

Mushroom Farm Eco-Lodge Hiking Guide

Livingstonia to Chelinda Camp through Nyika National Park

Treks should be organized directly with Park Rangers
Dan Zgambo: +265 999 182 396 / +888 641 183
Lusekero Mwambara: +265 882 258 441 / +265 991 167 261



Above: Stunning views of Nyika Plateau in Northern Malawi

General Information

Mushroom Farm offers two hikes to Nyika organized by Park Rangers Dan Zgambo and Lusekero Mwambara. The hikes are on the same trail, but have different lengths. We offer a **2-day trek** and **3-day trek** from Mushroom Farm to Chelinda Camp (Nyika National Park), and a **4-day round trip trek** from Mushroom Farm to Chelinda Camp and back on the same trail – the round-trip trek including motorbike transport for part of the first and last day of the hike.

DIFFICULTY: Moderate to Challenging

DISTANCE: Around 50km or a little over 15km per day, and over 1000 meters in elevation gain.

Most guests start hiking by 7am and finish each day around 2-3pm, an average of 7-8 hours of hiking per day. However, some guests may arrive at the campsite at 1pm, if they have a faster a pace, or 4-6pm, if they take a more relaxed pace.

The ranger will always be checking on your progress and monitoring your speed, but we recommend being direct in communicating your strength and tiredness level, so that he may best support you.

SCENERY: Be ready to experience the beauty of Malawian backcountry, as you'll traverse one of the most pristine National Parks in Malawi. During this trek you will pass through a number of different beautiful areas including numerous coffee and banana farms, high altitude forests, and the ancient plateau grassland of Nyika National Park.

WHERE YOU START: You can start your hike at Mushroom Farm or Chelinda Camp. We recommend a Mushroom Farm start, as it's the easiest place to organize all necessities for your hike.

WHERE YOU STAY: On the trail, you'll stay at old Ranger Campsites, which have clean drinking water and are used regularly for hikes.

Before arrival at Chelinda Camp, you will need to arrange your accommodation. This can be done with Chelinda Camp's Manager, Yonam. Options for accommodation include camping, cottages, or the lodge. Contact Yonam for any enquiries (+265 887 352 187 / +265 888 690 062 / +265 995 274 998).



WATER: Every morning and evening during the hike you'll have access to water from natural and clean streams and springs. The water is safe for drinking and there is no need to treat this water due to the elevation and flow. However, if you do prefer to treat your drinking water during your trek, you may choose to boil your water at night or use other treatment methods of your preference. Please make sure you have enough storage containers (water bottles) to carry an ample amount of water during the day, as finding water in between campsites can be difficult and is not a guarantee.

FOOD: If you choose to organize your own food, all your food should be ready before setting off on your hike. Here's what we recommend: something quick and easy for breakfast, like porridge, fruit or bread and tea/coffee. For lunch, consider sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs (prepared before the hike) with a piece of fruit. Dinner can be a little more intricate while keeping the weight of the food in mind (pasta, ramen noodles, rice). If you don't want to arrange your food it can be arranged by Mushroom Farm (see pricing below).

Each morning and night, the ranger will prepare a fire for cooking. A fire will not be prepared during the day along the route, so remember this when you are planning your meals. The ranger is not a personal chef, but can assist with simple cooking tasks, especially if you are not familiar with cooking on the fire. If you plan to rely heavily on the ranger for cooking, please discuss this before the hike begins so that plans can be made (also, consider a small top up financially for their extra services in going above and beyond).

If you plan to stay a number of days after the hike to enjoy Chelinda Camp, please also plan for food during your stay, as the lodge is currently all self-catering.

WASTE: Nyika is a National Park, so any rubbish you plan to carry with you on the hike, you should plan to carry the whole trek. Each night and morning at the campsites you'll have access to long drop toilets, but otherwise you'll be in the bush doing your business the natural way. Remember to carry some toilet paper for the trip.

Quick Reference Nyika Trek Costs

Length of Trek	How Many People	Cost
2-Day Trek to Chelinda Day 1: Motorbike Mushroom to Chakaka, Hike to Phata Day 2: Hike Phata to Chelinda Camp	1	350,000mk
	2	451,000mk
	3	537,000mk
	4	601,000mk
3-Day Trek to Chelinda Day 1: Hike Mushroom to Chakaka Day 2: Hike Chakaka into Phata Campsite Day 3: Hike Phata to Chelinda Camp	1	298,000mk
	2	378,000mk
	3	434,000mk
	4	468,000mk
Round Trip 4-Day Trek: Day 1: Motorbike Mushroom to Chakaka, Hike to Phata Day 2: Hike Phata to Chelinda Camp Day 3: Hike Chelinda Camp to Phata Day 4: Hike Phata to Chakaka, Motorbike back to Mushroom	1	427,000mk
	2	597,000mk
	3	742,000mk
	4	853,000mk

All of the above payments need to be paid in CASH directly to the ranger (there is NOT an option to put these payments on credit card at Mushroom Farm). Sorry for the inconvenience.

