

10 DAYS MARGHERITA PEAK 5,109 METRES

Day 1.

The trek starts at Trekkers Hostel in Kyanjiki 12 kilometers from Kasese past Kilembe. Best to start by 8.30am but can leave as late as 10am. Meet your guides and briefing. You walk 2.2km to the UWA rangers post at 1,727metres.

Here the rangers brief you on the day's activities and rules of the National Park.

Today's walk **8.6 km expected time 5 to 7 hours Start height is 1,667 metres climbing to 3,171 metres**

The first two kilometers climbs steadily through pristine montane forest, with tall trees thick undergrowth and a multitude of different species of birds and primates. Then a fairly strenuous climb up a main ridge with few rocks and firm footing except immediately after a heavy downpour climbing to your first night at Samalira Camp. As you leave the rangers post you walk along a path through tall grassland and ferns which gives way to magnificent pristine forests. As this is a new route the forests are untouched and carry a wide variety of trees and plants. Many species of birds can be heard and seen in this rich environment. The first few kilometers climb steadily crossing several small streams and rivers then we start climbing the ridge. As we climb the trees become taller and more straight and it is common to see and hear many types of primates, on the left you may hear troupes of chimpanzee echoing around the valleys. Particularly around our lunch spot at 2,570m it is possible to see troupes of 20 or more black and white Colobus monkeys or Blue monkeys as they dash through the trees. It is also common to see Red tailed monkeys in this area, as natural fruits are many.

After lunch we continue to climb steadily passing a rock shelter (2,785m) previously used by poachers to hunt primates and dika (small antelope) After the rock shelter the climb enters the bamboo zone and becomes steeper. As we near the top we break out of the bamboo to fantastic views of the valleys and hills below looking across to Lake George and Queen Elisabeth National Park in the distance. The equator lies just north of Lake George. Samalira Camp is at 3,147 metres, meaning views or lookout and offers great views of the surrounding landscape and Kasese town. (Mobile network available at this camp) **Sleep at Samalira Camp (FB)**

Day 2.

6.9 kilometres 4 to 5 hours. After a hearty breakfast we commence walking at 8.15 and initially climb steadily then cross a small stream and the climb become steep for about 200 metres up a narrow moss covered ridge. The thick moss covering the ground and rocks under the giant heather trees is spectacular and we ask you to help preserve this pristine environment by keeping to the pathway. The views give us the impression that we could fly as we look across the many ridges and valleys far below. You can see Kilembe village deep in the valley and across Lake George. After a relatively short climb the trail becomes less steep as we pass over Chavumba (meaning heaven) at 3,316m then cross a small flat valley to climb up a steady ridge through moss covered trees and misty forests to the top of the ridge at 3,515 metres. Here we descend steadily for about one kilometre before descending a steep drop of 200 metres into the Nyamwamba valley and a well earned lunch break at Polies Rock Shelter 3,249 metres.

After lunch we climb steadily above the Nyamwamba River for 1.6km though old giant heathers covered in old man's beard moss to Kiharo Camp at 3,380 metres directly at the base of some good granite rock climbs of 20 to 40 metres, with towering peaks above. **Sleep at Kiharo Camp. (FB)**

Day 3.

6.8 kilometres 4 to 5 hours Start height is 3,380 metres climbing to 4,200 metres on the top of the confluence between the two valleys then dropping to Camp 3 at 4,030 metres. We start by ascending to pass through Bamwanjara Pass then descend to Kachope Lakes The top of the pass trail that offers spectacular scenery of the main peaks ahead particularly on a clear day. After an early breakfast we climb a short steep climb through the narrow valley with large moss covered rocks. This area is stunning as you weave through the narrow passes near the foot of towering peaks till you reach the wider upstream Nyamwamba River. From here you climb steadily along the valley floor with small bogs and many giant lobelias. Both sides of the valley are lined with sheer cliff faces as we near the confluence of the Nyamwamba and Namusangi valleys. Our third camp at 4,065 metres, is above Lake Kopello and has spectacular views looking down the valley of nine glacier lakes, the Namusangi valley. **Sleep at Camp 3 (FB)**

Day 4.

6 kilometres 5 to 6 hours. Start height is 4,030 metres climbing to 4,450 metres on the top of Bamwanjara Pass then dropping to Camp 3 at 4,006 metres. We start by ascending to pass through Bamwanjara Pass then descend to Kachope Lakes The top of the pass trail that offers spectacular scenery of the main peaks ahead particularly on a clear day. We start by descending to pass through Bamwanjara Pass to Kachope Lakes a trail that offers spectacular scenery of the main peaks ahead where on a clear day you can see Mt Stanley, Mt Speke in the centre and Mt Baker. On the right one can see McConnell's Prong named after a British explorer and geologist. The view is awesome!! The Kachope Lakes area is one of the three known areas where on a misty day one may catch a rare glimpse of the Rwenzori leopard. Little research has been done on this animal yet it is more rare than the snow leopard, which has gained so much attention in recent years. After passing Kachope Lakes we climb to Camp four at 4,006 metres. **Sleep at Camp 4. (FB)**

Day 5.

