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12-DAY GREAT RIFT VALLEY SAFARI ~ ALBERTINE & GREGORY RIFTS ~ IN UGANDA, RWANDA, TANZANIA AND KENYA



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SAFARI:

- * TRACKING GORILLA AND CHIMPANZEE IN THE ALBERTINE RIFT: BWINDI, VIRUNGA AND GOMBE STREAM**
- * BIG GAME AND BIRD SPOTTING IN GREGORY'S RIFT: TARANGIRE, LAKE NATRON, SERENGETI, AND THE MASAI MARA**
- * STAYING IN RUSTIC AND ELEGANT, HIGH-END ACCOMMODATION**
- * TRAVELING BY PRIVATE AIRCRAFT THROUGHOUT**
- * ACCOMPANIED BY AN EXPERIENCED SAFARI GUIDE**



Visible from space, Africa's Great Rift Valley runs three thousand miles from the Red Sea to the mouth of the Zambezi. It's a diverse terrain of erupting volcanoes, forest-clad mountains, spectacular valleys, rolling grasslands, huge lakes and mighty rivers, and is home to gorillas, crocodiles, hippos, lions, elephants, flocks of flamingos and a diversity of indigenous peoples.

You will spend twelve days journeying down the two arms of the Great Rift Valley – the Western (or Albertine) Rift Valley and the Eastern (or Gregory) Rift Valley - visiting some of the worlds most renowned game parks, including Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, Rwanda's Virunga Volcanoes, Tanzania's Serengeti, and Kenya's Maasai Mara.

Each destination has been chosen for its uniqueness and variety of attractions, including primate treks, game drives, ballooning, boat cruises, and cultural encounters. You will stay in elegant tented accommodation at seven of East Africa's most sublime lodges. You will be free travel when its convenient for you, hopping between remote bushlands in the comfort of your own private Cessna 421, with pressurized cabin, luxury interior and two pilots. And your entire safari will be guided by Greg Cummings, a bestselling author with over twenty years' experience tracking and protecting African wildlife.





SUMMARY OF THE 12- DAY ITINERARY

- DAY 1 :** ARRIVE ON IN'TNL FLIGHT IN ENTEBBE, TRANSFER TO BWINDI BY PRIVATE AIRCRAFT - OVERNIGHT AT GORILLA FOREST CAMP.
- DAY 2 :** GORILLA TREKKING IN BWINDI, TRANSFER TO KISORO BY PRIVATE AIRCRAFT, THEN ACROSS BORDER BY CAR - OVERNIGHT AT VIRUNGA LODGE.
- DAY 3 :** GORILLA TREKKING IN VOLCANOES - OVERNIGHT AT VIRUNGA LODGE.
- DAY 4 :** GOLDEN MONKEY TREKKING IN VOLCANOES, TRANSFER TO KIGOMA BY PRIVATE AIRCRAFT, THEN BY BOAT TO GOMBE STREAM - OVERNIGHT AT GOMBE FOREST LODGE.
- DAY 5 :** CHIMPANZEE TREKKING IN GOMBE STREAM - OVERNIGHT AT GOMBE FOREST LODGE.
- DAY 6 :** TRANSFER TO KIGOMA BY BOAT, THEN TO TARANGIRE BY PRIVATE AIRCRAFT - OVERNIGHT AT TARANGIRE TREETOPS.
- DAY 7 :** GAME SPOTTING IN TARANGIRE - OVERNIGHT AT TARANGIRE TREETOPS.
- DAY 8 :** TRANSFER TO LAKE NATRON BY PRIVATE AIRCRAFT - OVERNIGHT AT LAKE NATRON CAMP.
- DAY 9 :** FLAMINGO SPOTTING IN LAKE NATRON. TRANSFER TO OLDUVAI GORGE, THEN TO SERENGETI'S WESTERN CORRIDOR, BY PRIVATE AIRCRAFT - OVERNIGHT AT KIRAWIRA TENTED CAMP.
- DAY 10 :** BALLOONING BREAKFAST OVER THE SERENGETI, AFTERNOON GAME SPOTTING IN THE PARK - OVERNIGHT AT KIRAWIRA TENTED CAMP.
- DAY 11 :** TRANSFER TO MASAI MARA BY PRIVATE AIRCRAFT. GAME SPOTTING IN THE MARA - OVERNIGHT AT IL MORAN CAMP.
- DAY 12 :** FLY TO NAIROBI - DEPART FROM JOMO KENYATTA I'TNL AIRPORT

