



# JOURNEY TO MT KENYA



*This information should answer some of your questions about the trip and give you a better idea of what we do day-to-day. It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.*



*Above Gorges Valley*

- ***An exceptional African experience!***
- ***Superb wildlife viewing***
- ***Meet the Maasai Mara people***
- ***Bush trekking with local guides***
- ***Climb a Rift Valley volcano***
- ***Traverse Mount Kenya by the most spectacular route on the mountain***
- ***See the African dawn from Point Lenana (4985m)***

*"Haraka haraka haina baraka" - In hurrying there is no blessing - Kiswahili proverb*

## **The trip**

Our 'Journey to Mt Kenya' trip is a fascinating, varied and experience-packed holiday. It includes a relaxing start wildlife viewing in the world famous Maasai Mara, trekking through the remote Loita Hills with Maasai guides, a hike up a Rift Valley volcano, a Lake Naivasha boat trip and a complete traverse of the Mount Kenya massif where we reach Point Lenana, the trekkers' summit at 4985m. This itinerary has been designed to let you experience a wide range of African

environments, see the best of its wildlife and make real contact with the local people, their customs and culture, and all at a not-too-strenuous pace.

### **Walking**

On the trekking section of this trip we walk for about 3-6 hours each day, although options are flexible and can be tailored to suit the group. There is no backpacking on this trip. All our baggage is carried in support vehicles that meet us at each night's camp. On Mt Kenya we use local porters to carry all the gear and food. This is a normal job for the locals and a valuable way of earning money. For us it is an important contact with the local culture and they are a valued part of the team. We carry only daypacks with waterproofs, camera, snacks, water and personal gear.

We make a full traverse of the Mt Kenya massif, avoiding the well-trodden paths and using a longer and more interesting route. This gives us plenty of time to acclimatise and gives everybody a much better chance of reaching Point Lenana!

### **Accommodation**

In true safari style, we camp throughout the bush walking sections of the trip and in the Maasai Mara we use a permanent tented camp. We spend two nights in a hotel before the Mt Kenya climb and on Mt. Kenya itself use mountain huts with one night's camping. In Nairobi we use a comfortable guesthouse or hotel.



*Elephants* Photo Mike Cosgrove

### **Food**

On trek and on safari, all meals are provided and prepared by our own cook. We are happy to cater for vegetarians. On our last two days, two lunches and two evening meals are not included. This gives you a chance to sample some local Kenyan cuisine. Allow approx £6-10/US\$10-18/NZ\$15-26 for dinner, less for lunch.

### **Tipping**

Tipping in East Africa has been customary since explorers and safari seekers first started travelling there and using the services of local people. It is a sensitive issue, and High Places do not automatically accept the practice of tipping, as we prefer to make honest and fair payments for services received. However, where there is a strong local tradition of tipping it is not possible to avoid this without upsetting local staff, who work extremely hard to make your trip successful. Last year most people spent approx £100/US\$160/NZ\$250 total on tips.

### **Seasons and climate**

Our trips run in July and August, one of the dry seasons in east Africa, when conditions for walking and travelling are at their best. The rains have finished, the climate is generally warm and pleasant, the skies are clear, and the vegetation is luxuriant. Daytime temperatures in the lower lands and foothills are warm, around 20-30°C (we often walk in shorts and T-shirts) although evenings can be chilly and afternoon showers are not unknown. On the high mountain sections, it feels very warm with the sun out but chills rapidly if it clouds over, while at night and in the early mornings temperatures can drop well below freezing. Also, even in the dry seasons, rain may occur at any time on the mountains. In the Loita Hills and Maasai Mara the days can be quite warm, up to 30°C but it is a comfortable dry heat. Nights are often surprisingly cool but not freezing. A range of clothing to cope with these conditions is essential.

**Altitude**

Above 3000m, the air is thinner, the pressure is lower and there is less oxygen available in the atmosphere. Acclimatisation is the process by which the body adapts to these conditions. The key to acclimatisation is a good itinerary with a gradual initial height gain, walking at a slow and steady pace, and increasing fluid intake – drinking at least 4 litres a day is advisable above 3000m.

