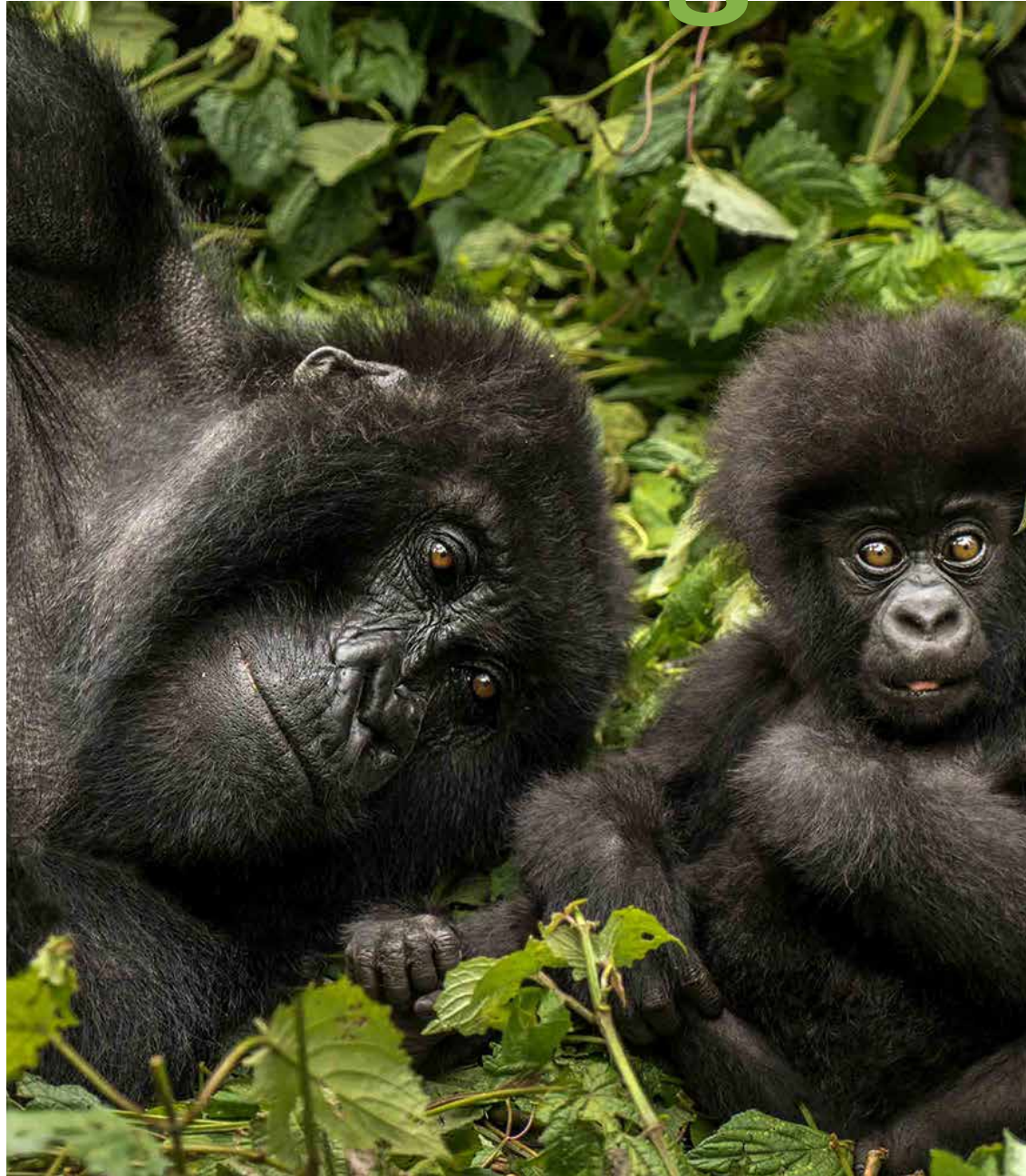


DRAGONFLY
AFRICA



gorilla trekking



The Trek of a Lifetime

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Southern and East Africa's leading Travel Group

