



Uganda is home to approximately half of the world's population of mountain gorilla families – the largest living primates on earth. A recent 2011 census puts the total population in Bwindi at around 400 gorillas, up from 302 in 2006. Bwindi Impenetrable National Park now has as many as 11 habituated gorilla families available for tracking. These families can be tracked from ranger posts in four different locations in Bwindi – Buhoma, Ruhija, Rushaga, Nkuringo. Please our separate map for their precise locations.

## **BUHOMA (Northern Bwindi):**

### **1. Habinyanja Group (18 members, including 1 silverback)**

This group's name comes from 'Nyanja', which is the local word for 'body of water' and refers to a swamp in the forest where the group was first sighted. There is a drive of approx 45 minutes from the briefing point to the start of the hike. Locating these gorillas often takes around two hours – but timings can vary depending on their location. The group is known to have a good population of juveniles and infants, making for a rewarding sighting.

### **2. Rushegura Group (17 members, including 1 silverback)**

This group was created in 2002 after a silverback broke away from the Habinyanja group. The group's name is derived from the Ebishegura tree which is abundant in the area. Rushegura is also known for its playful infants. The group often stays close to Buhoma, so the hike can be relatively short. Indeed, on occasion they have even been seen wandering through the gardens of the lodges in the area, as our [client discovered in a unique chance encounter](#) that became a popular Youtube hit.

### **3. Mubare Group (7 members, including 1 emergent silverback)**

This is one of the oldest groups, and consequently one of the friendliest. Sadly they lost their long-reigning silverback Ruhondeza to old age in 2012, but blackback Kanyonyi appears to be taking over leadership of the group as he graduates into a fully fledged silverback. Mubare group are usually found approx 15-45 mins drive from the briefing point. The trek to reach them can be one of the more arduous, taking around 3-4 hours to locate the gorillas.

## **Closest accommodations and recommended choice:**

- Gorilla Forest Camp (Upmarket)
- Mahogany Springs (Upper mid-range)
- Buhoma Lodge (Upper mid-range)



## **RUHIJA (North-eastern Bwindi):**

### **4. Bitukura Group (12 members including 3 silverbacks)**

If overnighting at Buhoma (where a better standard of accommodation is available), tracking Bitakura or Oruzogo groups means an early start of 5am as Ruhija ranger post is 52kms away (approx 2 hours drive) from Buhoma. The road conditions are terrible, windy and bumpy and during the rainy season, landslides can occur. The hiking can be challenging for those sensitive to altitude, as Ruhija is at 2,340m/7,700ft, but the tracking experience itself is considered very rewarding. Bitakura group has an interesting history – in 2011 the group divided into two and lived as two separate groups 10 km apart – only to reunite four months later. They have lived happily together ever since – and the reasons for the temporary split are still not fully understood.

### **5. Oruzogo Group (21 members, including 1 silverback)**

This group opened in June 2011 in the Ruhija sector of Bwindi. The group's name is derived from one of the plants the gorillas like to eat. Oruzogo is currently (at July 2012) the largest habituated group within Bwindi and therefore has a significant number of infant and juvenile gorillas – including a pair of twins born in March 2012. Their playful antics can make for an excellent experience and unique photographic opportunity. Please note the comments under Bitakura with regards altitude and driving time from Buhoma.

### **Closest accommodations and recommended choice:**

- Ruhija Gorilla Lodge (budget)
- Gorilla's Mist (budget)

Clients should be aware that they are not of the same standard as the lodges in Buhoma.



## **RUSHAGA (South-eastern Bwindi):**

Anyone tracking Rushaga based groups and overnighting at either Clouds Mountain Gorilla Lodge or Nkuringo Gorilla Camp (both located at Nkuringo) must drive from their lodge to the Rushaga ranger post, where the briefings take place. The drive time is approx 40 minutes. All groups below are then tracked by starting on foot from the ranger post, or taking another short drive of up to 30 minutes, depending on the gorilla family's location on any given day.