**GORILLA
LAND**

The Albertine Rift Valley

The Albertine Rift is the western branch of the Great Rift Valley, covering parts of Uganda, the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania. It extends from the northern end of Lake Albert to the southern end of Lake Tanganyika. The northern part is crossed by two large mountain ranges, the Rwenzori Mountains between Lake Albert and Lake Edward, and the Virunga Volcanoes between Lake Rutanziga and Lake Kivu, the latter forming a barrier between the Nile Basin and the Congo Basin. This is one of the most biodiverse regions of the African continent. With more than half of Africa's birds, 40% of Africa's mammals and about 20% of its amphibians and plants, it contains more vertebrate species than anywhere else on the continent. Among the endemic species (those only found here) are the Mountain gorilla and Grauer's gorilla.

6-Day Albertine Itinerary:



The Mountain Gorilla (*Gorilla beringei beringei*) is one of the two subspecies of the Eastern Gorilla. There are two populations. One is found in the Virunga volcanic mountains of Central Africa, within three National Parks: Mgahinga, in south-west Uganda; Volcanoes, in north-west Rwanda; and Virunga in the eastern Congo. The other is found in Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. Some primatologists have speculated that the Bwindi population in Uganda may be a separate subspecies, though no description has been finished. As of Spring 2010, the estimated total number of Mountain gorillas worldwide is 790.

The fur of the Mountain gorilla, often thicker and longer than that of other gorilla species, which enables them to live in colder temperatures. Gorillas can be identified by nose prints unique to each individual. Males usually weigh twice as much as the females, and this subspecies is on average the largest of all gorillas. Adult males have more pronounced bony crests on the top and back of their skulls, giving their heads a more conical shape. These crests anchor the powerful masseter muscles, which attach to the lower jaw (mandible). Adult females also have these crests, but they are less pronounced. Like all gorillas they feature dark brown eyes framed by a black ring around the iris.

DAY 1 : Arrive on your international flight at Entebbe Airport, UGANDA. You will be met by your safari guide Greg Cummings, who will remain with you for the duration of your trip. Transfer (1 hr 20 min) by light aircraft to Kahihi, then transfer (90 min) by road to Buhoma, on the edge of **Bwindi Impenetrable National Park**. Overnight at **Gorilla Forest Camp**.



DAY 2 : After an early breakfast, morning walk (5 min) to park HQ to receive a briefing (30 min). Transfer (1 hr 30 min) by road to the nearest location to the gorillas. Begin trekking in **Bwindi Impenetrable National Park**, on the steep, rain-soaked slopes of the Bufumbira Mountains. A modicum of fitness is required to trek Mountain gorillas. Bwindi comprises 331 square kilometers of jungle forests and contains both montane and lowland forest, and is accessible only on foot. The park provides habitat for some 120 species of mammals, 346 species of birds, 202 species of butterflies, 163 species of trees, 100 species of ferns, 27 species of frogs, chameleons, geckos and many endangered species.

After gorilla trek, transfer (90 min) by road and then (30 min) by light aircraft to Kisoro. Transfer (90 min, including border formalities) by car across the Ugandan frontier to Kinigi, RWANDA. Overnight at **Virunga Lodge**.



DAY 3 : After early breakfast, transfer (40 min) by car to park HQ to register and receive a briefing from the guides (30 min), then transfer (30 min) by car to the edge of the **Volcanoes National Park** to begin trekking. It helps to be moderately fit as we start from altitude, but the trek will proceed at a leisurely pace, and continue as gradually and steadily as you wish to go. After your trek, while still wonderstruck from your wild encounter with the rare Mountain gorilla and surrounded by breathtaking views of the Virungas, you'll enjoy a gourmet picnic at the park boundary.