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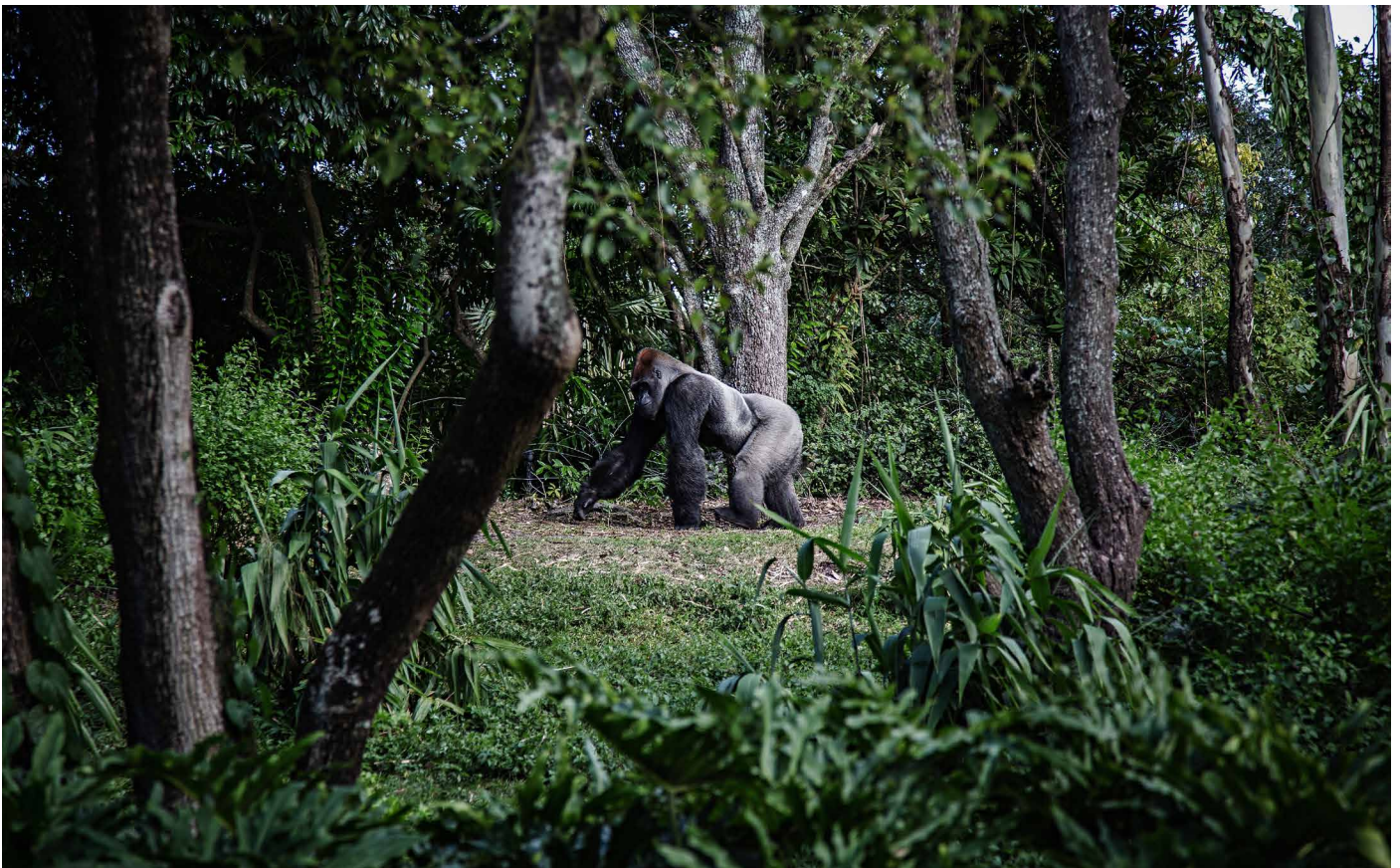
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ABOUT GORILLAS

