

Doug Macdonald's Safaris to Africa

Plains, Peaks and Craters walk of Northern Tanzania



- 8 Nights / 9 days
- Departing 23rd Feb from Kilimanjaro Airport
- Returning to Arusha on 3rd March 2015
- 1 Night Moivaro Lodge
- 4 Nights Camping in Tanzanian Highlands between Empakai Crater and Lake Natron
- Climb Oldonyo Lengayi – helmets and ropes provided
- 3 Nights Ronjo Mobile Camp Serengeti
- Charter flight back to Arusha and onto Kilimanjaro for onward flight connections
- Cost per person US\$5350.00 per person All Inclusive except drinks, visa fees, tips and extra activities around Lake Natron.

Itinerary

23rd February – Arrive at Kilimanjaro Airport where you will be met at the airport and transferred by road to Moivaro Lodge outside Arusha. Here you will be able to relax enjoy the scenery and get back into the rhythm of Africa with a cold drink and warm fire place.

24th February – We leave early in the morning and head for the highlands of Northern Tanzania – we will travel by road and go past the famous Lake Manyara as we ascend up into the Highlands and on towards the extraordinary Ngorongoro crater. We turn off here and make our way past Nainokanoka village and out across the sweeping high altitude pastures of the Embulbul Depression, where Masai herds are usually seen grazing often accompanied by wildebeest and zebra. Volcanoes will be in sight all around now, from the more dramatically peaked and often smoking Oldonyo Lengai to the broad and flat topped Empakai. The whole area is right off the tourist trail and really feels like Africa from centuries ago. Empakai Crater is where we start our walking from. Unlike the broad expanse of the Ngorongoro crater, this crater is steep sided and forest filled giving it a very dark and mysterious atmosphere and feels more enclosed than the 8km diameter would suggest. Dominating the crater floor is a large soda lake, which more often than not hosts good populations of flamingoes. The walk down and up is on very steep and slippery paths so can be quite tough and you have the added excitement of finding buffalo along the paths in the forest. We shall explore along the lake shore and in the forest for awhile before heading back out of the crater, and on towards our campsite for the first night. Total walk, about 5hrs.



25th February – Empakai Crater to Acacia Campsite After breakfast and breaking of camp we set off on foot as there are no roads here for vehicles and we will be accompanied by a local Masaai Guide, a cook and donkey driver with his animals which will carry our equipment and food. We walk on a gentle downhill path until we emerge onto a broad open grassland that feels quite alpine in character and is where we will see the Masaai with their cattle herds living their very pastoral way of life. This track takes us into Nayobi a fairly remote Masaai village and then leaving the village our track takes along the edge of the Rift Valley Escarpment with tremendous views of the valley below and Oldonyo Lengayi rising in front of us. We soon arrive in an acacia forest which we walk through for a bit to our campsite where we shall overnite. Walk Time 5hrs



26th February – Acacia Campsite to Natron Camp – After breakfast we walk through the acacia forest and up a steep rocky ascent and out onto a much drier hillside which is quite different from what we have seen so far. From this plateau we will have tremendous views of Oldonyo Lengayi. The track now starts to descend down the rift valley escarpment and there are some quite steep inclines often with loose stones and sand. When we reach the bottom we can decide as to whether to have the vehicle collect us or we can continue for the next 2hours across the flat dry landscapes of Lake Natron and into the camp itself. This camp is a tented camp and will be a very welcome relief to have a nice hot shower and cold drink after the days walking.



27th February – Today an early start (2am)in the dark back to the base of Oldonyo Lengayi by vehicle before we start this tricky climb. This is the only active volcano in Africa with active fumeroles at the top almost constantly. This ascent is one of the most day hikes in Africa it is a tough that requires a good



almost constantly. spectacular single tough climb level of fitness.



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The plan is to try and get to the summit for dawn so most of the climb is done in the dark with head lamps, towards the top we have an open cinder field to cross which is draining in that you go up and down in the same step and

then the final part might require a fixed rope to assist you to the top. The route down is obviously much easier and quicker and in theory we should be back to camp late morning for a well earned rest. The afternoon can be spent exploring the environment of Lake Natron and maybe visiting one of the waterfalls in the area for a swim or just taking in the incredible spectacle of huge flamingo flocks and extraordinarily coloured water that makes this place so unique and specialized.



28th February - Today we get back into the vehicle and head back east to reach the short grass plains of the famous Serengeti. At this time of the year the wildebeest are massing in this area and calving on these wide open expanses and of course this attracts many predators who take advantage of this bounty. We will be using Ronjo Camp which is a small and basic tented camp and gives us great access to this incredible spectacle and one of the natural wonders of the world. We shall spend 3 nights here exploring this area and hopefully have some amazing sightings of predator prey interactions. Highlights of which would be finding a cheetah hunting over these plains and just the sheer mass of animals.



6 Ashton Rd, Alex Park, HARARE doug@dougmacsafaris.com + 263 (0)774 820453
www.dougmacsafaris.com

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3rd March – Today we leave by light aircraft which will get us back to Arusha for onward connections or safari plans. Transfers onto Kilimanjaro airport can be done as well.

Extras and Ideas

Spend an extra night at Ronjo Camp

Climb Kilimanjaro

See other parks of Tanzania like Tarangire

Move to the Coast and enjoy the Islands off the coast of Tanzania like Zanzibar

Extra Notes

This safari is designed to be off the beaten track and an adventure in Africa, and as such there won't be too many creature comforts and you might be asked to assist with certain aspects of the trip like putting up a tent or peeling a potato. The walk does require good physical fitness especially if you want to climb Oldonyo Lengayi so please be adequately prepared for this to ensure your enjoyment of this adventure.



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