Mountains of the Moon

- Uganda’s Rwenzori mountains
- Safari in the Queen Elizabeth Reserve
- Uganda’s highest mountain
- Views of the Congo Basin

An expedition of wildly differing character offering a combination of jungle travel and mountain climbing to Uganda’s Rwenzori Mountains and its highest peak; Mt Margherita on the Stanley Massif (5109m) and Mt Baker (4842m).

The Rwenzori Mountains lie along the western border of Uganda and form the legendary ‘Mountains of the Moon’. Our peaks can be found in the centre of the range; alpine in stature, glaciated and snow capped. With the slopes hidden by unusual and dense vegetation, any ascent becomes a unique and intriguing experience. Among the many species of plants, we will see giant forms of lobelia, heather and groundsel and mesmerizing animals such as the blue monkey, chimpanzee, giant forest hog and many native birds. The ascent of the upper slopes are not technically difficult, but provide a thorough alpine type experience on rock and snow that is far more remote than anything in the European Alps! The friendliness and traditions of the local Bakonjo people will add a new dimension to this fine mountain trekking experience.

Participation Statement
Adventure Walks recognises that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

Adventure Travel – Accuracy of Itinerary
Although it is our intention to operate this itinerary as printed, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops and the duration of the day may vary from those outlined. You should be aware that some events are beyond our control and we would ask for your patience.
OUTLINE ITINERARY

KEY to inclusions (H-hotel, L-lodge, R-mountain refuge/hut, C-campsite, B-breakfast, L-lunch, D-dinner/evening meal)

Day 1 International flight to Entebbe, on the shores of Lake Victoria

Day 2 Arrive Entebbe where you will be met by our agent at the airport for the one-hour transfer to Kampala the capital of Uganda and our centrally located hotel. The afternoon will be free to look around this wonderful green city. (H,B)

Day 3 Drive to Ibanda 1600m
We approach the mountains of Rwenzori by road, a journey of about 250 miles, passing through Uganda’s rich fertile farmland with plantations of tea and coffee. We cross the equator on route. It is here we meet our trek crew of Bakonjo porters and finalise our park permits ready to leave the following morning (C,B,L,D)

Day 4 Trek to Nyabitaba Hut 2650m
Today we get introduced to the splendours of Ugandas great forests. Leaving Nyakalengija we start our journey by entering the small plantations of beans, bananas and coffee that leads us into the high elephant grass and finally the forest. We continue along the clear waters of the Mobuku river to Lake Mahoma to reach a steep ridge that takes us to the Nyabitaba Hut with its excellent views of the Bujuku Valley and the Portal Peaks. Blue monkeys are quite often seen from the hut. Ascent 1000m, time 5 hours. (R/C, B,L,D)

Day 5 Trek to John Matte Hut 3350m
The trail begins with a descent down through the forest to the confluence of the rivers Bujuku and Mubuku to cross by the suspended Kurt Shaffer Bridge. The path continues through giant heather, bamboo and groundsel forest, stopping for lunch at the Nyamileju hut. Here you will find the trees hanging with dramatic cloaks of moss and lichen, a tough but enjoyable day. Ascent 850m, time 6 hours. (R/C, B,L,D)

Day 6 Trek to Lake Bujuku Hut 3900m
Today is the day of the bog! You cross two tremendous peat bogs, pass a scenic heather forest to reach the Lower Bigo Bog for which wellington boots are a great idea. The trail then passes the base of the rocky slopes of Mount Stanley, skirts the lovely Bujuku Lake to Cooking Pot Cave before finally climbing up to the Bujuku Hut. Given good weather there are wonderful views of Mt Stanley, Mt Speke and Mt Baker. Ascent 750m, time 5 hours. (R/C, B,L,D)

Day 7 Trek to Elena Hut 4541m
This is quite a short day that starts off on a path through a forest of giant groundsel and climbs a section of ladders to gain the rocky shelf on which the Elena Hut can be found overlooking the glaciers of Mount Stanley. Ascent 550m, time 3 hours. (R/C, B,L,D)