Mountain Gorillas (*Gorilla beringei beringei*), unlike lowland gorillas, are only found in the Virunga Mountain region bordering the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda, as well as the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda. The mountain gorilla parks include; Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Western Uganda, Mgahinga Gorilla National Park, in South-West Uganda, Volcanoes National Park (Parc National Des Volcans) in North-West Rwanda, and Virungas in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Uganda alone has a population of around 400 gorillas in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, roughly half of the world's population with several habituated groups. Gorillas do not produce a great many offspring since the females do not begin reproducing until age 9 or 10 and infants are dependent upon their mothers for up to five years. Gorillas typically live in family groups, consisting of several adult females and their offspring. The groups are led and protected by a dominant male known as a Silverback. Gorillas' genetic composition is 98.6% of humans, therefore, they are susceptible to human diseases and infections. For this reason, prevention measures have to be taken before they catch any disease. They also get stressed if too many visitors arrive or approach too closely hence the need for rules.

Western lowland gorillas remain critically endangered and their numbers continue to decline because of poaching, habitat destruction, and disease. The trek in Rwanda can be easier, as hills are not as steep as in many parts of Bwindi of Uganda. All gorilla parks have dense undergrowth, being tropical rainforests, depending on where you trek. The difficulty of the trek depends on which gorilla family you visit and how far that family has walked from the trekking base the night before. There are fewer gorillas in Rwanda - all in one forest belt, compared to Uganda's various gorilla families and locations distributed quite far from each other.



CLIMATE

Climate and the best time to visit Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable National Park

Bwindi is cold in the mornings and in the nights, with moderate temperatures between 45°F (7°C) and 68°F (20°C). **Coldest weather:** June to July. **Wet seasons:** March to May & September to November. The wettest weather is in April when an average of 7.2in/183mm of rainfall (precipitation) occurs.

Climate and the best time to visit Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park

The climate in the Virungas is typically damp, with day time temperatures averaging 50°F (10°C). **Dry Season:** June to September and January and February are the driest months and best for gorilla trekking, but be prepared for afternoon thunderstorms at any time. **Rainy Season:** The long rains are from mid-March to mid-May, when many roads become impassable. It also usually rains in October and November.



