

18 Days of Uganda-Rwanda Birding, Primate and Photography Safari

Key sites: Entebbe Botanical Gardens, Murchison Falls National Park, Budongo Forest, Kibale Chimpanzee Forest, Queen Elizabeth National Park, Maramagambo Forest, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Parc National des Vulcans, Kigali.

Overview

Uganda and Rwanda are two adjacent and land locked countries Uganda is bigger among the two and Rwanda being smaller and skulk on the extreme southwest of Uganda. Both countries are rich in terms of wilderness biodiversity but more percentage of our itinerary is in Uganda because of its extraordinary and remarkable experience and size. Your guides pay attention to the need and expectation of your trip in order to make your journey fruitful. Please come with your most wanted checklist along!

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival Entebbe-Uganda

Arrival, meet and greet then transfer to Cassia Lodge. Early arrivals will be introduced to birding at the botanical gardens a good place to view the **Colobus Monkeys**. Overnight at either cassia lodge or the lodge Lweza BB

Day 2: Transfer to Murchison falls National Park-Uganda

After breakfast, drive northwest through the famous Luwero Triangle to Murchison Falls National Park, arriving Masindi Town in time for lunch. In the afternoon visit the top of the Falls where you can see the Nile's beauty perfected! Marvel at the Nile, compressing from up to one km squeezed through a 6-metre canyon dropping 150 metres with a thunderous roar, creating a beautiful rainbow. Marvel at 'The Murchison Falls' and enjoy the sunset as you drive to the lodge. Dinner and overnight at, Nile Safari Camp or sambiya river lodge. FB.

Day 3: Early Morning Game safari and afternoon boat cruise on the river Nile-Uganda

After an early breakfast, if we spent the night on the southern sector of the park, we drive shortly and cross to the northern side for a game safari expect to see the **African Elephant, Lion, Cape Buffalo, Roth-Child's Giraffe, Hartebeest, Waterbuck, Oribi, Bushbuck, Bohor Reed Buck, Uganda Kob, Hyena** and if you are lucky, the **Leopard**. After a picnic lunch, in the afternoon we proceed for a boat safari upstream the calm Victoria Nile to the bottom of the falls stopping just tens of meters from the 'Devil's Cauldron', marvel at the toothsome **Hippos, Crocodiles** and over the 17km stretch you may see **African Elephant, Waterbuck and Uganda Kob**. This is also the zone of many birds, species like **Goliath Heron, Egyptian Goose, Red**

Throated Bee-Eater, Kingfishers, Cormorants and the rare **Shoebill Stork**. After taking shorts of the photogenic Murchison Falls, return to Nile Safari Camp or Paraa Safari Lodge for dinner and overnight stay. FB

Day 4: Morning game safari and transfer to Masindi-Uganda

We start birding after an early breakfast. If we spent a night at Nile Safari we cross with the ferry of 7:00 o'clock and do a game/birding drive which will take us up to the Albert delta point. Special birds to look out for here include **Shoebill, Northern Carmine Bee-Eater, Abyssinian Roller And Ground Hornbill, Red-Throated Bee-Eaters, Goliath Heron, Saddle-Billed Stork, White Browed Sparrow Weaver, Silver Bird, Buff-Bellied Warbler, Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Senegal Thick-Knee, Osprey, Water Thick-Knee, Black-Headed Lapwing, Long-Toed Lapwing, Little Bittern, Red-Necked Falcon, Blue-Breasted Bee-Eater, Hauglin's Francolin, Black Billed Wood-Dove, Namaqua Dove, Vinaceous Dove And Grosbeak Weaver, Bar-Breasted Firefinch, Red-Winged Grey Warbler, Spotted Morning-Thrush, White Rumped Seed Eater, Red-Throated Bee-Eater, Beautiful Sunbird, Speckle-Fronted And Golden-Backed Weavers, White Rumped Canary** etc, we later drive to Masindi and spend our night at Masindi Hotel for one night. FB

Day 5: Birding and wildlife safari to Kibale Forest-Uganda

Today, we shall start after an early breakfast and begin our birding and wildlife safari with a long drive to Kibale National Park. We may have a chance of birding the main Road where we expect to encounter large crowds of **Olive Baboons, Black and White Colobus Monkeys, Red Colobus Monkey, Red Tailed and Velvet Monkeys**. Kibale National park is popular for hosting 13 primate species including the closest living cousins of man – **the Chimpanzees**. Stay at mountains of the moon Lodge or Attaco country resort. FB