Day 8 Training
This day has been set aside to give you training in the use of ice axe, crampons and fixed lines, whilst also providing valuable acclimatisation to increase your chance of success to gain Uganda’s highest summit

Day 9 Ascent of Margherita (Mount Stanley) 5109m
We start out early for this varied ascent that takes us across some interesting scrambling ground to reach the snow line and a pleasant easy walk to reach the Stanley Plateau. We continue our glacial climb to reach the saddle between Alexandra and Margherita peaks from where there is a final short steep section, due to the receding glacier, on fixed lines (training given), to the summit. Ascent 720m, time 6-8 hours. Descend to Kitandara Hut 3hrs. (R/C, B,L,D)

Day 10 Spare summit day
We give a spare day for the ascent in case of bad weather, however this can be used as a day of rest or to explore the surrounding area around the beautiful twin lakes of Kitandara, dominated by the Mount Baker massif in one of the most spectacular and wildest corners of Ruwenzori. (R/C, B,L,D)
Day 13 Ascent of Mount Baker 4843m
Mount Baker is the third highest peak in the Rwenzori range. The route provides a great day out with some good scrambling with magnificent views out across the Congo Basin and back towards the glaciers of Mount Stanley. Overnight Kitandara Hut. (R/C, B,L,D)

Day 14 Trek to Yeoman Hut 3450m
Leaving this beautiful lake area with it giant lobelia we climb steeply up to the Freshfield Pass and then descend to the head of the Mobuku Valley. After crossing a secondary ridge we descend further to reach the Bujongolo and Kabamba caves, this was he base used by the Duke of Abruzzi’s 1906 expedition, which made first ascents of the main summits of the Rwenzoris. Finally we pass the lovely Kabamba falls to reach the new Yeoman Hut. Decent 950m, time 5-7 hours (R/C, B,L,D)

Day 15 Trek to Ibanda – Drive to Queen Elizabeth Reserve
A difficult walking day over slippery boulders, tree roots and knee deep mud, guaranteed to test the most patient of people’s smiles! After about five hours we arrive back at the Nyabitaba Hut. Its then much easier underfoot for the final walk to the roadhead at Ibanda. We say goodbye to our porters and local Bakonjo staff and board our transport for the short drive to the Queen Elizabeth Reserve. 9 hrs walking / 1 hour drive. (L,B,L,D)

Day 16 Game drive in Queen Elizabeth National Park Reserve
The Queen Elizabeth Reserve straddles the equator and is regarded as Uganda’s best. Lush savannah grasses, rainforest and freshwater lakes provide all the ingredients that a wildlife park needs to support big game. You will have the chance to see hippo, warthogs, buffalo, waterbuck, elephant, leopards, lions and many species of exotic birds. Overnight in the Mweya Safari lodge. (L,B,L,D)

Day 17 Drive to Entebbe
After breakfast we set off back to Kampala, crossing the Equator, to arrive in Entebbe for a celebratory meal (H,B,L)

Day 17 Return International flights

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE/FITNESS
You will need a good level of fitness as this is quite a tough trek on a mixture of terrain, some of which can be quite tiring as there is a need to climb over obstacles such as fallen trees, crossing slippery ground, muddy ground, boulders and ascending glaciated terrain etc. Previous experience of backpacking will help or please make sure you attend one of our specialised preparation weekends in the Lake District. Time is given to train you in the use of ice axe and crampons.

SERVICES INCLUDED
National Park & Permit fees (approx£500), British Leader and local guide & porters, Flights and airport transfers (for flight inclusive package), land transport, hotel accommodation and all meals, on trek fully inclusive of Refuges/Camp all meals and group equipment.

SERVICES NOT INCLUDED
Travel insurances (essential)

A TYPICAL DAY
We generally start quite early (6.30am) with a pre breakfast cup of tea/coffee brought to your hut/tent, followed by breakfast. We would tend to reach our overnight camp/hut by dusk. Whilst trekking you will be able to walk at your own pace in small groups with our leaders and local staff walking between you, overall informal but gathering together at various points. We usually take packed lunches during the day. Dinner, a three course meal, is served at around 7-8pm and folk are usually in their sleeping bags by 10.00pm ready to recharge for the next day.

