



Ride to the Source of the Nile, Uganda.

7 or 9 days; multiple options to stay on.

Introduction

The story of the search for the source of the Nile is one of the real classics from the era of the great explorers; it ranks alongside the search for the Northwest Passage, and the search for the Oregon Trail. The first person to circumnavigate Lake Victoria, and so stumble across the only exit the lake has, was John Speke, a contemporary of David Livingstone. It is an awesome feeling to stand at the source of the world's longest river, to be able to do so as part of a riding holiday makes it even more special.

The thing to emphasize about this ride is that it's short and so invites you to combine it with another of Uganda's gems such as the Ziwa rhino ranch; magnificent Murchison Falls National Park; or the simply astonishing encounter with the Mountain Gorillas. If time is of the essence, this ride could tick a lot of boxes.

The horses

The selection of horses includes thoroughbreds, some Irish Sports and saddle-bred; for smaller riders there are a couple of sound Somali and Ethiopian ponies that originate from the Horn of Africa. The thing to emphasize is that they are all locally bred and trained so they're used to the semi-tropical environment and fit for their work. Some of these horses make trips to neighbouring Kenya for events and competitions. They are all well-schooled by the owners and well-mannered.

They range in size from 14 hh to 17 hh – something for everyone!

The Owners

The farm is owned by TJ Lonsdale (Ozzie) and Natalie McComb (Kiwi) who have owned this farm since 2007. Down to earth, practical people who know their horses well and the local terrain even better. They are excellent guides and excellent company in the field.

Tack

Saddles are English GP and endurance saddles.

Most horses are ridden in a snaffle; and you do see a few Pelhams. These horses are accustomed to traditional English style loose contact and go best with light use of hand and leg, and respond well to the rider's weight and shift of balance.

The ride is mainly over dirt farm tracks and through villages, tea plantations and rainforests that do not have tarmac roads. The horses are shod, but this is

the kind of surface that you could ride over bare-foot. The trails encourage a flowing pace. It is important that riders have experience of riding outside a ménage in open country.

Farm location

The farm is less than 50 Km north of the Equator. The gateway to Uganda is Entebbe airport, which is 70 Km south of the capital Kampala. Kampala, like Rome, is built on 7 hills; and there the similarity ends! The drive from the international airport handrails Lake Victoria and takes about 3 hours to

reach the town of Jinja where the farm is.



This part of Uganda is remarkably fertile and is the heart of tea, coffee and vegetable growing enterprises. The early settlers to this area claimed

that if you leave a spade in the ground overnight it would sprout roots and begin to grow. It is certainly lush, verdant country, with a gorgeous climate.

You will ride through many small villages and hamlets during the week. We are invariably met by a village committee consisting entirely of under tens! They come flying out to bid "Good morning Sir" to the mounted Wa-zungus: Swahili word meaning Wa = tribe and zungu = white. We are from the white tribe! Absolutely charming and there's no hint of derogatory reference, it's simply that we are different from the usual people they encounter.

The Riding Itinerary

The ride is designed to be a week long, but you can end on the morning of day 7 avoid the adventure sports day.

Day 1. Saturday.

Depart London and fly to Entebbe on the shore of Lake Victoria. The flights are often overnight.

Day 2. Sunday.

Reaching the farm & trial ride

We will meet you at the airport and drive you to the farm. The traffic around Kampala can be heavy, but Sunday is the best day to make this journey. Allow 3-and-a-bit hours. Pass through Jinja and 20 minutes away is Holland Park which is a lovely hotel overlooking the Nile! You couldn't ask for more; lush gardens with bougainvillea that seem to flower 11 months of the year and there's even a spa if you fancy a work-over before the ride. In the afternoon we'll head to the stable for a trial ride (2 hrs) to make sure everyone is settled on their horse.

Dinner and overnight at Holland Park.

Saddle time: 2 hrs



Day 3. Monday

Lake Victoria peninsular ride

Today's the day! At 8.30 a.m. we take the short drive to the starting point of the ride, and meet the horses which have been boxed over. The trail leads on to a peninsular that protrudes into Lake Victoria. The trail undulates and from the top of each rise you have fantastic views across the lake. Picnic lunch and ride back through sugar plantations and many tiny villages. The trails are firm dirt, ideal for a bit of a canter.

Dinner and overnight at Holland Park.

