

## AFRICAN DAWN – 2018

### OVERVIEW

Tour Date: 4 January 2018 – 31 January 2018

Tour Duration: 28 days

Tour Cost (\$AUD): \$19,950

Single Supplement (\$AUD): \$3,835

*African Dawn is a 28-day tour that will show you many faces of this great continent. It is a mix of diverse experiences and sights, from Lake Victoria and the source of the Nile in Uganda, to the rare mountain gorillas of Rwanda and on to Ethiopia - the cradle of civilisation.*

Imagine an adventure that starts with the thrill of seeing Lake Victoria and the River Nile, as it starts its epic journey northwards; an adventure that continues across the 'Mountains of the Moon' and onto one of the great wildlife parks in Africa, Queen Elizabeth National Park; an adventure that then heads south through Pygmy villages before crossing the border and heading to Rwanda's magnificent rainforests, home of the rare mountain gorilla. Imagine a walk that will bring you into close contact with a gorilla family on the slopes of the Virunga Mountains; an adventure that then moves eastward to Ethiopia, the cradle of Christianity, for arguably the most amazing festival in the world, Timkat, which celebrates the Baptism of Christ. Remarkable rock-hewn churches, medieval castles and ancient stelae provide a spectacular finale to a truly extraordinary and varied 28-day adventure.

Tour Fitness Level: Active

## AFRICAN DAWN 2018

### TOUR ITINERARY

#### 04/01/2018 Australia – Dubai

Depart from your chosen Australian airport on the flight to Dubai.

#### 05/01/2018 Dubai – Entebbe – Munyonyo (D)

On arrival in Dubai we connect with the flight to Entebbe.

Depart Dubai Emirates EK 729, 08.30

Arrive Entebbe 12.55

On arrival in Entebbe we transfer to Munyonyo, superbly situated on the banks of Lake Victoria. This evening we enjoy dinner on the terrace of our beautiful resort.

**The Speke Resort**

Munyonyo, Kampala

#### 06/01/2018 Kampala (BLD)

After breakfast we take a city tour of Kampala including the markets. The afternoon is at leisure and in the evening we enjoy a BBQ at the edge of Lake Victoria.

#### 07/01/2018 Source of the Nile: Jinja (BLD)

The main reservoir and source of the Nile, Lake Victoria is the second largest freshwater lake in the world after Baikal in Eastern Siberia and is situated between the Western and Eastern Rift Valleys. Like Baikal, many rivers flow into Lake Victoria but only one flows out: the Nile. Today we drive to Jinja where we board a boat that takes us to the very spot where the Nile bubbles up from Lake Victoria and begins its epic journey to the Mediterranean. Lunch is a picnic beside a memorial to John Hanning Speke at the spot where he first saw the Nile.

#### 08/01/2018 Kampala – Fort Portal (BLD)

This morning we drive through lush countryside and banana plantations as we pass Kibale Forest. After lunch at Fort Portal we enter Kibale National Park, home to 12 species of primates including a population of habituated chimpanzees. After visiting the chimps we drive into the Rwenzori Mountains – the famous Mountains of the Moon.

**Mountains of the Moon Hotel & Resort**

Fort Portal

#### 09/01/2018 Fort Portal – Queen Elizabeth National Park (BLD)

After breakfast we cross the Equator and enter Queen Elizabeth National Park. Here the country is untouched, with lush vegetation and rich in wildlife. To the west of our lodge lie the Rwenzoris, while to the east are the spectacularly raised Rift Valley Hills. The two are separated by the meandering Kazinga Channel that flows into the great George and Edward lakes.

**Mweya Safari Lodge**

Queen Elizabeth National Park

#### 10/01/2018 Queen Elizabeth NP (BLD)

Queen Elizabeth National Park is home to lions, leopards, elephants, hippos, hyenas, crocodiles and waterbuck, as well as more than 600 species of birds that flock around the Kazinga Channel. This morning we enjoy an early sunrise game drive before returning to the lodge for breakfast. In the afternoon we take a boat ride to see the diverse animal and bird life of the Kazinga Channel.

### 11/01/2018 Queen Elizabeth NP – Kabale (BLD)

This morning we have another early morning game drive before leaving for the border town of Kabale. Passing many coffee and banana plantations en-route, we arrive in Kabale in the evening and transfer to our hotel.

