TOUR CODE

VREA

ADVENTURESABROAD

RWANDA, KENYA & TANZANIA

with Zanzibar Extension

23 days

Updated 14/06/2013

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.

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

Day 2 ***Kigali: City Tour - Parc National des Volcans***

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.

"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.

Overnight at Parc des Volcans. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 ***Parc National des Volcans: Gorilla Trek***

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 and dinner.

Day 4 *Parc National des Volcans: Optional Activities*

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 and dinner.

Day 5 *Kigali, Rwanda - Nairobi, Kenya*

Today we drive back to Kigali from where we fly 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.

Overnight in Nairobi. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Nairobi - Mt Kenya Area*

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 where we may catch a glimpse of the glaciers coating the summit of Africa's second highest mountain.

A sheltered oasis, clustered around a water hole and set in the pristine calm of the private Ol Pejeta Conservancy, Sweetwaters Tented Camp offers a charming blend of under-canvas ambiance and safari luxury.

Located on the plains of Mount Kenya, the camp features luxury tents, each with its own private veranda overlooking the water hole. The central Rhino Restaurant is housed in the former manager's house of this once colonial farm, and offers both regional and international cuisine. Also within the house is the Kashoggi Bar and lounge, which centres on a blazing log fire. The Waterhole Bar, built in the style of a game-viewing hide, overlooks the waterhole and offers unrivalled wildlife-watching.

After check-in and lunch, we wil be able 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. We can also visit the Ol Pejeta Conservancy Black Rhino Sanctuary, home to 88 black rhinos relocated to the area in 2007.

Overnight at Serena Sweetwaters Camp. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 7 *Mt Kenya - 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. Lion Hill Sarova Lodge. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 8 *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. Mara Serena Lodge. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 9 *The Maasai Mara*

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.

In the Mara you will 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. During our stay in the Mara we enjoy a full day game drive in Africa's most famous game park.

Overnight in Maasai Mara. Mara Serena Lodge. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 10 *Maasai Mara - Nairobi & Giraffe Manor*

After breakfast, we depart for the Nairobi area. Our destination is Giraffe Manor, located just outside the capital.

In 1974 Jock Leslie-Melville, grandson of a Scottish earl, and his wife Betty, who also founded the African Fund for Endangered Wildlife (AFEW), bought the manor. They then moved five babies of the highly endangered Rothschild giraffe to their property where they have been successfully reared and they now have their own babies. Visitors can feed and photograph the giraffes and warthogs at the manor, and also wander through the adjoining primeval forest to view bushbuck, dik dik, and more than 180 species of bird.

Overnight in Nairobi. Giraffe Manor. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 11 *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. Amboseli Serena. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 12 *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. Manyara Serena Lodge. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 13 *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. Grumeti Eco Lodge. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 14 *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. Grumeti Eco Lodge. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 15 *Serengeti National Park*

We have another full day to enjoy the Serengeti.

Overnight in Serengeti National Park. Grumeti Eco Lodge. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 16 *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. Ngorongoro Serena Lodge. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 17 *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. Ngorongoro Serena Lodge. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 18 *Ngorongoro - Gibbs Farm & Ngorongoro Highlands*

This morning we descend from the crater rim and back down to the Ngorongoro Highlands. We enjoy lunch and overnight 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.

At some point today we will be able to visit a local Maasai village.

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

Day 19 *Gibbs' Farm - Arusha - Zanzibar*

Today we retrace our route back to Arusha. 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 our flight to Zanzibar and transfer to our hotel in Stone Town.

Zanzibar is an archipelago made up of Zanzibar and Pemba Islands, and several islets. Zanzibar Island is 96 km (60 miles) long and 32 km (20 miles) wide, occupying a total area of approximately 1040 km sq (650 sq miles). It is characterised by beautiful sandy beaches with fringing coral reefs, and the magic of historic Stone Town -- said to be the only functioning ancient town in East Africa.

Zanzibar's local people are an incredible mixture of ethnic backgrounds, indicative of her colourful history. Islam is the dominant religion, and practiced by most Zanzibaris, although there are also followers of Christianity and Hinduism. Population is estimated at 800,000, with the largest concentration being Zanzibar City, which has approximately 100,000 inhabitants. Zanzibaris speak Swahili (known locally as Kiswahili), a language spoken extensively in East Africa. Many believe that the purest form is spoken in Zanzibar as it is the birthplace of the language.

This afternoon we have a walking tour of Stone Town, the old city and cultural heart of Zanzibar, little changed in the last 200 years. It is a place of winding alleys, bustling bazaars, mosques and grand Arab houses whose original owners vied with each other over the extravagance of their dwellings. This one-upmanship is particularly reflected in the brass-studded, carved, wooden doors -- there are more than 500 different examples of this handiwork. Our tour takes us to the House of Wonders, the Palace Museum (People's Palace), the old slave market, the Arab Fort, and the Hamamni Persian Baths. Stone Town has some excellent gifts shops with plenty of souvenirs and handicrafts to choose from.

NOTE: The exact order of our Zanzibar sightseeing may vary depending on variables such as weather and other logistical considerations.

Overnight on Zanzibar (Stone Town). Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 20 *Jozani Forest & Stone Town*

This morning we visit the Jozani Natural Forest Reserve located in the central east region of Zanzibar Island, home to the rare red colobus monkey, endemic to Zanzibar. These monkeys are full of character and roam freely. They can also be seen at very close quarters just outside the reserve's perimeter and are incredibly photogenic. Jozani is home to other species including Syke's monkeys, small buck and bushpigs.

This afternoon is free to enjoy Stone Town. Most of the houses that can be seen today were built in the 19th Century when Zanzibar was one of the most important trading centres in the Indian Ocean region. The coraline rock of Zanzibar was a good building material, but it is also easily eroded. This is evident by the large number of houses that are in a bad state of repair. Several buildings have already been renovated and the Stone Town Conservation Authority has been established to coordinate the restoration of the town to its original magnificence.

Overnight on Zanzibar (Stone Town). Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 21 *Spice Tour - East Coast*

The history of Zanzibar would be incomplete without a 'spice tour.' Cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon, pepper and many other spices were as important to the Sultans of Oman as the infamous slave trade. They can be seen in the plantations just outside Zanzibar town, and our morning tour includes opportunities to dazzle the senses with fresh spices. A detailed description is given about a variety of spices and their uses in cooking and cosmetics. It is fascinating the sheer number of spices produced and their incredible value for many ailments and culinary applications.

We then travel to our resort-style hotel located on a beach outside of Stone Town.

Overnight on Zanzibar. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 22 *Zanzibar: East Coast Resort*

A day at leisure to enjoy the beach and to rest up after our journey…

Overnight on Zanzibar. Meal plan: Breakfast.

Day 23 *Departure*

We usually have some free time this morning before our afternoon departure from Zanzibar.

SAFARI NJEMA!