TOUR CODE

UG3

ADVENTURESABROAD

UGANDA, RWANDA, KENYA & TANZANIA

27 days

Updated 29/04/2013

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 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 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. Travellers should be aware that if they turn around do to fatigue, illness or any other reason the remainder of the group will go on. The returning traveller will be escorted by a local guide or porter. 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 ($500 per person).

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*

This morning we take a short 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. Gorilla's Nest. 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 *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 14 *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 15 *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 16 *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 17 *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 18 *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 19 *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 20 *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 21 *Nairobi - Amboseli National Park*

Today we travel south from Nairobi to the Amboseli National Park. Just across the border from Tanzania, this park is situated on the African plain at the foot of snow-capped Mount Kilimanjaro, the continent's tallest mountain at 5894 m (19,300 feet). Here the cone-shaped mountain seems to hover majestically over the shimmering African plains.

The Amboseli National Park is also famous for its large herds of elephants. Here they cover themselves in red dust, giving them an even more imposing appearance. On this afternoon's game drive we hope to view animals grazing on the open plain with Mt Kilimanjaro providing the classic backdrop (weather permitting).

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

Day 22 *Amboseli, Kenya - Lake Manyara National Park, Tanzania*

This morning we cross the border into Tanzania and travel to Lake Manyara National Park via the town of Arusha, the starting point for the northern safari routes of Tanzania.

Manyara is 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.

After lunch at our lodge we will have an afternoon game drive in the park, located at the base of the Great Rift Valley escarpment and comprising of forest, woodland, grasslands, and swamps. Wildlife interest at Lake Manyara is not confined to bird life only; animals such as buffalo, elephant, giraffe, impala, hippo and a great variety of smaller animals also inhabit the park.

Overnight at Lake Manyara. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 23 *Lake Manyara - Serengeti National Park*

This morning we enter the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, a beautiful rolling landscape with periodic views over the Ngorongoro Crater. Before descending onto the Serengeti Plain, we'll stop at a viewpoint overlooking the crater. 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 afternoon game drive provides an excellent introduction to this fantastic landscape and the biodiversity it supports.

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

Day 24 *Serengeti National Park*

Today we have a full day of game viewing on the Serengeti. 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. Depending on the season and the timing of the rains, 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. Even outside of "migration" time, large herds are still seen as they bear their young and feed, gaining strength for their annual return to the park's northern reaches. Resident species that do not migrate make for rewarding animal viewing in any season.

It may be possible to take an optional hot-air balloon safari over the plains at daybreak. Speak to your booking agent at the time of reservation.

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

Day 25 *Serengeti - Olduvai Gorge - Ngorongoro Conservation Area*

Travelling back to Ngorongoro today we make a stop at Olduvai Gorge, site of the Leakey excavations in the 1960s and 70s 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. Experts 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.

Called the 'eighth wonder of the world' and stretching across some 8300 sq km, the Ngorongoro Conservation Area boasts a blend of landscapes, wildlife, people and archaeology that is unsurpassed in Africa. The volcanoes, grasslands, waterfalls and mountain forests are home to an abundance of animals and to the Maasai. Ngorongoro Crater is one of the world's greatest natural spectacles and its magical setting and abundant wildlife never fail to enthrall visitors.

Balance of the day at leisure to enjoy our lodge overlooking the crater.

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

Day 26 *Ngorongoro Conservation Area*

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 on Lake Magadi.

* In order to reduce congestion and stress on wildlife, the Tanzanian government limits visitors to half-day visits of the crater. Depending on what time "window" we are assigned, our excursion may take place first thing in the morning, or later in the afternoon (both of which are equally advantageous for game viewing, given the relatively mild climate at this altitude).

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

Day 27 *Ngorongoro - Arusha - Depart*

This morning we descend the Ngorongoro Highlands, retracing our steps back to Arusha via a lunch stop at Gibb's Farm. 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.

We pass again through the town of Mto Wa Mbu ('Mosquito Creek'), famous for its lively cosmopolitan atmosphere and red bananas, which taste the same as regular bananas but their skins are a startling bright red. We continue to Arusha to connect with homeward evening flights.

LAND ONLY PASSENGERS need to take into account our morning journey when booking their flights out of Arusha (JRO). Your departure should occur no earlier than 6:00 pm.

SAFARI NJEMA! Meal plan: Breakfast and lunch.