

## **Trekking Expert Huub Cornelissen from The Netherlands visited Laku Oku in Cameroon December 2013**

### **The beautiful hike from Trekkers Camp Belo to Lake Oku.**

We started with our hike to Lake Oku early morning under the leadership of our guide David Ngong, who is also working for Zwinkels Trekkers Camp. Although we had asked the day before a number of the staff of the camp, nobody could give us a definite indication of how long the trip would take. David also avoided giving exact indications; he estimated the trip would take between 6 to 8 hours. Obviously, the duration of the trek depends on the people walking it.

The beginning of our walk is easy as it goes down from Camp Belo to the main road after which we turn right and the climb commences. The road is still wide and in a good condition, but sometimes quite steep. We pass through villages and people say very friendly hello to us. Sometimes some kids walk along and start a simple conversation: I am Rosy and what is your name. Motorcycles with one to four passengers pass us regularly. They have still considerable speed considering they go up mountain and we have to get out of the way.



On the road from Belo to Lake Oku

Nature is beautiful and we arrive at a part of the road which becomes narrower, quite steep and in a bad condition; even 4WD drives have difficulties in passing. After 3 hours of hiking we reach the highest point of our walk and we get our first view of the lake (see photo below), a good part downhill. In front of us we see mount Oku, the second highest mountain in Cameroon with 3000 mtrs. In the opposite direction we get a view of the largest tea plantation in the country.

We continue our road which now goes slightly downhill. After sometime, we arrive at the junction, where the downhill path leaves the road. We really get into the jungle. It is a dense forest with huge trees and sometimes we walk through man's high plants and grass and the path is nearly visible. The guide explains us that we have to watch out for some of the plants as they are poisonous and can itch terribly. Now we understand why we had to wear long trousers and shirts with long sleeves.



Lake Oku

Nevertheless some of us get pricked and it itches indeed terribly. Half way down we take a rest at a point with a magnificent view over the lake. (Photo) We continue our way down and after a while we reach an American church which is at the edge of the Oku village. It is only a small descent to the lake now, but we have to watch out as it is very steep. After 4.5 hours we finally arrive at the lake, where there is a bench at which we can have our packed lunch, accompanied by breath taking views. The lake looks beautifully calm and the water is cool. As Lake Oku is a sacred lake swimming in it is forbidden. The Cameroonian guide tells us at midnight the water disappears out of the lake and a village appears where according to local lore the ancestors have their dwellings. At four in the morning there is a signal after which you have to run up the hills quickly as the water flows back. We take some pictures.



Arrival at the crater Lake Oku

Lunch is finished and we start our ascent, the same way we came, although it is by times a bit harder than when we went down. We hear a lot of birds and see some nice ones. Except for some squirrels (and insects) we see no other animals.

We arrive at the main road and are happy to see the 4WD waiting for us. Including stops we have been on our way for 6 hours and 10 min. After a bumpy ride of 45 min we are back at Camp Belo where the staff is already waiting for us and serves us cold drinks. We take a warm shower after which we take a well-deserved rest in the lounge building. An active day well spent in beautiful Cameroon.

