

East Africa Mountain Safari

February 4 - March 12, 1997

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Safari means travel in Swahili. This is a record of my safari to East Africa in 1997. I visited Uganda and Tanzania to do some trekking in the mountainous areas, and to view wildlife. I hiked for a week in the Rwenzori Mountains, also known as the Mountains of the Moon, the source of the Nile on the Uganda-Congo border. I also climbed the highest peak there, the glaciated 16,700 foot Margherita. Afterward, I tracked mountain gorillas at Mgahinga National Park. I also viewed wildlife at other Ugandan parks, including Queen Elizabeth National Park. Then I went to Tanzania and climbed Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa at 19,340 feet. I viewed wildlife at the Serengeti, Ngorogoro Crater, and other Tanzanian parks, and finished with a few days on the coast in exotic Zanzibar.

It was a time of unrest in Uganda, which has known many such times. The problems were even greater in neighboring Zaire, which was in the process of turning into the Democratic Republic of Congo via a civil war. The problems sometimes spilled over the border into Uganda. I saw plenty of soldiers, plenty of guns, and plenty of refugees. Fortunately, none of this affected my trip much, although a year to the date after I was in Bwindi Forest, famous for its gorillas, a group of tourists was massacred at the same place I stayed. The Rwenzori mountains were closed to tourists for years after my trip, though they later reopened.

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February 4

Knoxville to Amsterdam

I packed yesterday morning, trying to avoid the all night packing sessions before my previous big trips to nepal and New Zealand. But after finding I had 65 pounds of stuff, and remembering how annoying it was to lug that much stuff around New Zealand, I decided to unpack again to see if I could lighten things. Instead, I ended up adding a couple pounds. I was somewhat concerned about a flight on Air Tanzania I would take from Kampala to Kilimanjaro, which had a 20 kg baggage limit, but I would just have to see about that when the time came.

I went into the university briefly for a last meeting with Benny, the boss, who wasn't really expecting me to show up. Then I went home and called a cab, and sent a quick fax to Jumbo Tours in Kampala, who was arranging my Uganda visit, to remind them I was coming. I reheated a pork and yam curry for a quick meal before the cab came to pick me up at 5:00, a bit early. The flight to Memphis left on-time at 7:00. The Memphis airport is small, and a pleasant place to change planes. I had less than an hour to wait. I looked through my Rough Guide to Amsterdam to see what I could do during my 12 hours there tomorrow. The OJ Simpson verdict was announced on TV. It sounded like he was guilty, but I wasn't paying much attention.

The KLM flight to Amsterdam left at about 9:30. The plane was only part full, so I moved to a window seat in an empty row, where I could stretch out. Dinner was served around 11. I had canoli with a bland white wine. Having three seats gave me plenty of room to sleep.

February 5

Amsterdam

I slept rather well, awaking shortly before breakfast - a variety of pastries with fruit and yogurt. I saw Ireland, England and the Isle of Man (home of a great grandfather) as we flew over. We landed in Amsterdam around 11:15 AM. I changed \$100, checked my bag, and took a train to the ornate Central Station.

I started walking down the wide Dam St., which has a rather festive atmosphere and lots of fast food. Then I explored some side streets that were closed to cars. The smell of cannabis was notable on some of the side streets - it is smoked rather openly, especially in the coffee shops that specialize in this. I saw a mime and bagpipe player at the otherwise rather desolate Dam Square. I was getting hungry, and thought of getting some French fries, which my brother said I must try in Amsterdam. But I hadn't seen any since Dam St, so I went into one of the ubiquitous bakeries and got a tasty tomato-onion-cheese bread.

I continued on to Rembrandtsplein, another square, and then walked along Herengracht a few blocks to the west. Eventually I ended up at the Rijksmuseum, and followed the road under it toward the Van Gogh museum. There were more squares beyond the Rijksmuseum, all rather desolate, depressing places, similar to Dam Square and the others I'd seen.

The Van Gogh museum was the main thing I wanted to see in Amsterdam, aside from just walking around. Actually, only the second floor was completely devoted to Van Gogh paintings. It had some of his dark early works such as "The Potato Eaters", and lots of the more colorful paintings he became known for. There was also a painting of a stuffed bat, and upstairs, one of a skull smoking a cigarette, which I found amusing. A huge bus load tried to jam into the museum as I left. I was glad I got there when I did.

Next, I went to the Rijksmuseum, a huge building with lots of old Dutch paintings, and an even larger collection of "practical arts and crafts". Rembrandt's "The Night Watchman" is their big attraction.

Around 4:00, I started looking for some of the Indonesian restaurants listed in the Rough Guide, and found four of them. Amsterdam is supposed to be a good city for Indonesian food. Only one was open so early. I wandered around some more, and ended up choosing Tempo Doeloe on Utrechtsestraat, south of Rembrandtsplein. It wasn't open yet, so I got a milkshake nearby, and walked toward the red light district, which is also something of a tourist attraction here. Now that the sun was setting, it should be starting to come alive.

I headed east from Rokin St., south of the red light district, planning to walk north to it, but overshot it by a couple of blocks on the east and ended up in Nieuwmarkt, another big empty square with a cursing bum. Apparently the Dutch don't like grass or trees, because you never see any in their squares. There was a huge stone building at the far end of the square, which turned out to be a candle-lit restaurant.

The red light district was just west of here. It was impossible to miss it, because it was dusk now, and red fluorescent lights were everywhere, marking windowed booths displaying scantily clad women. There is a big church right in the middle of the district. The open tolerance of sex reminded me of Bourbon St. in New Orleans, but this was more subdued, without the street-hawkers, and more like walking through a woman-zoo. I took a picture from across the canal, not wanting to look like I was photographing the women (a good way to get your camera stomped, according to the Rough Guide). I also discovered what the odd cylindrical shelters I had been seeing around Amsterdam's canals were for. They are urination stations - no plumbing, just pee on the sidewalk.

I walked back up to Tempo Doeloe, which was now open, since it was just after 6:00, but you still had to ring a bell to get in. I had their combination platter for 42 guilders - not cheap, but you get ten little samples, and it is filling. There was a range of hotness from mild to "very hot", which actually turned out to be a bit disappointing after what Rough Guide had written. The satay was excellent, and had plenty of sauce, which I scooped onto fried wafers. There was also pickled cabbage, beef (goat?) with mild coconut sauce, tomato sauce, and medium pepper sauce, two kinds of chicken, shrimp, and some vegetables, including green beans, and a piece of eggplant and tempeh. Actually, most of the samples weren't too memorable, with salty and chile flavors dominating. I had a beer with it, served in a tiny glass. I also had a frozen orange-coconut drink for desert. I spent 58 guilders in all, a good part of my Dutch money.

I finished dinner at 7:30 and started back to the train station. All the stores were closed and many streets practically deserted. Some care was required, because all the bicycles (very popular here) were practically invisible after dark. Some fast food stores were still open on Dam St., but I was too full to be tempted by the French fries now, even if they were the best on earth, as my brother seemed to suggest. I quickly found a train to the airport, though I came close to boarding the wrong one. No one ever looked at my ticket, in either direction.

Back at the Schiphol airport, I changed my remaining guilders for \$30, except a few I could spend on a drink, since the salty Indonesian meal left me thirsty. It turned out that there was not place to spend them. All the shops, bars, and restaurants had closed, even the casino. I shaved, and put some drops in my eye, which had become red and irritated in the city. I had a couple hours to wait.

At 10:30, they started letting people through security. I waited for the crowd to clear before approaching with my 50 rolls of film. Foreign airports often try to insist that their X-rays are safe, but I don't believe it, so I was prepared for an argument, and got one. But I had some 1600 speed film this time, and they knew that it was not safe, so they agreed to a hand inspection without further argument, though they opened every canister and checked to see that I actually had some 1600 speed film. In the future, I think I will always bring some 1600 speed film along on foreign flights, since it could avoid a lengthy and unpleasant argument.

The flight to Nairobi turned out to be rather full, so there would be no stretching out to sleep this time. I had a window seat in the first coach row. We took off at 11:45.

February 6

Flights to Nairobi and Entebbe

Dinner was served around 12:30 AM. I had "Madagascar Beef", which appeared to be covered with a spicy oily yellow peanut sauce, but it was actually just a bland airline gravy. I also had a Heineken, since beer usually makes me sleepy. When they offered coffee later, I declined, but wanted something. The stewardess suggested a cognac, but I wasn't sure I would like it, and asked her for a red wine. She didn't have any at the time, so I decided to try the cognac, and found that it was good. She later came up with a red wine, and brought that as well, making sure I had plenty of alcohol.

The man next to me, a German who appeared to be in his 50s or 60s, was reading a Swahili textbook. He was planning to visit a friend in Meru. He said the altitude was high, being near Mt. Kenya, so he wouldn't be taking any malaria prophylaxis. He said he took quinine in the old days. He didn't like taking Larium because it is so strong, but would prefer to take it after getting malaria.

I mentioned that I was a physicist, and he didn't know much about that, but when I said I had an internet company, we had an interesting discussion on that and exchanged cards. He was in the coffee business. He said the internet isn't really understood well in Germany yet. In fact, none of Europe has the access to the cheap, high-volume telecommunications capacity that America takes for granted, and been so important to the growth of the internet.

The flight movie was *The Ghost and the Darkness*, set in Kenya. The German said the train shown in the movie still runs between Kampala and Masai (at 30 miles an hour) and is worth taking if you have the time. I fell asleep quickly, missing the movie, but was not too comfortable and didn't sleep very well.

At breakfast, I took my second Larium. I would be taking one every Thursday. The land below was dry and desolate as we flew over Sudan and into Kenya. Some volcanoes appeared below, and occasional signs of agriculture, though the land was not good. There were mountains as well, and a couple of lakes. We flew into Nairobi over the Nairobi Game Park.

The German said there wasn't much for tourists in Nairobi. The game park is small and zoo-like compared to the others I would see. He mentioned a snake zoo, and he thought the Tuesday coffee market was interesting, since he is in the business. He said Nairobi has been deteriorating steadily since he started coming in '59. He said people in Nairobi don't appreciate beauty and thoughtlessly destroy it, and security is getting worse all the time. It used to be nice to walk in the nearby hills, but now you would be robbed or murdered.

It was in the 70's in Nairobi upon arrival at 9:45 AM. I dropped off a card showing my return flight, which was supposed to confirm it, though they said I should still call when the time came. A helpful KLM representative took care of my bag transfer to the Kenya airlines flight to Entebbe, leaving at 2 PM. I checked in for the flight when the counter opened. Then I bought an orange Fanta for \$1 and ate the granola bars I had brought for today's lunch.

The terminal was warm and humid, and slightly decayed looking - like a bus terminal with a lot of duty-free shops. The people I dealt with were generally helpful, with none of the confusion and neglect I experienced in the Delhi airport on the way to Nepal in '94. I had no problem passing my film through security here. The security was friendly and accommodating, unlike in Europe.

The plane boarded at around 1:45. It appeared to be the oldest jet I had ever been on. Some of the overhead compartments were crumbling and would barely stay closed. I hoped the engines were in better shape. The service was excellent. We got a full lunch even though the flight was under an hour.

Uganda was much greener than Kenya as we landed next to Lake Victoria in Entebbe. The Entebbe airport was surprisingly small, considering that it was Uganda's major airport. A plane full of Muslims was going through passport control as I arrived. There was no trouble here, and they did not check my immunizations. (I had got a cholera shot only because Uganda's visa information says this is a requirement. They can be hard to find since there is no valid health reason to get one.)

My luggage was waiting when I got to the conveyor, and there were no questions at customs. Catherine Nabwire of Jumbo Nature Safaris was waiting for me in the lobby, with a driver. I had called Jumbo in December after talking to the Uganda parks service and deciding I could use some assistance in getting a permit for Gorilla tracking. Only a few are issued each day, and they are quickly bought by local safari agents. I also wanted my own car and driver so I could get around quickly, and Jumbo would be providing that. I already sent them \$1600 of their \$3300 fee, which would cover essentially all my expenses in Uganda.

It was a long ride to Kampala. Entebbe was just a small town on the shore of Lake Victoria. We passed the decaying old Russian-built airport, not far from the new one, which was famous for a highjacking in the '70s. We passed a lot of little houses and shops, mostly similar to the ones I remembered in Nepal, small and sometimes crumbling. But there were also a few very nice houses mingling with the others. There were plenty of fruit stands, and some cattle with huge pointy horns. There was a lot of new construction as well. The traffic was generally much saner than in Nepal, and the ride was not at all scary.

Kampala turned out to be quite a large city, with lots of big, new buildings. We went to the Fairway Hotel, which appeared to be a very ambitious hotel which had a lot of trouble meeting its ambitions. The architecture was nicely designed, but the implementation a bit shoddy. It was not a cheap hotel, one of the higher-end places in Kampala in fact. It was also a bit outside the center of town, in an attractive,

upscale green neighborhood near the golf course. When I arrived in my room, eager to get cleaned up after two days of sleeping on planes, there was no cold water, and the hot water was cold. Catherine said she would let me rest a while and return.

I showered in spite of the cold water. The air was warm and muggy, so it was not too bad. The room was clean but the floor was wet for some reason. There was a phone, TV and refrigerator. The door to the second-floor balcony had no lock. My eyes were bothering me more now than in Amsterdam. I put some eye-drops in and lied down to rest. I still had the antibiotic eye-drops I bought for Nepal, which were now just past their expiration, and I thought I might wish I had more.

Catherine returned at 6:30 and explained my itinerary, which we had arranged by fax according to my specifications. I normally don't like to arrange things so much in advance, but I had a rather ambitious schedule for my 16 days in Uganda, including tracking the mountain gorillas, and I wanted some help making the connections quickly and getting gorilla permits (which is not at all easy, since only a few are issued each day). Jumbo would be providing a car and driver, arranging my accommodations, helping to set up my Rwenzori Mountain trek (through Rwenzori Mountaineering in Kasese) and attempting to get me a gorilla permit.

Catherine managed to get me a confirmed gorilla permit for Mgahinga National Park. This was news, since last I heard, the best she could offer was a "standby permit" for Bwindi. I wasn't sure what this meant, since officially there is no such thing as a standby permit. Mgahinga permits are not always issued because this is on the Rwanda and Zaire borders, and the gorillas often cross to the other side. I would keep my "standby permit" for the 17th, since Bwindi is more accessible. However, Catherine said one of the Bwindi gorillas died, leaving only three in one of the two groups there, while there are nine gorillas in the Mgahinga group.

Jumbo tours would pay the extra costs of getting to Mgahinga, but I would pay \$54 for one night at the Whitehorse Hotel afterward. There were some security issues as well, since Mgahinga is on the Rwanda and Zaire borders. There were still many refugees in the area due to recent genocides in Rwanda, and an ongoing civil war was active just across the border in Zaire. Catherine said driving at night would be dangerous, and I would have to take care to make the long connections before dark.

Catherine also asked what kind of food I would like on my Rwenzori Mountain trek. She would be doing the shopping for me. I wasn't sure what was available. She said meat could be brought in coolers, but I recommended a starchy vegetarian diet, to be safe. I suggested lots of spaghetti and macaroni, plus fruits and sweets. I paid the \$1700 balance due for Jumbo's services. There may or may not be an extra day at the end, which I could spend at Queen Elizabeth National Park or in Kampala. This would depend on whether I got in to see the gorillas at Bwindi, or had to drive all the way to Mgahinga in the southwest corner of Uganda. I left open the possibility of whether I would return to Kampala with Jumbo or on my own. If I wanted to go with them, it was included.

We arranged to meet again after lunch tomorrow. I could cash travelers' checks then as well. The hotel rate is not so favorable. The approximate exchange rate is 1000 shillings for \$1 US. After Catherine left, I changed a \$20 check to have some money for tonight, since I pay for the drinks while Jumbo covers the meal costs. I walked around the hotel grounds, which were rather spacious and green. There was an Indian tandoor-style grill on the patio, and a private party was being held there today. I ate in the upstairs dining room, where I ordered a dish from the Ugandan menu - smoked beef with groundnut sauce and katooshe (mashed bananas, a staple of the local diet). The meal was not at all spicy.

After dinner, I found my room's floor to be wetter than before. The cold water had returned and the toilet tank had a leak. I found a crack around the inlet pipe, and adjusted the float so it wouldn't fill so far. I repacked my bags in a more practical manner, reflecting how I would be using it during the trip, rather than the very compact form I used for the flights. I went to bed around 1:30 AM, though I still didn't feel that this was a proper time to be sleeping. It was only 5:30 PM at home. I should have been tired after the little sleep I got on the plane, but actually I had been sleepier in the afternoon.

February 7

Drive to Fort Portal

Fortunately, I did not need to get up early, since we were leaving after lunch. I had got to sleep very late. I went down to the dining room for breakfast. It was now brightly lit by the large windows which surrounded three walls. A buffet was set out with assorted fruits and toast. I also had some thick, delicious coffee. I walked around the grounds and saw the swimming pool. There was a lot of construction, with a new floor being added to the hotel. They really should fix their water system first - people tend to expect hot water in a hotel charging \$70 per night.

I wanted to send a card home, but the gift shop was closed, and the hotel was in a residential neighborhood with no other shops nearby. So I returned to my room and wrote a letter. Later, I went out and took some pictures around the grounds. I saw some interesting birds near the pool. Then I noticed that the gift shop had opened. There were not many post cards to choose from, but they had a kind of card with a wooden front and a selection of painted African scenes, and I bought one of these. There was enough room inside to copy my whole letter. The envelope provided didn't seal, so I used some tape. I thought this was more interesting than a post card, since you would never find such a primitive-looking thing in America. The hotel didn't have stamps, so I would have to mail it later.

I went to the dining room after noon for lunch, but they were behind schedule and sent me to the garden cafe out front, where they said I could order from a full menu. It was hot out, but shady. I ordered a chile cheeseburger with fries and carrots. The chile sauce was a bottled Kenyan brand served on the side. The burger was crisp outside but mushy inside. At first, I thought it was undercooked, but it

appeared to be well-done. Then I realized that this was the texture of an Indian kofta, a meat patty containing onions and spices. There were koftas on the menu, so this was probably the same stuff. In fact, the burger was really tasty, as a kofta should be.

I called Catherine when I finished, and she and a driver came over. While I waited, a Kampala man in the lobby talked to me a while. He said this hotel was too expensive, and in fact it was, considering the water problems and all. Catherine and the driver took me to the Sheraton Forex to change money, since she said they had the best rate for travelers' checks. They had the same rate as for cash, which is rare here. The Sheraton was a beautiful, very expensive hotel on a hill overlooking a large park and downtown Kampala. Catherine suggested carrying \$300 in US cash and \$100 in Uganda shillings.

The Forex worker turned out to be at lunch, so we went down to the busy main street and went to a bank instead. Guards with machine guns stood in front of the entrance. I already had enough US cash, so I just got some shillings. Then, we mailed my letters at the main post office across the street, and set out for Fort Portal. Catherine asked how I liked the Fairway Hotel, and I told her about the water problems. She said it was hard to find a good reasonably-priced hotel in Kampala, and they are always trying to come up with something better. She said the Hotel Gloria, which is much cheaper, may be a good alternative. The Lonely Planet book said it was pretty bad, so I had rejected that idea earlier, but Catherine said it was not bad anymore since they remodeled it.

Catherine spoke to the driver in a local language. I asked what it was, and she said it was Lugandan, the most common language in Kampala, though the official language is English, and all signs are in English. Uganda has many local languages, and English is the only common language. I also asked the driver's name, but I had trouble understanding it. It sounded like "Bekka" or something.

I hadn't expected Catherine to come along to Fort Portal, but she did. The main traffic on the road was matatus, white minibuses that drove like crazy. They are cheap and popular among the locals and budget travelers, but crash often. I had read about them, and expected something grungier, but they were actually mostly new and clean-looking, which is not easy to maintain on the roads here.

We drove fast as well, passing through a number of villages. There were always a lot of pedestrians and bicycles on the road. The bicycles were usually being pushed, and used to carry a load of bananas or other items. Many people carried their loads on top of their heads, needing no hands to support them. A couple of trucks went by covered with large yellow plastic containers, hanging from every direction. Catherine said they are used to haul the local gin from Kasese to Kampala, and then the containers are returned empty.

The driver stopped at a number of fruit stands looking for a good pineapple. We stopped for refreshments in Mityana. At Mubende, the paved road ended. The next half of the ride was very dusty, not helping my scratchy eyes at all. We stopped at a fruit stand that had all the tomatoes arranged in tall stacks. Many of the stands did this. Most of the people in the villages were neatly dressed, with women

wearing colorful dresses, and some of the men in suits. Finally, at the big market in Butiti, we stopped and the driver found some pineapples that met his standards. We bought some bananas too, as the car was surrounded by people bearing fruit. In a stand below, a woman was examining a large carcass for sale.

We drove past lots of banana trees. Catherine explained the many varieties. Some are sweet and eaten as fruit. Others are starchy and mashed like potatoes to make matooke. I had that last night. There were a lot of fruits for sale I didn't even recognize. Catherine told me the names of some. Most of the buildings in the villages seemed to be a kind of mud construction. There were a lot of what looked like termite mounds. I tried asking Catherine about them, but she thought I was asking about bananas.

Matatus sped by us, as we hurried to roll up the windows to keep the dust out. The small Korean sedan ("saloon car", Catherine called it) had no air conditioning. We stopped the car a few miles from Fort Portal to check the tires and steering after the bumpy high-speed drive. We were all covered by dust from having the windows open.

Finally, we arrived in Fort Portal and drove to the Mountains of the Moon Hotel, a large, single-story tin-roofed inn on the outskirts of town. The driver unpacked the car, and beat the dust off my duffle bag, which was now completely brown rather than blue. The sun was preparing to set over the Rwenzori foothills as we arrived. I thought it might be a nice sunset to photograph, but was disappointed as the sun simply disappeared into the haze, as it often does in the Smokies near home.

The hotel had beautiful grounds with big palm trees along the unpaved drive. The buildings were rustic, with very basic rooms, but at least the hot water worked. They offered to bring a bucket of it otherwise. Catherine wanted to stay here as well, but there were no more of the \$25 singles, only \$35 doubles, so she went elsewhere. The price was actually rather steep considering the condition of the hotel, which was big and nicely landscaped, but had seen better days and was now a bit run-down, though not unpleasant.

The lights went out at 7:00 PM as dusk fell, due to load-sharing. Electricity would return at 10 PM, they said. Candles were provided, and I showered by candle light. Hot water was slow to arrive, but came eventually. There was no shower curtain, but the shower head detached from the wall, on a hose so you could control it.

I went to the dining room and sat in front on the verandah. A generator provided fluorescent light here, though I think it would have been better with candles. I ordered pepper steak with fries and a Guinness Stout. Guinness is a bargain here, only \$1.20. It would be about triple that in a restaurant at home. The bottle said "Guinness is good for you". No doubt it's nutritious stuff, but you wouldn't see that at home either. The steak was excellent. In fact, it was the kind of nondescript cut I had encountered in Nepal, but coated with a generous pepper crust which made it very spicy and delicious. It came with a gravy which was also good on the crispy tender fries (why can't they make them like that at home?). It was a fine meal.

Afterward, I took a nap until the lights returned at 10 PM, then repacked my bags so that my backpack (the 40 liter ArcTeryx pack I brought for supported treks) had only day-hiking things I might want for tomorrow's chimp-tracking in Kabale Forest: rain gear, photo equipment and binoculars. Catherine said it would be dry tomorrow, as it has not rained lately, so I may not need to bring my raingear. In fact, I may not even need the pack, but will be prepared in any case. Later in the night, a group of dogs outside had a howling-fest. It didn't last too long, fortunately. I was planning to get up at 6 AM, and still hadn't adjusted very well to the time change.

February 8

Kibale Forest

I was not ready to get up at 6AM when my alarm rang, and could easily have slept more. They were supposed to have a quick breakfast ready for me at 7:00, so we could leave for Kibale Forest at 7:15. We were supposed to arrive there at 8:30 for chimp tracking. There were a few people in the dining room already. I ordered a plate of scrambled eggs with toast, and had some fruit from a buffet. Catherine and my driver were a bit late, arriving at 7:35, just as I finished my coffee. They said they were late because they had to wash the dust off the car, but the ride was short.

We drove across banana country for a while. Fires were common along the way, as they were yesterday, because fields were being cleared for planting. We crossed a large tea plantation as well. A big group of tourists was waiting to begin their walk at the visitor's center when we arrived at Kibale Forest National Park. I thought they were going to take everyone together, but it turned out that I would have my own guide. My driver would come too, but Catherine waited behind. She said she had just done the walk recently and had seen some chimps, but it was hard work. She was dressed rather elegantly for a forest walk anyway, with a nice sweater and scarf. In fact, my driver was also sharply dressed, and looked more like he was going out for a night on the town than a forest walk. In general, one thing I have noticed here is that Ugandans dress well, even in places where this would not be expected.

