TOUR CODE

RW1

ADVENTURESABROAD

RWANDA & KENYA

with Gorilla Trek

14 days

Updated 29/04/2013

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. Meal plan: 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. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 3 *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 hey 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 4 *Parc National des Volcans*

Today is a day of options. You may choose to trek another gorilla family,* trek with Golden Monkeys (optional, US$115 per person) OR take a trek up to the grave of Dian Fossey and the remains of the Old Karisoke Research Station (optional, US$85 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.

* An additional gorilla permit for a second day trekking 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.

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

Day 5 *Parc National des Volcans - Kigali*

Today we drive back to Kigali.

In Kigali 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.

Overnight in Kigali. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Kigali, Rwanda - Nairobi, Kenya*

Today we fly from Kigali to Nairobi.*

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 $350.

Overnight in Nairobi. Meal plan: 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 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 Camp. Meal plan: 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. Meal plan: 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. 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 up to two million 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.

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

Day 10 *Lake Nakuru - Maasai Mara National Reserve*

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.

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.

Overnight in the Maasai Mara. Meal plan: 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.

Overnight in the Maasai Mara National Reserve. Meal plan: 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. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 13 *Maasai Mara - Nairobi*

After breakfast we depart for Nairobi. 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. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Departure*

Departure from Nairobi.

SAFIRI SALAAMA! Meal plan: Breakfast.