

# WILD UGANDA PRIMATE SAFARI



Photo by Lyndsay Harshman, CAS



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## Itinerary Overview

Viewing gorillas in the wild is a breathtaking and humbling wildlife encounter. On this unique wildlife adventure, follow expert guides and native trackers deep into the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest in search of a family of mountain gorillas. We'll also take the time to enjoy the numerous other hidden gems that Uganda has to offer, such as Hike to see Chimpanzees in the Kibale Forest, take game drives and boat trips in Queen Elizabeth National Park, and stay on the tranquil shores of Lake Mburo, ensuing exposure to the full range of Ugandan wildlife. If you have extra time, we highly recommend an extension to Murchison Falls National Park for stunning scenery, excellent birding and the spectacular falls themselves.

DAY	DATE	OVERNIGHT	HOTELS	MEALS	HIGHLIGHTS
1		ENTEBBE	Karibu Guest House		Arrive in Entebbe
2		KIBALE FOREST	Primate Lodge	BLD	Drive to the Kibale Forest
3		KIBALE FOREST	Primate Lodge	BLD	Kibale Forest Chimpanzees
4		QUEEN ELIZABETH NATIONAL PARK	Mazike Valley Lodge	BLD	Am Bigodi Wetlands , PM Drive to Queen Elizabeth
5		QUEEN ELIZABETH NATIONAL PARK	Mazike Valley Lodge	BLD	Game driving, launch trip on the Kasinga Channel
6		BWINDI IMPENETRABLE FOREST	Mahogany Springs Lodge	BLD	Game drive Ishasha, drive to Bwindi
7		BWINDI IMPENETRABLE FOREST	Mahogany Springs Lodge	BLD	Gorilla Trekking
8		BWINDI IMPENETRABLE FOREST	Mahogany Springs Lodge	BLD	Gorilla Trekking or Batwa Cultural Experience
9		LAKE MBURO	Mihingo Lodge	BLD	Drive to Lake Mburo, afternoon game driving
10		DEPARTURE	Karibu Guest House (Dayroom)	BLD	Drive to Entebbe, evening departure

# Itinerary in Detail

## DAY 1: ARRIVAL IN ENTEBBE

Upon arrival into Entebbe you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel for an overnight stay. If you arrive early in the day, a visit to the Entebbe Botanical Gardens is possible. Overnight at **Karibu Guest House** or similar.

## DAY 2: KIBALE FOREST

*Driving time: Approx 7.5 hours on mostly paved roads*

Morning drive westward to Kibale Forest. The route slowly ascends from the Lake Victoria basin into the lush rolling foothills of The Ruwenzori Mountains (Mountains of the Moon). Pass through villages and farmland where every imaginable fruit and vegetable of the tropics can be seen growing. Birding is excellent with varying ecosystems including rain forest, agricultural land, papyrus swamps, scrub land, and the famous tea growing area around Fort Portal and Kyanjojo. Overnight at **Primate Camp. [BLD]**



## DAY 3: KIBALE FOREST

Today we get the opportunity to explore Kibale Forest National Park. Kibale Forest is home to 13 primate species and a guided forest trek can be taken in search of one of the most popular primate species in the world – the chimpanzee. There are 9 diurnal primates, include, vervet, red-tailed, L’Hoest’s, blue monkeys, grey-cheeked manabey, red colobus, black and white colobus, olive baboon and the most famous of all, the chimpanzee. Although chimp sightings are not guaranteed, the odds are good with the chance of encountering them standing at higher than 90%. Whilst trekking in the depths of the lush green forest, you will be surrounded by bird song and can expect to see at least 5 or 6 other types of primate, most probably the grey-cheeked managebey, the red-tailed monkey and of course the chimpanzee. The walking is fairly easy due to the well-maintained trails and reasonably flat terrain. You will get another chance to trek the chimpanzees in the afternoon, allowing for observation of the chimpanzees during a different section of their daily lives. Overnight at **Primate Camp. [BLD]**



## DAYS 4 – 5: BIGODI WETLANDS / QUEEN ELIZABETH NATIONAL PARK

Spend the morning visiting the Bigodi Wetlands, situated in the highlands of western Uganda, in the shadow of the Ruwenzori Mountains. Hike on well-maintained footpaths through the Bigodi Wetlands Sanctuary, part of the Magombe wetlands, with community guides. This afternoon prepare for a scenic drive (approx. 3.5 hours) to the Queen Elizabeth National Park, situated in the western region of the Great Rift Valley. This park includes a remarkable variety of eco-systems from semi-deciduous tropical forests to green meadows, savannah, crater lakes and swamps. Within the park a vast array of wildlife can be found including elephant, buffalo, hippo, leopard and lions.