Saddle time: 4 ½ hrs

Day 4. Tuesday

Into the rainforest.

This morning we ride south into the lush forested area. The first part of the trail is along grassy tracks through sugar plantations which grow to 3m and taller – an avenue of sugar! We ride through several tiny villages with the familiar calls of "Wa-zungu!!"

echoing around the huts and enter the forest of Mbira. The climate makes the trees grow enthusiastically and they form a glorious canopy. Mangabey monkeys are resident here and we should be lucky enough to see some. The main tree of interest here (to settlers) was the wild rubber tree. Early settlers tried to turn it into a viable rubber industry mirroring what had happened in Malaysia, but African rubber trees are not keen to yield their sap, and the idea ended in failure. Which is good news for the forest which has survived intact, rather than being cleared for rubber plantations. What we have today is an original primary rainforest.

We reach the charming Mabira Rainforest Lodge in time for a late lunch. The afternoon is free to enjoy the pool and join a guided rainforest walk.

Dinner and overnight at Mabira Rainforest Lodge.

Saddle time: 4 hrs



Grey-cheeked mangabey monkeys

Day 5. Wednesday

Exploring the rainforest.

Head off into the rainforest to explore this unique environment. We'll take a packed lunch with us (each person has twin saddle bags). The guide will point out some of the colourful but elusive birds as well as the mangabeys and other primates. Return to the lodge in mid-afternoon and enjoy the rest of the day around the pool or join a guided walk into the forest.

Dinner and overnight at Mabira Rainforest Lodge.

Saddle time: 4 hrs

Day 6. Thursday

Ride to the Nile.

This morning we swap onto fresh horses before setting off on today's trail which leads through sugar and tea plantations, undulating over the fertile ground. At the top of each little rise you're rewarded with stunning views looking west over the Nile. The destination we're heading for is The Haven, a small family run hotel that is built on a low bluff overlooking the River Nile: stunning views of the waterfall and first major rapid on this stretch of the Nile. We will arrive in time for a cool drink in the "bar with a view" and a late lunch.

Dinner and overnight at The Haven.

Saddle time: 4 hrs

Day 7. Friday

Rafting; adventure sports or rest day.

This stretch of the Nile is world-famous for its whitewater rafting: not only are the rapids large and exciting, but the water is warm! Perfect! The put-in is directly below the Haven, so if whitewater isn't your thing, you can still watch the rafts set off and tackle the first rapid. In the afternoon we saddle up and ride down to one of the quiet bays formed by the river which has a sandy bottom allowing the horses easy access and you can swim with your horse.

The whitewater rafting is just one of the activities available: others are quad biking, bungee jumping where they weigh you and ask if you'd like to be dipped in the Nile, or prefer a dry jump some people like this sort of thing! There's also a kayak school, mountain biking and jet boat rides. None of these activities are included as part of the trip, but there is time available for you to choose one if you wish.

Dinner and overnight at The Haven.

Saddle/swim time: 2 hrs



Just above Rapid 1.

Day 8. Saturday

To Wildwaters Lodge.

Today we go with the flow and ride along the east bank of the Nile through tiny villages, plantations and small foresty areas. The Nile provides some great views of the rapids as we follow the current downstream. The river is wide here (between 100 and 400 metres wide) and small islets begin to appear here and there. We are aiming for one of the larger islands, but still small enough to walk around in 10 minutes, and the amazing Wildwaters Lodge <http://www.ventureco-worldwide.com/africa/uganda/wildwaters-lodge/> This is where we say goodbye to the horses and cross by boat to the island – and what a stunning place to end the ride.

Dinner and overnight at Wildwaters.

Saddle time: 4 hrs



Day 9. Sunday

Onward travel.

Today the group divides and some may head home, in which case you'd set off from Wildwaters at 08:30 to reach Entebbe airport for most international departures. Alternatively you can spend an additional day or 2 at Wildwaters.

A third option would be to add a wildlife safari and the options are numerous. Everything we do at Venture Co is personalised and we are only too pleased to tailor a few days extra for you. Popular options in the past have been things like:

One day to visit the shoebills:

<http://www.ventureco-worldwide.com/africa/uganda/mabamba-swamp/>

One or two day/s to visit the chimps at N'gamba

Island: <http://www.ventureco-worldwide.com/africa/uganda/ngamba-island-camp/>

Four days to visit the mountain gorillas:

<http://www.ventureco-worldwide.com/africa/uganda/fly-in-gorilla-trekking-in-uganda/>

We know Uganda really well and have visited the country many times. Anything is possible, so do please send your request and we can make a plan to fit. As an illustration, here's how a gorilla visit would work:

Day 10. Monday

Fly west to the Impenetrable Forest.