ACCOMMODATION
During this trip we use a wide variety of accommodation from a quality hotel in Entebbe (twin sharing basis, singles extra if available), to basic Huts and Camping for the rest. If you are traveling by yourself you will be paired with another individual of the same sex.

FOOD
A wide variety of food is available in the cities. On trek it is a mixture of local and European-style foods purchased in Country and cooked by our own local cook.

BAGGAGE
For your own comfort, travel light. Normally airlines restrict baggage to around 20kg and on trek 15kg, but you will be wearing boots and one set of trekking clothes. Some items can be left at the hotel for your return. A suitable kit bag is provided but all items should also be packed in waterproof/plastic bags. A 35litre sac is needed as a day sac.

WHAT TO CARRY
This trek is fully supported by a team of porters. You will only need to carry a light daypack. A 35L rucksack is a useful size to comfortably fit in essential items such as two one litre water bottles, camera, sun cream, wet-weather gear, extra layers, gloves, hat and at the high
camps/huts a down jacket etc. A more detailed kit list will be provided with your booking confirmation.

**EQUIPMENT**
A detailed equipment list is provided on booking but you will need a 4 season sleeping bag (-10°C), thermarest, mountaineering boot that will take a crampon, crampons, ice axe, helmet, mountaineering harness, good waterproofs, good fitting wellington boots with a good grip sole and a down jacket. Specialist items can be hired or purchased with 20% discount from our shop.

**HEALTH**
We recommend the following vaccinations: Polio, Tetanus, Typhoid, Hepatitis A, Malaria. Please also consult your GP or a vaccine specialist for professional advice or visit the website www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk. Non spring bottled water should never be drunk without first sterilizing with iodine, chlorine tablets or by boiling. Our leaders hold first aid certificates and carry a first aid kit for medical emergencies. However you should bring your own supplies of plasters, blister prevention pads (compeed), paracetamol etc. and any medication you are taking.

**INSURANCE**
Insurance which covers mountain rescue, helicopter evacuation and medical expenses is essential. This is available through Ault Insurance (0121 569 8772) or the BMC. We will require a copy of your insurance prior to departure.

**ALTITUDE**
If this is your first trip to altitude you may have concerns about the effects of altitude. Don’t worry, our itineraries allow sufficient time to acclimatize. At worst you may experience a headache or a little breathlessness, the best way to avoid such symptoms is to do everything slowly, walk at a gentle steady pace and drink plenty of fluid. Should you be the exception, we can allow you to stay an extra night at a lower level and follow with one of our local guides.

**USEFUL TIPS**
Just in case your main luggage goes missing en route, it is a good idea to wear your boots on the plane. Most other things can be replaced but comfortable, well worn-in boots are more difficult to replace.

**VISAS AND PERMITS**
UK citizens and most EU nationals can purchase Visas on arrival in Entebbe. All other countries should check with their local embassy. Passports must be valid for at least six months after the end date of the trip.

**LOCAL COSTS**
Most meals are inclusive, please see the key above. Individuals are responsible for drinks throughout and hotel meals which gives the flexibility to choose where you eat. In total you should not spend more than £150.

**CURRENCY**
The local currency is Ugandan Shillings, UK Sterling, Euros and US Dollars can easily be changed on arrival in Entebbe. We recommend that you carry cash rather than travelers cheques as you will exchange the majority of this on the day of arrival. Credit cards can be used for the purchase of souvenirs.

**TIPPING**
Tipping is generally expected and part of everyday life. We generally tip our own local staff as a whole and would recommend around £60 per person for this trip in Ugandan shillings to be divided at the advice of our leader/guide.

**BOOKS & MAPS**
Available from Adventure Peaks/Walks
Lonely Planet – Uganda
Uganda ñ The Bradt Travel Guide
Map 1:50,000: Ruwenzori (map & guide) Andrew Wielochowski

**EXTENSIONS**
Gorilla Safari (plus 4 days) £395

You can round off your trek with a safari to search out the rare and elusive silverback gorilla.