*If your group is 5-6 people, pricing should be discussed directly with the Ranger.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THESE PRICES? Ranger fee, Camping Service fee, Park Fees, Mushroom Farm Organization Fee, Ranger Return Transport (for 3-day treks), and Motorbike to Trailhead (for 4-day trek). **The costs of Chelinda Camp Accommodation, a Porter, Camping Equipment, and Food are not included in this price!**

What's the Ranger Fee? The Ranger fee is a payment set by the Rangers to guide you through Nyika National Park. It covers any incidentals they may have during the trek.

What's the Camping Service Fee? This fee goes towards the care and maintenance of the campsites between Mushroom Farm and Chelinda Camp.

What are Park Fees? All visitors to the National Park have to pay \$10 a day. The Ranger will organize paying the park on your behalf once you have reached Chelinda Camp.

What is the Mushroom Farm Organization Fee? This fee is the only income which Mushroom Farm takes from assisting with the organization of the hike (26,000mk per group). It covers the cost of our airtime and time spent helping to organize with the Ranger.

What is the Ranger Transport Fee? For the 3-day trek, guests either finish their journey in Chelinda Camp or end their journey here at Mushroom Farm. On either side, the Ranger will need to be ready for the guests at the specified location. For this reason, the Rangers charge a fee to assist them with their transport to Chelinda Camp or coming back from Chelinda Camp to their home.

What is the Motorbike to the Trailhead? For those on the 4-day round trip hike, we arrange a motorbike to take you and the Ranger to Chakaka, the border of Nyika National Park. Without this motorbike ride, the total round-trip experience would be a 6-day trek.

Cost of Optional Add-Ons

Porter Costs	
2-Day trek	92,000mk (each porter)
3-Day Trek	92,000mk (each porter)
4-Day Trek	123,000mk (each porter)

All fees for the porter are paid in cash directly to the porters.

Food Arranged by Mushroom Farm	
2-Day Trek	64,000mk (per person)
3-Day Trek	96,000mk (per person)
4-Day Trek	128,000mk (per person)

Food should be arranged with Mushroom Farm AT LEAST one day in advance and will be added to your Mushroom Farm Tab. Additional days of food cost 32,000mk per day per person.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE FOOD PACKAGE: Homemade muesli with roasted groundnuts, freshly baked bread, locally-made peanut butter, honey, locally grown vegetables, coffee or tea, fruit, milk, spaghetti, soya pieces, and boiled-eggs. This package also includes all necessary cutlery needed for cooking and eating. **CHEF NOT INCLUDED.**

Camping Equipment Rental

Maybe you have some camping gear with you, but want to rent some different items to make your hike a little more comfortable. You are welcome to review the list below of items...

All Prices are Per Night:

- Tent Rental: 10,200mk
- Sleeping Pad Rental: 5,100mk
- Sleeping Bag Rental: 5,100mk
- Hammock and Straps: 5,100mk
- Camelback or Day Bag: 5,100mk
- 80L Hiking Backpack: 8,500mk
- Cookware, Dishes, Cutlery: 3,400mk per person

*All camping rentals will be added to your Mushroom Farm Tab



Length of Trek	Item	Cost (per item)
2-Day Trek	Hiking Bag	17,000
	Tent	20,400
	Sleeping Pad	10,200
	Sleeping Bag	10,200
3-Day Trek	Hiking Bag	25,500mk
	Tent	30,600mk
	Sleeping Pad	15,300mk
	Sleeping Bag	15,300mk
4-Day Trek	Hiking Bag	34,000mk
	Tent	40,800mk
	Sleeping Pad	15,300mk
	Sleeping Bag	15,300mk

Means of returning camping equipment should be discussed with Mushroom Farm staff and your guider before the hike, to make sure all gear is returned in good time and condition.

Additional fees for transport of gear may be required.

Frequently Asked Questions:

This is too much information; can't you just arrange everything for me?

Your Ranger is happy to meet any needs or questions you may have, but can't assist you fully if they do not know what you need. Try your best to read this document and write down any questions you may have. This trek is through a national park and can be more than a day's journey from emergency services, so we want to make sure each and every guest has the necessary information. For this reason, we like to organize a sit down between the Ranger and all hikers before departure to discuss the most important details about the hike.

I have never camped before, so I don't know if this is right for me. Is it?

This multiday adventure is approachable to novice hikers and first-time campers to experienced backcountry pros. Your assigned ranger has escorted individuals of all experience levels and ages. If you have any questions about the hike, we encourage you to ask them to the ranger beforehand.

Is it possible to hike in reverse, meaning starting at Chelinda Camp and ending at Mushroom Farm?

Yes, it is definitely possible to reverse this trek if you'd rather begin at Chelinda Camp and end at Mushroom Farm. If this is your preference please let us know in advance so the ranger and any porters can meet you the night before your hike begins.

What weather should I expect?