4.1 kilometres 3 to 5 hours Start height is 4,006 metres climbing to 4,333 metres at Camp 5. Today is a relatively easy walk past Kitandara Lakes and climb through Sott Elliott pass to our camp situated right on the pass with fantastic views down the valley to Lake Bujuku and Mt Speke. To the south you see Kitandara Lakes and Wiesmanns Peak. The camp is at **4,335 metres** in a flat sheltered position covered with moss where you can get a good sleep before climbing any of the peaks on Mt Stanley including Margherita and Alexandra Peaks. **Sleep at Camp 5. (FB)**

Day 6.

3.5 kilometres 3 to 5 hours up to Magherita Peak and 2 to 3 hrs hours back down to Camp 5. Start height 4,333 metres climbing to 5,109 metres on top of Margherita Peak. It is best to start climbing no later than 3.30am. So is best to get up at 3am have a quick cup of coffee or tea and some light high energy snacks and set off. It takes about one and a half hours to reach Elena hut (4,540m) which we bypass on the way to the peaks. After Elena the climb is steep but firm underfoot as you are walking on hard rock. You reach the edge of the glacier at 4,765 metres where you will need to put on crampons and harnesses at set distances. Although there is few crevices he guide will lead the way as one never knows. The scenery is spectacular and as you start to reach the upper areas of the glacier and the saddle between the two peaks Alexandra and Margherita the sun will just be peeping over the horizon giving the chance of fantastic photographs of the two main peaks tip with sunlight. You then reach the upper weather station (4,830 metres) where you climb down to a ladder (4803 metres) onto the upper glacier leading to Magherita Peaks. First you climb up the glacier to a small saddle between Alexandra and Magherita Peaks at 5,025 metres where you scramble up a steep rocky climb to the main peak. At times the rocks are covered with snow and ice and may be slippery but mostly it is firm rock. The exhilaration of reaching the top is enormous as you look across Albert Peak to the DRC (Congo) then east across the spectra of the Rwenzori Mountains. After enjoying the scenery and signing the book, you descend using the same path down to Camp 5. **Sleep at Camp 5. (FB)**

Day 7.

4.1 kilometres 5 to 7 hours Start height 4,333 metres climbing down to Kachope Lakes at 3,985 metres then over Bamwanjara Pass (4,450 metres) then dropping to Camp 3 at 4,006 metres. After a bit of a sleep in after a heavy climb yesterday and a good breakfast you walk from Camp five down to Camp 4. **Sleep at Camp 4. (FB)**

Day 8.

6 km Start height 4,006 metres climbing up 450 metres over Bamwanjara Pass to Camp 3 at 4,030 metres This is an area where rock hyrax are many and you have good chances to see hyrax sitting at the entrance to their rock shelter. Their main predator is the Rwenzori Leopard *Panthera pardus ruwenzorii* which is rarely seen. The leopard has been heavily poached in the past and there are few left however on a rare occasion on a misty or overcast day you may be lucky to see one briefly as they move between the rocks. **Sleep at Camp 3. (FB)**

Day 9.

5.8 kilometers 4 to 6 hours Today we descend via the Namusangi valley across open Moreland and large areas of tussock grass. As this is a valley floor it is rather wet and at times quite boggy. It is a good idea to have rubber boots for this section. We continue down the valley passing several small waterfalls and moss covered valleys until we reach the steep rocky section above Mutinda with fantastic views of Mutinda Peaks directly ahead. We turn left just as before the river drops over a sheer cliff to the Mutinda valley to walk down several steep slopes until we reach the valley floor. Here we again cross the river before climbing up to the Mutinda Rock Shelter. The Mutinda Rock Shelter is large enough for 80 to 100 people to take shelter from the weather as offers a dry night for our last night. **Sleep in Mutinda Rock Shelter. (FB)**

Day 10.

16.7 kilometres 6 to 10 hours distance from Mutinda to Kalalama Camp is 5.1km plus from Kalalama to the Rangers post 11.6km. 7am start as we descend down a series of rocky streams and valleys often passing or rock hopping across the rocks to Kalalama Camp 3,134 metres. As we near Kalalama Camp we pass through a beautiful valley dotted with Gaint Lobelia. After passing the Lobelia garden we climb to reach Kalalama Camp which is perched on a high ridge overlooking the Kilembe valley and Kasese town. Here we have a quick lunch before continuing to descend down through the bamboo forests. Here we cross to the ridge climbing to Samalira camp just above the lunch spot on day one. Here we have a short break before we walk the final distance through mountain montane forest to the Rangers Post 1,727 metres. After debriefing, we sign off and walk down to Trekkers Hostel. Some fast walkers have descended to the rangers post by midday however the majority of people arrive at the rangers post around 3pm.