WHERE TO TREK

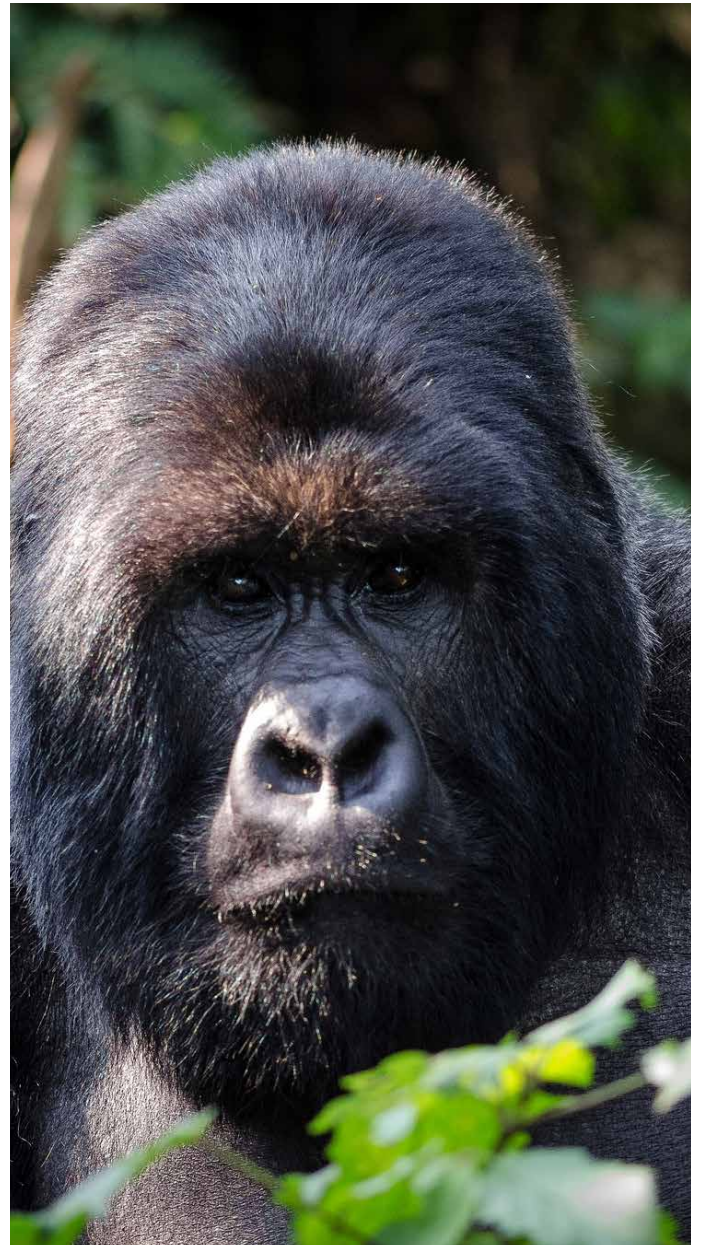
GORILLA TREKKING PARKS			
COUNTRY	NATIONAL PARK	SIZE	LOCATION
Rwanda	Volcanoes	62mi ² /161km ²	Northwest
Uganda	Bwindi Impenetrable	128mi ² /331km ²	Middle-Southwest
Uganda	Mgahinga	13mi ² /34km ²	Extreme-Southwest

Rwanda Gorilla Trekking

Gorilla trekking in Rwanda can only be done in Volcanoes National Park which forms part of the Virunga mountains. Mountain gorillas inhabit the Virungas, at an altitude ranging between 1.4mi/2.3km and 2.8mi/4.5km above sea level.

There are two categories of gorillas in Rwanda, those allocated for research and those for tourism. Only two groups of gorillas are designated for research and may only be accessed by scientists and researchers. These are, Beetsme and Pablois.

The trek in Rwanda is slightly less challenging than in Uganda and the infrastructure is more developed with only one starting point for the trek.



WHERE TO TREK

Uganda Gorilla Trekking

Gorillas in Uganda are exclusively mountainous and are found only in 2 parks out of the 10 national parks of Uganda, Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park, and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park.

Mgahinga Gorilla National Park

Location: Southwest

Size: 13mi²/34km²

Altitude: 1.4mi/2.2km and 2.5mi/4.1km

Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park

Bwindi was gazetted as a National Park in 1991 and declared a UNESCO Natural Heritage Site in 1994.

Location: Southwest Uganda

Size: 128mi²/331 km²

Altitude: 0.7mi/1.1km-1.6mi/2.6km above sea level.

Bwindi is a huge forest, there are around 400 mountain gorillas in Bwindi, of the remaining 750 in the world. It has three sections that are currently open to tourists. Buhoma which is the headquarters, Ruhija which is 18.6mi/30km from Buhoma, and Bwindi South which is only accessed through Kisoro - where there are the other two gorilla families of Nkuringo and Nshongi. These are Mubare, Habinyanja, Rushegura. The gorilla group at Ruhija was fully open for tourism in February 2009. Each of the gorilla families has between 8-25 gorilla individuals.

The habituated gorilla families are distributed within the size of the protected forest and accessible from the four different trekking points; Buhoma (Mubare, Rushegura, Habinyanja) in the North-west, Ruhija Sector (Bitukura, Oruzogo and Kyaguriro) in the North-East; Rushaga (Nshongi, Mishaya, Kahungye) in the South-East; Nkuringo (Nkuringo in the South-West).