I decided to leave my pack, since the walk was just a few kilometers and I would not be needing raingear. I attached a water bottle and binoculars to my belt, and brought both my cameras and a long-range zoom lens (70 - 210 mm, F2.8) that I bought for this trip. I had 1600 speed film in both cameras for taking pictures in the forest.

The first primate we saw was a black and white monkey. It took me a while to find it in the foliage, though it was quite large. Another was up there too, in the tree-tops. I attempted taking a picture with the big lens, but doubted the monkey would show up among the foliage. We saw some signs of where elephants had passed, stripping bark from trees or wallowing in mud, but they were gone now because it was too dry for them. Uganda has been having a long dry period, which should be ending soon.

The guide identified various bird calls, and many kinds of plants, including parasitic fig trees that grow in pockets on other trees, after being deposited in droppings. The figs send roots down along the tree trunk to the ground, and later strangle the host tree when they no longer need it for support. There is also another non-parasitic fig tree which grows to enormous heights, and has roots that look like large, vertical strips of bacon. Chimps hammer on these roots to communicate with their friends, the guide said. The drumming can be heard for a mile.

We came upon another monkey, a big gray noisy one. It turned out that several were in that tree. The guide pointed out a couple of chimp nests in the trees, made of sticks. He said they make two of these each day, one for afternoon and one for night, and never reuse them. My book says that chimps are shy and often do not appear during the walks, but it is more common to hear them. The guide did not hear any chimps about today. We passed another tour group, who had also been unsuccessful in finding chimps. Perhaps it was too dry.

We saw a nest of safari ants, but didn't see any ants. They bite hard and attack in large numbers, and can be a big problem when it is wet. We ended up on top of a grassy area overlooking the forest, where a small lookout hut had been constructed. We climbed into the hut. The guide said this was once a hunting ground for both people and lions, but that no lions remained around Kibale, because they had been killed. He said Kibale forest has eleven species of primates, including two nocturnal ones and the chimps. These are the main attraction.

The guide showed us small shiny blue berries that are used as pearls. I put a few in my pocket. We also looked at a vine he said was used to treat malaria by guerillas hiding in the forest in the '70s. The flesh inside had a hot, bitter taste. We saw a smelly leaf thought to be an aphrodisiac, used to treat "men of weak sex". The guide also pointed out a tree that produces a fruit elephants love. They wait until it falls from the tree and ferments, then eat it and get drunk.

We left the path once to see an especially large fig tree, and climbed about on its enormous roots. Chimps favor these trees, but none were here today. When we finished the walk around 11 AM, it was already becoming hot. We stopped in the park office, and the guide showed us a crumbling collection of moths and butterflies.

Catherine was sleeping in the car. On the way back out the road, we came upon a baboon, crossing the road a few hundred yards ahead. It was huge, and I thought it was a buffalo at first. We stopped, and more baboons came out of the forest. We also saw a small gray monkey with a baby in a tree just to the right of the car. I got out and took some pictures, until a speeding truck scared the baboons off, and scared me back into the car.

We returned to the Mountains of the Moon Hotel so I could have lunch, and Catherine and the driver took the car to run some errands. I was a little nervous after they left, since all my stuff was in the car, and my photo equipment was all in the back seat. The menu was the same at lunch as for dinner. I ordered Maryland chicken with French fries. It

was a bit tough, and not as good as the pepper steak last night. The fries were done perfectly again. It was a beautiful sunny day as I ate on the verandah.

I walked around the hotel and took pictures of some of the beautiful flowers on the grounds. Catherine returned later than I expected, around 1:30, after I had been dozing off on the verandah in the afternoon heat. She said they had to wash the car again. We then headed toward Kasese, which would be my base for the Rwenzori Mountain trek. It was just a couple of hours away, they said.

Upon leaving Fort Portal, Catherine pointed out a large circular fort-like structure on top of a hill. She said it was the home of a local king. She said all of the traditional local kingdoms in Uganda had been restored, and that this king had been in place for only four years.

The sky was getting dark, and it looked like rain, but it just sprinkled a bit as we passed some people picking cotton. We stopped at a roadside stand to buy beans (pea pods) for my trek. The driver also bought some passion fruit, which were stacked like the tomatoes I saw yesterday, making tall pinnacles like rock cairnes. We passed a police checkpoint, due to an accident ahead, where a matatu was on its side in the ditch beside the road.

We came to another checkpoint upon entering the Kasese district. Here, we were stopped while an officer with a machine gun and asked questions and examined some things in the front seat, before examining my passport and inspecting the trunk. Catherine said this was a special security measure due to fighting across the nearby border in Zaire, and they wanted to be sure none of the wrong people got through. Some guerillas had gotten into Kasese a few months ago, and there had been some shooting then.

We soon arrived in Kasese, a big town, and went to Rwenzori Mountain Service, the major (and for a long time, the only) outfitter for Rwenzori treks. One man occupied the small office. He was a jolly man who smiled and laughed a lot while talking. Catherine complained to the man that she could never get through by phone. The number, 44115, was always busy or not picked up. The man just rolled his eyes and smiled, and said he could not explain why this would happen.

He presented Catherine with a bill for \$340 for my trek, including a guide and two porters, one of whom could cook. Each porter would carry 15 kg of my stuff, plus 10 kg of their own stuff. Catherine thought I would be getting one more porter, at \$2 per day, but he said that was unnecessary. The porters' food was included in the price, but Catherine would be buying my food. The trek was scheduled for eight days. The number of days is standard, and included one extra day because I wanted to climb the highest peak, Margherita. I planned to try to finish in seven days, combining the last two stages, to have more time to recover before the gorilla tracking. This would not affect the price.

I would be renting two ice axes, two sets of crampons, and a climbing rope for my guide and me. These would be required only for the peak climb. There was also a \$50 park entrance fee, which Catherine gave me

50,000 shillings to pay upon arrival. Catherine and I discussed the food some more in the car on the way to the hotel. I wanted it to be vegetarian, which meant lots of pasta, rice and beans, plus breads and fruits and maybe some cabbage, depending on what she found in the markets in Kasese.

I would be staying at the nicest hotel here, the Margherita Hotel, which was on a hill outside of town, overlooking Kasese and the Rwenzori foothills. It was a nice place, well-maintained with beautiful grounds, but having a somewhat sterile institutional atmosphere. My large room had no shower, just a tub, and there was no hot water when I first checked. I put all my valuables - traveler's checks, cash and plane tickets - into sealed envelopes and brought them to the office for safe deposit.

I packed for the trek. I would be carrying a large day-pack with my day-time clothes, camera equipment, and other things needed while walking. My down sleeping bag was in a waterproof stuff-sack. I would also be bringing two compression sacks with all of my other clothing and equipment, plus a pair of high gum-boots which I brought for the track's notorious bogs. All of these items would be carried by porters.

I checked the hot water in the bathroom again. It was now hot, in fact very hot, and arrived immediately. After my bath, a person came to the door wanting to spray for mosquitos. He said malarial mosquitos were a problem here at night, though I had not yet seen a single mosquito in Uganda. He suggested turning off the overhead light, and using only the smaller ones, to avoid attracting mosquitos. There was also a mosquito net over the bed.

I went down to the dining room just after 8 for dinner - onion steak with fries. I asked the hefty waiter what his favorite Ugandan beer was, and he suggested a Chairman ESB (Extra Strong Brew, 7% alcohol), which came in a half-liter bottle. The waiter asked where I was from. He said few people from America hiked in the mountains here, which were known mostly to Europeans.

The steak was good, but a bit tough, and the fries were once again perfect. Ugandans definitely know how to cook fries. But they need to work on the ketchup, which is as bland and watery as it is most places outside the US. The beer left me feeling a bit drunk. I headed back to my room to make some final adjustments to my packing, and I could hear the news on a TV somewhere. I thought I heard a mosquito in my room, so I pulled the mosquito net down over the bed before going to sleep.

February 9

Begin Rwenzori Circuit

I set the alarm for 7 AM, since Catherine would be meeting me at 8:30 this morning. A few mosquitos were buzzing about outside the mosquito net over my bed, so I applied some DEET when I got up. I arranged my stuff one last time to make my pack lighter. As long as I was hiring porters, there was no need to carry too much.

I had a big breakfast: fruit, passion juice, Spanish omelet, bacon, sausage and toast. The sausage was especially tasty and tender, with a crispy casing. I also had a couple cups of the excellent coffee, which was served, as yesterday, in a teapot. It was a bright morning, and sun streamed through a row of windows lining the dining room. The air was fresh and cool. I thought about how good it felt to be in Africa.

I finished breakfast around 8:30, and Catherine was waiting on the verandah. I checked my duffel bag and left some clothes to be laundered. Then we drove down to Rwenzori Mountaineering Services in town. Downtown Kasese was dry and brown with unpaved streets. Not many people were out. I looked over the food Catherine had bought - it was quite a pile, with pasta, rice, beans, pea pods, cabbage, lettuce, bread, biscuits, cookies, pineapples, bananas, avocados, passion fruit, corn flakes, milk, mushrooms, curry powder, onions, scallions, peppers, popcorn, peanuts, and eggs. I wondered how well some of this stuff would stay fresh for the next week, and how the eggs would be carried, but the man at RMS said the porters would know how to pack eggs. The milk was ultra-pasteurized, and would need no refrigeration. Catherine brought plates (ordinary dishes, which I hoped would not break), cups and silverware, but forgot a knife. Fortunately, I had one, since I didn't know she would supply these.

A Spanish man, 24, in brightly colored pants, arrived with a small pack. He was going as far as the second camp, John Matte Hut, and then turning back, since he had limited time. I think his name was Jamil. His English was a bit limited. He had been tracking Gorillas at Bwindi, and found it amusing. He was lucky, and got a permit last week from African Safaris, where the national park service sends people when they don't have any permits themselves. I had called African Safaris in November. At that time, the man there said he could not get me a permit for February, but I could stop by and discuss the options. He said they handled safari arrangements for a number of large companies, including Mountain Travel Sobek and Explore Worldwide, but normally did not get permits for individuals.

After we took some pictures outside the RMS office, Catherine departed, and Jamil and I boarded a pickup truck for the ride to Ibanda, where the trek would begin. The driver picked up a number of riders, including four soldiers with machine guns who sat around the back of the truck. I was curious at first about why they were coming, since I knew there had been trouble in the area, but they just went as far as an army base.

The road became very bad. Most of the buildings looked really primitive: mud jammed between sticks for walls, and thatched roofs. I saw a man freshly thatching a roof. At one stop, a group of children came by, stopped next to our truck, and stared at me until we left. White people must be very unusual here. We picked up more riders. I looked back occasionally to make sure my packs were all right. The people walking along the roads in the villages were very nicely dressed, especially the women, who wore long, brightly colored dresses. Many of the men wore suits. They may have been going to church. It was Sunday morning.

Ibanda was a typical small village, except that it contained the large modern compound of Rwenzori Mountain Services and the park service offices. We checked in with RMS, and I requested two ice axes, two pairs of crampons, and a climbing rope. Some other items were available, if needed. Then I checked in at the park service office. I paid the 50,000 shillings for the permit and rescue fee. If a rescue were needed, a porter would come back and tell them to send help. There were no radios.

Jamil and I went next door for a briefing by the park information officer, who went over the route on a wall map, and discussed equipment requirements and altitude sickness. He said the guide would determine if a person were too sick to continue. He saw my Nikon camera, and said I was welcome to photograph anything I wanted, but that since it was dry, there probably would be few flowers now.

I went to the equipment shed to get my gear. At the same time, a large crowd of men gathered where porters were being hired. The manager, Alzaire (?), brought my guide into the shed and introduced him. His name was Joel, and he was said to be an experienced mountaineering guide. He would carry the mountaineering equipment I was renting here. He was a tall, slender, slightly bearded man, probably in his 30's.

Outside, I met my cooking porter, Richard, a 20-year-old wearing a FIAT T-shirt, baseball hat, and rubber sandals. He went through my food bags, and packed things so the fragile items were on top. He left the eggs out of the big white plastic bag he would carry. All of the porters gathered by scales hanging from a tree, and distributed items among large plastic bags. Each would carry 15 kg of my stuff and 10 kg of their stuff. The porters' food was supplied by RMS.

Richard and I set off first, with the Spaniard and his porter following soon behind. Mountains were visible ahead in the mist as we walked through the village. This was my first good opportunity to take some pictures in a village, while not speeding by in a vehicle. Richard spoke reasonably good English. He carried the eggs in their tray until we came to a house at the edge of town, where someone brought him something to pack them in. He put them at the top of his pack.

After reaching the park entrance, the road turned into a trail, going up and down, steeply at times, along the banks of the wide Mubuku River. Plants with enormous leaves grew along the trail. It was now early afternoon, and uncomfortably hot and humid. Actually, my thermometer showed that it was only 75° F, but it felt warmer as we climbed through the humid jungle. We saw a brightly colored chameleon, and Richard tried to help me take its picture.

The vegetation was generally quite thick, and Richard, in the lead, ducked carefully to avoid breaking eggs on the branches. Although they were on top of his pack, they weren't padded much. He carried the pack using a trumpline made of some fibrous plant. We stopped a few times for water and rests. Jamil and his porters drank directly from the river. The park office said this was safe, but I filtered water when I refilled my bottle.

The trail climbed relentlessly to the top of a ridge. The heat made

the climbing difficult, though I wasn't carrying much. We followed the ridge, still climbing continuously. The gorge to our right was very deep, and steep rocky mountains rose in the mist on the far side.

Richard told me he was a student, and went to school whenever he wasn't working. He was now a "level 4 senior", and he had to get to level 6 to go to a university. He said it may take years, since he must work most of the time. His family farms, and he works as a porter when possible, but tourism is off this year, he said, due to the trouble in Zaire, just a few miles away. He said that past problems also made tourists avoid Uganda, though it is now a nice place to visit, most of the time. He said he hoped I would tell people good things about the Rwenzori Mountains and Uganda, and I said that I would, and that I would probably put something on the internet.

The long climb was tiring, but the heat diminished as we gained elevation, and we stopped for plenty of rests. The ridge eventually flattened somewhat, and we came to Nyabitaba Tourist Camp, where two huts perched along the narrow wooded ridge. There were also some wood platforms under a rock overhang below camp for porters, but the group was small today: two porters and half a dozen staff. My guide, Joel, was the last to arrive. The rocky Portal Peaks were visible across the valley.

The corrugated metal tourist hut contained a long sleeping shelf. It had a capacity of 20, with half using the floor if necessary. The porter shelter next door had no floor. Richard had most of my food, but not all of it, so his idea of making me tea when we arrived was thwarted. Cooking would be done over charcoal. When the rest of my food arrived, I ate a banana. I was hungry since I had not eaten lunch, except for a couple of the Oreo granola bars and Milky Way bars I had brought from home.

Richard sorted the food on a table to see what we had. I decided to have pasta with some vegetables for dinner, and Richard started working on it. He also cut up a pineapple for me, since I was hungry. Later, he brought me a heaping plate of spaghetti, piled high with green beans, tomatoes, onions, and peppers. It was tasty, and hot with chile peppers. He apologized for using so many peppers, but I told him I liked it that way. Richard made me some tea as well.

At dusk, a South African man, who looked Indian and had long hair, appeared. He had come down from John Matte Camp, tomorrow's destination. He said he had started late because his watch was an hour off. He said it was colder up at the next camp, at 11,000 feet. Jamil was first in bed, and I went in at 8:00, as it became chilly outside. The South African came in soon afterward, fell asleep quickly, and snored all night, so loudly he shook the sleeping shelf.

February 10

To John Matte Camp

My guide Joel had told me he wanted to start around 8:30 this morning, so I had set my alarm for 7:00. I packed while Richard fixed me

porridge with tea. He made the porridge by cooking corn flakes with milk and bananas, so it was a bit odd and mushy, but tasted fine. The sun shined brightly on the Portal Peaks across the valley.

My guide and I were first out of camp. He had been staying in a big green building up the trail past the water supply. I hadn't seen it last night. The other staff hut I had seen yesterday was just used for cooking apparently, and they slept up here. The trail followed the ridge to a junction. The trail I would finish the circuit on was to the left. We turned right and descended steeply to a bridge at the junction of the Mubuku and Bujuku Rivers. Then we climbed steeply back up the other side. Joel said the bridge was built by an American.

The grade became gentler as we climbed, but the trail became rougher and rockier. We spent most of the time scrambling over boulders. The park information officer had warned us about this section. The rocks can be slippery when it rains, and footing is always treacherous. One of my guides compares it to "caving above ground". Fortunately, this section was not steep, and was now dry. Unfortunately, it was very muggy, and water supplies were limited on this section, which contributed to making this one of the more difficult sections of the circuit. Joel didn't stop for rests much, either, since he had a relatively light pack. He did keep a slower pace than Richard had.

We met some of the porters, and stopped for a break. I ate a couple of bananas I had brought for lunch, and went to sleep. Joel woke me and we continued. My legs had gotten cold when I dozed off, and were now cramping. It was slow, painful progress until my legs warmed up. After a long dry section, we finally came upon some water Joel had promised. I was really looking forward to this, having almost emptied my water bottle.

It was 12:30, and I suggested a lunch break. We had been walking just over three hours, and I had been told at the park office that today was a seven hour walk, so I expected a long walk ahead. I wasn't looking forward to that, since I was already sore and tired. I asked Joel how we were doing, and he said we only had an hour and a half to go. That was encouraging. I filtered water, and ate some of my popcorn and cookies.

Joel was quiet, and we hadn't talked much until this break. Joel told me he wanted to go to America, and had looked into plane tickets, but they were too expensive. He imagined that our villages were like Kampala and that our cities were beyond his imagination, but I told him that Kampala would be a big city even in America. Joel thought I had three cameras, but I told him one was binoculars. He said that sleeping bags were hard to find here, so most guides and porters just use blankets, which are not always adequate for the cold mountains. He brought a sleeping bag this time, since we would be staying at a cold hut before climbing the highest peak, Margherita.

I told Joel about my trip to Nepal, and discussed how the mountains there are different from these. Joel told me he was 32 and married, with four children. He was surprised I was not married yet. We came upon Nyameleju Hut, a small metal building rarely used now. The trail was now fairly easy, following the Bujuku River on a gentle grade. The trail was often muddy, but logs had been placed across it. Once, I

missed a log and got water in my boot.

We climbed a little hill, and Joel told me we had only 10 minutes to our destination, John Matte Camp. He stopped and pointed out Margherita Peak, the highest in the Rwenzoris at 16,700 feet, which was visible for the first time through the trees. I got out my big telephoto zoom lens and took a picture.

Within a couple of minutes, we arrived at camp, which Joel said was one of the nicest. It had an attractive, new wooden hut for the tourists, and there was an impressive view of the central Rwenzori mountains up the Bujuku River. There was also a nice view of the Portal Peaks in the opposite direction. I took pictures of the peaks and some of the unusual plants in the forest around the camp. Joel slept in the grass with his straw hat over his face, and I went into the hut for a nap until 5:10, when Richard brought my dinner into the cabin.

Richard had cooked rice with curried vegetables, and an avocado sliced on a separate plate. It was a heaping mound of food, and the featured vegetable was cucumber. It was extremely salty, but I tried eating as much as possible. The rice was also too mushy for my tastes, and it became cold rapidly in the mountain air, so I ended up eating only about half of the food. A whole avocado was a bit much as well, but I ate most of it. I suggested using less salt next time, and ate one of my Milky Way bars afterward. Richard took the rest of my food back to the porters' cooking shelter.

This camp was at 11,200 feet, and I took my first Diamox to prevent altitude sickness. I hadn't used these in Nepal, except on the highest day at Gorak Shep, when I climbed to 18,500 feet, but my pace was slower there. I wasn't expecting trouble yet, but we would be climbing to 16,700 feet in the next three days. Richard made me a cup of tea, and I went to bed at 8:00.

February 11

Bigo Bog, To Bujuku Hut

I was awakened around 6:30 by bright orange light streaming through the window from the sunrise down the valley. I had already been up once at night, thanks to the Diamox, which is a diuretic. Clouds hung over the central Rwenzori peaks, but our camp was sunny. Richard fixed me fried eggs with onion. They were well done, as I requested. I didn't pack a new lunch today, still having food from yesterday.

The Spaniard and his porter headed back down after breakfast. If he hadn't been planning to catch the ferry across Lake Victoria to Mwanza, Tanzania on Feb. 14, he might have completed the circuit. He wasn't interested in climbing any peaks, though. He wanted to see Kilimanjaro, but not climb it.

I was then alone with my staff, which included my guide Joel, my cook Richard, my other porter, and two other porters who apparently were supporting the staff in some way. Joel and I set out first, at 8:45.

This was the day we would cross the Bigo Bogs. I was not looking forward to this, having read accounts of knee-deep mud which took hours to cross. I put on a pair of Gore-Tex socks and gaiters for extra protection. Fortunately, I found that they were now relatively dry, and crossing them would be no problem. I would not need to put on the high rubber boots I bought for these bog. We quickly arrived at lower Bigo Bog. The bogs are covered with grass tussocks which provide some dry footing. The most notable plants were the spiny purplish lobelia boquaerti, which my guide pointed out. He said there were two other kinds of lobelia as well, and he knew the latin names of each.

Across the bog, we came to Bigo Hut and its rock shelter, and rested a minute though the walking had been easy so far. There were still some spots with deep mud, but my Gore-Tex socks and gaiters were adequate. Upon leaving the bog, the trail followed a narrow valley to Upper Bigo Bog. The climb was not difficult, but the dense, thorny vegetation scratched my arms.

Upper Bigo Bog turned out to be especially beautiful, with vistas of the mountains ahead. I asked Joel to take a picture of me with my small Vivitar camera. He liked this camera, with its motorized zoom lens and automatic focus. Joel pointed out the glacier next to Elena Hut, where we would be tomorrow night. It seemed a long way up to be going in just one day. After the bogs, the trail climbed to Lake Bujuku through lush forest. There were some beautiful waterfalls and cascades along the trail here.

Joel said the Rwenzoris actually get more visitors during the rainy season. This surprised me, since the walk would be much harder then, and with poorer visibility. Joel said that is because they come to see the unique vegetation, which is at its peak during the rainy season. I told Joel I was surprised how few people were here now, when the weather was mostly beautiful. He said it was an unusual year, since the war in Zaire (just across the border) had scared most tourists away. Joel said he wanted to attend a NOLS class at Mt. Kenya next month, but the \$150 fee would be difficult for him, especially with so few tourists coming. He probably would have liked some help. I mentioned that I would go on to Tanzania afterward, and climb Kilimanjaro. I wasn't sure yet if I would visit Mt. Kenya.

At the top of the hill, we met some porters, and sat briefly, but not too long because it was cold and windy now. Soon we came to Lake Bujuku, and made our way through the bogs along its bank, which were muddier than the Bigo Bogs. Whenever the clouds broke, we could see Margherita, the peak I would climb the day after tomorrow, towering high above. Margherita is the highest of three peaks on Mount Stanley, the tallest mountain in Uganda (or Zaire).

The vegetation along the lake was not as lush as I remembered from some pictures, but they may have been taken during the rainy season. Past the lake, the trail became indistinct, climbing gently through slightly boggy tussock, with the river following many paths into and out of the ground below.

Before long, we came to Bujuku Hut. Today had been an easy, four hour walk, much better than I expected. I am sure I would have gone faster

on my own, but Joel's comfortable, deliberate pace was fine with me. This camp, at 13,000 feet, had two metal huts side by side. A lot of boards were strewn about, so perhaps some construction was planned. I counted at least four latrines downstream from camp, next to a garbage pit. All the camps so far had garbage pits next to the latrines. Park regulations require all garbage to be carried out, but I don't think the porters go along with that idea.

Richard cut up one of my pineapples and made a cup of Milo, which is similar to Ovaltine. Richard asked what I would like for dinner. He suggested rice again, but I wasn't thrilled with his rice yesterday, and suggested potatoes instead. I wanted him to fry them, since we had oil, but he didn't know how, so I had suggested boiling them, slicing them, and serving them with peas. He wanted to cook about a dozen potatoes, but I stopped him, and said that four of the small potatoes would be plenty. He would prepare the meal over a charcoal fire in the middle of my cabin today. I told him to watch for mice, since I had seen a couple.

It was chilly here, only in the 40's, and while Joel slept, I decided to go out for a walk. Stuhlman Pass (4160 meters) was just up the hill, and I decided to head for it. I knew Zaire was just on the other side, and that I could see into it from there. I was curious to see if I could get to the border that way.