Day 6: Chimps and other primate tracking coupled with Bird Watching-Uganda

After Breakfast, go for chimpanzee tracking. Other primates include the **L'Hoest's, Red Colobus, Red-Tailed, Olive Baboon, Gray-Cheeked Mangabey** and many others. In the Afternoon we shall visit Bigodi wetland which is managed by the local community. Here, we expect to spot the Elusive **Sitatunga Antelope** in the Papyrus and several other interesting species of birds like the **White-winged warbler, Papyrus Gonolek, Carruther's Cisticola** etc. today we enjoy a traditionally prepared lunch from the local group that manages this wetland. Dinner and overnight at either mountains of the moon Lodge or Attaco country resort. FB

Day 7: Transfer to Queen Elizabeth National Park-Uganda

This day, we start at leisure and our journey takes us through Uganda's beautiful scenic areas with a clear view of the Mountains of the Moon depending on the cloud. We shall reach in the late morning and a game drive enroute is always rewarding Queen Elizabeth in the second largest national park in Uganda. In terms of diversity this park is having the biggest birding checklist in Uganda and perhaps the whole world with so far 612 species recorded. Special birds of this park include **Harlequin Quail, Blue Quail, Red Capped Lark, African Crake, Common Buttonquail, Broad Tailed Warbler, Martial Eagle, African Skimmer, Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Amur Falcon**. Primates include **Olive Baboon, Velvet Monkey, Tantalus Monkey**, in the kyambura gorge we find the **Chimps, Blue and Red Tailed Monkey**. In the afternoon we shall embark on a boat ride along the Kazinga channel where we get close to big schools of **Hippos, Buffalos, and Crocodiles** close to the waterside, many a time **elephants** are always swimming here. There is a variety of bird species', Including **Saddle billed stork**, both species of **Pink-backed and Great White Pelicans**, and other migratory species. The **African Skimmer, Striated Heron, African Spoonbill, Water Thick-knee, Three-banded Plover, Marsh, Green, Wood and Common Sandpiper, Gray-headed Gull, Plain Martin, Lesser Swamp-Warbler and Yellow-billed Ox-pecker** are on the birding list to be sighted. Overnight at bush Lodge or Marafiki lodge.FB

Day 8: Birding and Wildlife Safari in Queen Elizabeth National Park-Uganda

Have an early morning game drive which will provide opportunities to see **Spotted Hyena, Buffalo, Uganda Kobs, Defassa Waterbucks, Elephant, Leopard**, late breakfast. After Lunch leave the lodge for a boat safari on the Kazinga Channel with the largest concentration of **Hippos**, a host of countless bird species, **crocodiles and water bucks**. Overnight at bush Lodge or marafiki lodge.FB

Day 9: Kyambura Gorge/Maramagambo Forest/ (Chimp Tracking)-Uganda

Visit the nearby Kyambura Gorge to track the fast moving and elusive **chimpanzees**, one of man's closest relatives. The chimp population is quite mobile and viewing is unpredictable, however the walk in this "lost world" is nevertheless enchanting. Alternatively, time allowing go for a nature walk in the Maramagambo Forest. This forest harbors some unusual species -**Red-Tailed and L'Hoest's Monkey, Potto, Giant Forest Hog, Pygmy Antelope, And Giant Elephant Shrew**. You can also visit the bat caves and the blue lake in the afternoon. (B, L, D)

Day 10: Game drive and trying out the Tree Climbing Lions-Uganda

Take an early morning cup of coffee before setting off for a game drive in the Northern area of the park towards Lake George and expect to see **Lions, Elephants, Buffalos, Warthogs** and lots of animals and birds. Today we shall have checked out of our rooms in the morning, we continue to the 'Switzerland of Africa' area known as the Kigezi Highlands with its terraced

hillside and winding roads through the Ishasha sector where you will have an opportunity to see the **Tree Climbing Lions** on a good and lucky day. We later check in at Wilderness Luxury Tented Camp Ishasha or Savanna resort for dinner and overnight stay.FB

Day 11: Transfer to Bwindi the gorilla Forest-Uganda

After breakfast, we start with a game drive which will give us more chances of seeing **The Tree Climbing Lions** and bigger opportunities of seeing the **Leopard** this morning before setting off to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. We have stopovers to look out for interesting savannah birds. These include **Black Lored and Arrow-Marked Babbler, Ovambo Sparrow Hawk, African Cuckoo Hawk, Stout, Zitting, Wing Snapping and Trilling Cisticolas, Violet-Backed Starling, Brown Snake Eagle, Holub's Golden Weaver, Lesser and Greater Honeyguide, Grassland and Plain Backed Pipit, Black Cuckoo, Fork-Tailed Drongo, Senegal Thick-Knee, Blue-Naped Mousebird**. Always big troupes of the shy **Olive Baboon** will be met on the road. Stay at Gorilla Mist Camp or Buhoma Community bandas or Haven community camp for two nights.

