

# THE AFRICAN TOUCH

## Midwifery Safari - 28 Days

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

Giving life is perhaps one of the greatest gifts women can give, yet in Africa many die either during pregnancy or when giving birth. Among the reasons for the high mortality rate are poverty, cultural beliefs, poor governmental support, lack of education, and inadequate services in remote areas. But there is hope, as you will learn on The African Touch Midwifery Safari which will introduce you to a range of the services in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania which are associated with mothers, children and giving birth

**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 to Ngamba Island to visit the chimpanzee sanctuary where more than 20 chimps are free to wander about the forested island. We view them at close range during their feeding time.

Passing through Uganda we see stalls selling local wares, women in traditional dress and the friendly waves from 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.

*In Uganda the World Health Organisation has found that only 39 percent of births are attended by a skilled birth attendant and that, therefore, obstructed labour may go on for days. It is estimated two million women and girls in developing countries suffer from obstetric fistula, an abnormal opening in the birth canal that results in chronic leakage of urine and/or faeces. We'll learn more about the plight of these women, the programmes in place to help them and the work of a local midwife.*

**KENYA** - After departing from Uganda, we head towards Eldoret in Kenya where we will stay at a picturesque campsite set among rolling farmland beside the Naiberi River. Eldoret in the western highlands, receives one of the highest rainfalls in Kenya and has some of the richest farmland in Africa. *We'll visit the Riley Mother and Baby Hospital which opened 2009 and has the first newborn intensive care unit in East Africa. It can care for up to 50 newborns at one time.*

Also in Kenya we visit Lake Baringo where we take a boat to meet the traditional Njemp fisher people, spot crocodiles and hippos, and view fish eagles being fed. Lake Baringo's main attraction is the bird life; 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. We'll visit the Nomadic tribe of the Pokot people. Karoma will take you through their village, into their huts and explain how this fascinating tribe survives and what their customs and beliefs are towards birth.

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 are zebra, Rothschild giraffes, lions, leopards and more than 400 bird species.

Nakuru is the primary Masai trading centre in the area, and the town is full of colour, with 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.

On our arrival to Lake Naivasha we visit Elsamere - the home of the late Joy Adamson, who raised and released Elsa the lioness, whose story was immortalised in the book and film, 'Born Free'. The house is now a museum and the 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 home to around 300 hippos that can often be seen and heard from the campsite. To view the stunning bird life and many hippos, we'll take a boat trip across the lake. We'll visit Crescent Island where you can wander freely on foot and experience close hand East Africa's large variety of game including giraffes, gazelles, zebras and wildebeests 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 a local midwife and experiencing first hand their day-to-day living. We leave after Mama has shared with us some of her home cooking for lunch.

*Many African countries lack the funding and health facilities to provide care for pregnant women. We'll visit Naivasha Hospital to see first-hand the difficult circumstances in which midwives work. We'll also learn about Kenya's restrictive abortion law - approximately 300,000 backstreet abortions are carried out each year, using such things as knitting needles, water pipes, wire and herbal concoctions. It's estimated 30,000 woman die each year as a result of unsafe practices. In most developing countries access to safe motherhood services in rural areas is more limited than in urban areas. This issue is of particular significance for Kenya since 80 percent of its population lives in rural areas.*

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 darkness the game is at its most active and the sounds of the surrounding wildlife can be heard throughout the night. The ultimate attraction here is the annual wildebeest migration which begins in July/August as wildebeests 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'll learn a lot about this interesting tribe when we visit a local Masai village - and find out why it wouldn't be too bad being a Masai woman after giving birth!

Departing from the Mara, 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 from the Red Sea in Mozambique and is up to 100km wide in places.

Before we leave Nairobi we'll visit 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 slobbery and stunning animals. We'll stay in the area named Karen after the writer Karen Blixen who wrote *Out of Africa*, which is a wealthier area of Nairobi. *At the upper end of the maternity market is Karen Hospital which we will visit. For an elective caesarean and three-day stay the cost is approximately NZ\$3500. The average wage in Africa is \$2 a day!*

**TANZANIA** – After camping at the base of Mt Kilimanjaro we head towards Ngorongoro Crater. We head off in four-wheel-drive safari vehicles and descend 2000 feet into the extinct volcano over two-and-a-half million years old. At 19km across and 600m deep, this is the fifth largest crater in the world. The crater walls form a natural enclosure that is packed with wildlife. The view of the crater's vast soda lake from the mist-shrouded rim is 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 venturing on a closer encounter with the wildlife - take a camel safari or explore the Snake Park.

*While we're at Meserani we'll meet with some Masai woman; one of these is a nurse who works at the local clinic which has been opened for the Masai people. Ma and BJ, the owners of the campsite where we'll stay, have put a lot back into the Masai community. We'll learn about their positive input. Although the government is trying to abolish female circumcision, it is considered a rite of passage through which young girls are initiated into adulthood. Cases of excessive bleeding during the procedure have been reported, while many are exposed to difficulties in childbirth.*

As we head south, with a little good luck we'll have another chance to see 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.

**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 optional ways to enjoy 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 19<sup>th</sup> century; at its height about 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.

*We'll visit a hospital in Stone Town to learn more about maternity care in Tanzania. It's estimated that nearly three quarters of all neonatal deaths could be prevented if women were adequately nourished and received appropriate care during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period. Due to so many hospitals being overcrowded, pregnant women are not receiving the care they need.*

In the evening we can enjoy a 'sundowner' while watching the sun set over the Indian Ocean then sample 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 in which we will visit a neighbouring beach for a drink. 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 and enjoying our last group meal together.

*Please note for various reasons (eg. weather, road, political situation) it may be necessary to make changes to the itinerary.*