It was very cloudy when I set out at 3:10. The route was a bit hard to find at times. I passed a large rock formation visible from camp, and made one wrong turn leading steeply up a dead end before finding the true path to the pass (just an occasional footprint, actually). I made it to the pass, and continued down the other side a way through the tussock, hoping to see where the border was. There was no more path now. I took some pictures of the view into Zaire, though it was not as impressive as the view on the Uganda side, back toward Bujuku Lake and the Rwenzori peaks. The border had to be somewhere down the hill, but I wasn't sure where. I really didn't want to encounter any rebels from Zaire. There was some light sleet as I headed back down to camp, arriving at about 4:15.

Richard said my meal was ready, though he worried that it was too early for dinner. I said it was OK to eat now, since I had eaten only the pineapple for lunch. He had cooked the potatoes and peas as I asked, and added tomatoes, onions, chile peppers, scallions, mushrooms and curry powder. He also followed my suggestion to use less salt today. The results were pretty good. He had cooked six potatoes, and I ate most of it. Richard's cooking skills are pretty basic - see what we have, and throw it all in the pot. This could get monotonous, but at least I would not go hungry, assuming he saved some food for the rest of the trek. I reminded Richard that we had three more nights. He had already served most of my fruit.

The temperature quickly dropped toward freezing after dark, and I was concerned about how well my staff, who didn't have much gear, would keep warm. I went to bed at 7:30, and soon noticed mice climbing around the shelves where Richard left the food. I rigged a rope from the ceiling and hung the food there. The Diamox I took caused me to get up again within an hour, but after that, I slept peacefully most of the night.

February 12

To Elena Hut

I asked Richard to fix me eggs this morning, since he does it well, and there are plenty left. Joel and I set out first for Elena Hut, which is a short distance on the map, but a steep 563 meter climb. We first descended to the bog beside the lake, then climbed steeply through the bogs on its south side. We climbed a metal ladder, and then reached an overlook at the trail junction to Elena Hut. We stopped for a rest. It was cloudy today, and visibility was limited, except back down the valley toward Bigo Bogs and the Portal Peaks. Mt. Speke, across the valley, was hidden by clouds. It was apparent that we would be heading into the clouds ourselves as we ascended further.

The trail to Elena Hut is one of the steepest I've encountered. We climbed the muddy trail through exotic forests that reminded me of something in a Dr. Seuss book. Gradually, the trees became sparser, and the trail became rockier and steeper.

After resting under an overhang, we began a climb up a steep rocky section that looked like it would go on forever, until we came to a switchback near the top of the ridge, and the trail leveled off. There were steep dropoffs to the left, and views were limited since we were now in the clouds. Plant life was sparse on the craggy rock. It would have been hard to find the way in places without a guide or a good map.

We followed the ridge around a bend, and soon Elena Hut could be seen ahead, high above on the ridge. We followed cairns up and down over the rocky ridges to reach the hut at 4540 meters (14,900 feet). We arrived at 11:30 AM, less than three hours after leaving Bujuku, so today's walk was steep but short. The temperature was about 30° F when we arrived. There was a small wood hut, where we would stay, and a smaller metal one nearby.

Through occasional breaks in the clouds, we could see the jagged peaks of Savoia above, and the glacier we would climb to Margherita tomorrow. The porters arrived at about 12:45. Richard fixed me eggs and tea. The other porters stayed briefly and had tea before heading down to Bujuku for the night. It was too cold for them to stay here. Their blankets were barely adequate for Bujuku. I took a group picture at the hut before they departed. Richard would be staying to cook.

Richard and Joel had some meat for lunch. Joel asked why I didn't eat meat, and I said I didn't pack it on treks for health reasons, but ate it otherwise. I lent Joel my Lonely Planet East Africa Trekking guide to read for a while. My dinner was ready early. Richard cooked pasta with fried vegetables. I asked him to just cook half of the remaining pasta. He would have cooked it all. The results were tasty. I ate all of it, had some tea, and went to bed. It was only about 5:00, but it was cold sitting around in the drafty hut. We were in a cloud almost constantly, with a strong wind and sub-freezing temperatures.

As I went to bed, Joel and Richard were preparing their dinner, which featured some kind of dried bread-paste. They had some meat and vegetables as well. Both sat next to the charcoal cooking fire in the corner of the hut all afternoon. Around sunset, I noticed them both going outside, and Joel said they were going to "pass around". I looked out and saw that the clouds had lifted, so I got my cameras and took some pictures as darkness fell and the sky over Mt. Baker turned orange. I saw Joel and Richard far above on the rocks next to the glacier.

We all went to bed around 7. Both Joel and Richard had sleeping bags, but they were thin. I think they had to rent them. Joel wanted to start our climb around 6:30 in the morning, just before sunrise. I was warm enough, but had gas and slept poorly, until after I got up to pee at 2AM because of the Diamox. I will be glad to be done with that stuff.

February 13

Margherita Peak Climb

It was still dark when I was awakened by Richard starting the fire to make some tea. Joel was up soon too. He told me he had been too cold to sleep well. I ate a plate of bread with tea, and dressed for the Margherita climb. I put on most of my layers, including my rain suit for wind protection. I didn't want to carry a pack, so I stuffed everything in my pockets or hung them from my belt: water bottle, camera, film, extra batteries, gloves, a balaclava, and sunglasses. I had almost forgotten the sunglasses, since I never wear them, but Joel reminded me. They would be important since almost the whole route is on ice. Joel brought a pack of cookies for me as well. I wore double socks for protection on the ice, but Joel barely had one pair, with large holes, to wear under his rubber boots.

The sky was orange in the east as we set out, and I finished a roll of film before we got to the glacier. I changed rolls in the semi-darkness, and Joel helped me put on my crampons. He also made a body harness out of the ends of the climbing rope, and we each put this on. Then we started up the glacier, which was steeper than it looked from the hut. I felt a bit like a dog on a leash, and Joel's normally deliberate pace didn't seem so slow now. He rested whenever I asked. Eventually, the ice became level, and we crossed the Stanley Plateau, a wide snowfield, toward the summits clearly visible ahead in the bright morning sunlight.

Mount Speke was visible across the valley to the right. I could see footprints through the snow ahead to the right, ascending toward Margherita steeply from below. I thought that was a more difficult route from another hut. Then we turned right and started descending very steeply, quickly losing much of the elevation we had gained from the hut. Joel showed me how to dig in the ice with my heel points, but I suggested going slow, since I didn't really trust them, and it was a long way down. I asked if we would come back this way, and Joel said yes. We were making a detour around Alexandra, the secondary peak on Mt. Stanley.

We soon started climbing again, on the path I had seen from the plateau. This climb was steeper than the one from the hut. Joel pointed out several narrow crevasses to beware of. He had explained how to belay in case one of us fell into one, but there were only two of us, and I had no experience with crevasses, so it was important not to fall into one.

We eventually reached the saddle between Margherita and Alexandra, on the border between Uganda and Zaire. As we began the final ascent toward Margherita from the shadowy Zaire side, the ice became much steeper. Joel showed me how to use the point of my ice axe to pull myself up. At the top of the short climb, we came to a wide crevasse. Thin ice covered much of it, and Joel probed the ice, trying to find a solid spot. He selected a place to cross, and we did so quickly. This part made me rather nervous.

It was then a short climb to the wind-blown, rocky top of Margherita peak. We removed our crampons and scrambled up the rock, which was a bit exposed but not too difficult to climb. The wind picked up sharply as we approached the 5109 meter (16,760 foot) summit, and I put on my balaclava. The views from the top were superb, with only a few light clouds blowing by. We took pictures of each other on the peak. We were at 5109 meters (16,760 feet), on the highest non-volcanic peak in Africa. Only Kilimanjaro and Mt. Kenya are higher. This summit is on the Uganda-Zaire border, and is the highest point in both countries. There was little to see on the Zaire side, because it was hazy to the west.

It was cold and windy on top, so we didn't stay long. Our descent was quick. I soon realized that I had forgotten one important item: my gaiters. My crampons shredded my nylon rain pants on the way down. We stopped to eat cookies before the final steep ascent I was dreading, as we climbed back around Alexandra peak. This climb actually wasn't as bad as I expected. The only problem was that the snow was starting to become slushy, making it difficult to get good footing on the steep slope. We passed an impressive ice-cave to our right.

It was starting to get cloudy now, with limited visibility as we crossed the wide Stanley Plateau and made our final descent across melting ice, which seemed steeper than I recalled. Joel shouted down, and the porters answered from the hut. I was greeted with corn flakes in hot milk and a plate of fried eggs when I arrived at 11:30. I noticed that in the darkness this morning, I had loaded both my cameras with slide film. This was disappointing, since it is hard (and expensive) to get a good print from a slide.

It took an hour to eat and pack, and then we descended through the clouds toward Kitandara Hut, our destination for the night. The rocks, tarns, sparse vegetation, and clouds reminded me of some of the alpine areas in New Zealand. The route across the rocky ridges was mostly unmarked until the junction with the main trail.

After crossing Scott-Elliot Pass, the highest point on the main Rwenzori circuit, we could see the Kitandara Lakes far below, and we descended steeply toward them. Kitandara Hut is near the second of these lakes. Jagged peaks were visible in the distance through the

clouds. To my dismay, we started climbing again when we reached the valley. The forests were similar to those in the Bujuku valley, with a lot of giant groundsel. The final descent to the first lake was beautiful - this lake was surrounded by lush vegetation, and more beautiful than Bujuku Lake. Getting around the lake was easy, and we soon came to Kitandara Hut on the shore of the second lake.

This was a beautiful location, which appeared lush and tropical, aside from the 40 degree F temperature at 13,200 feet. I quickly finished the slide film in my Nikon, since I wanted to get print film in it again and take some pictures of the beautiful lakes. The clouds had mostly passed, and it was sunny now. Richard fixed me spaghetti with peas while Joel read my trekking book. I wasn't very hungry, and the pasta got cold fast, so I ate less than half. I hope Richard wasn't too insulted.

Anyway, I was more interested in taking some pictures now, since the lake was beautiful in the late afternoon sun. I set off for a walk along the lake with my cameras, and took a lot of pictures. When I returned, Richard made me tea. I left my trekking book with him overnight to read. I would hang my food tonight, because there were plenty of mice about. I wasn't completely successful this time, since the mice here could climb the rope.

February 14

Kitandara Hut to Guy Yeoman Hut

I was awakened at dawn by Richard coming in to prepare breakfast. It was cold this morning (35° F) and I was still tired, having been kept awake trying to throw things at mice climbing down the rope to get the food. I was not too motivated to get up, so Richard served me tea and toast before I got out of my sleeping bag. I took a Larium to prevent malaria, which I forgot to do yesterday with the peak climb and all. There is no risk of malaria this high anyway. I have seen hardly any flying insects at all.

When I got up, Richard brought me some eggs, and Joel said he would like to leave in an hour, at 8:30. The porters were huddled around a roaring fire in their shed. I had been thinking of this as a downhill day, but there was a pass to cross first - the second highest on the circuit, so we started steeply up hill.

I was in the lead today, until the way became sufficiently unclear that I let Joel go ahead. We could see Elena Hut across the valley, high up on Mt. Stanley. The green valley behind us followed the Butawa River from the Kitandara lakes into Zaire below. Eventually, after much steep climbing, we reached a relatively flat marsh forested with small trees and lobelia. It was notable for the large number of birds. I had seen very few birds on the entire trek until now. The last I had seen was a lone duck on Lake Kitandara this morning.

I stepped in deep mud once, but mostly, this bog was relatively dry, as long as you watched your step. We soon came to the 4280 meter (14,040 foot) Freshfield Pass, between Mt. Baker on the left and Mt.

Luigi di Savoia (named after the first explorer) on the right. Then, we began a steep, muddy descent into the Mubuku River valley. Joel pointed out Lake Mahoma in the distance. It was not far from Nyabitaba Hut, where I spent the first night. I slipped a couple of times on the muddy slopes, and there were some tricky climbs down rocks. Sometimes, the trail followed a stream bed. We passed under some large rock overhangs, which have at times been used as shelter. Many of the rocks on the way down were shiny with mica.

The forest grew denser as we descended, and a porter caught up with us during a snack break at Bujongola Cave, a small rock house which was once the favored stopping spot before Guy Yeoman Hut was built in the valley below. Joel pointed out the hut when it became visible, still far below next to the river. The porter stayed with us into the valley, talking to Joel in the local language. People here do not look at each other when they talk. They just start talking, so if there is a group, it is hard to tell who is talking to whom.

Eventually, the porter continued following the river bed, and Joel and I followed the trail through the soft grassy valley, passing Kabamba waterfall. We soon arrived at the hut, a new wooden one similar to John Matte Hut. Joel said the river below would be a good place to bathe, on our last night before returning to civilization. But, at 11,000 feet, it was still quite chilly, and the river was freezing, so this would require some motivation.

Richard served me the last of my pineapple with tea, and Joel came into the hut to discuss tomorrow's plans for the end of the trek, a six to eight hour walk combining two stages. Some graffiti on the wall brought up the subject of tips: "To please the potters, you give them bonus" and "Good tourists give potter bonus." I told Joel I wanted to give them something, but that my money was in Kasese. He said tipping was entirely up to me, but sometimes guides go to Kasese with people for a tip, and he could do this. I said I would give everyone a bonus for an extra day, which was within the guidelines in the Lonely Planet book.

If I were carrying more money, I may have liked to give them a bit more. The pay is not very good. Joel said he "digs" when not guiding. The farming provides food for his family, but brings little cash. Joel said there are many guides who work in rotation, normally once a season, unless someone specifically requests a certain guide. I told Joel I certainly could recommend him. In fact, I hoped that through the internet, I might be able to get many more people to come here. We exchanged addresses. Joel can be reached through the Catholic church in Ibanda. Those who wish to request his services through Rwenzori Mountaineering can ask for Joel K. Kastam.

Richard and I decided on potatoes and vegetables for dinner. There was still plenty of food left, including most of the rice and all of the noodles. Clouds started to come in during the afternoon. I decided to go down to the river and clean up a bit. It was too cold to actually get in, though there were some inviting pools here. I shaved for the first time on the trek, which took some effort. I also tried cleaning and cutting my black fingernails. My hands were in pretty bad shape from hiking through the thick thorny brush. I quickly washed my upper body and dunked my hair as well. My clothes would still stink, but I

felt better.

Richard started cooking at 4:30. My Lonely Planet trekking guide was becoming popular, and my equipment porter asked to borrow it. Richard brought me a heaping plate of potatoes with green beans, tomatoes, mushrooms, and peas. Tonight I actually ate it all. After all, it would be my final dinner on the trail. It was pretty good, thanks to liberal seasoning, though I preferred not to watch it being prepared, since the vegetables were now rather mangled and well past their prime. The curry powder and onions added much to their edibility.

Richard came into the hut with my Lonely Planet guide, and asked where I got it. He said he would like to have one. I said I would send him a copy. I didn't know where to find one in Uganda. We exchanged addresses. Like Joel, he can be reached through the Catholic church in Ibanda.

At dusk, the porters gathered wood for a huge fire in their shed, and I took some pictures of the misty mountains up the valley in the fading light, going to bed shortly afterward. The staff was noisy tonight until very late. It was their last night on the trail together, and they were apparently celebrating. As for most nights here, I slept poorly for an hour or two, then was awake a few hours, then got a few hours of good sleep before dawn.

February 15

Return to Kasese

Richard came in at 7 AM to make breakfast. As usual, he prepared tea and a plate of buttered brown bread, then cooked some fried eggs with onions. Through the window, I could see the sun shining brightly on the forested ridges across the river. The ridges looked so thin, they appeared to be made of cardboard.

We left the hut at 8:45, with Joel and me in the lead. After climbing a little, the trail headed steeply down, following the river. The terrain was rough, with lots of rocks and roots and mud. The rocks were big, with huge gaps underneath, similar to the ones on the second day. Soon, the trail began to descend much more steeply, following a cascade down into a seemingly bottomless valley ahead.

This was often more like climbing than hiking, and the water made the mossy rocks very slick in places. A fall could be a disaster here. I proceeded cautiously, and the porters passed us. We also met some porters on the way up. They were with a German couple on a 17 day expedition. The bottom of the climb was especially steep, and dusty. My porters were resting at the bottom, talking to some of the porters going up. The German couple had an incredible number of porters, it seemed.

From here, the trail became flat but boggy, so progress was still slow. In fact, we encountered some of the wettest bogs yet, with mud up to thigh level (judging from probing with my walking stick, not actually stepping in it). We saw a large waterfall far up the Mubuku

River in the distance, back toward the mountains. Overall, today's terrain was probably the most difficult on the circuit. We spent a lot of time balancing on logs and roots over deep mud and streams, and climbing up and down rocks and roots. The trail actually followed the stream bed occasionally, with some pools that could not be avoided easily. The vegetation grew thicker, as we descended from a heather forest into a bamboo forest.

I met the German couple whose porters we had been seeing for some time. They were going clockwise, because they preferred to climb up the steep section today (the steepest part of the circuit) rather than down it. Joel pointed out a side trail to Lake Mahoma, which I saw yesterday from Freshfield Pass. This meant we were getting close to Nyabitaba Hut, the end of the first of the two stages we were combining today. I was looking forward to this, since today's walk had been unexpectedly difficult.

We arrived at 12:45, much later than I expected, since the distance we covered wasn't actually that great. Richard brought me the last of the eggs and a cup of weak Milo. It was comfortably warm now, 68° F, and sunny. Joel and I continued on at 1:15, with me in the lead. The rest of the trail would be familiar from the first day. The trail conditions on this "tail" of the circuit were generally good, possibly because it gets twice the traffic of the rest of the circuit. Also, it is not muddy here, and there are no major obstacles. The scenery on the ridge below Nyabitaba, as well as the general trail conditions, reminded me of the Smoky Mountains at home (aside from the jagged Portal Peaks to the left, which were now hidden by clouds). I told Joel this, so he would have an idea of what my home looked like.

As we walked into mid-afternoon, the equatorial sun was merciless through the moist air. The vegetation often shielded us, but the exposed sections were uncomfortably hot (as is true of the Smokies in the summer). I was glad we were on our way down. We met a man and his porters climbing up. I told Joel I thought they should try to get an earlier start on these treks, to avoid the afternoon heat.

Large banana trees started to appear, and we eventually made it down to the Bujuku River. I saw a blue monkey scamper overhead, and attempted a quick photo before it disappeared into the foliage to join another monkey. Later, Joel pointed out another blue monkey in a banana tree. This was the first wildlife (aside from mice) I had seen on the trek.

We paused for a picture at the park entrance, then walked back into town. Joel knew almost everyone, it seems. He pointed out a man who he said was important, who was leading a group up the river. A group of four children, two of them naked, were playing with large yellow flowers in front of one of the mud houses. They all ran up to us, speaking rapidly in the local language. There were a lot of trees with bright red fuzzy flowers. I asked Joel what they were, but I didn't understand his answer.

We came to the Rwenzori Mountaineering compound at 3:45, an hour later than I originally expected, due to the wet conditions of the first stage today. We would have been later, but we made excellent time on the last stage. I signed in, and said the staff did a fine job. The

porters had arrived a while ago, so everyone was here. My equipment porter asked for my address, and I got his. We never met much on the trail, and I hadn't learned his name, which turned out to be Zepharaiah. I gave Joel my rubber boots that I had brought for the bogs, but not used. He appreciated this. They are nice boots, but somewhat heavy, with steel toes.

Joel and I boarded a van back to Kasese, along with a number of locals. It was a slow, bumpy ride, with lots of stops. At one stop, a group of children wearing only tattered shirts ran up and waved. At another stop, police with bright blue uniforms and automatic rifles stood outside. We arrived at Hotel Margherita, the last stop, just after 6.

I couldn't get my valuables immediately, because the manager would be out until 6:30. I picked up my laundry, which cost \$13.50, and stored bag, and checked into my room. I told the man at the desk that I had just climbed Margherita, which was pictured in a couple of photos behind the desk. He said I was very brave, and that he started going into the Rwenzoris once, but turned back because it was too cold. I offered to buy Joel a beer while we waited on the verandah outside the bar, but he said he doesn't drink, so I bought soft drinks. Then, the manager arrived and I retrieved my valuables.

I gave Joel 50,000 shillings (about \$50) to share with the porters. He wanted to know when I would return, but I said it was unlikely, due to the great distance. He also asked if I could send him a sleeping bag, but I said this was also unlikely. It is unfortunate that Rwenzori Mountaineering does not provision their guides better. Before Joel departed, I asked the man at the desk to take our picture on the verandah.

I went to my room and took a much needed shower, thankful that this hotel had a good reliable hot water supply. Then I checked to see if Catherine had called. She may not know I am back, since the Ibanda and Kasese branches of Rwenzori Mountaineering don't always communicate, and I returned rather late. I had the man at the desk call Jumbo Nature Safaris, but it was now after 8, and they were closed.

I went to dinner, and the waiter, the large man I had met there before, welcomed me back. I told him I had climbed Margherita, and he asked how cold it was, since he had heard that temperatures decrease with elevation, though he had never been to the mountains himself. Like most people here, it did not make sense to him that people would want to go to such cold places.

I was disappointed to learn that there was no beef today. I had really been looking forward to a steak at the end of the trek. I thought of ordering goat kebabs, but they were fried, not broiled, and that didn't sound appetizing. I decided to get roasted chicken with fries. I received half of a rather small, gamey chicken. It was acceptable, but I could have eaten more tonight. The fries were excellent, as usual, and there were avocado slices as well. I tried another Ugandan beer, the Nile Special, which was extremely bland but came in a big bottle.

After dinner, someone came to my room asking me to pay for the soft

drinks I had with Joel this afternoon, since I forgot about them when the manager arrived and left without paying. I washed most of my dirty hiking clothes in the tub afterward. On the nearby hills, large rings of fire were blazing to clear fields. I had been watching these during dinner, and attempted a photo from my room. I went to bed after midnight.

February 16

Drive to Bwindi

I didn't sleep well, coughing most of the night, possibly because of the smoke from the fires on the hill. Around 8:00, shortly after I got up, I had a call from Baker, my driver. He said Catherine was sick and couldn't come, but he would pick me up. I said I would be ready at 9:30, and showered before having a big breakfast, just like I did last Sunday, with eggs, sausage, bacon and toast. This hotel makes great breakfasts. I really like the sausage here. The bright, sunny dining room is very pleasant in the morning, even though it seems not much thought went into the design of the hotel, which always reminds me of a hospital.

Baker was at the desk paying when I arrived. He had already payed my laundry bill. That wasn't supposed to be included, so I said I would pay him back later. (We both forgot about it, though.) Today, Baker was driving a Toyota Land Cruiser. The roads would be too bad now for a sedan. Baker said that the dusty roads coming here had made Catherine ill, so she had to stay in Kampala. I hadn't been expecting her to come the whole way, in any case.

I asked Baker to stop at Rwenzori Mountain Services so I could get some post cards. I had seen some here of the summit of Margherita, which weren't available at the hotel. But they were closed this morning, so I didn't get any. We headed south from Kasese, passing several checkpoints. Security is high since the Zaire rebels have taken control of the border region.

We passed into Queen Elizabeth National Park, and saw numerous bok, large antelopes with big, curved horns. We passed Lake George, and saw lots of strange cactus-trees. There were signs marking the Equator, which we crossed into the southern hemisphere. We turned onto a rather poor dirt road leading into the Ishasha River sector of Queen Elizabeth Park.

A large group of baboons crossed the road. Later, we passed a lake covered with green vegetation that was full of hippos. I was wishing I hadn't packed away my big lens, not expecting to see so much wildlife today. I already had 1600 speed film in my main camera, anticipating the upcoming gorilla safari. Today, I took mostly slide pictures, so I could put 1600 speed film in the small camera as well when the time came.

We turned left shortly before the border, with Zaire visible not far away across the Ishasha River. We stopped for lunch in a town called Kihili. It was now after 1 PM, and Bwindi was still a difficult 40 km

drive. The town was sunny and dusty, and it was hot now.

We went into a small cafe called Green Grass Hotel and Bakery. The walls of the small restaurant were bright turquoise, and a thin white curtain hung in the door frame. The menu on the wall was in a Ugandan language, probably Lugandan, and the most expensive item was 1300 shillings, about \$1.30 US. Baker said they had goat meat, and suggested some rice and sweet potato to go with it. I received a heaping plate of rice with a whole greenish sweet potato, and three lumps of goat meat in a bowl of fatty broth. It wasn't bad. Baker had a bigger meal, with matooke.

We continued our drive. On the way out of town, we passed a very fancy, large church, which Baker said looked like it should be in Kampala, not a village. Obviously, it was built with foreign donations. Missionaries are very active here. We continued through villages and banana plantations to Bwindi Impenetrable Forest.

