

Malawi & Southern Tanzania

The Nyika & Kipengere Plateaux

A Greentours Itinerary

Day 1 London to Dar-es-Salaam

We depart Heathrow in the evening...

Day 2 Flight to Iringa then Kisolanza

Even before we've left the runway at Iringa we might have noticed our first orchid, tall white orchid *Satyrium trinerved*, blooming in the grass. We'll make the short journey to Kisolanza and settle into the cottages there. Our next orchid will be *Disperis reichenbachiana*, growing in leaf litter around the cottages. We'll walk down to the reservoir where if lucky we might see Cape Clawless Otter as well as birds such as Lesser Jacana and Red-knobbed Coot. There's some nice flowers too with *Gladilous dalenii* and a *Dissotis orchid*. Klaas's uckoo, Variable Sunbird, and Pintailed Whydah are to be seen around the garden.

Day 3 To Igumbilo Farm via Sao Hill and Kibena Marsh

After a platter of fresh fruit and a fry-up we'll depart for Igumbilo Farm, nestled in the uplands of the south-western corner of Mpanga-Kipengere Game Reserve. En route we'll stop at Sao Hill Marsh where we'll soon notch up some new orchids including *Habenaria gonatosiphon*, *Satyrium buchananni*, *Satyrium elongatum*, *Platycoryne pervellei* and *Liparis nervosa*. Igumbilo Farm is remote and beautiful, set in four thousand acres of grassland at 2500-2800m, bordering the Mpanga-Kipengere Game Reserve. Our group last year were the first 'tourists' to stay at the farm, home to the welcoming Joyce and David.

Day 4 -6 Exploring Kipengere Plateau: Igumbilo Farm bordering Mpanga-Kipengere Game Reserve

Beautiful Scarlet-tufted Sunbirds feed in flowering *Protea welwitschii* below a ridge where we'll encounter some really lovely plants. A favourite will no doubt be the blue *Moraea callista* and there is a beautiful display of yellow *Moraea tanzanica*. Hillsides are covered in white and frilly *Dianthus zeyheri* subsp. *zeyheri*, and amongst this are other gems such as *Disa satyriopsis*, *Disa saxicola*, *Habenaria lithophila* and *Crassula vaginata* x *alba*. Damp patches are full of *Disa erubescens* var. *erubescens*, *Xyris obscura*., *Cyanotis* sp., *Emilia tenera* and the white stars of *Wurmbea tenuis*.

Majestic Black-chested Snake Eagles soar overhead and White-napped Ravens are always on the look-out for someone to hassle. From time to time we'll come across Bush Duikers and Steinbuck. The grasslands are full of orchids. Hundreds upon hundreds of them making an incredible floral display. There is quite a diversity too with *Satyrium sceptrum*, *Satyrium neglectum*, *Habenaria macrura*, *Habenaria cornuta*, *Habenaria praestans* and *Disa satyriopsis*. In wetlands we'll find bright pink *Satyrium crassicaule*, flowering amid the spectacular giant *Lobelia mildbraedii*, and by a stream we'll find *Satyrium breve*, *Wahlenbergia huttonii*, and a lovely *Kniphophia*. There's *Habenaria njamnjamica*, *Satyrium sphaeranthum*, *Satyrium rynchantoides* and compact *Satyrium microcorys*

The lovely call of Southern Mountain Greenbul welcomes us to a small patch of forest dominated by *Erica aborea* where we'll see *Impatiens leedalii*, *Scadoxus multiflorus* and *Viola abyssinica*. Nearby is a stunning meadow full of orchids as well as *Inula stolzii*, *Alepidea peduncularis* and *Delphinium leyroi*. Goetze's Whistling Chameleon inhabits the rocks in grassland where we'll find *Lotus discolour* and the yellow spires of *Bulbine abyssinica*. At night by the farm we'll search for frogs such as the delicately marked endemic *Ptychadena udzungwensis*.