Afternoon visit (1 hr) to the **Iby'Iwacu Cultural Village**, for a taste of Rwandese culture. Iby'Iwacu literary means, treasures of our home, our heritage, and is a fascinating cultural excursion. The village convinced ex poachers to turn their back on poaching and instead create this unique performance for visitors, offering a rare and startling insight into Rwanda's distant history. Visiting the village you discover the traditional house of the kings, watch an authentic medicine man prepare herbal mixtures and potions, try your hand at firing a bow and arrow, and enjoy incomparable cultural dances and drumming performances. Overnight at **Virunga Lodge**.



DAY 4 : Golden monkey trekking in **Volcanoes National Park**. The golden monkey (*Cercopithecus kandti*) is found only in Nyungwe Forest and the Virunga volcanoes, which straddle three national parks: Mgahinga, in south-west Uganda; Volcanoes, in north-west Rwanda; and Virunga in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. This intriguing primate is restricted to highland forest, especially near bamboo. Not much is known about the golden monkey's behavior. It lives in social groups of up to 30 individuals. Its diet consists mainly of leaves and fruit, though it is also thought to eat insects.

Transfer (3 hrs) by private aircraft (via Kigali) to Kigoma, TANZANIA. Transfer (2 hrs) by boat to **Gombe Stream National Park** in time for dinner at the lodge. Overnight at **Gombe Forest Lodge**.



DAY 5 : Chimpanzee trekking in **Gombe Stream National Park**. Gombe is the smallest of Tanzania's national parks: a fragile strip of chimpanzee habitat straddling the steep slopes and



Excerpt from a *Newsweek* article on chimpanzee cultures:

The behaviors range from ways of greeting to ways of eating, tool use to courtship gambits. Only in the Tai Forest of Cote d'Ivoire and Bossou in Guinea do chimps carefully select flat stones to use as anvils on which to crack rock-hard coula nuts with pieces of wood. Only the chimp communities at Mahale and Gombe, both in Tanzania, fish for termites with flexible strips of bark; only those at Gombe, Mahale and Kibale in Uganda customarily perform rain dances, dragging branches and slapping the ground and charging when a heavy rain falls. Together, the 39 cultural variants are so specific that if you see chimps mash parasites against their forearms, hammer nuts and remove bone marrow from monkeys they've killed, you know you're looking at a community in the Tai Forest. In each case, the tradition has persisted for generations, strong evidence that it is transmitted from adults to offspring rather than reinvented with each brood. In the Tai Forest, for instance, wide-eyed infants clumsily handle a nut or a stone, watch the adults, practice hitting and only after three years manage to crack a nut atop an anvil stone.

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river valleys that hem in the sandy northern shore of Lake Tanganyika. Its chimpanzees – habituated to human visitors – were made famous by the pioneering work of Jane Goodall, who in 1960 founded a behavioural research program that now stands as the longest-running study of its kind in the world. The matriarch Fifi, the last surviving member of the original community, only three-years old when Goodall first set foot in Gombe, is still regularly seen by visitors.

The most visible of Gombe’s other mammals are also primates. A troop of beachcomber olive baboons, under study since the 1960s, is exceptionally habituated, while red-tailed and red colobus monkeys - the latter regularly hunted by chimps – stick to the forest canopy. The park’s 200-odd bird species range from the iconic fish eagle to the jewel-like Peter’s twinspots that hop tamely around the visitors’ centre. After dusk, a dazzling night sky is complemented by the lanterns of hundreds of small wooden boats, bobbing on the lake like a sprawling city. Overnight at **Gombe Forest Lodge**.



DAY 6 : Transfer (2 hrs) by boat to Kigoma, then (1 hr) by private aircraft to **Tarangire National Park**, famous for its great number of elephants, baobab trees and tree climbing African pythons. Overnight at **Tarangire Treetops**.