Along the shores of Lake Edward and the Kasinga Channel are over five hundred bird species, including the Shoe-bill stork, black bee-eater, eleven different species of kingfisher and several eagles and other raptors. Hippo and crocodiles line the shore, and herds of buffalo often come here to drink. A private boat trip on the Kasinga channel is included. Overnight for two nights at **Mazike Valley Lodge. [BLD]**

### **DAY 6: ISHASHA AND DRIVE TO BWINDI**

Enjoy a scenic drive to the Ishasha region, still within QENP. This region is known for tree climbing lions, who nap in the branches of fig and other trees during the heat of the day. Other species include buffalo, elephants, kob, topi, and other antelope species. Depart by vehicle to Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, home to half of the world's population of mountain gorillas and designated as a World Heritage Site. Some of the gorilla families have been habituated to human presence, and it is possible to visit them in their natural habitat within the forest. Bwindi also contains many other primate species and offers interesting and more relaxing walks for visitors around the lower levels of the forest. Overnight at **Mahogany Springs Camp. [BLD]**

### **DAY 7: MOUNTAIN GORILLA TREKKING**

Spend today visiting the mountain gorillas who reside in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest. Prior to trekking, you will have an orientation at the park headquarters to become familiar with gorilla tracking ethics. It is very important that under no circumstances are the gorillas to be touched by humans. This is to protect the animals from communicable diseases to which they are very susceptible. The trek, with experienced trackers leading the way, can take up to eight hours although the gorillas are usually found after two to four hours. Once located, your group of 8 trekkers will spend one hour with the gorillas. **Gorilla viewing is not guaranteed**, although since the trackers set out early in the morning to locate the gorilla families the probability of viewing gorillas is extremely



high. Some hiking areas lie at altitudes above 7,500 feet over rough and muddy terrain. Although the hike can be physically demanding, the beauty of the forest and surrounding scenery make the trek worthwhile. Once the gorillas are located all fatigue is forgotten, as the experience is often described as the most profound natural history experience in the world. Picnic lunches are provided and it is important to take plenty of water. It can rain at a few minutes' notice, hence water proof clothing is a good idea, also zip lock bags for cameras. Return to camp for the evening meal and relaxation. Overnight at **Mahogany Springs Camp. [BLD]**

### **DAY 8: OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES: BATWA COMMUNITY VISIT OR GORILLA TREKKING**

On day 8 you have the option to rest at the lodge, experience a second gorilla trek to see a different family of gorillas or to experience the lives of the Batwa tribe. (*Gorilla and Batwa options must be booked in advance.*) These Batwa pygmies were the original dwellers of the ancient forest and were known as the 'keepers of the forest'. The Batwa lived in harmony with the forest and survived by hunting small game using bows and arrows and gathering plants for both food and medicinal purposes. In 1992 the lives of the Batwa changed forever, when the forest became a national park and the Batwa were evicted from their traditional home.

In 2001, when the Batwa tribe was on the edge of extinction American medical missionaries, Dr Scott and Carol Kellermann came to their rescue. They purchased land and established programs to improve the conditions and lives of the Batwa. This included the building of a school, hospital and housing. The Kellermanns also developed water and sanitation projects and found ways that the Batwa could generate income and sustain themselves. These projects are now managed and operated by the Batwa Development Program (BDP). BDP works closely with the Batwa community to try to ensure that their indigenous rights are respected and they also benefit from the forest being a national park and tourist attraction.

The Batwa Cultural Experience was created by the displaced Batwa pygmies with the help of BDP to to share their amazing heritage and traditions with the world. A day spent with the Batwa gives you the opportunity to enjoy the following:

- Hike through the forest with the people of the forest. You will have a Batwa guide and he will provide you with the chance to see the forest and its habitants through his eyes.
- See how they lived and hunted in the traditional manner. Enjoy trying out your hunting techniques as the Batwa teach you how to shoot with a bow and arrow.
- Visit a traditional Batwa homestead and learn from the women how to prepare, cook and serve a meal. You will also have the opportunity to sample the dishes.
- Talk to a medicine man and learn about the medicinal properties of the forest flora.
- Hear ancient legends and traditional songs.

Overnight at **Mahogany Springs. [BLD]**

### **DAY 9: LAKE MBURO**

*Driving time: 6-7 hours with stops on a paved road*

Morning departure for the drive through southwestern Uganda, a stunning scenic area, to the Lake Mburo National Park. Lake Mburo is comprised of five different lakes, and is home to zebra, topi, and eland. A game drive in the Park is an option for this afternoon, or you might just want to rest at Mihingo Lodge and watch wildlife at the watering hole and salt lick below the pool. Mihingo Lodge is a peaceful and luxurious retreat adjacent to Lake Mburo National Park. Overnight **Mihingo Lodge. [BLD]**

### **DAY 10: DEPARTURE**

*Driving time: approx 5 hours*

You have an opportunity for a morning game drive before continuing the drive to Entebbe. A dayroom at the **Karibu Guest House** is provided in anticipation of an evening transfer to the airport for your international flight. **[BLD]**

### **END OF SERVICES**

**Actual routes and activities may vary. Local trip coordinators reserve the right to change accommodations to similar quality alternatives.**

**INCLUDED SERVICES**

- All guided tours and excursions
- Private English-speaking naturalist guide (Gorilla and chimpanzee treks are conducted in a group of 8 with a National Parks Ranger and are not private)
- Airport-hotel transfers, land transportation
- Park Entrance fees and Chimpanzee trekking permits
- 9 nights hotel accommodation as indicated
- Meals as indicated [B-Breakfast, L-Lunch, D-Dinner]
- Bottled water in the vehicle

