

Most Visited Uganda Safari Destinations

MURCHISON FALLS NATIONAL PARK; Murchison Falls Conservation Area is the largest protected area in Uganda, 5.025kms, including Murchison Falls National Park. Bugungu Wildlife Reserve, Karuma Wildlife Reserve and in the south, Budongo Forest. The altitude range is from 619m at the delta on Lake Albert to 1.292 m at Rabongo hill. The area is traversed by the Victoria Nile, which connects Lake Kyoga with Lake Albert. The park is named after the marvellous falls on the river at a narrow cleft in the Rift Valley Escarpment, then it is transformed into a froth of thunderous white water, with no comparison to any other site in East Africa. The vegetation is characterized by savannah, riverine forest and woodland.

Species: There are 76 mammal species, including giraffes, elephants, lions, leopards, spotted hyenas, kobs, bushbucks, waterbucks, oribi and jackals. The list of birds counts 450 species.

Activities: Launch trip from Paraa along the river Nile up to the Murchison Falls (17 km); a hike to “top of the falls”, to see closer from the top the spectacular Murchison Falls; Game drives North of river Nile and at Lake Albert Delta (Buligi, Albert and Queen’s tracks); Sport fishing (Nile Perch and tiger fish), on the river Nile above and below the Fall;. “Chimpanzee trekking” and bird watching in Budongo Forest and Kanyio Pabidi Forest Reserve.

QUEEN ELIZABETH NATIONAL PARK; This park lies on 2.056 sq. kms of land situated south of the Rwenzori Mountains, bordering Congo and including two lakes. This park lies on 2.056 sq. kms of land situated south of the Rwenzori Mountains, bordering Congo and including two lakes, George and Edward, which are connected through the natural Kazinga Channel. It is an ecosystem made of wetland and open savannah areas, at an altitude of 910m at Lake Edward.

Species: Queen Elizabeth records a large number of animals, including 95 mammal species (among them elephants, lions, leopards, Uganda kobs, buffaloes, jackals, spotted hyenas) and 10 primate species, like chimpanzees, vervet monkeys, blue monkeys, red tailed monkeys, black and white colobus, olive baboons. The list of birds is of 606 species recorded, possibly the highest in any African National Park and in the world.

Activities: Launch trip from Mweya along Kazinga Channel for a wonderful wildlife experience: Game drives in Kasenyi Plains (Northern Sector) and in Ishasha (Southern sector, searching for the typical lions climbing the fig's trees). "Chimpanzee trekking" in Kyambura Gorge and bird watching in Maramagambo Forest.

BWINDI IMPENETRABLE NATIONAL PARK ; Bwindi Impenetrable national park, 331 kms, is located in South Western Uganda, on the edge of the Albertine Rift Valley, at an altitude range from 1.160 m to 2.607m. This is a real tropical rainforest, spread over a series of steep ridges and valleys. It is regarded as one of the most biologically diverse forest in Africa. In the local language "bwindi" (from "mubwindi") means "dark place", referring to the impenetrable nature of the swamp located southeast of the Park, according to legends.

Species: There are 11 species of primates, including chimpanzees, Hoest's, red-tailed and blue monkeys, black and white colobus, olive baboons. Particularly, Bwindi is home to half of the worlds mountain gorillas population, remaining in the world. There are 346 species of birds recorded (Bwindi contains 90% of all Albertine Rift endemics, difficult to see in any other place in East Africa) and 200 species of butterflies. Mammals count is only 30 (buffaloes, leopards, elephants) and there are 324 species of trees.

Activities: The main activity is "gorilla tracking" and there are 10 habituated families of mountain gorillas. Hiking trails are open to people to sight birds, butterflies, and primates, (along the Munyaga, Waterfall, Rushura, River Ivi and Bamboo zone trails). Specially recommended for bird watchers are the River Ivi and Mubwindi swamp nature walks. Cultural walks to Buhoma village community can be organised to see the traditional homesteads, the local healer, the banana brewing, handicraft making and cultural performance.