We will drive you back to the airport to catch the morning flight to Kihhi which is in the west of Uganda just before the land rises to form the Virunga National Park and Ruwenzori Mountains (The Mountains of the Moon). The car and driver will be waiting for you to take you to the lodge. Check in and take lunch. In the afternoon you can engage a guide from the lodge to do a forest walk through the surrounding Virungas, or simply relax in the tropical gardens that surround the property (amazing sunbirds, which are the African equivalent of hummingbirds).

Day 11. Tuesday

Trek to visit the gorillas.

Drive through the foothills to reach the park headquarters. Here you meet the park rangers and will be briefed on gorilla etiquette! Sounds strange but there is a certain way to behave when you encounter these amazing creatures; after all there will be nothing between you these staggeringly powerful animals apart for a half-a-dozen metres of fresh mountain air! The walk in varies between 30 mins and several hours, depending on where a particular family is located that morning. There are four gorilla families that are habituated in Bwindi National Park and each is visited on a rotating basis

to avoid encroaching on the gorilla's private time. You spend a max of an hour with the family and then trek back to HQ and rendez vous with the car & driver.

Return to the lodge in the afternoon. Free time.

Day 12. Wednesday

Return to Entebbe.

Drive back to Kihhi and fly to Entebbe. Depending which airline you are travelling with, the times may be such that you can fly straight home; otherwise you may require an additional night in Entebbe.



Suggested flight schedule

We tend to use either Kenyan Airways or Emirates Airlines. The decision is influenced by what you decide to do after the ride. There are no direct flights to Entebbe and all airlines will touch down at an intermediary city (with plan change). We can usually arrange departures from your local airport.

There are also a number of European airlines who serve this route but their fares tend to be higher and the total travelling time can be longer. This is a daily service. All flights booked through Venture Co are financially protected via Venture Co's ATOL licence number 5306.

Included in the price

- ✓ Meals: full board from lunch on day 2 to breakfast on day 7 (short ride) or day 9 for the full itinerary.
- ✓ The ride as detailed with horse, tack and groom.
- ✓ Services of ride leader who is English-speaking.
- ✓ Airport transfers in Uganda
- ✓ Accommodation as detailed.

Not included

- International flights
- Visa for Uganda
- Personal travel insurance
- Alcoholic drinks and soft drinks
- Tips
- [There is no local payment]

In summary

You can **shorten the ride to 7 days** and depart on the Friday morning of Day 7; which would mean arriving in London on Saturday morning. This would give 5 day's riding.

The 9 day itinerary runs from to the 2nd Sunday; 6 days riding; accommodation in private lodges and hotels.

Price

Please see website for up to date prices.

Rider's weight

85 kg max. Riders over 85 Kg can be accommodated, please contact us.

Ride safely

You must wear a riding hat and appropriate foot wear. Gloves and half-chaps are recommended, but not everyone likes to wear them in warm climates. The rule is to be comfortable and you'll ride better.

Travel insurance

Please speak to Campbell Irvine Direct: http://www.campbellirvinedirect.com/ventureco_home.htm

At a glance

▼

The grade of the ride: [8/10]

novice intermediate advanced

▼

Accommodation grading: [9/10]

camping..lodges & hotels..glamping...loads of character

▼

Rider fitness required: [8/10]

▼

Cultural immersion: [8/10]

just like home surprises lots new completely different

More about "At a glance"

We grade this ride high in each category: it is a full immersion riding experience and you know from day one that you are not in England anymore! The horses, terrain, meals, language, customs, manners and everything else, are all different!

Ride rating: we rate this riding experience 8 out of 10 because the horses are well-mannered but forward-going. They are very fit and love "making progress".

The tack is predominately English (with some variations) so you need to be well-seated, compared for example, to Western tack which is more forgiving. Some canters are 8 to 10 mins long and half-a-dozen horses cantering together is exhilarating for competent riders, but would be scary for a novice. The trails are dusty and temps can top 30°C and higher so you will get sweaty and grimy – in the nicest possible way! Having said all that, it is also the most authentic, exhilarating and all-absorbing ride you could wish for.