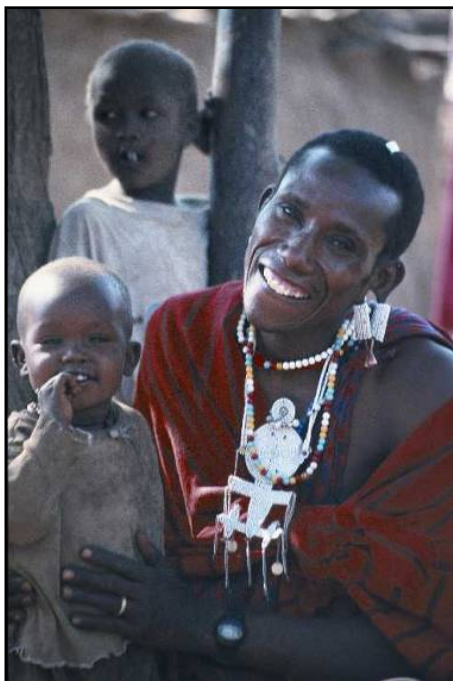
Many people have some minor side effects from altitude, such as headache, nausea or general lassitude. The optional use of 'Diamox' has proved useful for some people, as this drug can reduce these symptoms. You will be given more information on 'Diamox' with your Final Information, between 8 and 10 weeks before departure.

**Transport**

The areas where we walk are often remote and inaccessible, so on each trip we use specially designed safari vehicles to cope with the steep mountain approach routes and rough tracks. For safety reasons, we also use the vehicles for wildlife viewing in the Maasai Mara, and they are also essential to transport us between the various walking areas. When we are walking, any extra clothing or gear not required can be safely stored in the vehicle.

**Language**

Swahili and English are the national languages of Kenya. Many people speak English, including most of our local staff.



*Maasai family* Photo Maggie Graham

## DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

This itinerary is flexible and should be seen as a guide only. Local conditions, weather or fitness could lead to changes in our daily plans. All times and distances are approximate. 'B,L,D' refers to meals included in the trip cost, i.e. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner.

**This trip is 16 days ex NAIROBI. The first and last days refer to the days of arrival and departure in NAIROBI, and may not be the days you depart from or arrive back home.**

DAY 1 Arrive Nairobi. Hotel.

DAY 2 We start with a bang!! A morning drive brings us to the world famous Maasai Mara, perhaps the best game reserve in East Africa. On our afternoon game drive the wildlife list could include elephant, buffalo, lion, zebra, giraffe, rhino, hippo, crocodile and a whole ark-full of other animals and birds in their natural surroundings. This reserve is naturally very popular but we avoid the crowds by staying in a quiet established camp in the Sekanani valley. (B,L,D)

DAY 3 The whole of this day is spent on game drives in the reserve, which in July and August, is home to millions of migrating wildebeest from the Serengeti. We also have the option of an exciting night game drive leaving in the early evening after dinner. (B,L,D)

DAY 4 We start 3 days of easy hiking through rolling hills and savannah with local Maasai as our guides. This is the heartland of the Maasai people who unlike many other groups in Kenya have largely rejected the trappings of modern 'civilisation' and have kept to their traditional way of life. We are honoured to be guests in their land for a few days and know that our visit directly supports them. Today, we make a 3 hour hike over Naunare Hill, with fantastic views of the Mara plains, to a picnic lunch in the bush. A further short drive to our next campsite at Maji Moto and a bathe in nearby natural hot springs. (B,L,D)



*Maasai guides*

DAYS 5-6 Continuing down the eastern flank of the Loita Hills where even today very few foreigners travel. Over the years we have formed a special relationship with the local people, and we camp near their villages. We will walk during the mornings, meeting our vehicles at a different campsite each afternoon. While walking we are likely to see zebra, giraffe, gazelles and possibly even elephant as well as finding fragments of stone tools used by early humans in this area. On past trips we have found wild honey in the bush, watched as our guides made fire from rubbing sticks, visited a sacred meat camp and practised with sling-shots. A mid-wife on one of our trips even assisted a young mother to give birth - anything can happen here! As part of our commitment to responsible travel and to ensure local people receive some benefit from our visit, High Places make a financial contribution to a nearby primary school. On the afternoon of Day 6 we drive to a lakeside camp at Naivasha, superb bird life here and hippo's grazing in our camp at night! (B,L,D)