Gregory's Rift Valley

Some 20 million years ago, the earth's crust weakened and tore itself apart creating a jagged rift across the Eastern end of the African continent. The land on either side erupted creating great volcanic mountains, while the valley floor gradually sank into a low flat plain, forming the Great Rift Valley. The eastern branch of the rift runs from Ethiopia to Mozambique. Although the volcanic area is smaller in northern Tanzania than in Kenya and Ethiopia, major features such as Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain on the African continent; Ngorongoro, one of the largest calderas on Earth; Oldoinyo Lengai, the world's only active carbonatite volcano, and Olduvai Gorge, an important site in the history of human evolution, can be found here.

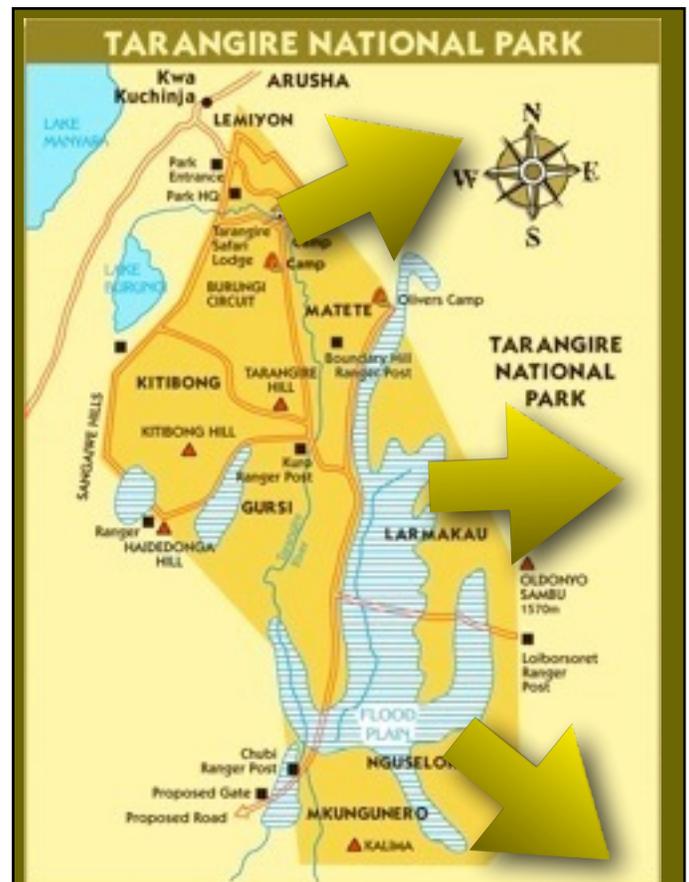
6-Day Gregory Itinerary:

DAY 7 : Game drive in the arid Tarangire, following the elephant herds looking for underground streams in dried-up river beds, while migratory wildebeest, zebra, buffalo, impala, gazelle, hartebeest and eland crowd the shrinking lagoons. During the dry season **Tarangire National Park** holds the greatest concentration of wildlife outside the Serengeti ecosystem. Overnight at **Tarangire Treetops**.



DAY 8 : Morning game drive. Transfer (1 hr) by private aircraft to **Lake Natron**, a salt lake located in northern Tanzania, close to the Kenyan border. It is the only regular breeding area for the 2.5 million Lesser Flamingoes, whose status of "near threatened" is a consequence of their dependence on the single breeding location.

Afternoon game drive to spot flamingo on the banks of the lake. Temperatures in the lakeshore can reach 50° C (120 ° F). Towering 2,980 metres (9,777 ft) above the shores of Lake Natron is **Oldoinyo Lengai**, the mountain of God. This active volcano is unusual in that its lava and ash contain an excess of sodium, which quickly reacts with carbon dioxide to form sodium carbonate crystals. This gives the summit its white streaks that resemble snow. Overnight at **Lake Natron Camp**.



The Tarangire Ecosystem

The ecosystem is defined by the main migration routes of several species and extends into the game controlled areas that surround the Park's boundaries, including Lake Manyara National Park, Mtu wa Mbu, Lake Natron, Lolkisale, Simanjiro, and Mkungunero.

As in many national parks, much of the wildlife which inhabits the area moves across park boundaries at certain seasons of the year, along traditional migration routes, in search of food and water.