Day 12 & 13: Gorilla Tracking Day-Uganda.

On this day, we set off early, with packed lunch, to the park headquarters for a briefing prior to Gorilla Tracking. The gorillas are gentle animals and it is an unforgettable experience to photograph them as they interact. It is a wonderful experience to stare in to the eyes of these gentle giants; watch them in awe as they play and go about their daily activities. It is indeed a "once in a lifetime" experience that you must never miss! Each encounter is different and has its own rewards; you are likely to enjoy the close view of adults feeding, grooming and resting as the youngster's frolic and swing from vines in a delightfully playful display. Gorilla tracking involves part or one day in the Impenetrable Forest. Sometimes the gorillas can be located within an hour or so, but at other times it sometimes takes an entire day of quite hard trekking to find them and return, so you need to be physically fit if you wish to maximize your chances. Very occasionally, in spite of all efforts, the gorillas prove elusive. Depending on the time we get back we might have optional village to the communities around the gorillas the pygmies inclusive or evening birding around the self-guided train in Buhoma, another Eden of birding in Uganda and later transfer to our lodge for dinner and overnight stay at Gorilla mist camp or Buhoma community Camp. FB

Day 14 – Transfer to Rwanda via the Cyanika Border-from Uganda to Rwanda

Today we will be moving from the lower forest biome to the seldom-visited higher forest in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. In scrubby areas beyond Buhoma, we will search for **Red-Necked Wryneck; Brown-Backed Scrub-Robin; Bronze, Copper and Variable Sunbirds;**

Baglafaecht, Black-Necked and Holub's Golden Weavers; Yellow Bishop; Village Indigobird and Black-Throated Seed-Eater. Further along the road, we will pass through Kitahurira or 'The Neck,' another well-known birding locality. Here we will search for species such as **Black Goshawk; Bronze-Naped Pigeon; Cinnamon-Chested Bee-Eater; Cassin's Honeyguide; Petit's Cuckoo-Shrike; White-Chinned Prinia;** the enigmatic **Chapin's Flycatcher; Mountain Wagtail; Pink-Footed Puffback;** the rare **Tiny Sunbird** and the attractive **Brown-capped Weaver.** Even further up the road, cultivated areas provide feeding opportunities for many seedeaters. Our main targets here will be the highly sought-after **Dusky Twinspot and Yellow-Bellied, Black-Headed and Black-Crowned Waxbills. African Stonechat; Streaky and Thick-Billed Seedeaters; African Citril and Cape Canary** may also be found here. **Noisy Chubb's Cisticolas** will mock us from deep within the bracken! and the beautiful **Doherty's Bushshrike** can be lured out from the dense vegetation. **Mackinnon's Shrikes** survey the road from high, exposed perches. We have many chance of seeing the **L'heost's, Red Tailed and the Black and White Colobus Monkey.**

There are so many special birds at these elevations that we do not want to rush through, we continue with our drive through the Kanaba gap a good swamp slightly ahead providing chances for the **Common and Lesser Moorhen, Hotentot Teal, African Rail** and many more as we ascend into Rwanda. We stay at Mountain Gorilla View Lodge or Gorilla Nest Hotel. FB

Day 15 & 16: Parc National des Volcans Gorillas and Golden Monkeys-Rwanda

Gorilla trekking in the Parc National des Volcans. Tracking the gorillas through the lush forested slopes of the Virungas is a magical experience. If you are lucky you can 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 it is wet and muddy. Overnight at the Gorilla Nest Hotel Mountain gorilla view lodge. FB

Day 17: Kigali-Rwanda Capital City

(easy day) After breakfast, leave for Kigali and go for a tour of the city including a visit to the market, a pottery project, handicraft shops, the Franco-Rwandan cultural Centre and a genocide memorial. Transfer to the airport for your flight onward.

Day 18: End! your flight back home