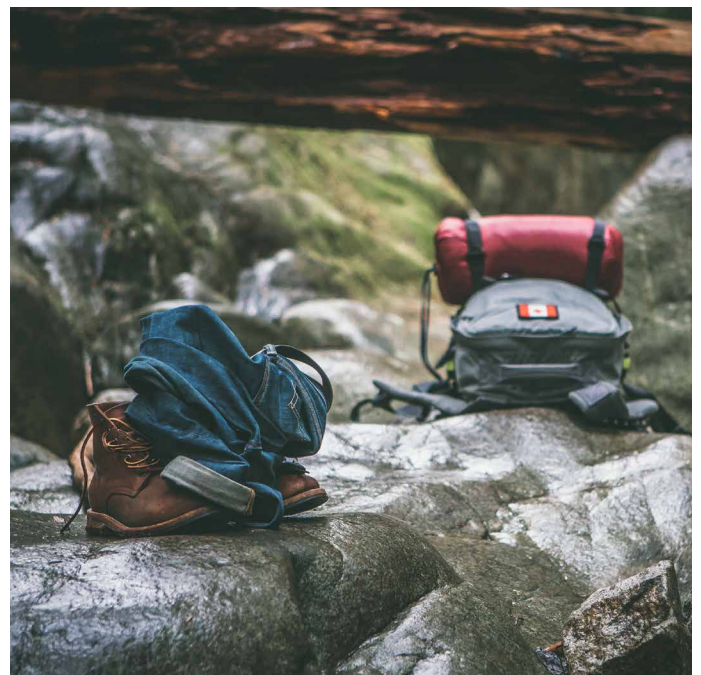
FITNESS LEVELS REQUIRED

Fitness is one of the most frequently asked questions about gorilla trekking and it is also perhaps the most difficult to answer. Gorilla trekking can be tiring and takes time, however it depends on the family you are trekking. As mentioned before, the families move around during the day. In both Rwanda and Uganda it is hard to predict how easy or strenuous your trek will be.

The trek to see the gorillas has two distinct phases. The first is the hike from the closest car park to the forest and national park boundary. The second is a trek into the forest in search of the gorillas. Usually the trackers would have located the troop prior to your trek. The first part of the trek is usually predictable and quite manageable.

The second part is more difficult to predict, as it will depend on the exact location of the gorillas on the day, and on the terrain en route. Other factors in determining how tough it will be, include the density of the vegetation (bending or crawling through the jungle can be tiring especially if you have to dodge nettles) and whether it has rained recently, in which case it will be muddy and quite slippery underfoot. Moderately fit people seldom feel any significant strain. One full day is allocated to a gorilla trek.

Other factors that could influence the trek could be uneven walking paths or high altitude. Most visitors to Africa live in towns and cities where roads and sidewalks are paved, and parks are serviced by neat footpaths, so they are not used to walking on the more irregular and seasonally slippery surfaces typical of the ascent paths and forest floor. The best solution for these conditions would be to wear strong waterproof shoes or hiking boots with good tread and solid ankle support. Furthermore, if you think you might struggle, rather consider travelling in the dry season when footpaths can be less challenging.