Upon going to the Bwindi office near the entrance, we learned that they had no booking for me, standby or otherwise. Baker said a local contact named Florence was supposed to have made a standby booking. The officials apparently knew Florence, but said this was impossible, because standby permits are issued at the Bwindi office only a day in advance, on a first-come first-served bases. There were already six on tomorrow's waiting list, so trying to get on now was pointless. We would have to drive to Mgahinga tomorrow, where I have a definite booking.

I was hoping Jumbo Nature Safaris did a better job at Mgahinga. I had been suspicious of their "standby permit", since I had read the regulations myself, but thought they would have a better understanding of how the standby system works if they were planning to try to get me a permit here. Probably they understand, but do what they can to try to manipulate the system, and to convince customers they have some chance of getting one of the scarce gorilla permits.

We checked into the African Pearl Cottages just up the road into the park. These are rustic but picturesque little houses, with adobe walls, thatched roofs (over tin), and porches. The basic rooms contained only beds and shelves, with a small rug. The beds were rather hard. A small, shuttered window had no glass. The door had no lock, but could be padlocked. I used my combination lock for this.

I asked Baker to check into the times for the forest walks, which provide an alternative to gorilla tracking for those awaiting permits. The man at the cottages said they go any time until 5 PM, according to demand, but that if you want to take the popular waterfall walk, you need three hours, and must leave by 3 PM to be back by dusk. It was already 3:30, but this was the most attractive walk, so we walked to the park office and asked for a guide. They said it was too late, and it would be better to do it early in the morning. But Baker said it was a five hour drive to Mgahinga, and we must arrive by 4 PM there to sign in for the permit. To be safe, we need to leave early tomorrow.

The office agreed to let us do a quick waterfall walk with a young guide from the village who "knew nothing" but could get us there and back. There would not be time for a full nature tour before dark.

Baker paid \$22 for park entrance and a guide, and the official went up the street and brought back a barefoot teenager who spoke little English and wore a brightly-colored iridescent nylon jacket.

Baker came on the walk too. We started out following the road past the park gate and African Pearl Cottages, then entered the forest and crossed the shallow Munyaga River several times on crude wooden bridges. There were fern trees along the river, which reminded me of the ones in New Zealand's rainforests. This was a stroll in the park compared to the Rwenzoris, and we kept a fast pace, exhausting Baker, who is no walker.

The trail led to three successively larger waterfalls along the higher parts of the river. The trail to the upper ones was quite steep, and left Baker gasping for breath. Thick columns of army ants crossed the trail in places, and we had to be careful not to stand on them, or they would crawl up our legs and bite painfully. Our barefoot guide had to be especially careful. A group of tourists passed on the way down, including one man with a camera with an enormous lens. They may have been a gorilla tracking group.

We took a different route back. The guide pointed out a path crossing the trail, and said gorillas had crossed that way recently. Further on, we saw several black monkeys high in a tree. By the time we got back to the cottages, we were quite hot and sweaty. The teenager looked at me like he wanted a tip, but I didn't give him one. I probably should have, but had no idea what was appropriate, and he didn't speak English.

Baker suggested a drink, and I got a Pepsi. A man from the cottages asked if I would like a shower. It takes a few minutes to load the bags above the shower stall with hot water. I showered, and then sat on the porch a while, watching people on the street. A man offered three boys 1000 shillings (\$1) to pose for a picture. I thought that was a bit excessive, considering local pay scales. You can get a porter for a day of gorilla tracking for that, and my Rwenzori porters only made about 2000 shillings.

At dusk, oil lamps were brought for the porch and the room. There was also limited electric lighting from a 15 watt bulb high on the room's ceiling. Dinner was served around 7 PM. There was a fixed menu, and all five guests were seated together in the small dining room dimly lighted by candles and an oil lamp. Hand-carved images plaques of gorillas and other animals decorated the dining room and guest rooms.

The others would all be tracking gorillas tomorrow. They included a couple from Alaska, an elderly Australian lady, and a young Dutch lady. The Alaskan man was the one I saw photographing children earlier. He and his wife had been to Africa a couple of times, and now they had been traveling since December. They have been camping a lot, and have climbed Mt. Meru in Tanzania, a volcano not far from Kilimanjaro. They said that in Ishasha, hippos would wander around their tent at night. The Dutch lady said she was also looking forward to visiting "Sinsinbar", which meant Zanzibar. She asked if the animal plaques on the wall were for sale, and was surprised to find they were not. The idea of selling crafts to tourists hasn't caught on here yet, though there are a few place where you can find some, including the

Bwindi office.

Dinner consisted of some spiced meat with a couple mounds of lightly spiced rice and vegetables. The Alaskans were vegetarian, and they had a double serving of vegetables. A soup was served before the meal, and a sweet pancake with jelly was served for dessert. I had a Ball Beer, another Ugandan beer, with the meal. Like the other Ugandan beers I tried, this was a rather uninteresting American-style beer, but was not as bland as the Nile Special. It came in a big bottle. I had coffee afterward, but unfortunately, it was instant. I had become accustomed to excellent coffee in Uganda, so this was disappointing.

A man said breakfast would be served at 7:15. That would give the trackers time to report by 8 AM, and me time to depart for Mgahinga around 7:30. I went to bed shortly after dinner.

February 17

Bwindi to Kisoro

I was the first in the dining room for breakfast at 7:15. As usual, it started with fruit and toast. I asked for a Spanish omelet with bacon, and received a generous serving with three big round bacon slices. Afterward, a chubby lady met me at my room and said I should try to get into a gorilla group, because I was one of the six people on the standby list (which I hadn't seen yet). This was Florence, and she had put me on the list yesterday morning.

I quickly put my boots on and grabbed my cameras and lenses, and headed down to the office. Baker and Florence followed. I saw that I was second on the list, though the park officials were reluctant to acknowledge this, since according to the rules, people are supposed to put their own names on the list. Florence was persistent, and they ended up going along with her. We waited until the 8:30 deadline to see if there would be any spaces. But everyone showed up this morning, so nobody on the standby list would go today.

Baker and I packed the land cruiser and departed for Kisoro. Shortly after leaving Bwindi, Baker stopped the car, saying the accelerator was broken. Sure enough, the cable had come loose. He was able to reattach it, and we continued, passing many children on the way to school.

Baker stopped to get some food for lunch, and I waited in the vehicle. A young man came up to talk to me. He wanted to know why I had come to Uganda. He said he would like to go to America, but it cost too much, and he didn't understand why Americans would want to come here. He didn't look at me much as he talked, as is common here, but seemed interested in the interior of the car. A small crowd gathered around him. The man asked how we had been able to travel through the parks, and if there had been trouble. He saw my camera in the car, and asked what I was taking pictures of. He asked if I would show my pictures to people at home, so that more visitors would come to Uganda. He said that would be good, and then departed, wishing me a safe journey. Baker returned with boxed lunches, and wondered what all the people

around the car were bothering me about.

The route followed a narrow, winding dirt road through the mountains, going up and down many switchbacks and following narrow ridges which provided some of the best views I had seen in Uganda. It was a beautiful route, but Baker said it was difficult, risky driving. We passed through pine forests, and also through cultivated land, with fields extending high up the steep hillsides. Although it was a bit hazy, the views were usually spectacular, and Baker stopped a number of times so I could take pictures. I didn't take too many though, since I had already loaded both cameras with 1600 speed film for tomorrow's gorilla tracking, and I only had one more roll of 1000 speed film.

While driving over the bumpy ridge-top roads, I heard a loud pop, and smoke came out of the radio. This happened a few more times as we drove, probably because a loose wire was causing a short. We stopped at a hill-top market, and Baker bought a large bag of passion fruits, giving me one. Descending into the valley, we crossed a floating bridge, and then came to a toll gate. Baker adamantly refused to pay the man, who said that all private vehicles must pay toll. Baker still refused, and the man didn't seem to know what to make of this, so he opened the gate anyway.

Baker stopped on one of the ridges, pointing out Kisoro in the distance. The most obvious feature was a large collection of tents, which Baker said was a refugee camp. Although we were close to the border, there were no security checkpoints today until the top of the last ridge before descending into Kisoro. The officer waved us through without even approaching.

As we approached Kisoro, we came upon a steady stream of foot traffic. Most of the women were brightly dressed, and most carried large baskets on their head. Baker said these were refugees from Zaire, and people going to a market in Kisoro today. We soon encountered the refugee camp I had seen from the distance, filling a large field left of the road. Baker was having trouble with the dust, and leaned out of the car, spitting and coughing.

We went directly to Mgahinga National Park headquarters in downtown Kisoro, and checked in. This time, everything was in order. They had my reservation, and the lady at the desk was expecting me. She had also booked a room for me at the Sky Blue Motel in town. She knew Baker, who had been in with Jumbo clients before, and was friendly with him. Posters in the office listed a wide variety of activities in the park, aside from gorilla tracking. These included volcano climbs, caving and Zaire border walks (for the truly adventurous?).

Mgahinga National Park occupies a small corner of Uganda which meets both Rwanda and Zaire, adjoining the Park National des Volcans and Park National de Virunga in those countries. In Kisoro, we are 6 km from the Rwanda border and closer to Zaire. I paid \$120 US for the gorilla permit and \$15 for the park entrance fee, in cash. The bills had to be issued in 1990 or later. Baker wanted to go too if there was a space. As a Uganda citizen, he would pay only 20% of the gorilla tracking fee. The lady would know at 5 PM whether everyone who was booked had claimed their permits.

Baker offered the lady a ride for lunch, so she came with us. She introduced me to the ranger who would guide the gorilla tracking tomorrow. It turned out that the vehicle wouldn't start, probably due to the short in the radio. The lady didn't have time to wait around, so she walked to lunch. Baker and I pushed the vehicle, a diesel, until it started, and then drove a short way to Sky Blue Hotel.

Sky Blue Hotel was definitely a third world establishment, with about a dozen spartan concrete rooms surrounding a central concrete courtyard, in which laundry was hanging. Noisy chickens scurried around in back. The shared bath in the back corner had only a squat toilet, and there was no evidence of running water. However, there was a large cistern in the front corner of the courtyard, and a small canister across from it with a basin and soap. In front of the hotel was a bar and restaurant. The hotel was reasonably clean, but rather noisy, with the chickens and a blaring radio and staff working in the courtyard.

For lunch, I ordered curried meat (probably goat) with rice. It was pretty good, especially after I added some hot sauce. Baker had told me that the Blue Sky chain was known for good food, and the lunch confirmed this. The Mountains of the Moon Hotel I had stayed at in Fort Portal is the best hotel in the chain. This one was much more basic, but the food was fine. Baker later brought in the boxed lunches, which he bought this morning because he thought the drive would take longer. I said I didn't need two lunches, but he said it wouldn't last until tomorrow, so I saved it for a snack later.

Baker walked down to the market, and later brought back a large earthen pot. He asked the hotel staff to help him push-start the land cruiser so he could drive back to park headquarters for final instructions for tomorrow (and to see the lady there). He would also take the vehicle to a garage.

I walked around outside a while, not going far, but watching the refugees and shoppers stream past. There was a water shortage in Kisoro, and many people lined up at wells waiting to fill jugs. It was hot and I was sleepy, so I returned to my room, ate part of my boxed lunch, and took a nap. I awoke in the late afternoon, and saw a lady bringing two freshly killed chickens into the hotel from the market. As dusk fell, I talked to a friendly hotel waiter on the front porch. He had seen the gorillas, and said they are just like people, except they don't talk. He asked if I had visited the market, and I hadn't, but thought it would be a good idea, except that I had slept all afternoon and now it was getting dark.

I went into the dining room and ordered dinner. My first choices were thwarted due to a lack of beef, but remembering the fresh chickens I had seen, I decided on poultry. I ordered escaloped chicken. I wasn't sure what this was, but the waiter assured me that it was excellent. The preparation took a full hour. Eventually, I received a big piece of chicken, coated with spices and breading, and deep-fried, served with a tomato and a shredded onion ball, similarly treated. It was all hot and crispy and very tasty. The only thing that kept this from being a meal of deep-fried perfection was the soggy grease-laden French fries, the first bad fries I had encountered in Africa, and

especially surprising since everything else was fried so well.

Baker came in and suggested that I could get a ride with the Danish women dining outside on the porch, who also would be tracking gorillas in the morning. He said my vehicle still wasn't working well. I talked to the women, and we agreed to leave at 7, to be sure we made the 8:30 deadline for checking in. At Baker's suggestion, I also gave the waiter my breakfast order, a Spanish omelet with toast, requesting it for 6:30, which was earlier than they usually serve breakfast. I prepared the things I would need for gorilla tracking, and went to bed around 9:30. I slept well, until the chickens started crowing around 4 AM.

February 18

Gorilla Tracking

I had no problem getting up at 6:30, since the chickens had been crowing continuously for a couple of hours. Breakfast was slow to arrive, not coming until 7, when I had wanted to leave. The Danish ladies, who were in their 40s, apparently, and traveling with an African man, had yet to receive any food. They received breakfast at 7:15, which was the latest we wanted to leave. They quickly ate part of the meals, and their African companion sent back an elaborate fruit plate that had arrived too late.

We loaded into their red pickup truck, with the sun rising bright orange through the thick mist. Baker was up as well, and set off separately in my vehicle, which still had to be push-started. The Danish lady drove slowly, as if afraid she would break the four-wheel drive truck on the bumpy road. I was getting frustrated with her granny-style driving, having some doubts about whether she would make it in time. We watched for Mgahinga signs, driving up into the hills past sorghum farms. Sorghum is fermented to make an alcoholic beverage. We passed a small campground outside the park gate, arriving at 8:05, a bit later than was comfortable, but still on time.

The headquarters were in a small metal hut inside the gate, but the officers hadn't arrived yet. Some campers were waiting to try to get on standby. They could claim any spots not taken at 8:30. Six people would be tracking gorillas today. Baker arrived in my vehicle, which he said was OK now. He just needed to drive it enough to recharge the battery. The Danish ladies paid for their permits when the office opened. I showed the man my permit. He seemed surprised to see it, and clearly was not expecting me, but the permit was valid. Apparently he had not communicated with the Kisoro office, though they are in radio contact, and he should have known. One of the standby people, a scruffy bearded man, had thought he was sure of a space until now, and became angry. He was with a group camping outside the gate, and I could hear them arguing with the official who had misinformed them.

The campers would have to wait another day, because everyone arrived, including the two Dutch ladies, their Ugandan associate, two German ladies, and myself. The metal hut was just a temporary office, and a permanent one was under construction nearby. A number of westerners

were helping out with the project. Most of these were very scruffy looking, in sharp contrast to the meticulously-groomed Ugandans. It is unfortunate that Americans and Europeans who travel here to work or visit often give such a bad image, when Africans work so hard to keep a neat, well-dressed appearance.

A group of rangers stood in military-style formation to receive the day's assignments. One of them walked over to us, carrying a rifle. His name was Joseph, and he would be our guide. He said it was important for everyone to bring water, and to wear long pants and sturdy shoes. A few people didn't have water, because they had heard that yesterday's tracking session was short, taking only 45 minutes to reach the gorillas. But the gorillas are quite mobile, and we were told we could have a much longer walk. The people without water bought some at a canteen near the campground outside the gate, and Joseph offered to carry it in his pack.

The walk started gently uphill through "zone 2" forest. This was land which had been farmed before the park was created, and was being reclaimed. We would be climbing into mature "zone 1" forest to see the gorillas. Joseph said he was carrying the rifle in case we encountered any threatening buffalo, which can be very dangerous. We passed some people cutting wood, and were told they were not cutting illegally, but were rangers who wanted wood for a party.

We were in radio contact with two rangers who would be meeting us after locating the gorillas. Not everyone in our group was in great shape, and we stopped frequently for breaks. I found the walking quite easy, and followed closely behind the guide. I noticed water dripping from his pack. One of the water bottles inside had a hole, and his bird-watching book had become soaked. As we approached a pipeline, we were instructed by radio to head uphill into zone 1. Here, the climbing became more difficult, and the terrain more uneven. One lady fell into a hole once. I still found the tracking easy after the Rwenzoris, though it was more difficult than most on-trail hikes.

As we climbed, large volcanos loomed overhead in the clouds. After a couple of hours, we sighted the other two rangers, just inside zone 1. One had a rifle, and the other carried a large knife, called a panga, for cutting vegetation. They had seen the gorillas and had cut a rough path for us. We followed them to the spot where they had seen the gorillas, but they had moved on before we arrived.

This group had 9 gorillas, we were told, including two silverbacks, the older, dominant males. We followed where it appeared the gorillas had gone, cutting a path as we went. About three and a half hours after leaving headquarters, we saw movement in the trees ahead, and the rangers said to be prepared to take pictures if we got a chance, since there may not be another opportunity. They approached the gorillas, changing "mmm mmm" to let the gorillas know we were coming, and to reassure them. Before visitors are allowed to see a gorilla group, they are habituated to rangers who visit, and establish a pattern that the gorillas come to expect, and feel comfortable with.

I soon had my first view of the gorillas, a mother and baby. The mother was eating ants from a tree chunk. Both seemed to have no concern about our presence, and ignored us while the guides chopped

down vegetation to give us a clearer view. We sat and watched for a while. The guides said to get plenty of pictures now, since this may be our best view. In fact, it was unexpectedly open and brightly lit, and I could have used a slower film than the 1600 speed I brought for deep forest shots. The gorillas are accustomed to camera sounds, but flash may not be used, since it could scare the gorillas. Actually, I did see some flashes going off, without concerning either the gorillas or the rangers.

When the gorillas departed, we followed, assuming they would lead us to the rest of the group. There was a lot of crawling under trees, moving like a gorilla through the dense brush, complete with thorns and stinging nettles. Soon, we came upon two females with babies. The babies were climbing and swinging in trees. Here, beneath the canopy of the dense forest, my fast film was essential, and in fact, barely adequate for the active babies.

We still hadn't seen the silverbacks. We pushed on, as one of the females climbed high into a tree in search of ants. We heard a silverback making loud gorilla noises in the trees, and could see some movement ahead. As we came close, a silverback quickly ran through a partial clearing nearby. I probably got the only picture, being in front, but barely had time to point the camera, let alone focus. It was a big animal, and the rangers said it was the dominant one, 45 years old. The younger silverback was around 30. Gorillas normally live 50 to 60 years, and can reproduce at age 4. We followed the silverback, and came upon some more females, but didn't get a very clear view. We could barely see the silverback, sitting and eating. Only part of his back was visible between the branches.

We were now down to the border of zone 2, and our hour with the gorillas was over. This was the maximum time allowed for contact with the gorillas. We cut our way to a clearing and sat for a rest. I got out my snacks, and had a drink. Eating and drinking is not permitted in the presence of the gorillas. Other rules are that coughing and sneezing must be done while turned away from the gorillas, that sick people cannot track gorillas, and that any feces be buried. This is to protect the endangered gorillas' health, since they can contract human diseases.

We took a more direct path back down. The two rangers we met here split off and returned to their base camp, taking both rifles. Joseph would be unarmed if we met any buffalo on the way down. He pointed out some Pygmie huts outside the park boundary, near the other rangers' base. He said a large percentage of Rwandans are Pygmies, and that they live throughout the border regions. We came upon an old man climbing up to gather honey. When the park was created, some people were allowed to continue tending bees. We saw some pretty flame-like flowers.

We stopped for a few rests. Though I wasn't tired at all, most of the group seemed exhausted. The ranger said today's tracking was about average. Some groups can take much longer, returning after dark. People are warned when this is a possibility. People who withdraw because of an illness or because they feel unable to do the walk can get refunds if they cancel before starting, but not after the tracking starts. Some people must be sent back because they just don't have the

strength for the strenuous walking. After tracking begins, refunds are possible only when the gorillas cannot be located within the allotted time, but this rarely happens.

Baker was waiting outside the gate when we returned. He suggested buying a Coke at the nearby canteen before departing. I did this, and bought a gorilla T-shirt, black with rather crude white printing on both sides, for 10,000 shillings as well. At 4 PM, we began the long, winding drive to Kabale. We passed some backpackers walking up the road to the park.

We retraced our route out of Kisoro. The views were better than on the way in, due to the clear late-afternoon light. Baker said it would take about four hours to get to Kabale, so I expected a late arrival. In fact, it would be dark by 8 PM, and it was not safe to be on the roads after dark, so we tried to make good time. Still, I asked Baker to stop for some photos, since the views were so beautiful. The hills around Kisoro are probably the most beautiful part of Uganda I have seen. Lake Bunyoni was especially pretty today.

We were starting to get low on diesel, and Baker said we had used more fuel than expected. He thought filling the two tanks once would be enough. He suggested that I might have to buy some fuel, but that was not part of my agreement with Jumbo. I hoped we would have enough to get to Kabale, since we certainly didn't want to run out of fuel as darkness fell, when we weren't even supposed to be driving then.

We descended into Kabale much earlier than I expected, arriving around 6:30. We drove to White Horse Inn on a hilltop overlooking the town, and I checked in. I would be paying \$45 for tonight's stay, according to my agreement with Jumbo. This was a truly impressive hotel that looked like a country club, with striking architecture, pointed roofs, covered walkways, and stone and brick floors. Behind, overlooking the town, were spacious, well-manicured grounds with gardens and a tennis court.

My room was large and attractive, with a modern appearance, a high, pointed wood ceiling over the bed, and satellite TV. I think this was the most impressive hotel so far. As is common here, the construction is a bit off - some corners not quite square, some walls not quite vertical, and there are some signs of decay. But the hotel was spotlessly clean, and the overall impression was very elegant. A few details, such as the stiff towels, the lack of a shower, and the smelly water, would be out of place at comparable western hotels.

I went out and took some pictures around the hotel as the sun set red into the clouds. A man came out and told me I had a phone call in the lobby. It was Catherine from Jumbo Nature Safaris. She had been talking to Baker, and now she wanted to know if everything was going well for me. I told her everything was fine. I also gave her my flight information for Tanzania, so she could confirm it. Baker departed to get a cheaper room in town, and I went to my room to clean up from the gorilla tracking.

After dark, I went to the large, elegant dining room for dinner. They had a buffet including ginger chicken, tarragon lamb, spaghetti Napolitan, sweet potatoes, squash, matooke, and a few other things. I

was seated with an upper-middle-aged couple who were here to work with some hospitals. After they departed, I refilled my plate, and then was served a crepe for dessert. The meal cost 8,500 shillings, and they wanted payment now. Afterward, I wandered into the lounge. It was a nice hotel, but somehow felt a bit stuffy.

I returned to my room and turned on the BBC news channel. It took me almost an hour to get all the burrs out of my wool socks and gorilla tracking clothes. There was a bit of news about the Zaire rebels taking over a border town, and an increase in refugees from the shelling in that area. They said the government was trying to suppress news of the rebels' success in the east, so that the rest of Zaire wouldn't think the government was losing control. I fell asleep watching TV, and slept very well in the comfortable room.

February 19

To Queen Elizabeth National Park

I got up at 7 AM, packed, and had breakfast: an omelet with bacon and toast. I didn't have enough shillings to pay the hotel bill, so I cashed a couple of travelers' checks at a rather unfavorable rate, 0.90 to the dollar. Baker was a bit late, arriving at about 9:00. I wandered around the beautiful grounds while waiting for him. Baker had refueled the vehicle. Catherine had told him that Jumbo was paying for the fuel, so there was no problem.

We stopped at a Forex downtown to change a couple more travelers' checks, since I didn't want to change more than necessary at the hotel. The rate here was 0.97 per dollar, not too bad. We started out following the highway toward Kampala, which is paved and was in fine condition, so we made good time. Then we turned up a dirt road toward Itashka, winding through the hills. We saw many Ankara cattle here, which have huge horns. I had Baker stop once for a cow picture. We passed through land where a crop used for its fibers grew, and then passed a hot spring. Baker stopped the car at a place where he thought the hills were especially beautiful, so I could take a picture, though it didn't seem very notable to me.

There were a couple of checkpoints along the way, but nobody stopped us. Finally, we descended switchbacks quickly to the plains below, rejoining the road to Kasese we had been on earlier, until we came to the entrance to Queen Elizabeth National Park leading to Mweya Lodge. Along the road, we passed assorted antelopes, especially water boks, and a few warthogs, which ran off before I could get a picture. We passed a group out for a game drive, but mid-day was not the best time for this. There were a lot of fires burning in the brush, leaving large sections of the plains blackened. Baker thought this was probably driving off game now.

We arrived at the lodge in time for lunch. The lodge was not fancy, but clean and neat. There was a large, bright dining room and bar in the main building, as well as a small souvenir shop. I got a table on the porch in back, overlooking the Kazinga Channel, which connects Lake Edward and Lake George. I ordered chicken stew with rice.

Afterward, I looked for Baker to see if he had scheduled any activities for the afternoon. He had me booked for a 3:00 boat ride on the channel. This was the thing I thought sounded most interesting here, and I had specifically told Jumbo that I wanted to include it in my itinerary.