Accommodation: we grade this at 9 out of 10 because the location of just about every lodge is fantastic. African hospitality is legendary and a happy smiling face is the natural way Ugandan people are: genuinely welcoming. Several of the lodges build a log fire in the evening and what better way to end the day than sipping a sundowner with your toes toasty warm?

Rider fitness: you do need to be in shape; “riding fit” is the label we attach to this ride. Many of the rides we do in other parts of the world allow you to arrive and get in shape during the ride; that is not really the case here, your riding muscles need to be prepared for what’s coming! You don’t need to be an athlete, but you will enjoy it much more if you ride regularly for a couple of weeks before the ride. We do use a support vehicles which carries your bags from lodge

to lodge, and this means that if you wanted to sit out an day, one of the grooms could lead your horse, and you could ride in the jeep (it hasn’t happened yet, but the option exists!).



Cruising through a tea plantation

Cultural Immersion: Venture Co prides itself on providing riding opportunities that take you directly into contact with the indigenous community. The guides, grooms, lodge staff, chef and his team and even the drivers will all be eager to talk to you and show you their “normal”; their life and their world. They are proud of their heritage and flattered that you are travelling half way around the globe to learn all about it. This, surely, is the essence of travelling. The real pleasure for any horseman is to compare how we do things to how they do things. It’s not the devil in the detail; it’s the delight in the detail that makes this ride so good.

The Field Manual.

A detailed guide will be mailed to each rider with your booking confirmation. This booklet is packed full of relevant, up-to-date information including clothing lists, vaccination advice, money matters, suggestions about the level of fitness and emergency procedures.

What’s the weather going to be like?

Uganda is a landlocked country about the same size as the UK. The Equator runs through the southern part of the country and most of Uganda is a plateau at approx 1,000 m above sea level. The western border of the country is formed by mountain ranges, including the Virungas (which are extinct volcanoes) and the Ruwenzori Mountains which reach 14,000 feet and are permanently snow-capped (also known as the Mountains of the Moon). The climate is fundamentally Equatorial.

Amman Climate Chart (Monthly Averages)												
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
High Temperature (C)	28	28	27	26	25	25	25	25	27	27	27	27
Low Temperature (C)	18	18	18	18	17	17	17	16	17	17	17	17
Precipitation (mm)	46	61	131	175	147	74	46	86	91	97	122	99

Payment Schedule.

If you decide to join this ride a deposit of £300 is due; the Booking Form is available on our website in the footer of each page. Email it back to us and the deposit can be paid by bank-to-bank transfer (free), cheque (free) or via payment card (Fee: 1.5% for credit cards and 1% for debit cards). Eight weeks before you set off the balance is due to be paid to Venture Co.

Please note that the best airfares are *instant purchase* tickets, which are non-changeable and non-refundable. Once you are sure about your travel plans (do you wish to stay on in Africa after the ride or not?) you are best advised to secure your flights at the earliest opportunity. Late bookings may require a higher airfare, depending on availability. Call us for guidance.

Equipment Brief:

A detailed clothing and equipment list will be provided in the Field Manual but to give you an indication, here is a summary:

- Baggage - a holdall (55 to 75 litre capacity) suitable to be packed in a truck each day is ideal. Helle Hanson, North Face etc all make them.
- Clothing – shirts made from natural fibres; and a wicking base layer.
- Footwear – a Jodhpur boot and short chaps. Sandals for evenings.
 - Sleeping Bag – is not required.
- General e.g. torch, water-bottle, penknife, toiletries, sunscreens and insect repellent.
 - Camera - with spare batteries.

Health Advice.

For detailed information and advice see <http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk> and click on their “travel clinics” option. Vaccination requirements change periodically so we advise that you check with your nearest specialist travel clinic as soon as possible. In the South West we are fortunate to have “Travel Health Consultancy” in Exeter: www.travelhealthconsultancy.co.uk 01392 430 590.

Possible changes

Although it is our intention to operate the itinerary as printed above, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of alterations to flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors. As a consequence, the itinerary and overnight stops may vary from those outlined.

HAVE A GREAT RIDE!

VentureCo Worldwide
6 Okehampton Business Centre, Higher Stockley Mead, Okehampton, Devon EX20 1FJ
01837 55 907

mark@ventureco-worldwide.com

www.ventureco-worldwide.com



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