Day 7 to Matema Beach via Kitulo Plateau

Our *Satyrium* festival continues in a damp roadside slough where we'll see *Satyrium trinerve*, *Satyrium buchananii*, *Satyrium crassicaule*, and *Disa stolzii* as well as *Habenarias* and the unusual climber *Ceropegia papillata* with its strange birthwortlike flowers. We'll visit a dairy farm on the edge of the Kitulo National Park and walk the meadows where *Geranium incanum* is dominant with frequent *Clematopsis uhehensis*, *Delphinium leyroi*, *Cephalaria pungens* and orchids such as *Disa perplexa*, *Habenaria petitiana* and an assortment of *Satyrium* species.

Continuing, the views down towards the lake and up to the Livingstone Mountains are spectacular. On our final approach to the lake we'll pass through rice paddies where Madagascar Bee-eaters sit upon the power lines along the roadside and we'll get close views of the forests and waterfalls on the steep mountain slopes that form a stunning backdrop to Matema. We'll arrive in time for a sundowner overlooking the sandy beach of Matema where things will feel somewhat warmer than up in the mountains! Cape Serotine and Little Free-tailed Bat hawk back and forth along the lake shore.

Day 8 Matema Beach

A chance for some lake-side relaxation with a nice beach, swimming in the lake, or just chilling out. Of course there's much wildlife to be seen too. Blue Pansies visit the creeping sesamum *Pedalioidis macrocarpus* and beach morning glory *Ipomoea pes-caprae* that populate a beach backed by mature Sausage Trees *Kigelia africana* and Natal Mahogany *Trichilia emetica*, these heavily laden with

Blackheaded Weavers nests. The rice fields have Wire-tailed Swallow, Little Bee-eater, White-browed Coucal, Malachite Kingfisher, Open-billed Storks and White-faced Whistling Duck.

Day 9 Over the border to Malawi. Afternoon in Nature Reserve around Lukwe Ecocamp, Livingstonia

This morning we'll cross the border into Malawi and head for Livingstonia, and thence the Lukwe Eco-camp. Lukwe is set in regenerated Miombo woodland which the Swiss owner bought thirty years ago to protect what is now proposed as a Forest Reserve from degradation. As you might expect the camp is immaculate, everything beautifully and thoughtfully built from wood, with a view that is hard to beat! The cabins are built on stilts on the edge of the rift, as well as the restaurant – the perfect place for an afternoon beer! All fresh produce is organically produced here using permaculture techniques. In the afternoon we'll walk through the woodland, stopping at a viewpoint to see Manchewe Falls. A fine yellow *Begonia* is in bloom and we'll hope to see the stunning blue and black butterfly *Euxanthe wakefieldii*. We'll take a look at the gardens where the orchid *Cynorkis kirkii* grows along the paths. The garden teems with life in a mosaic of ponds and terraced growing areas. Cryptic mantids perch on marigolds, frogs and toads lurk around the pond edges and at dusk we might see flocks of Eurasian Hobbies feeding on dragonflies and termites above us.

Day 10 to Chelinda on Nyika Plateau via Rumphu

Today we'll ascend the rift valley escarpment into Miombo woodland characterised by *Brachystegia spp.*, *Albizias*, *Acacia albidea* and *Pterocarpus angolensis*, flashes of colour from Red and Yellow Bishops marking our progress. We'll stop for a coffee break in the small but lively town of Rumphu, famous for its tobacco growing communities and friendly people, before heading towards the park gate at Thazima.

As we drive into the park we'll find wonderful groups of orchids tempting us to stop along the road. There's *Habaneria retinervis* and swarms of *Habenaria goetzeana* and *Playcoryne ambigua*. Above Amur Falcons and White-headed Saw-wings forage on the wing. Woodland gives way to open scrub and flat-topped *Acacia abyssinica* as we approach the plateau itself. Rocky outcrop have the large purpleblue bells of elegant *Streptocarpus wittei* and many other interesting species such as *Cyanotis longicauda*, *Spermacoce dibrabiata*, and endemic *Oxalis chapmaniae*. As we near Chelinda we'll start to see groups of Zebra, Roan Antelope and Southern Reedbuck. The birding is good too with Red-winged Francolin subspecies *nykae*, Hildebrandt's Francolin, Crowned Hornbill, Schalow's Turaco and Red-collared Widowbird all likely along the entrance road. We'll receive a fine welcome at the lodge and have the chance to settle into our glorious log cabins overlooking a scene of grazing ungulates in rolling grassland, before enjoying dinner.

