

G A M E P L A N A F R I C A

Journeys of a Lifetime



GORILLAS IN THE VIRUNGAS AND BWINDI

8 Day Gorilla Tracking Safari

Gorillas in the Virungas and Bwindi An 8 Day Gorilla Tracking Safari

Your 8-day safari starts in Kigali and finishes in Entebbe.

Seeing some of the last remaining mountain gorillas in the world is a mesmerising experience as it takes you through the enchanting forests of the Parc National des Volcans in Rwanda. The Batwa in Mount Gahinga were once indigenous forest dwellers and they lived in harmony with the forest millennia. Experience their culture like never before in a guided tour through their history and customs, learning the skills that have been passed down by the tribe elders. Then continue to track gorillas in the primeval forest of Bwindi. The gorillas in Bwindi live in thicker tropical forest and tracking is more challenging as the hillsides are steeper.



The magnificent Virunga Lodge is perched high on a ridge and has stunning views of the volcanoes and the twin lakes Bulera and Ruhonda. It's the premier luxury destination for tracking the endangered mountain gorillas and an established part of the local community.

Nestled in the foothills of the Virunga Volcanoes, Mount Gahinga Lodge is an exclusive lodge that has the impressive backdrop of three of the volcanoes themselves. Its rustic charm creates an absorbing atmosphere of tranquility and history.

Overlooking the primeval Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, Bwindi Lodge offers a truly unique jungle experience. Separated by nothing more than an idyllic stream, the gorillas themselves are frequent visitors to the finest lodge in Bwindi!

Itinerary:

Day 1:

Arriving in Kigali you will be welcomed by your expert guide who will provide knowledge and assistance throughout your safari. Your journey takes you through the beautiful terraced hills that characterize much of Rwanda's landscape. Climbing gradually to the base of the spectacular volcanoes of the Virunga range, the five nearest peaks rising high above the verdant countryside, you arrive at the magnificent Volcanoes Virunga Lodge.

Approximate Travel Times: Driving 3 hours
Please book flights arriving no later than midday.
O/N: **Virunga Lodge (Lunch, Dinner)**



Day 2:

Gorilla tracking in Parc National des Volcans, through the light mountain forest on the slopes of the Virunga range, is a magical experience. Once you reach the gorillas, you can spend an hour with them and be back at base in time for a late lunch! Some gorilla families can be more elusive, and tracking can take a full day, especially if it is wet and muddy.

O/N: **Virunga Lodge (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Day 3:

Either go gorilla tracking again (additional permits required, upon payment of supplement, subject to availability), or choose from one of many options. There is much to explore here:

- Track the endangered golden monkeys.
- Trek to Dian Fossey's grave and the gorilla cemetery, the final resting place of her favourite gorilla, Digit.
- Visit the local school and community projects, supported by the Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust.
- Visit Lake Kivu, home to some of the finest inland beaches in Africa.
- Take a guided walk to Lake Bulera, to experience local village life.
- Tour the ex Imbabazi Orphanage and flower plantation; have tea or lunch with staff and volunteers to learn more about founder Ros Carr and the Orphanage history.

O/N: **Virunga Lodge (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Day 4:

Enjoy a more relaxing morning during which you can do one of the activities in day 3 - except gorilla tracking and visiting Dian Fossey's grave. After lunch set off for the Volcanoes Mount Gahinga Lodge. You cross the border into Uganda and clocks need to be adjusted one hour ahead. The lodge is located at the foot of the Virunga Volcanoes and near the entrance to the national park. Enjoy your pre-dinner drinks on the terrace with stunning views of the Volcanoes or warm yourself inside by the roaring fire.



Approximate Travel Times: Driving 2 hours

O/N: **Mount Gahinga Lodge (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)**

Day 5:

The Batwa Heritage Experience offers an interactive tour of the culture and history of one of Africa's oldest tribes. The tour includes lessons on hunting, gathering, life in the forest, cooking food, religion, marriage and courtship customs and is fully involved. They also perform their traditional dances at the lodge and a Vocational Centre has been set up to teach them skills and abilities to create a new life for themselves in the village.