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DAY 9 : Taking the opportunity to buzz Ngorongoro Crater on the way, transfer (30 min) by private aircraft to **Olduvai Gorge**, one of the most important prehistoric sites in the world, instrumental in furthering the understanding of early human evolution. This site was occupied by *Homo habilis* approximately 1.9 million years ago, *Paranthropus boisei* 1.8 million years ago, and *Homo erectus* 1.2 million years ago. *Homo sapiens* are dated to have occupied the site 17,000 years ago. Though substantial evidence of hunting and scavenging has been discovered at the site, it is believed by archaeologists that the hominins that inhabited the area between 1.9 and 1.7 million years ago spent the majority of their time gathering wild plant foods such as berries, tubers and roots. Transfer (30 min) by private aircraft to Serengeti's Western Corridor.

Serengeti National Park is the best known wildlife sanctuary in the world, containing the greatest and most varied collection of wildlife on earth, including buffalo, elephant, lion, leopard, rhino, cheetah, African hunting dog, baboon, caracal, civet, bat-eared fox, genet, giraffe, hippo, honey badger, hyrax, mongoose, ostrich, serval, both Grant's and Thomson's gazelle, vervet monkeys, eland, hartebeest, impala, kudu, reedbuck. Roan, topi, waterbuck, dik dik, duiker and oribi. Evening game drive with sundowners. Overnight at **Kirawira Tented Camp**.



DAY 10 : Early morning hot air balloon ride over the Serengeti plains. The balloon safari is not merely a game viewing experience, but an opportunity for an adventure and unique perspective over outstanding quintessentially African landscapes, starting with an 'Out of Africa' breakfast prepared and served in the bush, and ending with a traditional champagne toast. Afternoon game drive. Overnight at



The Laetoli Footprints. An excerpt from Ngorongoro Conservation Area, by Jeannette Hanby and David Bygott:



3,500,000 years ago, our very remote ancient ancestors walked through a landscape very like that which we see today. The volcanoes were fewer but more active then, though Ngorongoro had not yet towered high above the others. On one particular day, the volcano Sadiman puffed out a lot of grey ash, which blanketed part of the plains. A rain shower dampened and settled the ashes, so that the local animals left crisp, clear tracks when they walked. Some of these creatures have changed little, hares were abundant, guinea-fowl scurried about, giraffes strode regally over the plain. Others are no longer with us, such as Deinotherium, an elephant with down-curved tusks in its lower jaw, and Hipparion, a three-toed horse.

Through this desolate grey landscape that would later be named Laetoli travelled three hominids. Shorter than ourselves (1.2 to 1.4 metres high), they may have looked more like apes than people, but they walked on two legs. A large, medium-sized and small individual walked together, the medium-sized one stepping in the tracks of its large companion. A day or two later, a fresh ash-fall buried the tracks, until they were excavated in 1978. We know from contemporary fossils that they footprints were made by Australopithecus afarensis, an early hominid.

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Kirawira Tented Camp.



DAY 11 : Transfer (2 hrs) by private aircraft to the Masai Mara, KENYA, via Mwanza. Evening game drive to spot everything. The **Masai Mara National Reserve** is Kenya's finest wildlife reserve. Everything about this reserve is outstanding. The wildlife is abundant and the gentle rolling grasslands ensure that animals are never out of sight. Birds, too, are prolific. Including migrants, well over 450 species have been recorded, among them, 57 species of birds of prey. The climate is gentle, rarely too hot and well-spread rainfall year round. Rain, when it falls almost always chooses the late afternoon or night.

The **Masai Mara National Reserve** stretches 1,510 sq km (580 sq miles) and raises 1,500-2,170 meters above sea level. The terrain of the reserve is primarily grassland and riverine forest with clumps of the distinctive acacia trees. Famous for the abundance of lion, the Great Wildebeest Migration and the Maasai people, well known for their distinctive custom and dress, it is without a doubt one of Africa's most spectacular safari destinations. Overnight at **Il Moran Camp.**



DAY 12 : Morning game drive through the Mara. Transfer (1 hr) by private aircraft to Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. Board your international flight home.



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