Day 11 - 13

Chelinda and the Nyika Plateau

We might awake to find Bushbuck around our cabins or perhaps a Warthog or two trotting by. After the lodge's splendid breakfasts each day we'll head out and spend the day exploring the varied habitats that the plateau has to offer, and this with barely another person in sight.

We'll have close encounters with the very striking Roan Antelope on occasion and will also find small herds of the impressive Eland. The huge Denham's bustard patrols meadow patches dominated by *Satyrium* and *Disa* orchids. We might disturb a family or two of Bush Pigs relaxing in a dambo (damp area) as we photograph the abundant orchid species which include *Satyrium buchannanii*, *Satyrium princeae*, *Habenaria praetans*, *Neobulusia stolzii* var *stolzii* and *Eulophia ovalis* var. *bainesii*. Other species of interest are frequent *Impatiens assurgens*, *Eucomis autumnalis* and *Polygala nyikense*. The dainty irid *Lapeirousia setifolia* is a prize find. Abdim's Storks glide on the thermals above meadows rich in flowers such as *Vernonia nyasae*, *Cephalaria pungens*, *Gerbera ambigua*, *Disa stolzii*, *Alpertia peduncularis*, *Kniphofia grantii*, *Erica sylvatica*, *Buchnera quadrifolia* and the lovely *Moraea schimperi*.

We'll explore the shaded, peaceful world under the canopy of some montane forest patches, quite a contrast to the large open vistas of the highland plains. The variety of trees is impressive and includes *Podocarpus milanjanus*, *Olea welwitschii*, *Cussonia spicata*, *Polyscias fulva* and the moist conditions favour epiphytes such as the African violet *Streptocarpus solanthus* and the orchids *Mystacidium tanganykas* and *Disperis reichenbachiana*. There are any number of special birds in these forest patches notably Fullebourn's Boubou, Evergreen Forest Warbler, White-stared Robin, Moustached Tinkerbird, Bar-throated Apalis, Malawi Batis, White-tailed Crested Flycatcher and Bar-tailed Trogon. Butterflies might include the Gaudy Commodore, Variable Diadem and the swallowtail *Papilo phorcas*.

At night the plateau is a very different place and animals that one cannot realistically see in the daytime come out to play. We may well see Spotted Hyena in the daytime but are much more certain to do so on one or two short night drives we'll do whilst at Chelinda. Servals are often encountered, these lovely cats are quite common here, and we will likely see Side-striped Jackal, Scrub Hare, Spotted Eagle Owls and Rwenzori Nightjar.

Day 14 Return to Lukwe Ecocamp, Livingstonia

We'll stop off in Livingstonia on the way back to Lukwe Ecocamp and visit the small museum there before having the chance to explore once again the Miombo woodlands around Lukwe. We'll take a walk down to a viewpoint passing some very tall and vivid orange *Platycoryne pervellei*. Birds include Common Waxbill and

Bronze Mannikin and with luck we'll encounter one of the troupes of Blue Monkeys that now live here as well as the lovely Sun Squirrels that scurry hither and thither along the vines and lianas.

Day 15 to Mbeya and Utengule Coffee Lodge/nature reserve

Begonia meyeri-johannis clings to damp rocks by the roadside along with *Habenarias* and other lovely flowers as we descend through mature Miombo woodland to the main road and the journey to Utengule Lodge. There we'll arrive in time to enjoy some birding in the scenic gardens, or from the luxury of our balconies, before dinner....

Day 16 Utengule and fly to Dar to connect with international departure

Common birds around the garden and in nearby woodland are Groundscraper Thrush, White-browed Robin Chat, Variable and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, Redheaded Weaver, Paradise Flycatcher and Red-faced Crombec. Butterflies include *Protogoniomorpha parhassus*, *Bibliya ilithya* and *Junonia natalica*.

After lunch its just a half hour journey to the airport where we'll board our flight back to the bright lights of Dar! There its just a five minute drive to the hotel where we'll have the chance to freshen up, repack and enjoy a slap-up dinner before our night time departure.

Day 17 Arrive UK/Europe

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