Nyika's weather is similar to the rest of Northern Malawi, with a higher expectation of rains from January to May, colder weather from June to August, and hotter weather from September to December. With that being said, Nyika's high plateau can bring night time temperatures near freezing in June and July, and during hot season, it's high altitude can expose hikers to a stronger than expected sun. The rainy seasons bring a beautiful green that blankets the rolling hills, but it can also soak paths and valleys on the trail. We usually recommend hikers prepare for the weather of the season, and encourage them to think of the hike as an adventure and to enjoy the weather that's delivered to you. The ranger is very experienced to keep you and the party safe from all that the elements can throw at you.

What animals will I see on the hike?

As in any national park, there is no guarantee to see animals, however, particularly as you approach the center of the park, many guests report seeing a number of different grazers, including zebra and antelope. Although the park is home to elephant and leopard, spotting these animals is much more difficult.

We recommend if you're keen on experience all the flora and fauna Nyika National Park has to offer that you plan to spend a few extra days to explore the plateau at Chelinda Camp. The park offers many well-trained guides who have a lot of knowledge and experience about the area. We personally loved the endemic bird tour with Watson, to which you can rent a bicycle to get to the area where the birds live.

This hike seems amazing, but it's a bit long for me. Is there any way to reduce the length?

It is possible to shorten your 3-day trek by hiring motorbikes to take you to Chakaka (for an additional fee), which is the small village that borders the park. This will shorten your overall journey to 2 days of hiking, and 1 night of backcountry camping. If this is something you are interested in please make sure to inform us ahead of time, so we can notify all necessary parties and arrange the motorbikes in advance.

The cost of the hike is high for my budget, can you make any discounts?

We understand every traveler has a different budget and plan for their trip, and we've tried our best to accommodate for different budgets by offering different packages above. The current prices have been intentionally discussed and are fair for the labors and experience for all involved. We recommend those restricted by budget to bring their friends or encourage fellow travelers to join them to share the costs as most fees can be divided between all hikers.

How do I get in contact with Chelinda Camp so I can pre-arrange my stay with them?

You will need to make your own lodging arrangements with Chelinda Camp before you begin your trek through Nyika National Park. Chelinda Camp offers a variety of accommodation options including campsites, cottages, and lodging, to meet the needs of many different budgets. At the moment the entire lodge is self-catering, so please keep that in mind when you are planning for your meals. To book a stay at Chelinda Camp, see the contact below:

Chelinda Camp Manager, Yonam: +265 887 352 187 / +265 888 690 062 / +265 995 274 998

The prices at Nyika are expensive for my budget, are there any other options?

In Nyika National Park, Chelinda Camp is the only official tourism accommodation available to guests.

Those who are interested in organizing a trip with students or are working in Malawi on a volunteer basis are welcome to contact the government run guest house at +265 88 424 7121 to organize their own booking.

I want to leave Nyika the same day we plan to arrive to Chelinda Camp, is this possible?

If you would prefer not to spend a night at Chelinda Camp, you can arrange for a taxi ahead of time to meet you the day you plan to arrive. However, we do not recommend this because it may be difficult to finish the hike, and get transport to your final destination before dark (roads in Malawi are more dangerous at night). Nyika offers so many activities and is like no other place in Malawi, that in our opinion, it seems a miss to not experience as much as possible before your departure. We do, however, understand that all guests have their own schedules and we wish to respect that.

I'd like to stay a few extra days at Chelinda Camp, can I continue to rent the camping equipment after the hike?

You are most welcome to continue to rent our camping equipment with the inclusion of the daily fee. Please organize with us ahead of time, so we can arrange collection/delivery of camping equipment after use. If you plan to sleep in a room at Chelinda Camp, the easiest way to return your camping rental would be to organize with the ranger to carry it back to Mushroom Farm. For longer rentals or for guests who have chosen not to return to Mushroom Farm, in the past we have arranged for camping equipment to be given to lodges in Mzuzu (Umunthu or Macondo Camp) and/or Nkhata Bay (Mayoka or Butterfly Space).

How do I travel out of Nyika National Park after my hike?

Due to the remote location of Chelinda Camp, public transport options out of the park are rare and difficult to find. The easiest way to leave the park is with a private taxi, which is unfortunately quite expensive. To inquire about a taxi please contact the numbers below:

Frank: +265 999 579 120

Paul: +265 884 373 456, +265 994 373 456 / paulnyirenda@gmail.com

Phillip: +265 993 530 701

If vehicle transport doesn't fit your budget, another option is to hike both to and from Mushroom Farm (see 4-day trek options above).

If I drive to Mushroom Farm in my personal vehicle, how do I get my vehicle to Chelinda Camp?

We are happy to help arrange a driver to bring your car to Chelinda from Mushroom Farm, or better yet you can arrange yourself with the phone number below. Other guests use their own driver which is also welcomed.

Lonely: +265 886 807 686

James: +265 884 275 753

Paul: +265 884 373 456, +265 994 373 456