When it came time to check in for the boat ride, Baker was not around, so I paid 11,250 shillings for my share of the fee, which was divided among eight people. The more people go, the less it costs for each. Sometimes, people have to wait a day or two for enough passengers to show up, but now the lodge was full and this was not a problem. I had scheduled two nights here just to be sure.

I got a ride down to the launch site below the hotel. Six passengers were in one group, and they had a van. A hippo greeted us by the river, standing near the boat dock. The Kazinga channel is wide and open, not quite how I had imagined it in advance, when I was thinking of Uganda as being more overgrown and jungle-like, as in Bwindi. The boat crossed the channel and headed toward Lake George.

We immediately came upon a large group of hippos. We would see many more hippos along the way. They were everywhere. We saw a dead hippo with its feet in the air and a monitor lizard on its head. It made me think of Elayne, a friend from the UT Canoe and Hiking Club who likes dead things, and I took a slide photo to show at a meeting.

We saw a crocodile and lots of birds, including some colorful storks and some fish eagles. We also saw water bok and buffalo. I could see three elephants in the river far ahead through my binoculars. By the time we got close, they had decided to leave the water and were heading up the hill. We also came upon some people swimming near a village. We headed back along the other bank, but there was less wildlife on that side.

A larger group was waiting to board the boat when we returned to the dock at 5:00. Baker was there to pick me up. He apologized for not being present when the boat left. I think he was talking to a lady friend in the bar. He reimbursed me for the boat ride. Then I went to my room, which was quite large and had windows all along one wall overlooking the channel. I showered and washed some clothes in the tub. Hot water was slow to come, and just slightly warm. I hung the clothes from a rope I stretched across the room.

Dinner was served at 7, buffet style. This buffet was larger than last night's at the White Horse Inn, with all sorts of things to pick from, including pork chops, chicken with mushroom sauce, beef Stroganoff, macaroni with tomato sauce, matooke, potatoes, rice, squash, French onion soup, rolls, fruit, and chocolate cake. I ordered a Guinness Stout with dinner. I like the label reading "Guinness is good for you", which unfortunately is not seen in the US.

Afterward, I had some instant coffee on the patio. A fire was burning out back. I approached it, and heard someone say "watch out". Sure enough, there was an obstacle just ahead - a sleeping hyena. I met two ladies I had seen at the lodge in Bwindi. It turns out that they went tracking two days and had a great time. I returned to my room to get my cameras, and took pictures of the hyena. It seemed remarkably

unconcerned about all the people around. I saw one waiter almost trip over it, and some other people pass within a few feet of it without noticing it.

A lady from New York came and sat by the fire, but not too close since it was still very warm out. She was here with a museum group of twelve who wanted to visit the mountain gorillas. They had been doing some project related to Diane Fossey, who made the gorillas famous. She said she remembered when her father would travel to Africa and bring back gorilla foot ash trays and real shrunken heads. This was not her first trip to Africa.

The lady got up and walked over to talk to the sleeping hyena. A waiter warned her about getting too close to the huge animal, since it is wild and unpredictable. She seemed reluctant to listen, and kept talking to it. The waiter said the only problem he remembered with the hyena was when it came inside the lodge once.

I saw Baker outside, and he reminded me to get up early tomorrow for a 6:30 sunrise game drive. I returned to my room and went to bed after 11. I could hear hippos down below throughout the night.

February 20

Game Drive and Boat Excursion

I got up at 6:00 to prepare for the game drive. It was still dark when I met Baker at 6:20, and I went inside for a quick cup of coffee. We got into the Land Cruiser and tried to find a ranger to come on the safari, but the lodge was full and the rangers were all booked in advance, so we set off without one. Buffalos' eyes glowed in the headlights as they crossed the road in front of us in the darkness. Baker thought he saw a lion once, but it was only a hyena. Some hippos crossed the road as well. We headed across the main road as the sun began to rise, and headed toward the Ugandan kob mating grounds.

The sun rose bright red through the thick blue-gray mist. We saw plenty of kob, some waterbuck, buffalo, and warthogs. Salt-lake craters were gathering areas for wildlife. At the second we came to, we found a huge heard of bok. It was a beautiful spot, with the shallow lake shining below as the sun rose red behind it. A couple of male kob were gently fighting, locking horns. At one place, we saw at least 50 buffalo together. Warthogs ran by every now and then, but we never saw any lions.

We headed back toward the lodge, passing plenty of warthogs. We arrived at 9:05, in time to have breakfast, which was served buffet-style, and included cereals, fruits, juice, eggs, bacon, sausages, and some delicious corn fritters. Afterward, I watched the birds in the trees around the lodge, and found a couple of very colorful lizards, with blue and green bands. Baker found me and told me I was scheduled for the 2:30 boat to Chimp Island, where they take orphaned chimps whose mothers have been killed by poachers.

The lunch buffet was ready a bit late, after 1:00, and was as impressive as the dinner buffet. It included curried chicken, pepper

steaks, minted lamb chops, and assorted vegetables. As for dinner, they charge \$13 for this (which is included in my package). After 2:00, we drove down to the Chimp Island boat dock to board two small motorboats for the ride across Lake Edward. A group of southerners was here. A man from Birmingham saw my Smoky Mountain T-shirt and asked where I was from. They were missionaries, and this man, who had gray hair and a beard, actually lived full-time in Kampala. He had lived in Kenya earlier, and had some suggestions about what to see there. He said Samburu was nice, and the lake with flamingos. He said the Masai Mara wasn't worth the drive, and that Mera had deteriorated badly, and Mombassa should be avoided. He also advised not to go out alone in "Nai-robbery".

On the way to Chimp Island, we stopped briefly to see some elephants on another island. There are no animals except chimps on Chimp Island. The first chimps were placed there in May, 1995. Poachers kill female chimps to take their babies. Other babies are left orphaned and will probably die unless rescued. Many chimps can be killed to capture one baby, which often dies while being smuggled. Also, in Zaire, chimps are considered a source of meat, which is about as close to cannibalism as you can get.

Visitors get off the boat on a platform just off-shore. No chimps are visible, but they know to expect the boats, and soon come to gather on the bank before dispersing into the trees. There is one small baby in the group. A man brings food over to the chimps from a nearby island. They are fed twice a day while the visitors are watching. This ensures that the chimps come to meet the boats. We stayed about an hour before reboarding the boats and encircling the island to see the cave where the chimps sleep, and a variety of birds, especially fish eagles.

We got back to shore at 4:40. Baker was waiting. I returned to my room and showered, and then brought my binoculars to the lodge and sat behind it looking for wildlife in the surrounding landscape below. There was an extensive view from the hill on which the lodge was situated. I saw a lot of hippos, buffalo, and warthogs. Earlier, I thought I may have seen a lion, but it was probably a hyena. I took a last look around the small gift shop, and decided to buy a small "kissing mask" for \$10. They also had a lot of carved animal and human figures, plus clothing with the lodge logo.

I went to dinner and had just finished a bowl of potato-leek soup when the missionaries came in and invited me to join them. Tonight, the buffet had fish, chicken curry, beef stew, pork medallions, assorted vegetables, and creme caramel for dessert. The crispy breaded pork medallions were a favorite with everyone at the table, and I had two servings of them. I heard some bad news about Kilimanjaro. Reportedly, the most beautiful part of the mountain burned in a big fire recently. I don't know how much this will affect the climb I'm planning.

After dinner, I gave the man from Birmingham/Kampala my VIC business card so he would have my e-mail address. He has internet access through the missionary service, but uses it only for e-mail because it is expensive. When the missionaries departed, I sat out back on the porch and had a cup of instant coffee. There weren't as many people here tonight. Muzak played quietly and a fire burned in the yard. No hyenas came tonight. I went to bed around 9:30. Baker was planning a

late departure tomorrow at 10:00, so I would have plenty of time to rest. The night was peaceful, and I slept well.

February 21

Return to Kampala

I slept late and got up around 8:00. There was a pretty little red bird in the tree outside my room. It was cloudy and hazy this morning. Usually, the big windows lining the back wall of my room had a clear view of the Kazinga Channel below, but today, it could barely be seen. At 8:45, I walked down to the lodge for breakfast, bringing my cameras in case any interesting animals showed up. I passed Baker, who was looking over the Land Cruiser's engine, and just beyond, I saw a warthog rooting in the front lawn of the lodge.

The breakfast buffet was the same as yesterday. Uganda has great sausages. I took two servings. The corn fritters were good for seconds also. The staff was putting bread on the bird feeder out back, attracting lots of little yellow birds.

At 10 AM, Baker was not quite ready to go. As I waited in the lobby, a woman dressed in a nice blue dress asked me for a ride to Kampala. I said it was OK if Baker agreed. He was at the reception desk. The lady knew Baker, and I think he had already offered her the ride, and she was the reason we were waiting to leave. We would pick her up at the gate.

When we went to the gate, the lady was not there, so we drove to the employee quarters to check on her. On the way, we passed the hostel, where I found a mother warthog with several babies. I was going to take pictures from the vehicle, but Baker said I could go close, so I did, though they retreated quickly as I approached. We drove on to the gate, and found the lady this time. She spoke slow, careful English in a quiet voice, usually speaking to Baker in English as well, probably as a courtesy since I was present. We followed the channel to the main gate, where the guard asked to see our park permit. Baker had some trouble finding it.

We retraced our path back over the hills, passing a checkpoint where a bus was stopped and all of the passengers lined up to have their documents checked. We did not stop. They normally don't bother tourists. Today, we followed a good road to Mbarara. This was a fairly large town with some nice hotels, especially Lake View Hotel. We stopped at Pelikan Inn, on a back road, for lunch. Their electricity was off, so the menu was somewhat limited. I ordered chicken curry with rice, and the Baker and the lady ordered beef curry with matooke. The lady, whose name was Florence, asked if I ever had matooke before. I said no, and that the closest thing we had were plantains, which were normally sliced and fried, not steamed and mashed. Florence asked if I knew any Ugandan. I said no, and she said I should at least learn one word, "Oliotya", meaning "Hi". When we paid, Baker was short on cash, and asked to "borrow" \$10.

After lunch, we drift-started the Land Cruiser. I noticed that Baker

was always careful to park facing downhill. There was still some trouble with the electrical system. Mbarara has a statue of an Ankara cow, since this is the capital of the Ankara cattle region. We got back on the highway between Kabale and Kampala, and passed the Lake Mburu game preserve, which is home to zebras. I originally had that on my itinerary, but had it removed to allow a more relaxed visit to Queen Victoria Park.

The next big town was Masaka. The highway now bypasses it, but we drove through town so I could see it. Baker recognized a matatu driver there. This appeared to be a lively town, and had some discos. We passed a number of banana trucks having trouble with their tires or wheels. Some of these trucks were very overloaded. We passed a market selling all sorts of baskets and drums. Fishermen held fish up at stands along the road. We were close to the shore of Lake Victoria now. We stopped for diesel one last time.

The equator was marked by the same concrete circular markers we had seen earlier, south of Kasese. This time, we stopped for equator photos. An "Equatorial Cafe" was nearby, and a man in a suit asked me to sign the guest book. He also tried to sell me an equator certificate, which I declined. We entered Kampala around 4:30, passing more craft shops on the way into town. We soon were stopped by a traffic jam, where police were checking driver permits. Baker said a lot of people in Uganda don't bother to get permits to drive.

A short time later, we entered the center of town, and were stopped again for the same reason. We drove past Kampala High School, where Florence once attended school. We also passed Makerere University, and let Florence out nearby. The fuel was almost empty again, and Baker worried that it would run out in the heavy traffic. But we soon came to the nice neighborhood with the golf course, and were just around the corner from Fairway Hotel.

We checked into the hotel around 5:00, and Baker said he would be bringing someone else over tomorrow, so I might run into him again. I wondered what I should tip him, but didn't know what was expected, so I didn't give a tip. It wasn't clear if he expected one. This time, I got a small single room, which was good because I would be paying for tonight. Jumbo's tour was over now. Even though it was small, the room was still \$76 per night, rather expensive for a hotel whose hot water was unreliable, and still didn't work.

In my upstairs room, I could hear live music from the patio below. When I went down, I saw a black man with a keyboard and a white man with a guitar. They were playing a combination of African pop and reggae, with some American standards mixed in. I took a look in the gift store, and went to dinner at 7:30 in the hotel dining room. It was night now, and I got a seat overlooking the patio and musicians below. Today, I ordered peppered steak and a Nile Special beer. The steak came with fries. It all came to \$10.

After dinner, I watched TV in my room and repacked my bags for the plane flight to Tanzania. There was only one channel, Uganda TV, showing a documentary on women in India. I went to bed early, at 9:30.

February 22

Free Day in Kampala

Today I didn't have anything scheduled, except to recover from my safari before flying to Tanzania to climb Kilimanjaro. I was on my own now, having concluded my arrangements with Jumbo Safaris. I went down to breakfast around 8:00. It was already warm and muggy. In addition to the basic buffet, I ordered an omelet with sausage and bacon for \$6.50. I asked the front desk exactly what my final bill would be, and what it would cost to go to the airport tomorrow, so I would know how much money to change. I planned to go for a walk around Kampala today, and would change money and mail my post cards in town. The hotel has a poor rate for travelers' checks (90 cents to the dollar), but is not bad for cash.

It always feels a little strange venturing beyond the hotel gate for the first time in a strange city with an unknown culture. Although I had been in Uganda a while, I had been shepherded about by Jumbo Safaris, and being on my own for the first time felt different. I had never really seen Kampala, except through the car windows. I carried my small camera and a bag containing my Lonely Planet book and post cards, plus the hotel key I wanted to mail back to Margherita Hotel in Kasese.

I walked past a bunch of taxis clustered around the hotel gates, and turned up the hill, walking through a very nice neighborhood, including the Nigerian ambassador's residence. I walked toward the enormous Sheraton Hotel, whose tower was just visible over the hill. The Sheraton is in a beautiful park overlooking the central business district. I changed \$240 at Speedbird Forex Bureau there, where Catherine had said I would find the best rates for travelers' checks. I would need \$203 for the hotel bill, taxi and departure tax. The rest would be for souvenirs. The Sheraton has a little gift shop mall, and I looked in their shops, but didn't buy anything, expecting everything to be expensive here.

I walked around the park, where many people were lying in the grass, and then walked into the city, quickly finding the post office, where I bought stamps and mailed my post cards and hotel key. Then I walked along Kampala Avenue, which is home to numerous banks, all surrounded by small armies of armed guards. I headed down the street toward the parliament buildings, which are behind an impressive gate. The gate was open, and as I had read, you can still see bullet holes in the pillars, especially on the back side. Beyond the parliament buildings, I came to the National Theater. Next door is a dilapidated arts and crafts institute. I had been told I would find a craft market behind the theater, but it was deserted today.

I walked back toward the center of town, and down the hill toward the river valley. Here, the streets were crowded with a lot of small shops, and I found a large market. I returned to Kampala Avenue and walked in the other direction, past the square and a large matatu stop, arriving at Pioneer Mall, a nice little collection of stores. Inside, I found a well-stocked gift shop. I looked around a while, and decided to buy a large "kissing mask" similar to the small one I

bought in the safari lodge. I also bought a batik print of some ladies with fruits, that reminded me of village scenes I had encountered in the countryside. Similar prints were the most common decorations in the hotels where I had stayed. I spent a total of \$33.

I started looking for a place to have lunch. My Lonely Planet book said the Tandoor Restaurant had a good lunch buffet. I found it, but it was closed. A nearby "Red Bull" restaurant was supposed to have interesting German food, but I didn't see it. I saw a Fido Dido ice cream and snack shop next to Tandoor, and a "Munchies" on the next block, modeled after an American fast food restaurant - most obviously McDonalds. It had burgers, hot dogs, and southern fried chicken. I walked back to a Curry Pot restaurant I had seen. They serve Ugandan curries. A sign outside said they were now introducing boiled goat. I ordered beef curry with matooke, and had a couple of cokes, all for \$4. Ugandan curries are not very spicy. Some beans and vegetables were served on the side, and a fruit cup was included for desert.

By now, it was getting very hot out. I wandered around some back streets past the Hotel Equatoria, and found the Hotel Gloria which Jumbo Tours had suggested as a cheaper alternative to Fairway. It didn't look very impressive, but maybe it was not bad. The Lonely Planet book suggests it is not too nice, but Catherine said it's been remodeled since they reviewed it. I walked down the hill, across Bat Valley and a stinking creek, and a short way up the neighboring hill, which had a Sikh Center, a large tower of some sort higher up, a church (or possibly a mosque), and a nice house at the very top. This neighborhood generally looked run-down, and I didn't go very far before heading back across the valley to Kampala Ave.

I wandered around some more streets, and returned to the market I had seen earlier. No one had bothered me in Kampala until now - even the street hawkers and beggars went about their business passively. The market was different. I had to keep moving or be immediately accosted by numerous peddlers all wanting to help me find what I was looking for. I didn't spend much time there. I was hungry for some ice cream, and walked up toward the Sheraton. Just below it was a nice Italian restaurant / coffee shop where I had seen an ice cream stand. I got strawberry ice cream and sat on the patio a while, having a Sprite also.

It was now around 4 PM, and I decided to walk back to my hotel. Walking through Kampala, one of the most striking things is all the armed guards, both government and private. Each store has its own guard out front with a rifle, even the small grocery stores. The electronics shops and banks are most heavily guarded, with the banks tending to have a small army. Soon after I got to my room, I had a call from Florence of Jumb Tours, checking that everything was ok and that I had a way to get to the airport tomorrow. She said a lady had checked into the Fairway today, who would visit Murchison Falls with them, and maybe I would see her.

The hotel pool was very popular on the hot afternoon. I thought about a swim, but instead dropped off my packages and set out for another walk, up to the top of the hill behind the hotel, past a big military complex. I was going to loop around back to the hotel, but instead descended the other side of the hill, arriving at Kampala Ave. near

the Equatoria Hotel. I met a friendly person on the way down, and talked a little.

It was around 5:00 now, and I thought it would be good to get dinner in town tonight, so I walked down Kampala Ave. to an Ethiopian restaurant, Daas, which I had noticed earlier between the Tandoor Restaurant and the Curry Pot. It was not a cheap restaurant, but not as expensive as the hotel restaurant at Fairway. I was seated upstairs, and ordered Doro Wat, a chicken dish served with a hard boiled egg and berbere chili sauce. I was warned that it was very spicy. I said that was good, and ordered a Nile Special beer to accompany it. The waiter brought a basin and pitcher to wash my hands, because Ethiopian food is eaten without utensils. The meal came on an enormous plate lined with an injira, a fermented Ethiopian bread with a moist, bubbly texture and a wine-like flavor. The chicken and egg were at the center, covered with berbere sauce, with small dabs of beans or lentils and spinach around the edge, plus a second folded injira. The meal was very good, and just spicy enough. The total was around 6500 shillings.

I finished dinner at about 6:00 and walked back to my hotel via the Sheraton park, where a wedding party was taking pictures. I stopped in a grocery store and bought some matooke chips for a snack later. I had gotten quite a sunburn today. Back at my hotel room, I checked the hot water and found that, finally, it was at least a little warm, and I had a bath. Afterward, I repacked, taking my film out of its canisters to make hand inspection easier. Tonight, there were a pair of bad British sit-coms on TV, followed by long speeches by the President of Uganda, who was in Washington for some economic talks. He was actually an interesting speaker, so it was worth listening a while. Mostly, he talked about how to get the poor farmers out of poverty. Their problem is that they have little land, and use most of it to feed their families, planting the rest with low-value crops such as cotton or coffee, which bring in only a few hundred dollars per acre a year. He complained that protectionism kept Ugandan beef out of America, Europe, and Japan, where beef is more expensive. He also discussed improving Uganda's telecommunication infrastructure. A lot of what the President said made a lot of sense, and he seemed to have a firm understanding of economics, which gave me hope for Uganda's future development. I went for a walk around the hotel grounds, which were quiet tonight, and went to bed around 10:00.

February 23

Entebbe to Kilimanjaro

I was awake before dawn, having gone to bed early. I dreamed I was at Disney's EPCOT Center, where they had just put in some new rides, such as bumper cars where the goal was to injure the other riders as much as possible. The cars accelerated after each collision. I also dreamed about kayaking on an artificial river with some big waterfalls. I thought it sounded like it was raining outside, but when the sun came up, it was clear. I got moving slowly, going to breakfast at 9 and having just the basic buffet, to conserve my remaining Ugandan shillings.

Around 10:00, I brought my bags down to the desk and checked out, paying the full \$160 bill, including dinner Friday, in 10,000 shilling notes. That left me with \$25,000 shillings for the cab to the airport, which the receptionist called for me. I also had about 8,000 shillings left for lunch, more than I would probably need. I would pay the departure tax with a US \$20 bill. The cab driver played a muzak tape on the way out of town. Many streets were now familiar from yesterday's walks. We stopped briefly for gas, and pulled out just in front of a truck, which blew its horn loudly. There was a lot of construction along the way. I had read that there were many craft shops on this road, but saw only one. I took a picture of Lake Victoria as we came into Entebbe, which is a pleasant-looking peaceful little town. A lot of people surrounded the churches this Sunday morning. We passed a lake-front disco, and the old air terminal famous for the 1976 hijacking, and arrived at the airport just before 11:00.

On the way, the driver asked me about Africans in America. I told him there were many, especially in the South and in the cities. He said they must be living very well, and I had to agree. The Africans in America are wealthy indeed, compared to those in Uganda. I mentioned also that my boss is African. When I departed the car, the driver said I would probably be bored at the airport, waiting so long for my 2 PM flight. This may be true, but I feel more comfortable being early than rushing for a plane. A couple of people recommended seeing the zoo in Entebbe while I waited, but that would be trouble with all my luggage. I stopped in the cafe for an early lunch and asked if anything was available yet. They said the roasted chicken and fries were ready. I ordered these with an Orange Crush, using about half of my 8,000 shillings. While waiting, I removed the film from my cameras and put it in the bag I would have hand-inspected. I spent most of my remaining shillings on a box of Orange Creme cookies, some M&M's and another Orange Crush. That left me with about \$1 which I kept in case there were drinks in the departure area.

The board said the Air Tanzania flight to Kilimanjaro Airport was now scheduled for 3:15, over an hour late. I would have lots of time to wait. I passed my bags through the X-ray, handing my film around. They wanted to see a "long rod" in my duffle bag, and I showed them my walking stick. They asked what it was for, and I said I would climb Kilimanjaro, and had been walking in the Rwenzoris. They asked how I liked the Rwenzoris, and I said they were beautiful, but cold. Ugandans, who dress warmly even when it is hot out, think of the Rwenzoris as being a very cold place. It was about 80° F inside the airport, and Ugandans probably think this is cool.

Air Tanzania opened a checkin line at 12:30, and I was third to check in. My repacking had been more successful than I expected: my checked bag weighed only 12 kg, and they didn't weigh the carryon bag, where I had put more compact but heavy items, so that the bag would look lighter than it was. (I was also carrying all my camera equipment on my body rather than in the bags, to be sure the bags were below the weight limit.) My travel agent had warned me of possible trouble with the ticket, since it had cost only \$10 for what was supposed to be a \$150 flight, but I had no problem. I paid the \$20 departure tax and entered the departure area. There were some stores and a cafe here, but I had eaten already, so I went straight to the gate and went

through the metal detector. The X-ray here was covered, so they just felt my bags by hand and looked at my big zoom lens. The inspector said I would be bored checking in so soon, but I just wanted to relax until the flight came. I said I would read my Lonely Planet book, which was also in my hand (in case the pack was weighed).

An Air Uganda flight was preparing to leave. Once it departed, there were just three people waiting at gate 2. I reloaded my films into their canisters and sorted them (I number them with a marker), then relaxed to await the flight. I also packed my heavy boots away (wearing them also lightens the packs), and switched to cooler Tevas. The next flight departing would be Kenya Airways to Arusha. I ate some biscuits I had been carrying since Bwindi. I should have brought some water, but had been concerned about the weight. The Entebbe airport is pleasant and modern, but could use some air conditioning. I ate a few cookies, but will save most of them for snacks on Kilimanjaro.

The Air Tanzania flight finally arrived, a small jet. Before boarding, we were to point out our luggage lined up next to the plane. The plane looked nicer than the Kenya Airways plane I took to Entebbe. It was actually cool inside the plane, which was not very full. I took a window seat on the side facing north, which I hoped would have a view of Kilimanjaro. We flew on schedule, with Lake Victoria sinking into the horizon below. The flight would be just over an hour. We received roast beef sandwiches (which were little more than bread with a bit of meat) and a canned soft drink. I got a Fanta. Beer was available also. We flew over some very dry land and a big crater after crossing the lake, and began our descent with Mt. Mera visible to the left. Kilimanjaro was ahead of the plane, but never became visible.