### **6. Nshongi Group (19 members, including 3 silverbacks)**

Named after the River Nshongi, this used to be the biggest group ever habituated (until Oruzogo took on this mantle) and contains the largest silverback in the park (who is also one of the younger silverbacks within the group). Please see above for logistical information, though it is worth noting that the hike to locate Nshongi is most often started on foot from the ranger post itself.

### **7. Mishaya Group (7 members, including 1 silverback)**

This family was originally a splinter group from Nshongi group and is led by the silverback, Mishaya. There are currently no male blackbacks in this group, so Mishaya currently faces no challenges when it comes to his harem of females! Please see above for logistical information, though the trailhead for this group is most frequently located a short (10-20 minute) car journey back in the direction of Nkuringo.

### **8. Kahungye (20 members, including 3 silverbacks)**

One of the most robust and vibrant families in southern Bwindi, Kahungye were introduced as a newly habituated gorilla family in 2011. They have rapidly gained a reputation for being one of the most fun groups to track, with their acrobatic antics and wide range of ages within the group entertaining visitors to this part of Bwindi. Please see above for logistical information. Please see above for logistical information, though the trailhead for this group is most frequently located a short (10-20 minute) car journey back in the direction of Nkuringo.

(Rushaga Groups continued overleaf)



## **9. Busingye (7 members, including 1 silverback)**

Busingye was formed in mid 2012, when a splinter group from Kahungye created a new group of habituated gorillas in the Rushaga area. Because the split is so recent, the permits are being sold locally to the park, and as such, it is harder to secure them in advance. Once the group is deemed permanently established, the permit sales will be centralised. Please see above for logistical information on the day. Please see notes on previous page for logistical information, though the trailhead for this group is most often located a short (10-20 minute) drive back in the direction of Nkuringo. We would recommend reserving Busingye and Bwesa for last minute enquiries when other groups are not available – due to the dynamic and unpredictable nature of freshly formed gorilla families.

## **10. Bwesa (7 members, including 1 silverback)**

Bwesa is another recent splinter group, this time from Nshongi family, and is therefore often reached by leaving the Rushaga ranger post on foot. As with Busingye, the permits are issued locally to the park, but once enough time has passed to ascertain the group's permanence, the process should be centralised. We would recommend tracking Busingye and Bwesa for last minute enquiries when other groups are not available – due to the dynamic and unpredictable nature of freshly formed gorilla families.

### **Closest accommodations and recommended choice:**

- Clouds Mountain Gorilla Lodge (Upmarket)
- Nkuringo Gorilla Camp (Mid-range)

Please note the lodges above are up to 45 mins drive away from Rushaga briefing point, as the accommodation offer at Rushaga is limited and of a low standard.



## **NKURINGO (Southern Bwindi)**

### **11. Nkuringo Group: (14 members, including 2 silverbacks)**

This group was named after the Rukiga word for 'round hill'. Depending on client preference, they can either set off on foot or take a 5 minute drive to the ranger post. The scenery in this area is stunning, and as the gorillas usually dwell on the primary rainforest side, it is not unusual to find them in a closed canopy area, which means some excellent viewing! This group is often located quite close to the ranger post – but the steep hillsides of this area can make for a challenging descent (and an uphill hike back to base).

### **Closest accommodations and recommended choice:**

- Clouds Mountain Gorilla Lodge (Upmarket)
- Nkuringo Gorilla Camp (Mid-range)

Both properties are 10-15 minutes walk or a short car journey from the ranger post.

### **GENERAL NOTES:**

- All pre-tracking briefings take place at 0800hrs. Clients are required to reach the relevant ranger post by 0745hrs at the latest.
- Only eight visitors per tracking group per day.
- While gorilla tracking in Bwindi offers exceptionally high success rates for sightings, having a gorilla tracking permit is no guarantee of seeing the gorillas.
- The hike taken to reach the gorillas varies enormously and can be from as little as half an hour to as long as seven hours. Clients will be transported back to their accommodation at the end of the trip, a journey that again, varies depending on the location of the briefing point, and of the gorilla family on the day.

**For all other guidelines and what to expect when gorilla tracking, please see our briefing document 'Gorilla Tracking Guidelines'.**