Alternatively there are other exciting activities for those interested in the culture and natural history of Mgahinga:

- Hike the Muhavura, Sabinyo or Gahinga volcanoes. Mount Gahinga offers a gentler hike through the bamboo forest on the lower slopes and marshy craters at the peak.
- Enjoy a performance from the Batwa Dance Group, an initiative fully supported by the Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust. The group now performs once a week on Volcanoes Safaris land for the benefit of the local community and Volcanoes Safaris clients. Learn more about their unique culture through their oral traditions first-hand.
- Track gorillas in Nkuringo, which is a 2-hour drive away from the lodge. (additional permits required, upon payment of supplement, subject to availability). Tracking is

possible at Nkuringo, located at the southern sector of Bwindi National Park. Tracking here can be challenging due to steep and muddy paths.

- Take a guided nature walk through the park and track golden monkeys. The path takes you from the bamboo stands and a forested gorge on the lower levels to the elevated heath and moorland higher up.

O/N: Mount Gahinga Lodge (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 6:

This morning you will transfer to the airstrip in Kisoro for the 9:10am flight to Kihiki, arriving at 9:30am. Once there, you will be met by the next guide who will transfer you to Volcanoes Bwindi Lodge. Depending on when you arrive you may explore the lodge grounds with its clear mountain stream or visit the local village.

Approximate Travel Times: Flying 30 min; Driving 2 hours

O/N: Bwindi Lodge (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 7:

Optional additional gorilla trek available (additional permits required, upon payment of supplement, subject to availability). After enjoying an early breakfast, you set off gorilla tracking. Trekking through the steep, densely forested hills and then finally coming across the gorillas camouflaged in the vegetation is an inspiring and privileged moment. Tracking in the Bwindi forest requires stamina and can often take most of the day.

Alternatively there are other activities and excursions on offer in and around the national park:

- Take a guided walk in the rainforest, home to several endemic bird species, clouds of butterflies and rare plant life. This walk offers excellent photographic
- Opportunities and the knowledgeable guide will provide a great insight into this globally important habitat.
- Walk through the local village, and learn about community life and Bwindi Community Hospital that started as a health clinic under a tree and now provides vital medical and educational services to over 60,000 people. Also take a tour of our local tea processing operation at the lodge which enables guests to see the various different methods for tea growing and at the end of the tour taste some of our own grown tea! The Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust supports both projects.
- Discover the traditions of the Batwa Pygmies, and learn about the native tribal inhabitants of the forest. The indigenous people of Bwindi forest, though no longer resident in the forest, still practice many of their traditional hunter-gatherer skills.

O/N: Bwindi Lodge (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 8:

Transfer from Bwindi Lodge to the Kihiki airstrip, approximate transfer time of 2 hours. Leave with the 09:45am (arrive at 11:25am) or 14:05pm (arrive at 15:55pm) return flight to Entebbe and connect in time for your return flight.

Approximate Travel Times: Flying 2 hours; Driving 2 hours

Please book return flights departing after 5:00pm

Bwindi Lodge (Breakfast)

2016 Costs

Per person sharing

From US\$7,565.00**

**Includes one gorilla permit. Optional extra cost for additional gorilla permit.

SAFARI INCLUDES:

- An expert drive/guide and vehicle for the itinerary agreed
- Accommodation on a shared basis
- Meals as stated
- All activities as per the itinerary agreed. Where appropriate, boat trips, park fees, nature and community walk fees and one gorilla permit are included.
- At Volcanoes Lodges (Bwindi, Mount Gahinga, Kyambura Gorge and Virunga), the tariffs are on an all-inclusive basis and include unlimited consumption of all alcoholic and soft drinks (except champagne), laundry services, and any activities guests wish to do around the lodges
- One complimentary massage included

SAFARI EXCLUDES:

- Airfares to/from Rwanda/Uganda
- Entry visas
- Airport taxes
- Gratuities
- Personal expenditures such as drinks and laundry at non-Volcanoes lodges
- For single rooms, a supplement needs to be paid

NOTE: All gorilla permits need to be purchased at the time of booking. Gorilla viewing is subject to availability of permits, which are limited; any additional gorilla permits required should be purchased when booking. Gorilla permit prices are subject to change without warning.