After landing, my yellow fever certificate was checked for the first time. Few passengers got off here - most were continuing to Dar es Salaam, so Tanzanian immigration went quickly. Customs went smoothly too. There were no questions about my bags, just about where I had been, my occupation, and where I was going. When I said Moshi, the customs officer said "Oh, you are climbing the mountain", and he asked if I had transport. I said that Shah Tours at Mountain Inn was arranging the climb, but I had not arranged transport. He directed me to a shuttle booth outside the customs gate, where a sign indicated a \$50 fare to Moshi, as I had been informed by Shah Tours.

I never made it to the booth, being immediately accosted by a couple of men who grabbed my bags and told me to come to their car. A large, older man followed, saying they were not his drivers, and that I had to go to Arusha with him to get a shuttle to Moshi, because his booth at the airport was now closed. (It was just after 5 PM.) I insisted on going to Mountain Inn, and the men said this was fine, though they clearly had plans of their own. But I didn't want to go to Arusha with the "official" guy - it was the wrong way - and ended up in a car with the two men, John and an associate, who said they had a new safari company called Buffalo Safaris. They wanted to arrange my climb, and showed me a book of comments from customers - presumably happy ones - although few were in English. I lied and said I had given Shah Tours a 50% deposit, putting an end to the issue, though I left open the possibility of a wildlife safari later.

The road to Moshi was in beautiful condition, and the ride went fast

across the arid plain. A big dust devil popped up once, and Kilimanjaro was visible through the clouds. As we entered Moshi, the car's muffler fell off, and I began to doubt we would make it to the hotel. One of the men found some wire and tied the muffler back on, and we sputtered out of town a few more miles to Mountain Inn, a nice looking place a bit off the main road.

The lady at the hotel was expecting me. I showed her my fax. Mr. Shah would be out until 7:30, she said, but she showed me to a room, which was basic and uncarpeted, but in decent condition. The shower was the sort (with no stall or curtain) that got the whole bathroom wet. My dinner order was taken, and I requested steak. Then I showered. Hot water was available, but slow to come.

As the sun set, I went out to sit on the large porch surrounding the main part of the hotel. Around 7:30, a young Indian lady came to meet me. She was Bijal, who had sent me the faxes. She went over my itinerary and an equipment list. I would need only a tent, for \$5 a day. She suggested tipping the guide \$50 - \$100, and each porter \$10 - \$15. This was more than I tipped in the Rwenzoris, but Kilimanjaro climbs are more expensive as well. Bijal showed me a book of pictures, including a picture of my guide, Tobias, who she said is their most experienced guide on the Machame route, which is more difficult than the more common Machame route, by which I would descend.

An older man, Mr. Shah, came and asked me how I had arrived. He said a man with a placard had been waiting for me, but didn't see me, only "three old ladies" arrive from my flight. Certainly, I never saw the placard (partly because of the Buffalo Safari men), and the fax hadn't told me they were sending a driver, but only said the ride was \$50.

Another man told me my dinner was ready, and I was escorted to an upstairs dining patio, a pleasant breezy place with candles on the tables. One other group was dining here tonight. Dinner began with a stuffed avocado vinegarette and roll, followed by "French" Onion Soup (resembling an Indian soup, actually) and then my steak, served with boiled potatoes and carrots and a salad. A couple of small bananas were served for dessert. I was not familiar with the beers here yet, so I asked which was most popular, and tried a Tusker, a popular Kenyan brand. I finished with coffee, and went back to my room to pack for the climb, which took me until around 11 PM.

February 24

Kilimanjaro - To Camp Machame

I got up at 6:30, repacked a little, and went to breakfast at 7:30. I had my camera, and tried to unscrew the polarizing filter to take a picture of the patio, but it was stuck. I twisted harder, and the entire front end of the lens came off. Oh no! I thought this lens was finished, leaving me only with the big telephoto zoom lens and my small "backup" camera with my Kilimanjaro climb about to start. I wasn't very interested in breakfast now, but ate it quickly while attempting to reassemble my lens. Eventually, I found a way to screw the front back on. Adjusting the focus so that infinity was in the

right place was harder, but I managed, and the front focusing ring was loose, so I would have to be careful with it.

I paid for the climb, \$955 including the hotel bill, in the office, and checked my valuables and duffle bag. I met my guide, Tobias, and a van picked us up at 8:30. The driver was the man who had tried to meet me at the airport yesterday, and he said he had a sign with my name on it, but I never saw him in the confusion outside the customs area. He said he saw me going with "Zaza Tours", so he didn't think it was me.

Kilimanjaro was clearly visible in the distance as we drove to Machame Village, where we met the porters. Two porters, plus one for my guide, would go with us here. Another would bring up food for the last couple of days via the Marangu route. It was warm, in the 80's, as I walked with my guide to the park gate. He is 37 and married with children, so we are about the same age. I checked in, and started walking with the youngest porter, Richard, who was carrying a large white bag on his head. I think he had the biggest load.

We walked slowly through the forest, taking a couple of breaks. The trail was not difficult, though it climbed steadily and was muddy in places. I ate the lunch they packed for me - a bacon sandwich, cheese sandwich, hard-boiled egg, tomato, and two bananas - at the first two stops. The second stop was half way to camp. The walking was rather easy, and eventually I went ahead of Richard and arrived at camp just before 3:00.

None of my staff was here yet. I didn't know I had passed all my porters until I arrived at camp and found it empty. I tried getting a good tent spot, and set some things there, but a porter for another group got the spot when I wandered away for a while to see if anyone was in some buildings down the hill. He warned me about leaving things unattended because "people come from the woods", but the things didn't stop him from setting up camp on my spot. He simply moved them aside. Two Germans arrived at the tents he set up at 4:00. I had passed them earlier.

My staff started to arrive around 4:30. Tobias helped me set up my tent in a level spot a little way up the hill from my original choice (which had had a better view through the forest into the distance), and my staff brought tea with biscuits. A group of Americans arrived. In all, it looked like about seven climbers and their staffs had started this route today. According to the sign-in book, more than 30 started yesterday. If there are only seven, the camps shouldn't get too crowded.

Dinner came soon after I finished the tea: first soup and bread, then pasta, greens and carrots, beef and potatoes cooked with tomatoes, and bananas with more tea. It was a big meal, well prepared and presented. I ate most of it. I talked to a German man in my original spot a bit. He actually lives in Egypt. The sunset was pretty, with the sky around Mt. Mera turning orange. Kilimanjaro showed its peak through the clouds at dusk. I went to bed early, and had a terrible dream that someone stole my CD collection, but otherwise I slept reasonably well my first night out.

February 25

Kilimanjaro - to Camp Shira

I got up at 6:45, and breakfast was brought to my tent at 7 AM, as planned. First, I got dry, yellow bread with honey and margarine, with tea. Then came scrambled eggs with thick, lean bacon and sliced tomato and cucumber. The summit was clearly visible, near the rising sun. Mt. Mera could be clearly seen also. There were few clouds as I set off with Tobias around 8:15. I wore my heavier nylon pants, the ones I used in the Rwenzoris, and a long sleeve supplex-nylon shirt. Tobias wore a Patagonia fleece jacket with a Colorado Outward Bound patch, a synthetic undershirt, green plaid flannel shorts, purple leggings, high white socks, sneakers, and a bright green head band. The guides I saw here, and even the porters, were much better equipped than in the Rwenzoris. The pay is much better as well, and they get work more often. Tobias said he guides about ten trips a year.

We stopped a couple of times for rests, and so Tobias could smoke a cigarette. He said smoking gives him energy. He smokes Sportsman brand cigarettes in a bright red box, whose "YeeSSabo" logo could be seen at bars across Uganda. After a couple of breaks, the Germans passed us, and Tobias sent me ahead to walk with them. The Germans were walking slowly and only passed us because Tobias likes long cigarette breaks. We passed a number of porters, some carrying large meat coolers on their heads. The route today was fairly short, but steep. Some of it felt more like rock climbing. The route leveled off as we approached the Shira Plateau, and the trees became scrawny and sparse.

Clouds were moving in, and often engulfed us. As we approached camp, there was a nice view toward Shira Cathedral and Ridge. The groups were scattered widely among various caves in low ridges along the plateau. Tobias arrived, and led me to a sheltered spot where my tent had already been set up by porters. It was just before noon, so today's walk had taken less than four hours. I was not at all tired, and could have gone faster. Tea was served with a plate of popcorn and biscuits. I still had my lunch, and ate it too. There were again two sandwiches, one with butter and the other with honey, a hard-boiled egg, a banana, and a mango. The mango was a nice addition. I had a big thermos full of tea, and drank many cups, because drinking plenty of fluids is good for acclimatization.

We were now at 12,500 feet, and won't be going too much higher tomorrow. I was thinking of taking a walk toward Shira Ridge, but the clouds were getting heavier and visibility was now poor. I took a nap instead, until after 3 PM. After 4:00, the clouds started to lift, and I followed the trail in the direction of Shira Ridge, going as far as Shira Hut, where the other Americans were camped. I got back to camp just as dinner was being served. The soup and bread were ready. The main course was a fried chicken drumstick with french fries and fresh carrots, impressive considering the location. There was also rice with some vegetables: cabbage and perhaps eggplant.

Tonight's sunset was impressive, with the sky between Mt. Mera and Shira Ridge turning bright red. The pinnacles and Cathedral of Shira Ridge were highlighted beautifully. Kibo Peak was now cloudless, and

turned a nice reddish color. I went to bed at 7, but was soon up with gas and diarrhea - the food finally got me. It had been a good trip, health wise, so far. All night I was very gassy, and had to get up five or six times. I took an Immodium, but it made little difference - it was really the gas that was the problem. There were no toilet facilities here, just a grassy area littered with waste and toilet paper. (This is one big problem on Kilimanjaro.) It was a clear, starry night with a bright moon, and the lights of towns twinkled on the plain below.

February 26

Kilimanjaro - to Camp Barranco

I'd had little sleep when I was awakened by Tobias. Breakfast was ready, but I ate only about half to avoid trouble during the walk. I also took an Immodium before setting off. We started climbing up to the top of the ridge. It was a very clear morning. The entire Shira Plateau was visible behind us, with Mera above the clouds in the distance. Kibo Peak was also cloudless. The climb was not difficult, but my stomach was still churning with gas. After getting to the top of this ridge, we descended and climbed another. This would continue all morning, up and down one ridge after another, following the trail around the south side of Kibo. We climbed to well over 13,000 feet, and Kibo appeared to be very near.

Around noon, clouds moved in quickly and surrounded us. We descended steeply into a forest. Tobias pointed out a purple speck in the distance: my tent, which the porters had already set up. We descended to Barranco Hut, then crossed some streams and ridges to Barranco Bivouac, where my tent was set up near a small cave next to a stream. I was served tea with popcorn and biscuits, and ate only the best parts of my lunch: the mango and banana. There was a latrine here with a low rock wall. I used it, passing mostly gas, and felt much better.

It started to hail pea-sized stones, and I retreated to my tent. Soon, Tobias came and said the cave was too small, and we had to move everything to a bigger cave. I helped carry the tent over. The new cave was big enough for the entire staff to have shelter, and had an overhang that protected my tent from the hail. This was good, because my tent had a few holes, and if the hail turned to rain, it could be leaky. A thunder storm came, and heavier hail. Then, around 4:15, the sun came out and the clouds lifted. I could see all the way down to the plains below, but Kibo was still mostly in clouds.

After 5, dinner was served. I concentrated on the best parts: the soup, pork chop, and a few potatoes, leaving the spaghetti and cabbage. I was suspicious of the cabbage after yesterday. As the sun set, the clouds lifted from Kibo, and the mountain turned a nice red color. We were camped just below the moraine of a glacier that was feeding the streams running through camp down into the valley below.

February 27

Kilimanjaro - to Camp Barafu

I got up quickly at 7 due to another diarrhea attack. Breakfast was served at 7:30. I ate the egg, some cucumber slices, a slice of bread with honey, and a green orange. There was ice inside my tent fly. We began with a steep climb up the Breach Wall, often needing hands and feet. Then we went up and down around the Summit Circuit, at about 14,000 feet, to the Karanga Valley, where I was served a hot lunch with soup and French toast. It was the same unidentifiable thick yellow soup I have been getting every time. A small bird kept trying to get my lunch.

After the break, we began a steep climb out of the valley, and then had some more up-and-down ridge crossing, with a few flat stretches. The route was increasingly desert-like. We had a steep climb to a ridge top, where we met the trail junction to Barafu Hut, up the ridge. We found a porter (from another group) with altitude sickness there, breathing fast. We rested and Tobias smoked a cigarette before continuing up the ridge. Our porters joined us. The climb did not become very steep until the last half hour. The only plants were now some isolated clumps of grass and lichens on the volcanic rock. We were occasionally engulfed by clouds.

We reached Camp Barafu, at 15,100 ft, at 2:15. An American group was already here, having camped at Karanga Valley. I was brought popcorn and tea. The peak showed only briefly through the clouds, beyond the jagged volcanic cliffs ahead. The sharp peaks of Mawenzi could occasionally be seen to the east, when the clouds broke. There was some thunder from the west. One of the American women who had been on the same itinerary arrived in camp sick, and decided not to continue climbing the peak. The German man also said he was too exhausted to continue. It is possible to bypass the peak by going back to the junction where we saw the sick porter, and continuing around the mountain to meet the Marangu route. This is what our porters would do while Tobias and I climbed to the summit.

The camp, perched on a narrow, rocky ridge, was periodically bathed in sunlight as the clouds formed interesting shadows below. For dinner, I had soup, a chicken thigh, french fries, and macaroni with cheese, plus pineapple for desert. I ate everything. Tobias said he would wake me up at midnight for tea and biscuits, and we would begin the summit climb at 1 AM. The others in the camp were all starting an hour earlier, but Tobias figured I was faster than them. There was a particularly beautiful sunset at 7:00, but most of the camp was already in bed and missed it. I took a lot of pictures, and then went to bed myself.

February 28

Kilimanjaro - the Summit

Tea and biscuits were brought to my tent shortly after midnight, but I couldn't eat them without first visiting the latrine. My diarrhea was

improving, but I was not yet completely well. I packed, and we started walking at 12:45, the last to leave for the summit. A number of clients slept in camp, deciding not to attempt it - some of the Americans staying behind were already on their second unsuccessful attempt. Happily, Tobias carried my pack. He wore a GoreTex jacket, nylon pants, high leather boots, a balaclava and hat, and a Petzl head lamp. He is definitely my best equipped guide yet on a trip such as this.

The climb up the ridge was steady, but not difficult, over rock and loose volcanic gravel. The lights of Moshi were visible far below. It was a bigger town than I had thought. We caught up with an American group at 2:00, and stopped for a break. The moon was bright, and I was the only one still using my head lamp, so I switched it off as well. We passed the German lady and American man. As we passed, one of the other guides told us "pole pole", which means "slowly slowly" in Swahili - this is the mantra of Kilimanjaro. Tobias replied "pole pole shit", and we kept moving at a rather fast pace. I never got tired and had no trouble breathing. The previous Rwenzori climb had been excellent preparation.

We sat down at 4 AM, and Tobias said we would reach Stella Point on the crater rim at 4:30, less than four hours after leaving camp. I said that was too early - we would freeze waiting for the sun to come up. It was 10° F now, and would be colder and unsheltered at the top. We sat among the rocks for a while and let the American man pass (both of his female companions decided against attempting the summit). We continued on at a much slower pace, yet still reached Stella Point before 5:00. It was too cold and windy to wait here for the sun, so we continued slowly toward the summit, Uhuru Peak. The mountain and glacier were beautiful in the moonlight. I made a few attempts at time exposures (without a tripod), but suspect they would be unsuccessful - it was too cold and windy to be attempting such complex photography.

I could see flashes ahead from the American man taking photographs at the summit. We reached it, at 19,340 feet, at 5:30 AM. We attempted to take pictures of each other using my small camera, which has a flash, but it didn't seem to be working properly, so I don't know if they will come out. Tobias saw a man at the summit whose guide did not accompany him to the top because it was too cold. He said the man had "a shit guide".

We walked back down to Stella Point, where I wanted to watch the sun rise over Mawenzi peak. But we were still rather early, and had to wait a while in the cold. It was 5° F, and neither Tobias nor I was dressed to be sitting around at that temperature. But the beautiful sunrise, with the bright yellow light shimmering off the glaciers, was worth the wait. As the sun rose, I took more pictures of the crater, glaciers, and Uhuru Peak. It was then that I noticed that my small camera was frozen, putting in doubt that I would have any summit photo, so I started thinking that maybe I should go back to the summit for another photo, but I decided against it and continued around the crater rim to Gilman's Point, at the top of the Marangu route, which we would descend. There were still very few people on top, but several more had arrived from this side.

We descended rapidly from Gilman's Point, down steep volcanic gravel.

We took a direct route, sliding straight down across the switchbacks, by which dozens of people were slowly ascending from Kibo Hut, below at 15,400 feet. Tobias pointed out three people who were headed down because they found that they couldn't make it on this route, nicknamed the "Coca-Cola" route because of the amenities at the huts on this, the most popular (and shortest) route. The Marangu route is really much less scenic and varied than the Machame route, but it is far more popular, because it has the huts, and is shorter. (Time is money on Kilimanjaro.) Compared to the route we took up, this one is a highway.

Tobias "skied" on ahead of me at a pace I wouldn't attempt, sending up a dust cloud behind, and I arrived Horombo Hut at 12,200 ft at about 10:30 after stopping for a brief rest at Kibo Hut. Horombo Hut is a huge complex of A-frame wooden huts, mostly windowless, with solar panels on top. A canteen sells various refreshments, all expensive. The bathroom has running water. We set up camp in an open area with a view of the green fields on the lower elevations of Kilimanjaro below. One of my porters, Richard, is scheduled to depart today, so I gave him a \$15 tip before he left.

Richard's replacement arrived from Marangu with fresh food. For lunch, I had a french fry omelet - strange but tasty. After lunch, I did surgery on my small camera, removing the front lens assembly using the small screwdrivers I carry in my repair kit. I couldn't see what the problem was, but I suspected the flexible cable that connected the shutter to the camera's electronics. When I replaced the lens assembly, the camera would take pictures again, apparently, although the autofocus didn't seem to do anything, and I wasn't sure it was really taking proper pictures. I sacrificed a roll of 400 speed print film (which I rarely use) to see if the camera at least was functioning. For the rest of the trip, I would continue to use this camera to shoot slides, but would be suspicious of the outcome.

Tobias came to my tent and told me he had a headache from the altitude. I wasn't surprised considering our fast pace, and gave him a couple of my Diamox. In late afternoon, the view of the mountain below became clearer, and I could see a big crater and a lake in the distance. For dinner, I had soup with chapatis, a whole chicken leg, yellow rice, and vegetable curry, plus a fruit cup including mango, oranges, melon, and other good things. At sunset, when the cloud lifted from atop Kibo, I took a quick walk up the hill for a good view and some pictures before going to bed at 7:00.

March 1

End of the Kilimanjaro Climb

I didn't sleep very well, because a strong wind shook my tent noisily all night. Breakfast was brought to my tent at 7 AM. I had eggs and bacon with water melon and cucumber, and skipped the dry bread. I didn't see Tobias this morning. He may have got an early start. The new porter came for me at 8:00, and I followed him down. Porters are quite fast, especially downhill. Some of them passed us running. My porter had a light load, carrying a small rucksack plus a bag of dishes in one hand and an empty water jug in the other. He slowed down

when he got too far ahead of me, which happened mostly when I stopped for pictures. There was a kind of white cottony "flower" all along the trail.

We passed a lot of people going up. Much of the route on the way down to Mandara Hut passed through a burned area. All the bushes were charred, but the grass was green. We passed the small crater I had seen yesterday from Horombo, and I saw a couple of spots where fires were still smoking. Kibo and Mawenzi were still occasionally visible to the rear. The route continued gently downhill across the rolling green (but charred) countryside, until we entered the forest just above Mandara Hut, where we stopped for a break. Below that hut, the trail passed through forest and soon widened into a road. We started seeing women and children again, meaning the gate was close. The road became paved, and we quickly arrived at the entrance gate, at 12:25. Someone took my picture with the sign pointing out distances to various places along the Marangu route.

I looked in the shop at the entrance briefly, but didn't buy anything. The guide for the American group on my route said Tobias was around, and I went to find him. He had me sign in, and brought me my certificate for climbing Kilimanjaro as I sat in front of the shop eating the green orange from my lunch. I would skip the butter sandwich, egg, and overripe banana. I learned from the certificate that my guide's name is actually spelled "Thobias". I tipped him \$70, and he seemed happy with this. (Shah Tours had suggested \$50 - \$100.) He took me to meet the porters. I gave the other porters who had accompanied me on the route \$15, the maximum suggested by Shah Tours, and the new porter for just the last day 5000 Tanzanian shillings, or about \$8.

There was some discussion, and Thobias told me that Richard and the new porter were not happy with their tips, so I gave them each an additional 5000 shillings. Tipping is not really something extra at Kilimanjaro - it is expected, and some porters are said to demand their tips before the end of the trip. Shah Tours had told me not to pay anything before the end, to discourage this bad habit. They should have suggested bigger tips for the porters, however. Now that everyone was happy, they carried my bags down to the waiting van, and we took group photos. I also gave the other porter, who had not complained, an extra 5000 shillings as well.

We drove back to the hotel through Marangu. There was a short section of a nice paved road, but the rest was dirt, with lots of construction, until close to Moshi, where the road became paved again. Thobias came back to the hotel, and we said goodbye there. I spent a couple of hours cleaning up, then went down to the porch to wait for the office to open. I met a Canadian who was about to start the Marangu Route with a mostly British group. We sat and talked, and I had a Coke. The receptionist brought me a comment form to fill out, and showed me the items for sale at the reception desk. I bought a couple post cards and a Kilimanjaro t-shirt, for \$13 including the postage.

I wrote the post cards and filled out the comment form, saying the staff did a fine job, but mentioning that the hard, dry bread was inedible, and that there was a real problem with garbage and fecal

matter around the campsites. I also mentioned that they should suggest bigger tips for the porters.

A large French group wearing hippo t-shirts arrived. The office opened at 6:30, and I retrieved my valuables, and asked about getting to Arusha tomorrow, so that I could go on a safari. The man said it would be difficult because there was a new regulation, effective today, that required all cars in Tanzania to have speed governors installed, but that most vehicles didn't, including all of Shah's. He said he would get me a ride to downtown Moshi, and I could probably find a bus there: they run regularly as they fill up. This would be preferable to a taxi, which would be expensive, and maybe hard to find due to the new law. We would discuss this further in the morning.

I went to my room and tried to think of a way to pack my Kilimanjaro certificate without mangling it on the rest of the trip. I came up with the idea to enclose it in several maps and tape it to the inside back panel of my backpack, where a plastic sheet and aluminum stay provided a rigid surface. Dinner was served at 7. I had ordered a steak, as before. Dinner again started with avocado vinegarete, followed by soup. Then I received a pair of fried, breaded steaks with boiled potatoes, greens and carrots. Shredded pancakes with jam, arranged into a kind of a nest, was served for dessert. There were at least two other large tables of people. The hotel was a lot fuller tonight than last time I was here. During dinner, an older, plump man, apparently Indian, who I believe is Mr. Shah, came to my table and asked how the climb went. He said I could have a ride with him to Arusha at 7 AM tomorrow, and he would inform the kitchen to have my breakfast ready at 6:30.

I returned to my room and packed, and went to bed at 11:00, after purifying some water. I had an upstairs room this time, down a corridor near the dining patio. There was a large velvet tapestry of dogs playing poker on the floor behind my bed. Some people were singing and clapping hands outside somewhere as I went to bed.

March 2

Arusha: Begin Wildlife Safari

I got up at 6 AM to have breakfast at 6:30, the same breakfast I had before the climb, but more relaxed since I wasn't desperately trying to fix my camera this time. At 7, a driver (not Mr. Shah) came to take me to Arusha. He first brought another man to the Moshi bus station and inquired about getting me on a bus, but we ended up driving to Arusha. On the way, we stopped for a relatively clear picture of Kilimanjaro, and picked up three passengers. A lot of people were looking for rides today because of the new regulation requiring speed governors in vehicles. I said I didn't know which hotel I would stay at, and would decide on the way after looking at my Footprints Guide. I said I wanted to shop for a safari, and the driver suggested staying near the market area. There are hundreds of safari companies in Arusha, so the choice can be daunting. As we entered Arusha, the driver asked if I wanted to start my safari today. I hadn't thought of this possibility, but he stopped and talked to a driver from A.J.

Safaris, and he said he could get me on a camping safari today, so we drove to their office to discuss it.