#### Arcadia Cottages

Kabale

### 12/01/2018 Kabale (BLD)

After breakfast we take a boat ride on beautiful Lake Bunyonyi and visit a Pygmy colony of the Batwa people. These people are the oldest recorded inhabitants of the Great Lakes region of central Africa and are a significant minority group. Originally they were hunters and gatherers, but they have now been relocated from the Kigezi forest to make way for protected gorilla parks and today they are farmers and builders.

### 13/01/2018 Kabale – Ruhengeri (BLD)

After breakfast we head further south to the border and, after completing customs and immigration formalities, we enter beautiful Rwanda, 'the Switzerland of Africa'. We then drive to Ruhengeri in the Virunga Mountains and Parc National des Volcans. After lunch we head to our home for the next two nights, the aptly named Mountain Gorilla View Lodge.

#### Mountain Gorilla View Lodge

Ruhengeri

### 14/01/2018 Ruhengeri (BLD)

After a short briefing from park rangers on gorilla protection and protocol, we enter Parc National des Volcans. These are the 'Mountains of the Mist', which are world renowned thanks to the eminent primatologist Dian Fossey, who lost her life here in 1985 in her quest to protect her beloved gorillas. Today her 'gorilla family' and their offspring live in the Virungas, free from fear and poachers. Our exhilarating walk through the cultivated foothills of the mountains offers stirring views in all directions. Our first contact with the gorillas will be unforgettable.

### 15/01/2018 Ruhengeri – Kigali (BLD)

This morning we head south from the park to the Rwandan capital of Kigali. En-route we visit the Iby Iwacu cultural village and enjoy a lively display of music and dance. After lunch we continue to Kigali and on arrival we transfer to our hotel.

#### Kigali Serena Hotel

Kigali

### 16/01/2018 Kigali (BLD)

Kigali is a very pleasant modern city situated among rolling hills. Although it is home to a million people, it enjoys a very relaxed pace of life and it is extremely friendly and safe. Kigali and its people bear witness to a country that has successfully forged reconciliation and enjoyed social and economic stability for more than ten years. Today we take a walking tour of this delightful capital, passing by the presidential palace, craft markets and the famous 'Hotel Rwanda'.

### 17/01/2016 Kigali – Addis Ababa (BLD)

This morning is at leisure and after lunch we depart to the airport for our flight to Addis Ababa.

Depart Kigali Ethiopian Airlines ET 806, 16.00

Arrive Addis Ababa 19.30

Welcome to the 'Cradle of Civilisation!' Ethiopia is one of the world's most extraordinary, yet least visited, countries. Lying in the mountains at an elevation of

2,500m, Addis Ababa is the third highest capital city in the world. It enjoys a superb climate with an average year-round temperature of 25 degrees. On arrival in Addis Ababa we transfer to our hotel.

**Hilton Addis Hotel**

Addis Ababa

#### **18/01/2018 Addis Ababa (BLD)**

This morning we visit the fascinating National Museum where the oldest human skeleton 'Lucy' is on display. Today is also the start of the Timkat Festival and in the afternoon we join the throng of white-veiled worshippers as they dance and sing in the streets to the beating of drums. The Arc of the Covenant is paraded through the streets and the procession then moves to a water source where the festival proper will take place early in the morning.

#### **19/01/2018 Addis Ababa (BLD)**

Today the festival reaches its climax as priests in satin robes and the Patriarch celebrate a communal service and bless the pool of holy water. Thousands of joyous people throng to the compound waiting for a drop of holy water which priests spray into the crowd. It is a truly remarkable spectacle and the atmosphere is one of great excitement and joy. We are privileged to view this extraordinary festival from within the compound with the priests and Patriarch.

#### **20/01/2018 Addis Ababa – Bahir Dar (BLD)**

This morning we transfer back to the airport for our flight to Bahir Dar.

**Depart Addis Ababa Ethiopian Airlines ET 126, 07.50**

**Arrive Bahir Dar 08.50**

Bahir Dar was the capital of Ethiopia in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. This attractive town was, and still is, an important commercial centre. On arrival in Bahir Dar we transfer to our hotel, situated on the shores of Lake Tana, before heading to the Blue Nile Falls. This afternoon is at leisure.