FITNESS LEVELS REQUIRED

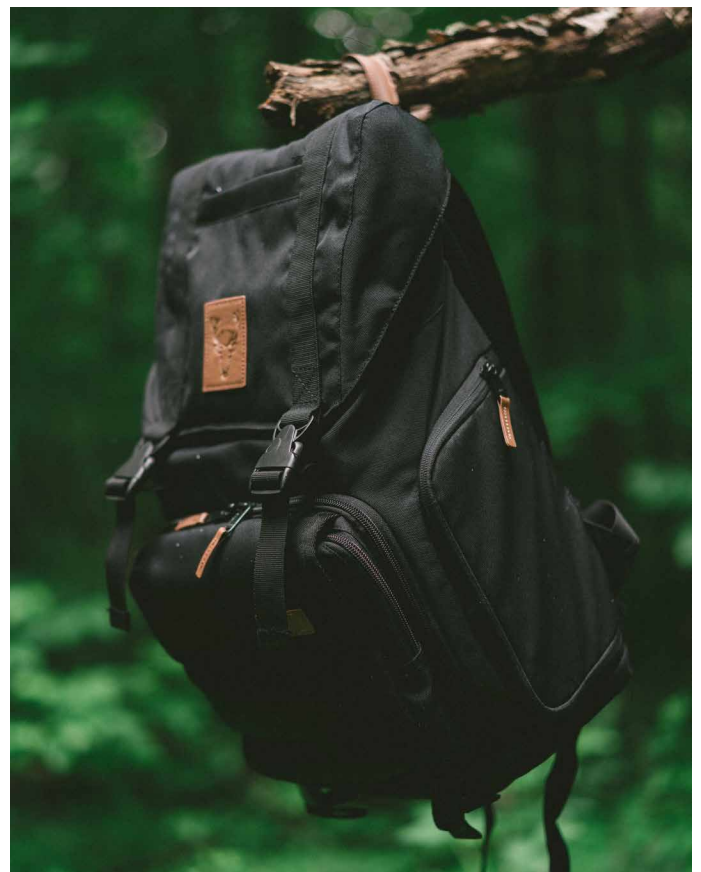
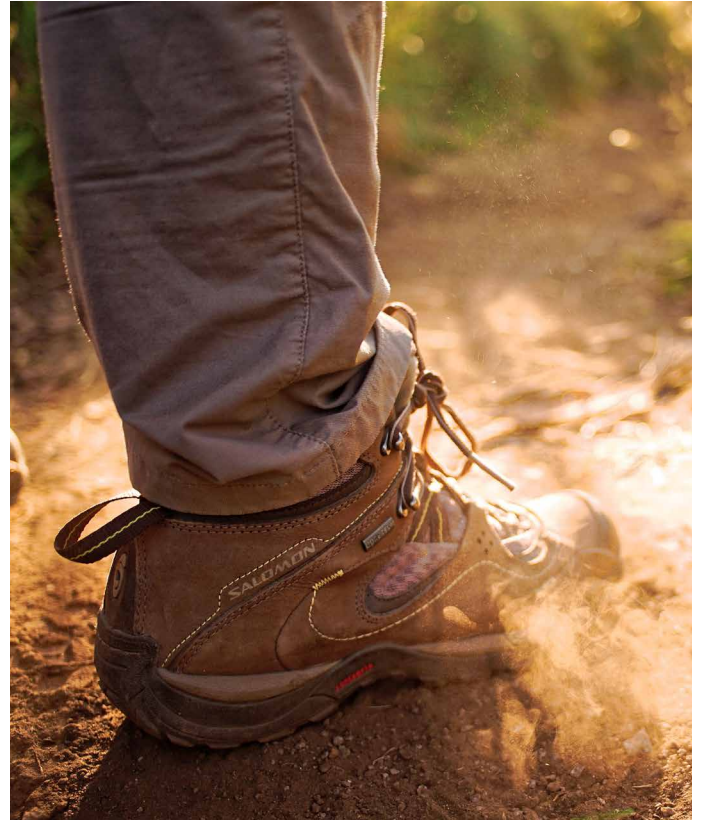
The trekking takes place at elevations of 1.6mi/2.6km-1.9mi/3.0km above sea level, not high enough for altitude sickness to have an effect, but still significant enough to make an impact on your breathing.

Guides will generally offer you a walking stick at the start of the hike, and, even if you normally shun such props, it is worth taking up the offer to help support you on those slippery mountain paths. We highly recommend hiring a porter to assist with carrying enough water and helping you through the mountainous terrain.

Once on the trail, take it easy, and do not be afraid to ask to stop for a few minutes whenever you feel tired. Drink plenty of water and carry quick calories, like biscuits and chocolate. The majority of lodges include snacks and lunch boxes for the trek.