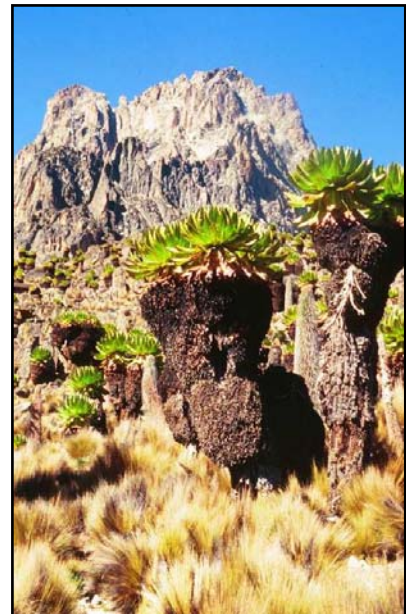
DAY 7 A 5 hour morning hike up and down Mt Longonot, a spectacular Great Rift Valley volcano – still not quite silent with fumaroles sending wisps of steam into the chilly morning air. Afternoon relaxing by the lake with optional boat trip for bird and hippo watching. (B,L,D)

DAY 8 Leaving early we head for the well known Aberdares National Park, a mountain area which rises to 4000m. Adorned with lush montane forest and expansive moorland the Park has an amazing population of wildlife adapted to high altitude including leopards, elephants, bushbucks, buffaloes, forest hogs and the bongo antelope among others. We traverse the range making a number of short hikes to waterfalls and caves before a final game drive in the forested salient section of the Park. We exit via the eastern gate and head for our hotel base on the slopes of Mount Kenya. (B,L,D)

DAY 9 Some easy walks around this predominantly Kikuyu area, exploring local farms and villages and being introduced to medicinal plants, birds and animals of the forest environment. We can gain a privileged insight into the lives of the people who live on the slopes of Mt Kenya and know that our visit is contributing towards their local economy. This is where we meet our mountain guides and prepare for the main trek. (B,L,D)

DAY 10 The ascent of Mt Kenya following the Sirimon route is one of the longest and gentlest on the mountain. It is also one of the most spectacular. We walk up to our first hut at 3,400m, a total ascent of 690m. On this route, we will pass through zones of dense forest, bamboo, giant heather and out onto high open moorland. 3-4 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 11 Today's trek takes us up the surreal Mackinder Valley with its strange vegetation of giant lobelia and groundsel, unique to equatorial African mountains. Here we stay at Shipton's Camp (4236m), just below the glaciers and jagged peaks of bare rock that surround the main summits. 6 hours, 836m of ascent. (B,L,D)



*Mt Kenya and giant groundsel*

DAY 12 We stay at Shipton's for two nights, and have a rest day. This is invaluable for acclimatisation and will make the summit day more enjoyable! Optional short walks on the summit circuit. (B,L,D)

DAY 13 After the rest day comes the highlight of the Mount Kenya trek: the stiff, but exhilarating, scramble by starlight up to Point Lenana, the "trekkers' summit", in time to see the African dawn from a vantage point of nearly 5,000m. We leave at 4am and climb the 800m to the peak in 3-4 hours. The descent down to our campsite at Hall Tarns drops 685m in around 2 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 14 To complete our traverse of the mountain we descend by the Chogoria route with enjoyable walking and spectacular views of the chasms and waterfalls in the Gorges Valley. 5 hours, descent 1280m. waiting us are hot showers and a log fire at the mountain chalets (bandas) by the exit gate. (B,L,D)

DAY 15 Walk down through the giant bamboo forest to meet our vehicles for the return journey to Nairobi, arriving in the late afternoon. Guesthouse/Hotel. (B)

DAY 16      Transfer to the airport for your flight home or continue with your own arrangements (B)

**What our clients say....**

*“Every minute of every day was filled with a new experience. What a privilege to be allowed to immerse yourself in the lives of local people, culture, landscape and wildlife.” G.W.*



*African sunset*

ML 10/10