A friendly, hefty Indian man met me and showed me the itinerary and a book of pictures and testimonials, and said I could join four people on a five-day safari to Lake Manyara, the Serengeti, Ngorogoro Crater, and Tarangire National Park for \$425 (\$85 per day). That would include everything but tips and personal items. This sounded like what I was looking for, and the trip was leaving this morning at 9 AM, so I said fine. The others included Eric, a man from Seattle on a five month tour of Africa, a Peace Corps worker from Oregon stationed in Swaziland who was traveling with her daughter, and a young Indian-Canadian man from Calgary who was born in Dar Es Salaam.

We loaded into the safari vehicle at 9:30, a half hour late, and drove across Masai land toward Lake Manyara. The Masai wore bright robes and had large herds of cattle, and lived in bee-hive shaped huts. They wore elaborate ear decorations. The land was arid, and dust devils swept over the landscape. It is said there was rain yesterday, and some puddles remained. I saw a young boy drinking from one while tending a herd.

The villages here generally belong to one family: a man, his wives, and their descendents. We stopped at Twiga Camp near Lake Manyara. The men in our group went for a walk down the dusty street. Children often asked for pens, and a woman offered to pose for a picture for 100 shillings, something of a bargain since we had been told the going rate here is 200 shillings per person, or about 32 cents. I had no small bills and declined, but Eric took a photo.

Some herds of cattle went by, one led by a man with a bow and arrow. We returned to camp and walked around the grounds, which were beautifully landscaped and planted with flowers. We actually didn't have to camp tonight, since huts were available, with private baths, and we could stay in those. This was a really nice camp. We walked to the bar and met the ladies from Oregon on the porch and sat for a while until deciding at 2:00 to check on lunch. It was almost ready. We were served a large lunch of chicken, potatoes, and vegetables. Around 3:00, we boarded into the vehicle for a late afternoon game drive. A couple of my traveler's checks were used to pay the entrance fee for the group, so I had to go into the office to fill out the forms. (I had used these to pay for the safari, and they brought them along, without cashing them first.)

We raised the roof of the vehicle so we could stand for better views. The first animals we saw were baboons - lots of them, but smaller than the Ugandan ones, I thought. We drove through forest a while, seeing more baboons and some blue monkeys, named for the color of their testicles, though we never got a clear view of their bottoms to confirm this. Next, we saw some zebras, one of the animals I'd been hoping to see here. We saw impala, which are common here, then some giraffes, which were another animal I really wanted to see. There were lots of giraffes. We also saw warthogs, some elephants, a gnu with a baby, some tiny dik dik antelope, black-faced monkeys, and a pool of hippos.

We saw some crested cranes, the symbol of Uganda, though I never saw

any there. We drove out to the edge of the lake, which was now very empty: the water was far away, and through strong binoculars, we could see a huge flock of flamingos, which looked like a pink line with the naked eye. We saw many more giraffe, baboons, and elephants, including babies, and one elephant high on a hill dwarfed by a huge baobab tree. We saw some hornbills and some guinea hens, and "sausage trees" on the way out, leaving the park at 6.

Back at camp, I had a warm shower, and dinner was served after dark at 8 PM: first soup, then minced meat in tomato sauce over rice. Dessert was a delicious creme caramel. We had a selection of soft drinks. The "Stonies", a ginger beer, were popular. The ladies had good things to say about Ethiopia and about Belize, as well as Guatemala and southern Mexico. Eric strongly recommended spending some time in Zanzibar, seeing Stone Town, and doing a spice tour. At least four days would be needed for this, including one there and back, one for stone town, and one for the spice tour. I would have just enough time if I scheduled nothing in Kenya. If I've had enough of safaris after this one, I will do that. I went to bed around 10, but it was too hot to sleep comfortably.

March 3

Camping on the Sarengeti

I got up at 6:30 and took a shower and shaved. Breakfast was served at 7:30: fruit, toast and eggs. A Masai man cleaned up the truck and hung around camp. Another came as well. Eric and I took pictures of him for 200 shillings each. We got on the road at 9:00, leaving Masai country and entering Mburo country. These people are farmers. The land and buildings reminded me of Uganda. We stopped for gas in Karatu, and soon entered the Ngorogoro Crater Conservation Area. We climbed high up onto the rim, and stopped at the overlook. I saw an elephant below through binoculars. We would come back here later for a closer look. Now, we descended toward the Serengeti plain, entering Masai land again. We stopped for lunch: a fried butter sandwich an egg, a piece of chicken, an orange, cookies, and a melted chocolate bar. We soon entered Serengeti National Park. There, in the hot mid-day sun, we saw a lot of gazelles and some ostriches. Mirages shimmered across the plain in the heat.

Soon, the vehicle stopped - and it wouldn't start. Something was wrong with the carburetor. Our driver, Richard, disassembled it and worked on it a while. We got out of the vehicle while he worked, but stayed close, mindful of possible predators nearby. Eventually, Richard got the vehicle running again. We arrived at park headquarters and paid the entrance fee. By now it was about 3:30. We were running late, so we left immediately for a game drive before making camp. We quickly found a sleeping male lion, and several females nearby. Shortly, we found several more lions, including a male and female together. They were all sleepy and didn't care that we drove very close. Driving across the roadless plain, we saw a huge herd of zebra, a few giraffes and ostriches, lots of gazelle, and more lions. We also saw a crocodile.

Around 6:00, we drove to our campsite. Several people wanted to camp in the grass off to the side, but the driver said it was safer to camp close to the other people in the central dirt area. We set up three tents. I would share one with Eric. We went down to the showers just before sunset, but there was no water. For dinner, we had soup, mini-steaks, potatoes, vegetables, and a fruit cup. The stars were beautiful tonight. We saw the Southern Cross and Megellanic Cloud. I scanned the forest edge with my high-powered halogen headlamp, catching the eyes of some bat-eared foxes, shining bright yellow. (When you look at an animal while wearing a head lamp, their eyes reflect the light directly back at you.) We heard gazelles fighting in the woods.

I went to bed at around 10 in the tent I shared with Eric. I slept well until I was awakened by rustling noises just outside the tent. Some animal was outside, and I was nervous, not knowing what it was, and not wanting to unzip the tent to find out. Eric awoke too, and I felt it brush against my back through the tent wall. I wondered if the foxes had come looking for food. I had some cookies in my pack. Or lions? A shadow passed over the vent on top of our tent, and I knew it was something big. Then I heard one of the ladies in the next tent say "My God, there's an elephant just outside our tent!" I didn't want to disturb it, so I stayed very still, hoping it would watch its step. By the time I unzipped the tent and looked out, the elephant was in the forest by the latrines. The people in the next camp noticed the elephant and alerted their driver. "No problem" he said, "he is our friend." He added, "Don't get too close!"

A couple of huge porcupines were outside rooting around the cooking area. They ran off when I shined a light on them. Later, they came back and I took a picture with a flash, scaring them again. The elephant stayed in the woods all night, and I slept on and off until shortly before dawn.

March 4

Herds on the Serengeti

I was awakened by people outside saying the sun was about to rise. It rose as a beautiful golden disk. The elephant which had been lurking near camp wandered off further into the woods. It was a big one. We had breakfast at 7:30, and quickly loaded into the vehicle for a morning game drive. We would go a long way today to find the migrating wildebeast herds in the south Serengeti. First, we searched some rocky places for cheetahs, but didn't find any. We did see a poisonous green mamba snake. After a long drive across mostly empty plains, we found a large herd of zebras mixed with wildebeasts crossing a river. Elephants were here too. We stayed a long time watching the herds cross the river, and then drove up-stream along the river to see the wildebeasts walking single file. We found an even larger herd, plus a great number of elephants spread out along the river.

Having seen what we came for, we drove back across the bumpy, roadless

plains, looking for cats. We saw a small spotted one, which appeared to be a serval according to our driver's wildlife guidebook. It was after noon and quite hot when we arrived at the Seratona Lodge, not far from our camp. This was a very deluxe safari hotel. The driver went inside a while, and we tried to go to the gift shop, but it was closed. Some of us took advantage of the washrooms to clean up, since our camp had no running water.

The driver had been talking to his boss on the phone to straighten out a problem with our itinerary which we had recently become aware of. We had been promised a campsite by the Ngorogoro Crater rim tonight. This was a special point stressed by the ladies from Oregon when they made the arrangements. But our contracts showed Kudu Campground, which our guide said was in town, not on the rim. So apparently A.J. was trying to trick us. Our guide told us a story about a robbery by some Masai at Simba Camp on the rim a couple of weeks ago, and said the change was for our safety, but we all assumed he was just trying to save money. Our driver was trying to straighten this out by phone. He told us he had no money to spend on Simba Camp, and if we wanted to stay there, we would have to pay \$20 per person ourselves. He claimed A.J. would reimburse us, but we were skeptical. We all decided, however, that we really wanted to stay on the rim, and we would work it out with A.J. later.

We tried to get fuel before lunch, but there was none, though the driver was able to get a little from a friend. We had used more fuel than expected on the long drive across the plain. For lunch, we had tomato beef with peppery potatoes and carrots and mango. Before we set out for Ngorogoro Crater, we drove a little more to try to find a cheetah, but all we found were some water bok. On the way out of the Serengeti, we did come across three more female lions. At park headquarters, we paid the extra \$20 per person for Simba Camp, promising trouble if A.J. didn't reimburse us.

We followed a fast truck across the plain, which churned up clouds of dust. We passed lots of gazelles. We entered Masai land and climbed into the hills toward the crater rim. The vehicle stopped briefly when the fuel pump overheated. Later, around 5:30, it stopped for good - we were out of gas, still a few miles from camp. Richard drained the remaining fuel into a plastic jug, punched a hole in it with his knife, and fed the hose to the fuel pump directly into it, sealing it (more or less) with a plastic bag. In the mean time, Eric hitched a ride to camp in another vehicle. At 6:20, we tried Richard's contraption, and it worked for a while, getting us only another mile or so before the fuel ran out again. Then another vehicle came by. It pulled in front of us and the driver got out a rope. They towed us the last few miles to camp, and we arrived shortly before sunset.

We set up camp and Richard went off to look for fuel while dinner was prepared by our cook, Mushaka. We had spaghetti with tomato-meat sauce, soup, and fried caramel bananas - a good meal, but not very filling. It was chilly tonight on the rim. A couple of armed Masai guards wandered about for protection. We could see just the dipper part of the big dipper over the crater. We met some Swedes who had come through Ethiopia and a Frenchman who claimed to be comfortable in his t-shirt, shorts and flip-flops. I got out my fleece jacket. The Frenchman said someone stole his watch in Zanzibar, but he got it

back, saying the thief would not be seeing much with his right eye for a while. He was a big guy, not a good choice for a robbery victim. I went to bed at 10. After midnight, I heard a lot of noise outside, and looked out. Mushaka was loading all of his equipment into the vehicle for the night. I slept well in the cool night air.

March 5

Ngorogoro Crater

I got up at 6:30 to watch the sun rise. Eric showed me a path down the hill to an open spot with a nice view of the crater. The sun rose bright orange across the rim. Breakfast was served at 7:30. Richard took the vehicle to get fuel, and did not get back until 8:30. We were getting rather impatient, since we were getting a late start for the morning game drive in the crater. Finally, we got on the road, and drove steeply down into the crater. First, we saw a lot of buffalo, wildebeast and zebras. These animals were everywhere, especially the wildebeast and zebras. We saw some crested cranes and a silver-backed jackal, and came upon two female and two male lions. The males were a bit restless, so we didn't stay close too long. We drove down to the water and saw some geese and flamingos, and plenty of animal bones.

We drove further across the crater and had a distant view of a rhino - a black rhino, the only kind here. We saw more lions in the distance, and another near a hyena and some elephants. We drove to a spring where there is always water, and stopped for lunch. Here, we found both elephants and hippos. Lots of land rovers stop here. An elephant walked up to a group of them, sending everyone running for cover. Then it headed toward us, and we got in our vehicle as well. An elephant is big enough to tip a land rover if it would decide to. The elephant walked over the hill, and we got out for lunch: beef and cheese sandwiches, hard boiled eggs, pancakes, bananas, and chocolate crunch bars with reasonably cold soda. (Lunch had been in a cooler today.) We couldn't stay out long, because some hawks came and dive-bombed us.

After lunch, we drove back on another road to the rim, and saw several rhinos in the distance. The vehicle stopped several times. Any time the engine stopped, it had to be push-started or drift-started. We saw another rhino, a couple jackals, and more elephants just before starting out of the crater. It was slow going, with the vehicle stopping several times on the way up the hill. Shortly after we got out of the crater, at about 3 PM, it stopped on the main road and could not be started. Several other land rovers stopped to help, including one from Abercrombie and Kent. It appeared to be an electrical problem. Some mechanics came and fixed it.

We drove back to camp and loaded the vehicle, getting on the road after 4 PM. We broke down once again in a village on the way back to Twiga Campground, where those of us going to Tangarire National Park would spend the night. Some water fixed the problem this time. The Canadian and I unloaded our stuff, and the others went back to Arusha. I shared the room with the Canadian, who was of Indian origin, and came from Dar Es Salaam originally. I found out that he was actually A.J.'s nephew. I showered, and then we changed rooms because the drain

was plugged.

Dinner was served at 7:30 - chicken in a tomato-vegetable sauce over rice, with tomato soup. There was fruit for dessert. We both did some laundry in the sink before going to bed tonight. It was hot here, but I slept well anyway.

March 6

Tarangire National Park

The Canadian's alarm went off at 6, but I stayed in bed until 7. Breakfast was served at 7:30. Richard had not returned last night. I put the clothes I had washed outside to dry while we waited. Richard finally arrived at 11 in a different vehicle. He said he broke down on the road last night on the way back and slept there until someone helped him get to Arusha this morning. He got the new vehicle, which he said is the one he usually drives, and left Arusha at 9 AM. This vehicle appeared to be in about the same condition as the other, and sounded like it also. So instead of a morning game drive at Tarangire National Park, we would have to settle for a mid-day game drive, not ideal.

On the way, we stopped for gas near a gift shop, and looked around in it while the vehicle was serviced. A large group of Masai women were hawking things outside. They requested 2000 shillings for a picture of the group, and then lowered the price to 1000, and I accepted, taking a picture of just part of the group, actually. I also paid a few ladies 700 shillings for a smaller group picture. When Richard returned to the vehicle, he was sweating and said he felt like he had the fever, meaning malaria. Nevertheless, we continued to a small, empty campground near Tarangire, where we stopped for lunch: chicken and an egg in tomato-onion sauce. We bought cold drinks from the bar there, and continued on to the park gate while Mushaka stayed behind cleaning up. It was now mid-afternoon and the temperature was around 100° F as we began the game drive.

Richard said Tarangire is his favorite park in the rainy season because it is so green and has so many animals. Now, at the end of the long dry season, the park is parched and barren. Without the numerous baobab trees and sausage trees, it would look like a desert. The river is completely dry in places. Most of the animals, including zebras, wildebeest, gazelles, giraffes, water bok, ostriches, and elephants, are not far from the river, which is now barely a stream.

Tarangire is especially known for its elephants, and these are plentiful, including many babies. Baboons are plentiful too, congregating in shady areas, eating the fibrous sausage tree fruit. Near the end of the drive, we stopped at a "picnic spot", where we could get out and enjoy a panoramic view of the elephants along the river below some steep cliffs. But it was unbearably hot, and we didn't stay long, ending the game drive after barely three hours. We picked up Mushaka at about 3:45 and headed back to Arusha through Masai country. This vehicle behaved rather well, and we made it to town at 5:30, when the A.J. office was still open. A.J. had no problem

refunding my money for Simba Camp. He was going to bring the \$20 to my hotel tonight, but I suggested giving it to Richard and Mushaka for their tip, solving both the problem that I wasn't sure I'd see A.J. again and the problem that I didn't have small bills for the tip accessible at the moment. (I hope they got their tip.)

A.J. suggested that I try Pallson's Hotel in downtown Arusha for \$25 a night. It looked fine to me, and was centrally located, so I agreed. The first thing I did after checking in was to take a shower, which was hot. Since my cash was getting a bit short, I wanted to use a traveler's check for the bill, but Pallson's doesn't take them. We tried cashing them at a nearby restaurant, but they wouldn't take them either, so I got a cab to a Forex bureau at Motel Impala on the edge of town. That attractive hotel is about twice the price of Pallson's, though having to take a cab to change money effectively raised the price of Pallson's by 3000 shillings. I changed \$50 for 28,000 shillings, and the hotel bill took about half.

At the hotel, I asked about a bus to Dar Es Salaam, where I could catch a ferry to Zanzibar. The receptionist suggested the Air Msae Motor Coach. A man from the hotel escorted me to the bus station to buy a ticket, since it was now after dark and security was a concern. I had heard of some security problems in Arusha, but didn't know the details. The hotel suggested carrying only 10,000 shillings to the station, enough for the ticket. We found the Air Msae bus, and I bought a ticket on board for 9500 shillings. I could choose the assigned seat. My shilling supply was again nearly exhausted.

I went to the Chinese/Indian restaurant in the hotel for dinner. I was the only customer, and had chicken masala, which was well prepared, with rice. The chicken serving dish was kept heated with some coals. Robocop was playing on the TV at the bar. After dinner, I turned on the TV in my room. The Commish was on. I went to bed early, expecting a 5 AM wakeup call. The hotel's pipes were noisy at night, interfering some with my sleep.

March 7

Arusha to Zanzibar

I was already awake when my wakeup call came at 5 AM. Two men escorted me to the bus, carrying my duffle bag. I was the first to report. I tipped the escorts 1000 shillings each, and they seemed satisfied. Loud Christian muzak played on the bus's stereo. The bus gradually took on passengers, and departed at 6 AM. We made several stops on the way out of Arusha. There was a beautiful view of Kilimanjaro as the sun rose bright orange ahead of the bus. A small cloud sat on top of Kibo like a hat. I took a few pictures, not knowing how they would come out from the moving bus in the low dawn light. We made a long stop in Moshi before continuing.

The drive passed through mountainous country with many plantations and villages, many comprised of simple mud huts with thatched or tin roofs. We stopped for lunch at a roadside hotel at 11. I got chips with grilled meat wrapped in a newspaper for 800 shillings, plus a

coke. Ordering was difficult until I saw someone with what I wanted and pointed, since I didn't know what it was called.

I had sat on the left side of the bus because I wanted a clear view of Kilimanjaro at sunrise, but this turned out to be the sunny side of the bus, and I began to regret my choice of seat as the afternoon grew very hot. I opened my window a crack, although all the other windows were closed tight. The boy next to me closed it once I fell asleep. People here like it to be hot.

As we approached the coast, the landscape turned to rolling hills with lots of palm trees. At last we arrived at Dar Es Salaam, a sprawling city with lots of traffic lights. We got into the bus station at about 3:00. I was worried that it might be too late to get a ferry to Zanzibar, but one of the taxi drivers who surrounded the bus upon our arrival said I could make the 4:30 departure. He drove me to the Sea Express ticket office, and I got a ticket for \$30. I had to pay the \$5 port tax at another window, and the driver carried my bag to a waiting room under the stairs at the port. I gave him a \$2 tip for this, in addition to the 4000 shillings for the ride.

The ferry arrived just before 4:30. It was very stuffy on board, in the 90's. Fortunately, the ferry was a hydrofoil, and very fast. We made the crossing in just over an hour. There was also a small outdoor deck in back, which was hot but breezy. As I retrieved my duffle bag, a man took it and said he would carry it. I refused, but he picked it up anyway and carried it until he was stopped at the dock. There, I met one of the waiting cab drivers, and we carried the bag together to immigration and customs. Zanzibar has its own immigration procedures, and stamps your passport, even though it is part of Tanzania. My yellow fever certificate wasn't checked here. We carried my bag to customs so the officer could mark it with chalk (apparently his only job).

I told the taxi driver I wanted to go to the Pyramid Guest House in Stone Town, since it had been recommended by Eric on the safari. The driver drove me just a short distance, and then stopped and we carried the bag together through the narrow maze of alleys of Stone Town, where a vehicle would not fit. On the way to the hotel, he told me of various tours he could give me tomorrow. It would be cheaper to get on a tour with a group, but I would talk to him about it.

At the Pyramid Guest House, I was shown a self-contained single room on the top floor, at the top of an extremely steep staircase (easier to descend going backwards, as on a ladder). The guest house was very vertically oriented, with little horizontal extent. The room was quite nice, with a canopied bed, interesting carved furniture, a large, clean bathroom, and a ceiling fan. It looked like a good bargain at \$10 a night, breakfast included.

The cab driver told me he would meet me tomorrow at 8:30 to discuss tour options, and I could pay him later - he knew where to find me. I was soaked with sweat from the 100^o F heat, and eager to take a shower. Of all the hotels so far, this one had the hottest water, which was really not what I wanted today. It was 7:30 and dark when I finished my shower.

I went downstairs and asked about restaurants, since the hotel doesn't serve dinner. The man at the desk suggested going to the waterfront, where I would find a number of popular restaurants, including Fisherman's, which he recommended. I was a little nervous about going out alone at night, since Stone Town is said to have some security problems, and I had no idea how to get around. I brought just enough cash for dinner, in case of a robbery, and attempted to retrace the path we had taken to get to the hotel. I wasn't completely successful, and ended up in some darker, narrower alleys than I would have preferred. At one point a woman passed, greeting me with "Jambo", then "Careful".

It didn't take too long to find the main road on the coast - there are many ways out of Stone Town. I saw a restaurant nearby called Sea View, and Indian restaurant which was listed favorably in my books, so I decided to try it. I was seated on the balcony overlooking the dark ocean. The lobster and prawns had just come in tonight at 7, so I ordered lobster curry.

I was told the restaurant also offers spice tours for \$8 with a minimum of four persons. Since that was something I wanted to do, I said I was interested. They said to come back at 9 AM tomorrow. The meal turned out to be pretty good. I received two lobster tails in a tomato masala sauce with rice, spinach, salad, chapatis and four chutneys, followed by a fruit plate and coffee, plus a Safari beer, all for \$11. I paid with a \$20 bill to get some shillings in change. The currencies used here are a mix of US dollars and Tanzanian shillings, with US dollars actually required for certain things, such as paying hotel bills. (This could be inconvenient if you came unprepared, since there doesn't seem to be a way to get US dollars if you didn't bring them.)

After dinner, the manager expressed some concern about me walking back to the hotel alone through Stone Town, because "it used to be paradise here, but that is no longer true". At first, he gave me directions for going around the north edge of Stone Town and entering from Creek Road, past Narrow Street Inn. But I didn't know that route, and he decided to send a young Indian man with me as an escort. He told me there were a lot more Indians here before the revolution, and this accounts for the Indian-style carved doors on many of the buildings. We followed a new route back to the hotel, approaching it from the east for the first time, although the route started out the same from Mizingami Road. I took a cold shower to cool off, and fell asleep rather early.

March 8

Zanzibar Spice Tour

I was awakened at 5:30 by singing from the loudspeaker at nearby Ijanaa Mosque. Soon after this, the chickens started, followed by noisy doves outside my window. I got up at 6:30 with a mild case of diarrhea, and took a couple Immodiums to keep it from interfering with my Spice Tour. I showered again and went to the roof for breakfast:

bread and jam, an omelet on a chapati, and fruit.

I asked the reception desk how to make a call to the KLM office in Dar Es Salaam to confirm my flight home in three days. He told me the hotel phone could not make outgoing calls, and said I could do it at the post office. At 8:30, my taxi driver returned to offer a spice tour. He wanted \$60 for a personal tour. I said that was too much, but I might be interested in a tour of the town later. That didn't interest him, but we agreed I would give him 2000 shillings for escorting me here and helping me carry my duffel bag yesterday. When I went to get the money, he brought another man selling group tours for \$10. I didn't catch the name of the tour.

I got my cameras and prepared to go to the Seaside Restaurant for their spice tour, but a black man at the door said I should go with him to get on Solomon's Spice Tour, one of the two oldest tours (only Mitu's is older). Solomon wasn't mentioned in my books, just Mitu's, but I think Eric said he took Solomon's tour and it was good. This tour costs \$10 and lasts until 4:00, longer than Seaside's. He said we should go quickly to get a space for today's tour. Solomon would show us various spices and fruits growing on the island, and we would have a swim in the Indian Ocean and a meal featuring local ingredients.

We walked fast through Stone Town to the southern end and entered a big hotel on the waterfront, where we went to the Island Discovery Tours office and paid for the tour. Thirteen people would be going on this tour. Shortly after 10:00, we loaded into an open-sided truck with a roof and seats around the edge.

We drove to a village and walked about as Solomon showed us various fruits, spices, and medicinal plants. He is a tall black man who always refers to himself as "Solomon" or "Dr. Solomon". When we were to move on, he would say "Follow Solomon to see other things." We learned that the local people don't like the avocados, because they are not sweet, but are happy to sell them to the foreigners who like them. We continued from village to village seeing a wide variety of spices and fruits. At one stop, they sliced open a huge jackfruit and served us all pieces. The fruit is sweet, but with a somewhat oniony flavor. We also had mangos here. It started to rain, and we sat in a thatched-roof shelter to eat the fruit.