**NOT INCLUDED SERVICES**

- International airfare
- Gorilla permits (listed separately)
- Batwa Cultural Experience (listed separately) as optional substitution to 1 day of Gorilla Trekking
- Tips and gratuities
- Visa fees
- Drinks, alcoholic beverages, and meals other than listed above
- Personal expenses for extra services, optional activities, or changes in your itinerary for reasons beyond our control
- Travel insurance for trip cancellation, medical services, or evacuation
- Any other items not mentioned above

**TRIP NOTES**

Departure dates are scheduled on a private basis and subject to Gorilla Permit availability. We advise confirming this itinerary at least 6 months before your intended date of travel. Minimum age to trek for gorillas is 15. Trekking Permits and 20% deposit required to confirm. Both deposit and permit payment are non-refundable.

## Accommodations



### **KARIBU GUEST HOUSE, ENTEBBE**

This charming boutique hotel is within close proximity to the airport (10 min) and offers the perfect respite prior to embarking on your exploration of Uganda. With international managers and a staff of 20 Ugandan's this vibrant little guest house places a premium on guest satisfaction. Seven comfortable rooms are all individually decorated with fun vibrant colors such as mango, azure and bordeaux . Enjoy free wi-fi while enjoying a welcome beverage or Mediterranean style meal on the open air

veranda with sunset views out over Lake Victoria.



### **PRIMATE CAMP, KIBALE NATIONAL PARK**

Primate Lodge is situated in Kibale Forest National Park and is the perfect gateway for tracking the primates of Uganda. The lodge is committed to the conservation of nature and culture and is constructed using local materials and makes use of solar power electricity in order to minimize the impact on the environment. Primate Lodge features 8 luxury safari tents and 7 cottages. All the rooms are privately situated within the forest, making it an ideal place to unwind and enjoy the natural beauty that surrounds you. The luxury tents are on a raised wooden platform and covered by a grass thatched roof, blending perfectly with the natural

environment. The interior is tastefully decorated in African style, with queen sized beds, brightly colored bed spreads and large windows to take in the forests. The en suite bathrooms are furnished with a natural touch of stone and bamboo.



### **MAZIKE VALLEY LODGE , QUEEN ELIZABETH N. PARK**

Mazike Valley Lodge is situated on the eastern edge of Queen Elizabeth National Park with stunning views over the park and Kyambura Gorge. Accommodation is provided in 4 spacious and tastefully decorated self-contained grass-thatched cottages, with bath tubs/showers with views to the park, running hot and cold water and electricity. Each cottage has a lovely wooden balcony from which the diversity of wildlife in the park can be viewed and enjoyed. The lodge also has a beautiful swimming pool and camp fire around which local traditional dancers will entertain you as

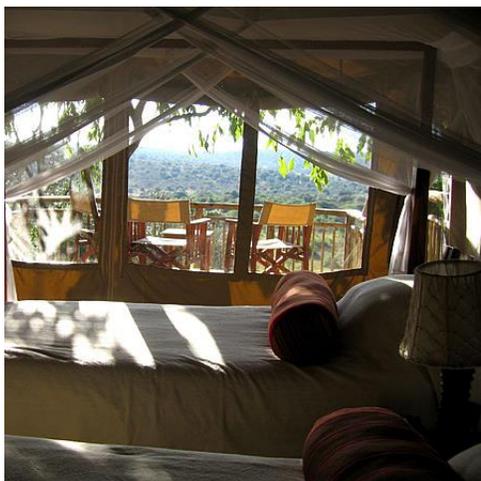
you relax after the day's activities.



### **MAHOGANY SPRINGS, BWINDI NATIONAL PARK**

Set back on the pristine waters of the Munyanga River and facing the Impenetrable forest, Mahogany Springs is an ideal setting to begin your unforgettable experience with the gorillas of Bwindi. All seven rooms at Mahogany Springs are suites with large double doors and beautiful windows. Each suite has its own private terrace with panoramic views of the surrounding area. There are power points in the rooms as well as a dressing table/desk. All suites have large en-suite bathrooms with an open terracotta shower. For added comfort and peace of mind all the suites have an advanced mosquito net system that wraps around the entire

area of the beds. With some of the most luxurious accommodation in East Africa the feeling that you will experience when staying here is beyond compare.



### **MIHINGO LODGE, LAKE MBURO**

Mihingo Lodge is a peaceful and luxurious retreat adjacent to Lake Mburo National Park. Situated on over 200 privately owned acres, it features ten rooms which are built on wooden platforms and stilts, covered by a thatched roof. Suspended under the thatched roof is a spacious and comfortable tent equipped with en-suite bathrooms, including hot and cold running water, showers, and flush toilets. The main dining area is a large thatched structure built from rocks, the wood of olive trees, and native grasses. Below the dining area, an infinity swimming pool stretches out from the rocks and seems to disappear into the vast landscape beyond.