The good news is that most people who trek gorillas find the hike to be far less demanding than they expect, and 99% of cases, whatever exhaustion you might feel on the way up will vanish with the adrenalin charge that follows the first sighting of the majestic mountain gorillas!

While many older travelers do find the trek quite difficult, it is very unusual that they are so daunted as to turn back.



SIGHTING RULES

How to take pictures?

Flash photography is not allowed as this could frighten the gorillas and bother other visitors. Professional filming requires extra fees.

Habituation of Gorillas

Gorillas have to undergo a long process called habituation where the family gets used to human presence. Families usually consist of more than 5 members and once habituated feel more comfortable in the presence of visitors.

The number of people allowed to trek per day?

Each day only 8 gorilla permits are issued per family and only 8 people are allowed to trek that particular day. This is to avoid unnecessary stress for the gorillas and the possibility of transmitting human diseases to the gorillas.

How long does gorilla trekking take?

Trekking through the thick jungle, traversing canopies of thick undergrowth can be tough, arduous and wet. The trekking can last from as little as 45 minutes to as much as 8 hours.

How long can you watch the gorillas?

The maximum time you can spend with the gorillas is one hour. However, if the gorillas become agitated or nervous, the guide will finish the visit early.

How do you behave when watching the gorillas?

If you are in a group, do not surround the gorillas and listen to the careful instructions of your gorilla guide.

When to eat?

Your local guide will advise you on the rules of eating and drinking close to the gorillas.

Age Restriction

Please note that children under 15 years old will not be allowed to do gorilla trekking,



GORILLA SAFETY

Remember gorillas are very susceptible to human diseases. The following are ways to minimize the risk your visit might pose:

- Respect the limits imposed on the number of visitors allowed with the gorillas each day. This minimizes the risk of disease and stress to the troop.
- If you are feeling ill, or you are showing symptoms of a contagious disease you might not be allowed to enter the park.
- If you feel the urge to cough or sneeze when you are near the gorillas, please turn your head away and cover your nose and mouth. This is to minimize the spread of bacteria or viruses.
- Always stay 22 feet (7 meters) away from the gorillas. The further back you are, the more relaxed the group will be.
- Do not attempt to touch the gorillas.
- Do not smoke, drink or eat when you are with the gorillas.
- Do not leave any rubbish (e.g. food wrappers) in the Park; foreign items can harbour diseases or other contaminants.



EQUIPMENT LIST

1. A small, lightweight, frameless, waterproof back/day pack.
2. Light, waterproof hiking or walking boots or shoes with treaded soles.
3. Thick socks.
4. Camera and binoculars.
5. Long trousers (jeans/khakis) and a long sleeved shirt.
6. Leather or heavy canvas gloves to grip vegetation (gardening gloves are advised). This is vital due to stinging nettles that can make the experience very uncomfortable.
7. A raincoat or poncho with hood.
8. Sunglasses, sun screen and a hat
9. Thick sweaters are not necessary on the trek, as it gets very hot. Best to have layers of clothing as temperatures tend to change.
10. Enough drinking water.
11. Ask for a walking stick if needed.



OTHER ACTIVITIES

Park Activities

Trekking the golden monkeys

This species was previously thought to be a subspecies of the blue monkey (*Cercopithecus mitis*), and the two are similar overall, but the Golden Monkey has a golden-orange patch on the upper flanks and back.

It is sometimes called the golden snub-nosed monkey and has blackish-grey shoulders, upper arms, back, crown, and tail, with the back being covered in a longer layer of fine silver hairs.