The rain became heavy, and we returned to the truck and put down the clear plastic side covers, and waited for the rain to slow down, but it appeared that it may not slow down. I had really good weather on this trip until now. Perhaps the dry season is ending, or maybe Zanzibar just gets more rain because it is an island.

Some children from the village, including one wearing a green woven palm leaf hat, had followed us to the truck, and hung onto the back as we drove to the next place. At one spot, we drove into a deep, water-filled rut and stopped with a lurch. A bunch of people helped us push the truck out of the ditch. Soon, the weather began to clear up. We saw a clove plantation and coffee plantation. The coffee beans on the trees were white, and we picked some off and tasted them. We stopped to see an old Persian bath house. The nutmeg fruit was very interesting. The large brown seed inside is covered with bright red strands. We stopped at a store where the spices were sold, and you

could buy coconuts and drink the water and eat the soft flesh from the middle.

At about 1:30, we stopped for lunch at a little house. We had cardamom-cinnamon spiced rice with potatoes, coconut curry potatoes, spinach cooked with coconut oil, a salad, and lemon grass tea. There was plenty of tasty food, and some people ate until stuffed. After lunch, we saw more spices and a coconut plantation. They use all parts of the coconut: the husk is used for ropes and mats, the shell can be burned like wood, and the inside makes coconut meat, coconut oil, and coconut water.

We visited a slave cave and an underground chamber where slaves were hidden to continue the slave trade after it was officially forbidden. Then we went to a beautiful, palm lined beach for a swim. I had left in a rush this morning, and hadn't had time to look for my water shorts, but had put on my nylon Patagonia hiking underwear, which would have to do. I wasn't the only one without proper swimwear. The water was quite warm, even uncomfortably warm near the shore. By the beach, we were given the juice of a fruit similar to a passion fruit, but bright yellow and with bigger seeds. A couple of people were missing when we prepared to leave, having swum around some rocks to another cove. They got a ride back on a dhow, a wooden sailboat used here.

On the way back to town, we stopped at some palace ruins. They were now home to bats, whose droppings smear the walls. One hallway has five toilets. Solomon said it was so the Sultan could use a different one every day. There were many ants in the ruins, and you had to watch your step, or they would climb onto your feet and bite.

At the end of the tour, we were dropped off near the post office. It was closed, as was the telecommunications center next door, because it was now after 5, so it was too late to try to call KLM. I saw the Fisherman's Restaurant, and looked at the menu, but found it to be expensive and uninteresting. I looked at several other restaurants in the area before getting oriented and heading up Mizingamu Road toward my hotel. I tried following the main roads up past Cine Afrique and the police station to find my way to the hotel from Creek Road, but I couldn't see how to get there, so I attempted to follow the route I took to the hotel when I arrived yesterday. I ended up lost for a while in the maze of alleys, eventually stumbling upon a sign pointing toward Pyramid Guest House.

I showered, and then set out to have dinner on the south end of Stone Town, taking care to note landmarks as I made my way out to Mizingamu Road, which I then followed. I first looked at Camlar's Restaurant, which serves Swahili curries, but they only take shillings, and my supply is low. I followed signs to Chit Chat Restaurant, deep inside Stone Town near a Cathedral. Here, they serve Goan food. It was sweltering inside the traditional house, but fans helped, and the atmosphere was nice. I ordered prawn curry, and asked for it to be spicy. It turned out to be a fairly mild, yellow coconut curry, but it was still very tasty, and it came with rice and spinach, and a fruit cup for dessert. The meal cost \$8 including a beer.

Walking back up Mizingamu Road, I passed the fort, where they were

having a Saturday cultural dance show. It was \$10 including a buffet. I had already eaten, so I passed. I checked out the large group of food vendors along the waterfront. These were very popular with budget travelers, but the selection didn't look too interesting. I had a Coke and walked back to my hotel, following the landmarks perfectly this time. I went and sat on the roof for a while to relax and enjoy the view of Stone Town before going to bed.

March 9

Zanzibar: Monkeys and Stone Town

It had been a hot night, especially when the electricity went off and the fan stopped. In the morning, I found that I still had diarrhea, and took another Immodium. It was kind of liberating in a way, since I no longer had to worry so much about eating something that would make me sick. At breakfast, I found the two ladies from Oregon from the safari. They followed Eric's suggestion and ended up here as well. We had a pancake with a hard-boiled egg, toast, and fruit. The waiter claimed it was the best breakfast in Zanzibar. I was skeptical, but the view from the roof certainly added to the experience.

Afterward, in the sitting room downstairs, I saw Jimmy, who had escorted me to the spice tour yesterday, trying to sell the same tour to the two ladies from Oregon. But they already had booked Mitu's somewhat more famous tour. Unsuccessful with the ladies, Jimmy tried selling me another tour. He said he could take me to the beaches, but I said I wasn't interested in the beaches. Since I had just one last day here, I wanted to see Stone Town. A city tour didn't interest him, but he suggested a half-day trip to see the rare red colobus monkeys in Jozani Forest. This interested me, and would leave a half day free to wander about Stone Town. But Jimmy wanted \$50 to take me to see the monkeys, which I thought was too steep. I told him I would go for \$30. Jimmy agreed, and his "brother" drove us to Jozani Forest in a minivan, stopping at a Forex on the way so I could change a \$50 traveler's check. We also stopped briefly at a hospital, so Jimmy could check on one of his children who was sick.

By the time we got to the forest, it was raining. The man at the entrance said the rain was "no problem" - they had umbrellas. But we would have to wait 20 minutes for the guide to come back. I paid the entrance fee and bought a Stony Tangawizi ginger beer. Several others showed up: two Danish men living in Dar Es Salaam, and the Australian from the spice tour, who had economically come by bus.

When the guide came, he led us away from the park toward the road, since the "friendly monkeys" were outside the park. We quickly found a group of the red colobus monkeys, and then crossed the road and found a larger group. We could get very close to the monkeys, which were habituated to humans. The Zanzibar red colobus monkey is very rare, with only 1500 in the world, all in Zanzibar. After seeing the monkeys, we entered the park for a nature walk. We passed first through a planted mahogany forest, and then through a native swampy forest, which was very jungle-like, with lots of palm trees and big vines. We brought umbrellas on the walk, and had to use them often.

There are monkeys here, but they are "not friendly", and hard to find in the trees. We saw a black monkey. At the park entrance, there was a store where I bought a monkey t-shirt.

I rode back to town with Jimmy and his "brother", and Jimmy escorted me back to the hotel. Then I wandered about Stone Town on my own. First, I went to the dock to check ferry times. They go at 7:00, 10:00, ..., and probably, I should get the first one to connect with the bus to Mombassa or Aruba, where I could spend my last night before catching another bus to Nairobi for my flight home. But I wasn't sure I could get to the ferry so early. I'd have to check. Vendors were selling coconuts along the street. I walked down the street to the Floating Restaurant, which is built out over the harbor, and had grilled octopus with chips for lunch. Then I looked in the fort, which had an amphitheater inside and some shops, but wasn't very interesting.

I wandered around Stone Town's alleys a while, mostly lost. Only a few shops were open on a Sunday afternoon, and I didn't see many other tourists in the inner alleys. I emerged into a big marketplace on the other edge of Stone Town, and explored it a little. The smell was pretty bad from the fish and meat sections. I returned to the hotel for a short rest and water, since it was very hot out.

I returned to the dock and bought the 7:00 ticket on the Sea Express. I would have to work out a way to get there in the morning. While I waited in line, a kid tried to sell me an octopus he was carrying around. I headed down Creek Street to the Anglican church and old slave market. They charge 300 shillings for a guided tour including the underground slave chambers. I took the tour. The slave chambers weren't much to see, but the church was nice. The church's altar is built on the site of a former slave whipping post. I wandered about the interior of Stone Town some more, finding a large mosque. I don't think I saw the baths I read about, but I'm not sure what they look like. I was a little nervous about being the only white person around, and carrying a large Nikon camera, but I took lots of pictures and there was no trouble. The elaborate carved doors of many buildings were very beautiful. The buildings themselves had a decaying look, with the stone appearing very weathered.

I returned to the hotel and asked at the desk if I could get to the dock at 6 AM in the morning for the 7:00 ferry. They said it would be difficult, but I assured them I would pay the person who helped me generously. They said they would let me know later. I had a refreshing cold shower before leaving for dinner. When I passed the front desk, they introduced me to a young man (teenager, probably) named Abdullah, who would help me carry my bag to the dock in the morning. I made it to the waterfront in time for sunset. The sun was behind a cloud, but the sky turned a nice orange color.

I found a big souvenir shop by the waterfront, a rather dark and cavernous room filled with African things. I bought a kissing mask similar to the one I bought in Uganda, but more elaborate, with an elephant head, tusks, and a shell necklace. It cost \$20, and one tusk was broken and the shell necklace was also partly broken, but I figured I could fix those. The point at the top of the head of the one I bought in Uganda had broken off on safari, and I wasn't sure I could

fix it, so the new mask could be a replacement, perhaps.

I tried going to an Indian restaurant behind the fort that my book recommended, but it was closed. I went to the Sunrise restaurant on the south end of Stone Town instead. They have a lot of local dishes on the menu, and I had been wanting to try a Swahili curry. Also, they have outside seating, which is very attractive since the indoor restaurants are quite stuffy. The terrace was pleasant and breezy, and the prices reasonable. I ordered a calamari coconut curry with rice and a Tusker beer. Mice scurried about between the tables, and inside as well. An Englishman dining alone, who said he was on a "cultural safari", joined me. He wanted to visit Uganda because of the interesting mix of ethnic groups there. The cooking took a long time. The Englishman's fish masala arrived, looking excellent. My calamari soon came afterward. I didn't detect much evidence of coconut - the curry appeared to be tomato and onion based - but it was very tasty.

I started walking back along the waterfront toward my hotel, when I noticed the ladies from Oregon near the fort. They were ahead, walking in the same direction. I was a little nervous about entering the heart of Stone Town alone at night, especially carrying a package from the souvenir shop, so I decided to follow them. As they tried to find their way through the alleys back to the hotel, I caught up with them and joined them. We came upon an interesting little store called The Spice Shop, which had been closed in the afternoon, and we took a look inside. I noticed that Zee Bar and Zee Pizza upstairs had an interesting menu, and I might have tried it had I known it was open (assuming I could find it - this is the second time I saw it, and only stumbled upon it by accident).

Back at the hotel, the receptionist brought Abdullah to me, because he wanted to know what I would give him to help me in the morning. I offered \$5, a bit more than I gave the taxi driver who brought me here. He agreed. I was already sleepy, so I packed, took a cold shower (hot was available, but not attractive) and went to bed early, anticipating a 5:30 wakeup from the nearby mosque.

March 10

Zanzibar to Mombasa

As expected, I was awakened at 5:30 by the howling from the mosque's loudspeakers. I still had some diarrhea, so I took another Immodium and went downstairs at 6:00. The lobby was dark and the door was locked. While I tried unsuccessfully to open the door, a man in his underwear emerged behind the desk and said he would awaken Abdullah. He came down, and we set off for the dock, taking the most direct route through Stone Town, a way I hadn't found before. The man who issues the \$5 port stamps wasn't in yet, and we had to wait for him to arrive on a scooter. In the meantime, Abdullah asked for my address so he could send me a post card. He said he would like a post card from the US in return. I got the stamp and we carried the bag to the dock. The sky and water were pretty from the rising sun. Abdullah stayed until the boat arrived, and I paid him the \$5 I promised.

The ferry ride took longer on the way back to Dar Es Salaam, arriving shortly before 9 AM. Mercifully, the ride was cooler in the morning. Plenty of taxis awaited our arrival, and I got a ride to the bus station, with a stop at a bank on the way to change a traveler's check. They wouldn't change it, saying they needed to see the receipt, so I went to a hotel instead. The taxi driver found me a bus to Mombasa for 7000 shillings, which he said was a good price, on a Tawfiq bus. It was a video bus, but not as fancy as the last one I rode. I paid the taxi driver 5000 shillings for his help, and boarded, finding a mother and two children (one an infant) already in the next seat. This made for a tight ride, with four people in two seats. The mother was breast-feeding her baby.

The bus departed at 10 AM. The ride was fast, but the road was sometimes bumpy. Fortunately, the woman and children departed at Tanga, where we stopped for lunch. As I walked on the street during the break, I was mobbed by taxi drivers and bus ticket salesmen. I bought a potato samosa from a street vendor, then went to a small restaurant and got two meat samosas, a sweet roll and a Fanta. I was thirsty, and still had some Tanzanian shillings to spend, so I bought a Stony Tangawizi as well, plus two big packs of cookies: cardamom cream and orange cream.

We arrived at the Kenya border, and stopped. Entering Kenya was not a simple matter: the crossing took almost two hours. First we had to get everyone through the Tanzanian exit forms and customs, and then through Kenyan immigration and customs. The Kenyan immigration official took some time with my passport, first claiming he couldn't find the visa, then that he didn't understand the January 6 issue date (I had got it in advance), and then saying that it was "too faint". I think he was trying to get me to give him a bribe to approve it, but finally he quit complaining and stamped it. Customs was friendlier. The beefy officer was in a jovial mood. He said I should have arms like Mike Tyson from carrying my big duffel bag. Another man wanted to write in his records that I was a student, but I said I was a professor. The beefy man asked some questions about what I worked on, and told me to take my bag of "professorly things" back to the bus.

The sun had set by the time we got to the ferry to Mombasa, which was a smooth, fast ride. It was very stuffy again in the bus, since Africans seem to like being hot, and have an aversion to fresh air. They rarely opened the windows. It was 7:30 and dark when we reached our first stop in Mombasa. I decided I wanted to stay somewhere nice tonight, my last night in Africa, and I had been reading my guidebooks to find the best place. When I got off the bus, a cab driver immediately latched onto me, and I asked him to take me to the Royal Court Hotel. He was an elderly Indian man who seemed to have trouble understanding me. He kept saying he knew a nice cheap hotel, and I guess he had some relation with them, but I insisted on going to Royal Court. Eventually he took me there, and I paid him \$5 for the ride. I did not yet have any Kenyan money.

In fact, the Royal Court surprised me, being strikingly luxurious, with marble and carved wood in the lobby. It was far beyond any place I had stayed on the entire trip, even the White Horse Inn in Kabale. This would be a nice hotel by American standards, and I was immediately nervous to ask about the price. It turned out that the

price for a single room was only \$38, an incredible bargain. The room was on the fifth (top) floor, but there was an elevator. The room was beautiful and cool - it had air conditioning! I felt filthy from the hot, dusty bus ride, and quickly showered.

The hotel had two Indian restaurants, said to be among the best in Mombasa in my books. I checked the menus of both, choosing the Tawa Terrace on the roof, which featured Tandoori and stir-fried dishes, as well as a great view. I ordered a chicken stir-fry (tawa) Punjabi-style dish, and asked them to make it very spicy. I also ordered a naan and a Tusker. The waiter seemed pleased that I chose a Kenyan beer. The meal was spicy and excellent, and the naans perfectly cooked. Some tasty chutneys were served on the side. The night view of Mombasa reminded me more of a modern American city than any so far on this trip, though Dar Es Salaam was similar, perhaps. I fell asleep almost immediately after dinner, without undoing the bed covers. I awoke around midnight, packed for the trip home, and went to bed properly at 1 AM.

March 11

Mombasa to Nairobi

I awoke before 7:00 and took my last shower before going home in the room's nice bathroom, and I shaved for the last time. There was a dead cockroach outside the bathroom this morning. Breakfast was included in the room price. I had juice, fruit, a spanish omelet, bacon, and a sausage. Then I asked the reception desk for the number to call to confirm my KLM flight home. They couldn't tell me, and called Kenya Airways to get the number. I waited a half hour for the answer, but heard nothing, and decided to go out and see Mombasa's main tourist attraction (apart from its beaches), Fort Jesus, built by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. I wasn't sure this was a good idea, since I still had a long ride to Nairobi to make my flight tonight, and hadn't even checked the bus schedule yet, but I figured this would be my only time to see some of Mombasa, any other problems could be fixed if necessary. A cab driver said he would take me to the fort, wait, and bring me back for 500 Kenyan shillings. I got him to stop at a bank so I could change \$70 in traveler's checks. I had the same problem as yesterday: the first bank wanted to see the receipts, so I went to the bank next door, which gave me no trouble.

The old fort was quite large, with a much more modern museum inside, and some shops and a cafe. They charge 200 shillings to enter. It is a rather interesting fort, and I shot most of a roll of film there, although I didn't spend have too much time to spend. I made it back to the hotel at 9:45. There was still no word on how to reach KLM, and I had to get to Nairobi, so I wasted no more time and got my bags, checked out, and paid for last night's dinner.

An Indian cab driver took me to find a bus to Nairobi. We tried a couple of companies before settling on a 12:30 Malinda bus, which they said would get me to Nairobi around 7 PM. That would be fine, assuming I had a "good safari", as the cab driver put it, and the bus didn't break down or have an accident. He said I shouldn't worry about this

too much, because another bus would help out in that case. But of course, I didn't have much time to waste if I were to catch my 11:05 flight. I paid 300 shillings for the ticket and 200 shillings for the cab driver. This was my cheapest bus ticket yet, in spite of the long ride, and I was hoping the bus would be ok. It wasn't a video bus, although I had never actually seen the TV used on the video buses I had taken.

It turned out that I was lucky: the 11:00 bus was not full, and I got on it. The road to Nairobi is mostly in fine condition, so we made good time. I ate my pack of cardamom cookies on the way. Our lunch stop was short. I stayed on the bus, and bought a bean samosa (not too fresh) and canned coke through the window from a street vendor for \$1. We entered Masai country, and an elderly Masai man in traditional dress took the seat next to me. We arrived in Nairobi, a sprawling city, around 6:00. I was somewhat nervous about arriving in a city some called "Nairobbery", and hoped the bus station would be similar to the ones I had experienced up to now, with an easy way to catch a taxi. I thought I would like to get dinner at the Carnivore Restaurant the missionaries in Uganda had told me about, and which I had found in my guidebook. It turned out that the bus dropped me off at an apparently random spot, with no taxis in sight. This was the last thing I wanted, with large bags and no idea where I was, in a city I was nervous about.

I walked to the nearest street corner, and found a taxi there, close to more busses around the bend. I asked the taxi drivers (there were two men in the car) to take me to the Carnivore Restaurant, thinking it was probably centrally located, and would be a quick trip, although I hadn't located it on a map. I had trouble getting them to understand my request, probably because they assumed I wanted a place to stay first, since I had bags. But I said I was just passing through, and wanted a ride to the restaurant only. I hadn't anticipated the heavy rush hour traffic, or the distance to the restaurant. It was far out of town, past a big prison. The sun set as we drove, and the length of the drive made me wonder if I would have time to get dinner and make it to my flight. Maybe I was packing one thing too many into this trip.

The Carnivore Restaurant was a big fancy place, a real tourist restaurant. They served a fixed price feast for 1150 shillings, just over \$20. I had arrived just before the restaurant's first seating at 7:00, so I was just in time. The restaurant soon became packed, as it was popular with tour groups from British Airways and Air France. I hadn't anticipated the popularity, and felt fortunate to get a seat, arriving without notice. While I waited, I had the office call KLM for me to check on my flight. They said the airline's computer was down, but that the flight was full, so if I were not listed, I may have to be on standby. I was hopeful that the card I left at the Kenya Airport upon my initial arrival would suffice to confirm my outbound flight, and that I was on the passenger list.

Drinks were rather expensive, but there was an excellent selection. I chose a draft beer. Dinner began with tomato soup and a variety of salads. I had barely touched the salad when a hot plate with a baked potato arrived, and the meat started coming. Meat was delivered continuously by carvers carrying spears of sausages, chicken, honey

wings, pork, spare ribs, beef, lamb, and more exotic wildlife, including hartebeest, zebra, and crocodile. There were sauces on the table to go with each kind of meat. Meat would be brought to me until I lowered a flag on the table to indicate that I'd had enough. Eventually, I became stuffed with the tasty, excellently prepared grilled meats. Around 8:00, I took down my flag, and selected pineapple pie with ice cream for desert.

I got a cab to take me to the airport for \$20, having spent practically all my shillings by now. It was just three hours before my flight, but fortunately, the restaurant was on the same side of the city as the airport, and I made it to the airport just before 9 PM, and had no trouble checking in. It was a strange feeling, stepping back into the familiar world of an international airport, knowing that in a sense, I had already left Africa behind. My checked bags weighed 20.4 kg, within the free allotment. I paid the \$20 departure tax and went through emmigration. I forgot to fill out the departure card, but they didn't care. I went to the departure gate, passing my film to the inspector by hand. He saw my "I have climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro" t-shirt and asked if I had also climbed Mt. Kenya. I said no, maybe on another trip. (Mt. Kenya is actually much harder if you go all the way to the summit, since it involves technical rock climbing. I don't think I would go that far.) The inspector asked if I would come again, and I said yes, although I don't know. I hadn't spent much time in Kenya, actually, and it might be nice to see more of it. It might make a nice combination with a trip to Ethiopia and Egypt, some day. The plane turned out to be not completely full, so any standby passengers must have made the flight. We took off at 11:20. I still have 420 shillings left, more than I wanted, but less than \$10. I could have ordered more drinks at the Carnivore.

March 12

The Flight Home

A short way into the flight, they brought us beef with noodles and cabbage, plus some cheese and grapes, a salad, and custard, but I didn't eat much since I had just had a much better meal, and was still full from the Carnivore. I had a cognac afterward, and slept briefly, awaking to watch most of the flight film, *The Associate*, a good movie with Whoopie Goldberg, followed by a really stupid movie called *Space Jam* featuring Michael Jordan and Loony Toons characters, which was too painful to watch. But I didn't want to sleep much now, because it was not time to sleep at home, and I needed to get back on schedule. Breakfast was served as we approached Amsterdam, where we arrived at 5:30, somewhat early.

My next flight, to Detroit, was not until 10:45. I ate my orange cream cookies and spent most of my remaining guilders (from my last trip through) on a cup of coffee. There was a long line at security when I went to the gate at 9:45, so I waited for it to clear before entering. They asked the usual questions about who packed my bags and whether they had been in my possession. Again, they were fussy about hand-checking the film, bothering to check that I actually had some 1600 speed film. The effect of X-rays is cumulative, so I wouldn't

trust the slower film in X-rays at all of the airports I'd been through on this trip. It was foggy in Amsterdam this morning, and visibility was very limited, delaying departures. We left more than an hour late, at about noon.

I slept on the plane until after take-off. We received a lunch of beef goulash (or turkey), a salad, and dessert. I slept on and off, watching the movies, first a Sinbad movie called First Kid (possibly a Disney film), then a movie about a girl and her geese, called Long Flight Home, or something. We got to Detroit a half hour late, at around 2 PM. Another man coming from Tanzania worried about missing his connection. Immigration went fast. The lady read the list of countries I'd been to, and seemed surprised was traveling alone on vacation to such places. She asked if I did it often, and I said yes. She said that maybe this is the best way to go. My bags were slow to come, but customs took no time.

I took a bus to the domestic terminal and changed a \$50 traveller's check, since my cash was almost gone. I had been missing ice cream in the heat of Africa, having it only in Kampala and Nairobi, and some of that had been an icy Italian style. The airport only had frozen yoghurt, a poor substitute for ice cream, but it would do for now. I got a cappucino yoghurt waffle cone. The airport was sunny and warm, so the yoghurt was welcome. My flight to Knoxville was at 4:55, so I had a couple hours to wait. I fell asleep a few times. The flight to Knoxville was delayed, but not as much as a flight to Texas a few gates down, where they announced one discovery of a mechanical or safety problem after another.

We were served peanuts and a drink on the short flight to Knoxville. The landscape around Knoxville was green and beautiful in the setting sun, with the Smokies appearing as little wrinkles to the south. It was around 7:00 when my baggage came down the chute, and I found a taxi to take me home. There was a Canoe and Hiking Club meeting going on now at UT. I had thought maybe I would make it, since I was eager to tell everyone about Africa, but the flight was too late. I showered, and then went downtown to see if anyone had gone to Sam and Andy's, where people met to hang out after club meetings (they called this the "Drinking and Lying Club"). But Sam and Andy's had become less popular this year, and no one was there, so I went to Stefano's for a pizza, another thing I'd been missing in Africa. Stefano's has a really good Chicago-style whole wheat crust pizza, which I like with Canadian bacon on top. I had trouble staying awake to finish my pizza, and fell asleep as soon as I got home.