

THE AFRICAN TOUCH

28 Day Itinerary

(Aklid-Entebbe/UGANDA-KENYA-TANZANIA/Dar Es Salaam-Aklid)

WEEK ONE: UGANDA – Located on the shores of Lake Victoria, Entebbe is an attractive town that was once the capital of Uganda during the early years of the British protectorate. From here we head out to Ngamba Island to visit the chimpanzee sanctuary. There are more than 20 chimps and they are free to wander about the forested island. We get the chance to view them at close range during their feeding time. Passing through Uganda we see stalls selling local wares, woman in traditional dress and the happy waves from the children. Jinja, our next stop is at the source of the River; here we can watch it begin its 4000 mile journey north from Lake Victoria through the Owen Falls Dam. We camp in full view of the impressive Bugagali Falls where you have the option of rafting on the White Nile, quad biking through local plantations, village walks, helping with a local school community project or if you're after a more relaxing time, just sit back and watch the local fishermen glide by in their dug-out canoes.

WEEK TWO: KENYA - Departing from Uganda, we head towards Eldoret in Kenya. We stay at a picturesque campsite set amongst rolling farmland beside the Naiberi River. Eldoret is situated in the western highlands; it receives one of the highest rainfalls in Kenya and has some of the richest farmland in Africa. As the evening gets cold we snuggle up by the open fire at the campsite while the local women prepare us a traditional meal.

Also in Kenya we visit Lake Baringo where we take a boat to meet the traditional Njemp fisher people, spot crocodiles, hippo's and view fish eagles being fed. Lake Baringo's main attraction is the bird life and the lake is the bird-watching centre of Kenya. Over 1200 different species of birds are native to the country, and more than 450 of them have been sighted here. Another highlight here is the visit to the Nomadic tribe of the Pokot people. Karoma will take you through their village, into their huts and explain how this fascinating tribe survives.

Next we enter Nakuru National Park where we spend the night sleeping amongst the animals. Nakuru N.P is dominated by a huge soda pan and has the largest herd of black rhino in East Africa and over a million pink flamingos feeding on the shore. 'Nakuru' means 'place of the waterbuck' in Swahili and these antelope abound in the park as well as impala, buffalo and warthog. Also in the park there is zebra, Rothschild giraffe, lion, leopard and more than 400 bird species.

Nakuru is the primary Masai trading centre in the area, and the town is full of colour of the Masai resplendent in their red shukas (robes). We have the opportunity to visit the curio (souvenir) markets of Nakuru and sample the fine coffee that is grown in the region. It is also here where you get the opportunity to visit the local food markets and try your hand at bartering.

Our next Kenyan National Reserve is the famous Masai Mara, the Mara is the northern extension of the Serengeti Plains. Here we observe the vast range of animal and bird life before camping in the heart of the Reserve - during the hours of darkness the game is at its most active and the sounds of the surrounding wildlife can be heard through the night. The

ultimate attraction here is the annual wildebeest migration which arrives July/August in search of lush grass before heading south around October. A colourful sight around this area is the Masai people in their red shukas grazing their stock, we learn more about this interesting tribe when we visit a local Masai village.

On our arrival to Lake Naivasha we visit Elsamere - the home of the late Joy Adamson, who raised and released Elsa the Lioness, probably one of the most famous animal stories ever told, immortalised in the book and film, 'Born Free'. The house is now a museum and her green lawns are surrounded by giant yellow Acacia trees where troops of black and white colobus monkey cavort.

Our campsite is on the picturesque shores of Lake Naivasha. The lake is one of the Rift Valley's fresh water lakes and is also home to around 300 hippos that can often be seen and heard from the campsite. To view the stunning bird life and many hippo we'll cross the lake by boat to the nearby private game reserve of Crescent Island. Here you get to wander freely on foot and experience at close hand East Africa's large variety of game including giraffe, gazelle, zebra and wildebeest before returning to a champagne brunch at the truck.

A special treat also awaits us in the hills of Naivasha, a village by the name of Ngondi. Here is where Karoma's Mama lives. We'll spend time in this beautiful African village overlooking Lake Naivasha, visiting the local school, talking with the locals and experiencing first hand their day to day living. We leave after Mama has shared with us some of her home cooking for lunch.

