



Amani Nature Reserve:

Ndola Trail

...IN A NUTSHELL

FURTHER INFORMATION

Ndola Trail composes of a 18 km (both way) drive through forest roads and tea plantations and a 4-5 km walk through village cultivation and open grasslands with spectacular views of the West Usambaras and Lwengwera Valley.

Total time required is about 1 hour for the drive (both ways); 1.5 - 2.0 hours walk.

In addition to providing a rich overview of the village agriculture, tea cultivation and natural forests of the East Usambara, the trail also gives the visitor a different perspective on the East Usambaras. Unlike other trails, the walk provides a more somber view of the interaction between man and nature: of deforested barren grassy hilltops not typically associated with the lush and diverse rainforests of the East Usambaras.

The East Usambara Area Conservation Management Programme (EUCAMP) aims at protecting biodiversity and water sources while sustaining villager's benefits from the forest. The project is implemented by the Forestry and Beekeeping Division of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism with financial support from the Government of Finland and European Union.

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TRAIL GUIDE

The drive begins from Amani Nature Reserve headquarters. Turn right and take the main road towards Kwamkoro Tea Estate and Forest.

0 km: Follow directions from Amani Nature Reserve office as far as Kwamkoro Tea Estate offices.

8.0 km: On entering the tea estate office compound take right turn over the bridge with Kwamkoro Tea Factory above you to the left. In 100 meters, take left fork around workshop fence, the first right with a pond to your left and tea above you to the right.

9.1 km: Climb up the winding hill and ignore a road to you left.

10.3 km: Continue on main road with forest to your left and Mtakuja Village across a stream to your right.

12.2 km: Turn right over a bridge. In 300 meters cross another bridge and fork left, signposted Ndola Division.

13.1 km: The road climbs to a junction with a bougainvillea bush in the central roundabout. Go straight with the bush on your left descending down a hill.

13.6 km: Take the lower right fork and carefully cross a shallow stream.

14.3 km: Ignore road from the left.

15.9 km: Keep to the left in two successive junctions. Pass a large wooden house to your left and fork right along a hedge of evergreen Mezican cypress. At first lead shed fork right down the hill towards Ubiri Village,

17.2 km: At the foot of hill where tea ends, cross a small stream and climb steeply through Ubiri Village to a primary school at the top of the hill. Park your car in the shade of the Eucalyptus trees on the level next to the school. Do not leave valuables in view.

Take the footpath to the left of the school through plantations of fast growing fuelwood species *Eucalyptus saligna*. These were planted in 1992, partly by school children, partly by Ubiri farmers, to supplement the village fuel supplies in this largely treeless and agricultural environment.

As you climb beyond the Eucalyptus plantation views you will see the surrounding area. To your **right** you will see a village cultivation of sugarcane, cassava, maize and bananas. The dwarf bananas (Malindi) are for cooking and eating, the tall variety (Kisukari) is for brewing banana beer. You may see home processed tea from the tenant plots being sun-dried in front of some of the houses. To your **left** you will see down the escarpment where many Ubiri farmers also have plots of land for cultivating maize, beans, mangos and avocados - none of which grow well on the colder hilltop fields. **At the foot** of the escarpment you will see the Lwengwera Sisal Estate, established by German planters in 1880s. It is now run by a local company but failed on hard times due to declining demand of sisal twine and matting. Halfway across the valley is the tree-lined Lwengwera River. **Across the valley** you will see the West Usambara mountains to the north west and the town of Korogwe below a low hill to the south west.

Continue along the footpath keeping close to the escarpment edge and crossing two grass-covered hilltops. To your right you will see some more planted Eucalyptus as well as indigenous tree species planted on the hilltops. The footpath disappears before you start to climb to the third and highest hilltop, called Lutindi (1141 m). It is topped by what seems to be the remains of a fortified settlement, dating possibly back to early iron age and perhaps near a site of battle between the rival sons of a Kilindi chief who ruled much of Usambara in the mid.19th century.

From the summit you have once again spectacular views. **To the north** you will see the Nelusanga Village. Behind Mt. Nilo - **to the north-east** - you will see the plantations and indigenous forests of Monga Estate. **To the south** you will see the Ndola estate and its workers houses. And **to the west** you will see the Lwengwera Valley and far behind to the majestic West Usambara mountains.

The vegetation on Ndola hillsides are a stark contrast from more forested areas of the East Usambaras. It consists primarily of two grass species: a broad-leaved grass (locally called Kinyusi) and a finer-leaved one (locally called Khus Khus.) The area is heavily grazed by cattle and goats. Opinions vary whether these grassy hills were ever forested - and if they were, why are they now so barren. A local myth says that in the distant past the hills were heavily forested and water flowed endlessly from an earthenware pot at the top of the hills supplying the villages. One day, however - due to the misdeed of one of the villagers - the spirits were angered and the pot was broken. The water washed the whole village and forest cover into the valley below. A more scientific hypothesis would probably say that, following prehistoric deforestation, the shallow soils, together with strong winds, constant grazing, burning of grass and cutting of wood for fuel and building, have prevented the growth of all except the hardiest tree species and kept the hilltops bare. Perhaps a somber reminder of the fate of the rest of the East Usambaras without proper conservation!

Return to Ubiri village by retracing your steps back to the car and then follow the road you came back to Amani.