KIDEPO VALLEY NATIONAL PARK; Kidepo national park was not a national park as

it was just another area inhabited by the Dodoth pastoralists who are famously known. Is an isolated park found in the rocky semi-arid of Karamoja bordering between Uganda, South Sudan and Kenya, located on a 1442 square meters dominated by rugged savannah and beautiful blue mountains such as Napore-Nyagia mountain, Morungole mountain, Lotukei mountain and many more others. The fact that it is in a semi-arid area, water supply is scarce and can be found along a few places such as Narus River and Kidepo River

Initially Kidepo national park was not a national park as it was just another area inhabited by the Dodoth pastoralists who are famously known as the Karamajong and the IK farmers. There were many Borassus palm trees that attracted so many people that came to pick the fruits and make things out of them such as beer, therefore the Dodoth pastoralist named it Kidepo from their verb a kidepo meaning 'to pick up'. In 1958 the area was gazetted because people were burning down the bushes as it was infested with tsetse flies and the fact that animals were attacking people and their livestock/homesteads, it was therefore gazetted to protect both the animals from being poached and attacking people with their livestock. This was formally finalised in 1962 when it was converted into a national park, this left most inhabitants homeless as they were shifted from the park. These people almost became extinct and can only be found up the scenic Morungole Mountains that are near to Kidepo Valley Park, if you opt to visit these areas, you will hear all these amazing stories. To have a clear image of what Kidepo was after transition is by watching a documentary film that was made, called 'The wild and the brave'

Regardless that it is surrounded by beautiful hills and mountains, it has a semi-arid climate that is why it has one rainy season. The months in which rain could probably rain are from April to August, however the rains are really light. These months are perfect for those that would love to bird watch because in this season so many birds are migrating from one region to another in search of water. Kidepo National park temperatures can range from 21.5c to 34c annually, which goes to show that it is pretty hot. The months in which it's pretty hot are from September to March, in these months taking game drives are common because you get to see most of the animals out in the wild mostly in search of water and that is why September to November is the peak season for the park. Watching a herd of buffalos moving together is the most spectacular thing you can ever see and nowhere else.

The park is enriched with 77 mammals, 475 birds and 692 plant species of which 28 of those animals can only be found in this park such as cheetahs, striped hyena, the klipspringer well known for rock jumping, pigmy crocodiles that are 10 meters long etc.

The likes of the African elephants, zebra, lions that are commonly seen on top of rocks, the leopards that like to hide in perennial grasses, Hartebeest, a variety of antelopes and many more others can be found in other parks. The park is not totally dry as there is some vegetation such as the acacia trees, short trees however the vegetation is more like the vegetation in Kenya, for the bird lovers, this is where you are mostly likely to see some bird species such as lammergeyer, verreaux's eagle, the most rare birds such as Karamoja apails and black breasted barbet.

Kidepo valley National Park is undeniably picking up faster than other parks because it has a scenery like no other park in Uganda. Tourists that come to this park do not want to go back and those that go, leave with a promise to come back. This because there are a lot of activities that one can partake, such as hiking/scenery viewing the Kanangorok hot springs which are believed to have healing powers- these are situated just 11km from Kidepo river, bird watching is one of the common activities as there are many bird species that are commonly from Apoka rest camp, for those that love the quiet life, you can have a picnic situated on the sand and hear the sound of palm trees in harmony with each other, take a walk around the neighbourhood and get to witness how the remaining cultures go about life and lastly taking a game drive in the park early morning or in the evening hours, while taking these game drives you are probably going to see the bat eared fox, a cheetah that is rarely seen elsewhere. The park is gifted with five primate species that can only be seen at night; guenther's dik dik which are found in the north, the Senegal galago , white tailed mongoose, orbis and Kavirondo bush baby.

With such unmatched nature, you cannot fail to find accommodation, as there are many options based on different budgets. If you want a luxurious accommodation, Apoka rest camp got you covered as they aim to please with their services. If you are fazed by luxury things and just want to enjoy the wild, there are various accommodation options for you such as National Park Bandas, The Kakine Campsite with these budget options, you are probably going to carry your own tent to be involved in the whole adventure experience however you will be provided with firewood, water etc but not food.

