

UGANDA & RWANDA

'Land of a Thousand Hills'

13 days

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Day 1 Arrive in Entebbe, Uganda

Today we arrive at Entebbe International Airport (the airport serving the capital) and transfer to our lodge nearby.

Welcome to Uganda! Nestled on the northern shores of Lake Victoria, Entebbe offers a serene and picturesque introduction to your Ugandan adventure. As the gateway to the country, this charming town boasts lush botanical gardens, vibrant local markets, and rich history.

Overnight in Entebbe.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Entebbe - Murchison Falls National Park

Early this morning, we embark on a +/- 4 hour scenic drive northwards. Our first stop is the Ziwani Rhino Sanctuary, where we'll have the opportunity to track these magnificent creatures. After lunch here, we continue our journey towards Murchison Falls National Park.

Arriving in the mid-afternoon, we'll check into our lodge and freshen up before a scenic drive through the park. This afternoon's game drive will give us a glimpse of the park's diverse wildlife, including elephants, giraffes, and various antelope species. As the sun begins to set, we'll return to the lodge for a well-deserved rest before dinner.

Tomorrow, we'll witness the raw power of nature at Murchison Falls. The Nile River, on its journey from Lake Victoria, is dramatically forced through a narrow gorge, creating a breathtaking waterfall. This powerful display of nature's force is truly a sight to behold.

Overnight in Murchison Falls.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 3 Murchison Falls Park

We'll start our day bright and early with a game drive along the Buligi, Albert, or Queens tracks. These scenic routes offer incredible opportunities to spot iconic African wildlife such as lions, leopards, giraffes, elephants, and warthogs.

After lunch, we'll embark on a Nile River cruise. As we journey downstream, we'll witness the immense power of Murchison Falls, where the Nile River is dramatically squeezed into a narrow gorge and plunges 43 meters. Along the way, we'll encounter a variety of wildlife, including crocodiles, hippos, buffalo, elephants, and a diverse array of birdlife, such as herons, cormorants, and the elusive shoebill.

Returning to the lodge in the late afternoon, we'll enjoy a well-deserved dinner before retiring for the night.

Overnight at Murchison Falls.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 4 Murchison Falls - Kibale Forest National Park

Early this morning, we'll make a final stop at the top of Murchison Falls, where we can marvel at the powerful cascade of water. After taking in this breathtaking sight, we'll continue our journey by road to Kibale Forest National Park.

This approximately six-hour drive will take us to a lush, tropical rainforest renowned for its diverse primate population. Kibale Forest is home

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to 12 different primate species, including the chimpanzee. Tomorrow, we'll have the opportunity to trek through the forest and encounter these fascinating creatures in their natural habitat.

We'll spend the night at a lodge within the park.

Overnight at Kibale.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Kibale Chimpanzee Viewing - Queen Elizabeth II National Park

This morning we trek to see chimpanzees. Kibale National Forest has one of the highest diversity and concentration of primates in Africa, and is one of the best places not only in Uganda, but in the world, to see chimpanzees. Kibale Park is connected to Queen Elizabeth National Park in the South, hence allowing wildlife to freely move. This park has a total population of approximately 1,450.

Then we'll have a walk through the Bigodi Swamps. The Kibale Association manages the Bigodi Wetland Sanctuary for Rural and Environmental Organisation, formed in 1992 with the aim of achieving social and economic development for local communities. While on our guided walk around the swamps, we can distinguish many from the approximately 137 bird species found here, including the Snowy Headed Robin Chat, Black and White Casqued Hornbill, Emerald Cuckoo and a variety of weavers, warblers, greenbuls and sunbirds. There is also an abundance of butterflies, and rich in vegetation, such as wild palms, polita figs and the dominant papyrus.

We depart Kibale by road for the Mweya Peninsula in Queen Elizabeth II National Park, dominated on its northern border by the snowcapped peaks of the Rwenzori Mountains -- the famous 'Mountains of the Moon.' The varied ecosystems of this park, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve for Humanity, support a wide variety of species including elephant, buffalo, lion and leopard. Driving through huge banana plantations, we'll cross the equator and arrive at the national park.

Overnight at Queen Elizabeth II National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 6 Queen Elizabeth II National Park

This morning we embark on a game drive in open savannah covered by acacia trees on the edge of the Albertine Rift Valley. We will search for the unique tree climbing lions (among other things), a population which is found only in this part of the country. It is impressive to see the animals while they are resting on top of the fig trees.

This afternoon we cruise up the Kazinga Channel, a narrow band of water connecting lakes Edward and George. This is one of the most memorable experiences of a visit to Uganda, offering an opportunity to cruise amid members of Africa's largest hippo population. In addition to these giant semi-aquatic mammals, the launch affords unique opportunities to view other mammals and birds as they come to the water's edge to drink and bathe. Birding is excellent, and we expect to see species ranging in size from the tiny, brilliant Malachite Kingfisher to the giant Goliath Heron.

Overnight at Queen Elizabeth II National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 7 Queen Elizabeth II National Park - Bwindi Impenetrable Forest

Today, we'll embark on a scenic road trip through the Ishasha Plains and the East African Rift Valley. Our (+/- 6 hour) journey will take us through rolling hills, deep valleys, and lush forests, creating a picturesque landscape often compared to the beauty of Central Europe.