Departing from Naivasha, we head southwards towards Nairobi and climb the Rift Valley escarpment for spectacular views of this ancient ravine which stretches the length of Africa. The Rift Valley runs 6,000km's from the Red Sea in Mozambique and is up to 100km's wide in places.

Before we leave Nairobi we'll take a visit to Sheldricks Animal Orphanage for the morning rhino feeding and baby elephant play sessions, then Langatta Giraffe Park where you can get up and personal to these slobber...stunning animals.

WEEK THREE: TANZANIA – After camping at the base of Mt Kilimanjaro we head towards Ngorongoro Crater. We head off in 4-wheel drive safari vehicles descending 2000 feet into the extinct volcano over 2-and-a-half million years old. At 19kms across and 600m deep this is the 5th largest crater in the world. The crater walls form a natural enclosure that is packed with wildlife. The views of the Crater's vast soda lake, from the mist-shrouded rim are incredible.

From the crater we travel to Meserani Snake Park, Arusha, via the village of Mto Wa Mbu, where Masai display their carvings, spears and bead work. The traditional herdsmen, attired in colourful dress and ornate jewellery, can be seen grazing their cattle by the road. Time in Arusha can be spent relaxing, exploring the craft shops, visiting the Masai museum or perhaps venture on a closer encounter with the wildlife - take a camel safari or explore the Snake Park.

Heading south with a little good luck we have another chance to see the magnificent Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa. Our destination is the ancient Usambara Mountains where we stay at Lushoto on market day. Farmers troop into town laden with bowls, bags and baskets of produce to display on cloth on the ground. Wander in the local

village and be charmed by Africa, the smiles, the waves of children, the many colours of the kangas worn by the woman. A sunset walk with a local guide to Irete Viewpoint to look out over the village and the vast Masai Steppe completes a special day.

Our last stop before we reach Dar Es Salaam is Bagamoya. This small seaside town was the terminus for slaves being transported from the interior for passage to the Middle East. Because they were at the end of the line with little hope of escape, Bagamoya means 'lay down your heart'. A town with a lot of history, the walk here is very informative.

WEEK FOUR: TANZANIA COAST - Welcome to Zanzibar! After flying from Dar Es Salaam we step onto the 'Spice Island' of Zanzibar. The name promises to take your senses to another world and has lured travellers to its shores for centuries. Many different cultures have made their home here and all have contributed and influenced Zanzibar. Hidden among the narrow winding streets of Zanzibar are countless bazaars, mosques and palaces. Marvel at the whitewashed, coral-rag houses, with over-hanging balconies and the richly detailed carved brass-studded doors.

We spend two nights in the historic Stone Town before we head up to the northern beaches. There are many options to enjoy in your leisure time, hire a motorbike or jeep to explore the island, take a trip to Prison Island to see the ruins of the old prison and the giant tortoises thought to have originated in the Seychelles, swim with the dolphins on the southern beaches or go souvenir shopping.

On the Spice Tour your local guide will show you a variety of different spices and fruits grown on the island, as well as explain more of its fascinating history. It is easy to see the strong Arabic influence as you listen to the Muslim prayer chanting and see the traditional dress. Zanzibar was a major centre for the slave trade in the 19th Century and at its height 50,000 slaves a year passed through the island before being exported overseas or sent to local plantations. Your guide will take you to the site of the old slave market and you can visit one of the chambers where the slaves were imprisoned upon their arrival on the island.

In the evening we can enjoy a 'sundowner' watching the sun set over the Indian Ocean before sampling the delights of the local restaurants or maybe a trip to the night food markets to savour the myriad of fresh seafood available.

While staying in local beach cottages on the northern beaches we organise a boat ride in a traditional Arabic sailing dhow visiting a neighbouring beach for dinner. You can also go snorkeling or even dive in the beautiful waters of the Indian Ocean. Its coconut palms, white sand and clear blue sea, make it a peaceful tropical setting perfect for relaxing near the ending of the tour.

Our last night together is spent back in Stone Town where we'll have our last group meal together before flying back to Dar es Salaam the next day.