To go to the Park, you will either use road transport or air, the chartered aircrafts at Entebbe airport will transport you if you are to be picked from the airport and fly you directly to Lomej which is about 3km south of the park headquarters. Another chartered aircraft that can fly you over if you are not at the airport is found at Kajjansi. For those that prefer to use the road it takes about 11 hours to reach the final destination, most people prefer to use the road because it is cheaper and also the fact that they get to see a lot of things on their way. However when choosing to use road transport, it's advisable to use a 4wheel drive.

The routes to Kidepo are as follows:

Kampala-Jinja-Mbale-Soroti-Moroto-Kidepo- Approximately 792

km Kampala-Gulu-Kitgum-Kidepo- Approximately 558 km

Kampala-Jinja-Mbale-Sironko-Kotido-Kidepo-740 km

Kampala-Soroti -Kotido via Amuria 656 km

KIBALE FOREST NATIONAL PARK; Kibale National Park, 766 kms, forms a contiguous block with Queen Elizabeth National Park, at an altitude of 1.100-1.590m above sea level. The vegetation is dominated by the tropical rainforest.

Species. At least 60 mammal species are present, including elephants, buffaloes, leopards, warthogs, bushpigs, golden cats and duikers. Kibale is well known for sighting primates, counting 13 species. Particularly, it hosts a large population of chimpanzees as well as vervet, red-tailed, Hoest's and blue monkeys, red colobus, black and white colobus, grey – cheeked mangabey, olive baboons. The bird list records 335 species, of which four are only found here (Nahan's francolin, Cassin's spintail, blue-headed bee eater and masked apalis). Furthermore, more than 250 species of tree have been recorded.

Activities. The main attraction of the park is the "chimpanzee trekking" from Kanyanchu gate. The second main activity is bird watching at "Bigodi Wetland Sanctuary", near Bigodi, a trading centre just outside the Park's boundary. The activity consists of a guided walk through the Magombe swamp, with the possibility to see among others the great blue turaco and the papyrus gonolek. Nature walks are open in the Park, to see primates, birds, reptiles, medicinal plants.

LAKE MBURO NATIONAL PARK ; This park, 260 sq.kms, is located in Mbarara District, with an altitude range from of 1220m to 1828m above sea level. The park is named after the lake which lies in this territory.

Species: This little park hosts a variety of animals, that is to say 68 mammal species, including a large number of impalas (the antelope from which "Kampala" is named after), Uganda kobs, zebras, Ankole cattle, buffaloes, topis, leopards, spotted hyenas, waterbucks, warthogs, oribi, bushbucks, duikers. There are 315 bird species, including red faced barbet, crested crane, shoebill stork, papyrus yellow warbler. The vegetation is dominated by an open Savannah of Acacia trees, Olea and Boscia.

Activities: Boat trip on lake Mburo, Game drives along the Park to see the animals (following the Impala, Zebra, Kazuma or Lakeside tracks), Nature walks and bird watching.

SEMLIKI NATIONAL PARK; This park, 220 sq. kms, lies along the Congolese border following the Semliki river, within the Western arm of the Albertine Rift Valley, in the North of Rwenzori mountains. The altitude is on the average of 700 m above sea level.

Species: There are 336 tree species recorded, of which 24 are restricted to the Park (like *Isolana Congolana* and *Ejacis Guineensis*); 435 bird species (at least 40 of them are found nowhere else in Uganda); 63 mammals, like elephants, leopards, buffaloes (nowhere else are found flying squirrels, pygmy antelope and six types of bats); 9 primates (chimpanzee, blue monkey, vervet monkeys, baboon); at least 374 species of butterflies.

Activities . Natural walks from the headquarter at Sempaya gate down to the river Semliki, enjoying bird watching, butterflies, flowers and trees. Moreover there are two “hot springs” (one male, one female), situated in a tract of hot mineral encrusted swamp land, where visitors see a jet of hot water and a pool of boiling water.