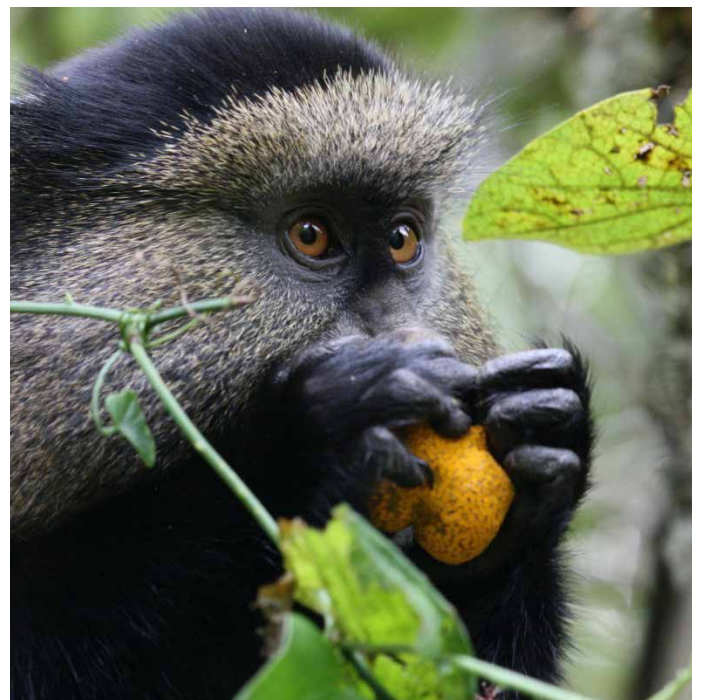
In males the sides of the head, forehead, neck, and underparts are a bright golden colour, hence the common name for the species. Females are generally similar in appearance to males, but the head and upperparts are more brownish-black. Their noses are flattened and set back from the muzzle.

Their wide nostrils face forward while two small flaps of skin above the nostrils touch the forehead. These monkeys produce a wide range of vocalisations, remarkably, without making any facial movements.

Please note the age restriction for trekking the golden monkeys is 12 years old.

Other park activities

- Trek gorillas a second or third time.
- Climb Visoke Volcano.
- Climb Mount Muhabura.
- Visit Dian Fossey's Research center and grave.



OTHER ACTIVITIES

Non-Park Activities

List of activities

- Musanze caves visit.
- Visit a project created by local women.
- Lake Kivu, Lakes Bulera and Ruhondo.
- Genocide memorial sites.
- Batwa Tribe Experience

Local villages

Muko village is 3.1mi/5km southwest of Musanze (formerly called Ruhengeri) and home to the Ndufatanye Momahoro Association, an association of local women who show travelers how to weave baskets.

The genocide memorials

With the help of the local authorities (Musanze Council), the association was started by women who survived the genocide. This empowers them to generate revenue to improve their livelihoods and to allow their children to receive an education.



MEDICAL CARE

Rwanda

For quick emergencies, we use the Musanze hospital. It is a 1-2hr transfer from the park. Even for helicopter transfers to Kigali, the plane does not land in the park, as this is a forest. Guests are evacuated by stretcher from the forest, by car to nearby open ground and then by air to the King Faisal Hospital in Kigali for specialized treatment.

There are no flying doctors in Kigali or Rwanda but there is an option of the group purchasing insurance for this purpose if guests wish, where guests requiring emergencies from the park or any part of Rwanda can be flown to King Faisal Hospital in Kigali first, and if necessary, flown to Nairobi for specialised treatment.

Ruhengeri (Rwanda)

Polyclinique La Medicale

Tel. +250 782 726234

Kigali (Rwanda)

King Faisal hospital - KG 544 St, Kigali, Rwanda

Tel: +250 250 588888



MEDICAL CARE

Uganda

Kisoro International Medical Centre

Afya Clinic
Tel: 070 280 4952
Tel: 077 350 3506

Kampala Medical Centre

Head office plot 16A Elizabeth Avenue
Kololo, Kampala
Direct line: +256 414 560900
Tel: +256 312 261318
Tel: +256 414 560900
Email: info.ug@aar-insurance.com

The Surgery

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Tel: +256 (0)31 225 6001/2/3
Emergency/Ambulance: 075 275 6003

Case Hospital

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