

AFRICAN DAWN

5 JANUARY 2020 - 31 JANUARY 2020

Tour Cost (\$AUD): \$22,990
Single Supplement (\$AUD): \$3,835

Tour Duration: 27 days



OVERVIEW

African Dawn is a 27-day tour that will show you many faces of this great continent. It's 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 the islands of Lake Bunyonyi 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 civilisation, 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 27-day adventure.

Tour Fitness Level: Active

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TOUR MAP



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ITINERARY

05/01/2020 Australia - Dubai

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

06/01/2020 Dubai - Entebbe - Munyonyo (D)

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

Depart Dubai Emirates EK 729, 09.25
Arrive Entebbe 13.50

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

07/01/2020 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.

08/01/2020 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.

09/01/2020 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

10/01/2020 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

11/01/2020 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.

12/01/2020 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-

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route, we arrive in Kabale in the evening and transfer to our hotel.

Arcadia Cottages

Kabale

13/01/2020 Kabale (BLD)

After breakfast we take a boat ride on Lake Bunyonyi. This beautiful and serene lake – without doubt the loveliest in Uganda – is punctuated with 29 lush green islands with steep terraced hillsides. After lunch we take a stroll through the bustling Kabale markets.

14/01/2020 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, stopping en-route to visit the Iby Iwacu cultural village where we enjoy a lively display of music and dance. After lunch we head to our home for the next two nights, the aptly named Mountain Gorilla View Lodge.

Mountain Gorilla View Lodge

Ruhengeri

15/01/2020 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.

16/01/2020 Ruhengeri – Kigali (BLD)

This morning we head south from the park to the Rwandan capital of Kigali. 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'.

Kigali Serena Hotel

Kigali

17/01/2020 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, 16.20
Arrive Addis Ababa 19.55

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, where we enjoy a late dinner.

Best Western Plus Bole

Addis Ababa

18/01/2020 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



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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.

19/01/2020 Addis Ababa – Bahir Dar (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. After lunch we transfer to the airport for our flight to Bahir Dar.

Depart Addis Ababa Ethiopian Airlines ET 140, 15.05
Arrive Bahir Dar 16.05
Kuriftu Hotel

Bahir Dar

20/01/2020 Bahir Dar (BLD)

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, located on the shores of Lake Tana. Today we head to the Blue Nile Falls.

21/01/2020 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.

22/01/2020 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.

Inn of the Four Sisters

Gondar

23/01/2020 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.

24/01/2020 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. Here we see the amazing indigenous gelada baboons, and also visit remote villages where the way of life has changed little over the centuries.

25/01/2020 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



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valleys. By mid-afternoon we reach Axum.

Yared Zena Hotel

Axum

26/01/2020 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.

27/01/2020 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.

28/01/2020 Axum – Lalibela (BLD)

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

Depart Axum Ethiopian Airlines ET 123, 12.10
Arrive Lalibela 12.50

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. This afternoon we visit the first group of churches.

Zagwe Hotel

Lalibela

29/01/2020 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.

30/01/2020 Lalibela – Addis Ababa – Dubai (B)

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

Depart Lalibela Ethiopian Airlines ET 121, 10.00
Arrive Addis Ababa 11.00
Depart Addis Ababa Emirates EK 724, 15.05
Arrive Dubai 20.15
31/01/2020 Dubai – Australia

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