TOUR CODE

UG1

ADVENTURESABROAD

UGANDA & RWANDA

'Land of a Thousand Hills'

13 days

Updated 22/11/2013

Day 1 ***Arrive in Entebbe, Uganda - Kampala***

Today we arrive at Entebbe International Airport (the airport serving the capital) and transfer the short distance to Kampala.

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

Day 2 ***Kampala - Murchison Falls National Park***

This morning we travel by road northwards passing through the famous Luwero Triangle stopping in Masindi for a lunch stop. We proceed to Murchison Falls.

The falls mark the spot where the River Nile, on its journey from its source at Lake Victoria to join Lake Albert, is suddenly channeled into a gorge only six meters wide and cascades 43 meters below. The earth literally trembles at Murchison Falls -- one of the world's most powerful natural flows of water. Named them after Sir Roderick Murchison, president of the Royal Geographical Society, the falls also lend their name to the surrounding Murchison Falls National Park.

Upon arrival we drive to the top of the falls for some magnificent scenery and breathtaking views of the raging Nile as it forces its way through a rocky gap.

Overnight in Murchison Falls. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 3 ***Murchison Falls Park***

We begin the day with an early morning game drive on the Buligi, Albert or Queens tracks north of the river Nile. Here we have the chance to observe those animals closely associated with the African savannah like lion -- leopard, giraffe, antelope, elephant, and warthog.

After lunch we have a cruise on the Nile River. The cruise takes to the bottom of the thundering falls where you will see huge crocodiles, hippo, buffalo, elephant and a variety of water birds like herons, cormorants, ducks, bee-eaters, kingfishers, skimmers, fish eagle and the rare shoebill.

We return to the lodge for dinner and overnight.

Overnight at Murchison Falls. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 4 ***Murchison Falls - Kibale Forest National Park***

This morning we travel by road to Kibale Forest National Park, famous for its families of habituated chimpanzees. The park it is home to an astonishing number of 12 species of primates, the highest density in the world! This afternoon, on a guided walk, we'll hopefully encounter families of chimps and Red Colobus monkeys, all superb photographic opportunities. While in the vicinity of Kibale, we will visit a Jane Goodall Institute project. Here we will learn about snare removal programs and the way in which the researchers are working with the local communities to raise awareness of the problems of poaching and habitat destruction.

Overnight at Kibale. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Kibale - Queen Elizabeth II National Park*

This morning we will have another guided walk, this time through the Bigodi Swamps. The Kibale Association manages the Bigodi Wetland Sanctuary for Rural and Environmental Organisation, formed in 1992 with the aim of achieving social and economic development for local communities. While on our guided walk around the swamps, we can distinguish many from the approximately 137 bird species found here, including the Snowy Headed Robin Cat, Black and White Casqued Hornbill, Emerald Cuckoo and a variety of weavers, warblers, greenbuls and sunbirds. There is also an abundance of butterflies, and rich in vegetation, such as wild palms, polita figs and the dominant papyrus.

We then depart Kibale by road for the Mweya Peninsula in Queen Elizabeth II National Park, dominated on its northern border by the snowcapped peaks of the Rwenzori Mountains -- the famous 'Mountains of the Moon.' The varied ecosystems of this park, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve for Humanity, support a wide variety of species including elephant, buffalo, lion
and leopard.

Overnight at Queen Elizabeth II National Park. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 6 *Queen Elizabeth II National Park*

Early this morning we cruise up the Kazinga Channel, a narrow band of water connecting lakes Edward and George. This is one of the most memorable experiences of a visit to Uganda, offering an opportunity to cruise amid members of Africa's largest hippo population. In addition to these giant semi-aquatic mammals, the launch affords unique opportunities to view other mammals and birds as they come to the water's edge to drink and bathe. Birding is excellent, and we expect to see species ranging in size from the tiny, brilliant Malachite Kingfisher to the giant Goliath Heron.

After a break for lunch and relaxation, we embark on an afternoon game drive in open savannah covered by acacia trees on the edge of the Albertine Rift Valley. We will search for the typical tree climbing Lions (among other things), a population which is found only in this part of the country. It is impressive to see the animals while they are resting on top of the fig trees.

Overnight at Queen Elizabeth II National Park. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 7 *Queen Elizabeth II National Park - Bwindi Impenetrable Forest*

We have a morning road trip through the Ishasha Plains and the East African Rift Valley via Fort Portal, to the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest with picnic lunches (+/-6 hours). We pass through high, forested hills and through deep-farmed valleys. The drive is reminiscent to what one would experience driving through central Europe -- indeed this region of Uganda is often referred to as "Little Switzerland."

Overnight at Bwindi. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 8 *Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park*

Bwindi, a World Heritage Park, is home to just over half of the world's last surviving mountain gorilla population of 600 individuals. Today's trek* can take from one to six hours, sometimes more, at elevations in excess of 2270 m (7,500 ft) and over rough terrain. Although the hike can be physically demanding, the anticipation of the exciting experience ahead is invigorating, and the beauty of the forest and its inhabitants is fascinating. For more info, go to www.uwa.or.ug. Your gorilla permits are included in the tour price.

The area around Buhoma is an excellent place for watching primates and birds and you may catch a glimpse of the noisy but evasive Chimpanzees or the beatiful Hornbills and Turacos. The forest is home to 120 species of mammals, 346 species of birds, 202 species of butterflies, and 163 species of trees, making it one of the richest ecosystems in Africa.

*NOTE: Group participants MUST have a medical questionnaire signed by a physician indicating their fitness to undertake such an activity. This form will be included with your confirmation package and MUST be returned to us before your final documents are issued.

Overnight at Bwindi. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 9 *Bwindi, Uganda - Parc National des Volcans, Rwanda*

Today we travel by road +/- 6 hours via Kisoro to Parc National des Volcans, Rwanda, a journey that takes us through the beautiful terraced hillsides that characterize much of Rwanda's landscape.

"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 a rich mosaic of montane ecosystems, which embrace evergreen and bamboo forest, open grassland, swamp and heath.

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

Day 10 *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 11 *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 12 *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 13 *Departure*

Departure from Kigali.

SAFARI NJEMA!! Meal plan: Breakfast.