gently rolling countryside is dotted with these majestic trees, which seem to dwarf the animals that feed beneath them. Wildlife is drawn to the Tarangire River, a year-round source of water for herds of elephant, buffalo, giraffe, zebra and antelope of all shapes and sizes. Predators such as lion, leopard or hyena lurk nearby.

This afternoon we will enjoy a game drive in this reserve famous for its huge numbers of elephants, baobab trees, zebras, antelope, giraffes, baboons and an amazing variety of birdlife. We will return to our lodge in time for dinner.

Overnight in Tarangire National Park. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 10 *Tarangire National Park*

Tarangire National Park is probably one of the least visited of the northern Tanzanian game parks, and retains a real air of undiscovered Africa. It lies a little distance to the south east of Lake Manyara and covers an area of approximately 2,850 square kilometers. Many consider this a great place to avoid the crowds that one may find in the other Northern Parks, and an equally brilliant place for viewing large herds of game. The scenery is striking with acacia woodlands dotted with ancient baobabs. We will spend the full day exploring the park, enjoying both games drives and, unique in East Africa, a walking safari.

Overnight in Tarangire National Park. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 11 *Tarangire - Arusha*

Today we will go on an early morning walk at Tarangire before we start our drive back towards Arusha. This afternoon we will have some time to enjoy the town of Arusha.

Arusha, the safari capital of East Africa is a bustling, vibrant town with the streets filled with 4X4 game viewing vehicles. Maasai warriors in full regalia stroll the streets, mingling with tourists. Arusha is the kind of place where you can get a sense of what modern Africa is all about. At the nearby International Conference Centre, some of the most important peace treaties and international agreements in modern African history have been signed. The Rwandan war crimes tribunals were held here. The curio markets crammed between the Clock Tower and India Road are filled with high quality crafts.

Overnight in Arusha. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 12 *Arusha, Tanzania - Kigali, Rwanda - Parc National des Volcans*

Today we will fly to Kigali, Rwanda. Kigali is the capital and the largest city of Rwanda and is 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. Upon arrival we will make a stop for lunch and have a brief look at Kigali and the Genocide Museum. The Genocide Museum opened in 2004 to mark the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. While the genocide occurred as a result of a complex series of factors, it can only be seen as an absolute tragedy to Rwanda and its people. Time spent at the Genocide Museum will be emotionally moving and an important way to understand the sheer courage and resilience of this beautiful, tiny nation. We then continue by road to the Parc National des Volcans (+/- 3 hours).

Overnight near Parc National des Volcans. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 13 *Parc National des Volcans*

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 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. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 14 *Parc National des Volcans - Kigali*

Today is a day of options. You may choose to trek another gorilla family,* trek with Golden Monkeys (optional, US$75 per person) OR take a trek up to the grave of Dian Fossey and the remains of the Old Karisoke Research Station (optional, US$75 per person). It is strongly advised that these options are pre-booked and confirmed at time of purchase

of the main tour to ensure availability.

For those who loved the book and/or the movie "Gorillas In The Mist" the Dian Fossey trek could be a good option. Over the course of the morning you follow in her footsteps as you trek to Dian Fossey's grave and the many graves belonging to the poached gorillas, including that of Digit.

For a more leisurely experience, trekking to the Golden Monkeys is highly recommended. In June 2003 the National Parks department first allowed permits to trek theses rare primates. A short walk to the edge of the forest to see the endangered Golden Monkeys is a rare treat. Watching these unique primates play and perform in the forest is mesmerizing.

*Gorilla Trek: Subject to permit availability at the time of booking. We will INCLUDE one gorilla permit per person, with no guarantees. A second gorilla permit for a second day trek is an optional expense of approx $750 US per person, payable in advance only and non-refundable if you change your mind after the first day's trek. Gorilla trekking is highly controlled with less than 50 gorilla trekking permits available each day. Once a trekking group encounters one of the gorilla families, only one hour is granted to be in the presence of the gorillas before the trekkers must leave the gorilla family. The trek can be strenuous and may reach altitudes of almost 3000m (9,000+ ft) to stand within the realm of these amazing mammals is a truly emotional experience.

Late this afternoon we will return to Kigali for our last night in Rwanda.

Overnight in Kigali. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 15 *Parc National des Volcans - Kigali - Depart*

Today we drive back to Kigali.

Time permitting we will have a brief look at Kigali and the Genocide Museum, opened in 2004 to mark the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. While the genocide occurred as a result of a complex series of factors, it can only be seen as an absolute tragedy to Rwanda and its people. Time spent at the Genocide Museum is moving and important in understanding the sheer courage and resilience of this beautiful, tiny nation.

Later we connect with our flights home.

SAFARI NJEMA!! Meal plan: Breakfast.