We'll enjoy a packed lunch along the way, taking in the stunning views. As the day progresses, we'll arrive at Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This dense, tropical rainforest is home to a significant population of mountain gorillas. We'll spend the night at a comfortable lodge within the park.

Overnight at Bwindi.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 8 Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park: Gorilla Trekking

Bwindi, a World Heritage Park, is home to just over half of the world's last surviving mountain gorilla population of 1,000 individuals. Today's trek* can take from one to six hours, sometimes more, at elevations in excess of 2270 m (7,500 ft) and over rough terrain. Although the hike can be physically demanding, the anticipation of the exciting experience ahead is invigorating, and the beauty of the forest and its inhabitants is fascinating. For more info, go to www.uwa.or.ug. Your gorilla permits are included in the tour price.

The area around Bwindi is an excellent place for watching primates and birds and you may catch a glimpse of the noisy but evasive Chimpanzees or the beautiful Hornbills and Turacos. The forest is home to 120 species of mammals, 346 species of birds, 202 species of butterflies, and 163 species of trees, making it one of the richest ecosystems in Africa.

Overnight at Bwindi.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 9 Bwindi, Uganda - Parc National des Volcans, Rwanda

Today we embark on a +/- 6-hour journey to Parc National des Volcans in Rwanda. Our route takes us through the picturesque terraced hillsides that are characteristic of the Rwandan landscape. After a 2-hour drive, we'll cross the border, which typically takes about an hour. We aim to arrive at our accommodation near the park in the early-mid afternoon.

Parc National des Volcans is a stunning mountain range, home to the endangered mountain gorilla. As Dian Fossey once wrote, "In the heart of Central Africa, so high up that you shiver more than you sweat, are great, old volcanoes towering up almost 15,000 feet, and nearly covered with rich, green rainforest." The park's diverse ecosystems, including evergreen and bamboo forests, grasslands, swamps, and heath, provide a unique habitat for a variety of wildlife.

This afternoon, we'll take a leisurely walk to the Ellen DeGeneres/Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund, a fantastic opportunity to learn more about gorillas and the remarkable work of Dian Fossey. The center offers informative exhibits and educational programs whereby visitors can gain valuable insights into gorilla conservation efforts and the challenges these magnificent creatures face.

We'll spend the night at a lodge near the park, preparing for our gorilla trekking adventure tomorrow.

Overnight near Parc National des Volcans.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Parc National des Volcans: Gorilla Trekking

Early this morning we drive to the park headquarters where we are briefed by the guides of the Parc des Volcans before we start our gorilla trek. This 13,000-hectare national park protects the Rwanda sector of the Virunga Mountains, a range of six extinct and three active volcanoes which straddle the border with Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Bamboo forest is interspersed with alpine moorland, grassland and marsh.

Tracking the gorillas through the light mountain forest on the slopes of the Virungas is a magical experience. If you are lucky you will get to the gorillas, spend an hour with them, and be back at the base in time for a late lunch. Some gorilla families however are more elusive, and tracking can take a full day... especially when wet and muddy.

The Mountain Gorillas in the Parc National des Volcans are part of a worldwide population of just 740 individuals. The gorillas we are allowed to track belong to one of several habituated family groups. For up to five years each, these groups have undergone an extremely delicate

process that has gradually brought them to tolerate the presence of humans for a brief period every day and allowed a few privileged visitors to interact with them in the wild.

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The gorillas are by no means tame, and are completely wild animals. However, experienced guides will accompany us on our tracking, many of who have been involved in the habituation process themselves. The guides will use their knowledge of the gorillas' habits and information from the previous day to locate the group's whereabouts. Because of this, the time taken to track the gorillas varies enormously, from as little as 1 hour to as much as 8 hours before one returns to base. Once the gorillas are located, our group will be allowed a maximum of one hour with them.

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Please remember that the mountain gorillas are a wild animal and are not enclosed in any form and free to move as they please. For this reason actual sightings of the gorilla groups cannot be guaranteed. For more information on gorilla tracking in Rwanda, go to:

www.visitrwanda.com/interests/gorilla-tracking/

Overnight near Parc National des Volcans.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 11 Parc National des Volcans: Twin Lakes & Village

We'll start our day with a leisurely walk to the Ellen DeGeneres/Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund, a fantastic opportunity to learn more about gorillas and the remarkable work of Dian Fossey. The center offers informative exhibits and educational programs whereby visitors can gain valuable insights into gorilla conservation efforts and the challenges these magnificent creatures face.

We then have a scenic drive to the picturesque Twin Lakes of Burera and Ruhondo. Upon arrival at Virunga Lodge, we'll enjoy a short walk, taking in the stunning views of the surrounding mountains and the tranquil waters.

We'll then head to the bustling Musanze market. As we wander through the vibrant market, we'll immerse ourselves in the local culture, experiencing the sights, sounds, and smells of this bustling marketplace. We'll have the opportunity to interact with local vendors and learn about their products, from fresh produce to handcrafted souvenirs.

Overnight near Parc National des Volcans.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 12 Parc National des Volcans - Kigali

This morning we'll embark on a cultural immersion experience, visiting a nearby village. We'll witness firsthand the daily lives of the locals, observing their farming techniques, beekeeping practices, and traditional clothing-making processes. We'll also have the chance to explore their homes and gain a deeper understanding of their way of life.

Later today we travel back to Kigali arriving later in the afternoon.

Overnight in Kigali.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Departure

Departure from Kigali.

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Included Meal(s): Breakfast