**Kuriftu Hotel**

Bahir Dar

#### **21/01/2018 Bahir Dar (BLD)**

Today we board a boat to explore Lake Tana's famous island monasteries, founded in the Middle Ages. In the afternoon we visit local villages as well as the colourful marketplace, where traditional wares such as baskets, pottery and hand-woven clothes are traded.

#### **22/01/2018 Bahir Dar – Gondar (BLD)**

After breakfast we begin a leisurely drive north towards the Sudanese border and the fabled highland city of Gondar, popularly known as 'Ethiopia's Camelot'. On arrival the rest of the day is at leisure. Our hotel is spectacularly perched on top of a hill, offering magnificent views of the city and its surrounds.

**Goha Hotel**

Gondar

#### **23/01/2018 Gondar (BLD)**

Gondar was the 17th- and 18th-century capital of Ethiopia. Founded by Emperor Fasilidas around 1635, the city is famous for its stunning medieval castles and beautiful churches. Today we explore this amazing UNESCO World Heritage listed complex and, this evening, enjoy an exclusive dinner in the castle grounds.

#### **24/01/2018 Gondar (BLD)**

Today we visit the beautiful Simien Mountains where canyons, gorges and soaring 4,000m peaks create a startling wilderness. In places the dramatic topography, dominated by basalt lava flows, is reminiscent of the Grand Canyon. We enjoy a picnic lunch in the mountains, and see the amazing indigenous gelada baboons. We also visit remote villages where the way of life has changed little over the centuries.

#### 25/01/2018 Gondar – Axum (BLD)

After breakfast we embark on an astonishing drive through deep canyons gouging high plateau lands for hundreds of kilometres. This is some of Africa's most spectacular scenery. The road to Axum, originally cut by the Italian occupiers in the 1930s, is a masterpiece of road building! Its dramatic switchbacks supported by extensive brick work are truly impressive. Ears pop with endless pressure changes as the road winds down, across, then up again in a seemingly endless series of mountains and valleys. By mid-afternoon we reach Axum.

#### Sabeen Hotel

Axum

#### 26/01/2018 Axum (BLD)

Axum is the oldest and holiest city in Ethiopia and was the country's capital during the reign of the legendary Queen of Sheba in the 10th century BC. Today we visit the palace and bath of the Queen of Sheba, the Zion Cathedral - where the original Arc of the Covenant is said to be housed - and Stele Park, where magnificent and mysterious obelisks have stood since the 3rd century.

#### 27/01/2018 Axum (BLD)

Today we travel just outside of Axum to the historic and spectacular Adwa Mountains. It was here in 1896 that King Menelik II decisively defeated the Italian invaders and forced them out of Ethiopia, in the triumphant Battle of Adwa.

#### 28/01/2018 Axum – Lalibela (BLD)

Following breakfast we will transfer to the airport for our flight to Lalibela.

Depart Axum Ethiopian Airlines ET 123, 11.15

Arrive Lalibela 11.55

UNESCO World Heritage-listed Lalibela is one of the world's most extraordinary ancient sites and is simply breathtaking. A total of 13 churches were chiselled out of solid red volcanic rock more than 1,000 years ago. A complex and bewildering labyrinth of tunnels connect the churches with narrow passageways, offset crypts, grottoes and galleries. Throughout this mysterious and wonderful settlement priests and deacons go about their timeless work, seemingly unaware of their extraordinary surroundings.

#### Roha Hotel

Lalibela

#### 29/01/2018 Lalibela (BLD)

This morning we visit the second group of churches including the awe-inspiring rock-hewn Bet Gyorgis, the 'House of St George'. We then explore the town of Lalibela and its amazing market. In the evening we enjoy an exclusive dinner with local priests and students, followed by a bonfire and display of traditional dancing.

#### 30/01/2018 Lalibela – Addis Ababa – Dubai (B)

This morning we fly from Lalibela to Addis Ababa and connecting on to Dubai.

Depart Ethiopian Airlines ET 123, 12.15

Arrive Addis Ababa 14.20

Depart Addis Ababa Emirates EK 724, 16.15

Arrive Dubai 21.20

31/01/2018 Dubai – Australia

In Dubai we connect with the flight to our chosen Australian airport.