MGAHINGA GORILLA NATIONAL PARK; Mgahinga National Park, only 38 sq.kms in size, is the Ugandan part of the bigger Virunga Conservation Area, which is a jointly protected area with Congo and Rwanda. It includes three extinct volcanoes: Mount Sabinyo (3.669 m.), Mount Gahinga (3.474 m.) and Mount Muhavura (4.127 m.). “Mgahinga” is named after Mount Gahinga plus the initial of Mount Muhavura.

Species: The vegetation is the one typical of afro-montane areas, with a consistent bamboo forest. There are 76 mammal species recorded, including buffaloes, elephants, bushbucks, golden monkeys, leopards. 115 bird species have been recorded, including Rwenzori turaco, crowned hornbill, black kite and crowned crane. Mgahinga hosts a population of golden monkeys and a few families of mountain gorillas.

Activities: Each of the three volcanoes can be climbed with a day trip hike, without a special mountain equipment. Visits are organised to the Garama Cave, near the Park Head Quarter in Ntebeko, which is 432 m in length and was once inhabited by the pygmy population. The main attraction was the “Gorilla tracking” when there was one habituated family of mountain gorilla, in 2005 this family migrated into Rwanda. A

number of nature trails are available from the gate at Ntebeko (the Sabinyo Gorge trail and Rugezi Swamp trail), especially for bird watching activities.

RWENZORI MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK; The park, 996 sq. kms, protects the slopes of the Rwenzori Mountains, which run for 120 km along the Congo border. It is a block mountain resulting from the formation of the Rift Valley. The Rwenzori is the highest mountain range in Africa, with six glacial peaks: Mount Stanley, Mount Speke, Mount Emin Pasha, Mount Gessi, Mount Luigi da Savoia and Mount Baker. The main peaks, Margherita (5.109m) and Alexandra (5.083m) on Mount Stanley, are exceeded in altitude elsewhere in Africa only by Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya. The first European who climbed the peaks was in 1906 the Italian Prince Luigi Amedeo da Savoia, Duke of Abruzzi.

Species: The interest for Rwenzori is also on the vegetation, which is divided into several altitude zones: the forest zone (between 1.800 and 2.500 m), the bamboo forest (up to 3000 m), the heath and Alpine zones (3000-4.500 m), with forests of giants heath plants, giant lobelias and groundsels. There are 70 mammal species recorded (elephants, golden cat, chimpanzee, yellow – backed duiker) and 177 birds, especially Albertine Rift endemics (Rwenzori turaco, cuckoo, owl, francolin, robin).

Activities: Most of visitors undertake the excellent “central circuit” trail, which takes 6 nights 7 days to complete and takes you to the main peaks. However, other shorter hikes are possible in the central area and in the North of Rwenzori. High Mountain equipment is required, as the trails reach an altitude of 4.000m above.

MOUNT ELGON NATIONAL PARK; Mount Elgon is an extinct volcanic mountain with the largest surface area in the world (50km by 80km) and a caldera with a diameter of about 8 km. The highest peak is Wagagai, 4.321 m. It lies at the border with Kenya. The National Park is 1.145 kms in extension. The local people, Bagisu used to call the mount “Masaba”, while “Elgon” is named after the Anglicisation of the Maasai “El Kony”. The best time to visit Mount Elgon is May and September, November and December.

Species: While ascending Mount Elgon, there are four different forest zones: the lush montane forest, the mixed bamboo belt, the heath and the spectacular moorland hyrachs, which contains rare species like the giant Lobelia Elgonensis and clusters of groundsels which are unique to Africa. At least 300 species of birds are recorded, including Jackson’s francolin, guinea fowls, sunbirds and turacos. The checklist for

mammals includes at least 24 species.

Activities: There are several trekking trails around Mount Elgon, all open to everybody as this is not a difficult mountain to climb (Sasa, Sipi and Piswa trails). The full trekking circuit to the peaks takes 5 to 6 days to complete. The nature walks allow you to see flora and fauna, the enormous caves, gorges and hot springs. One day hikes are possible from the Forest Exploration Centre at Kapkway. Particularly fascinating is the hike from Sipi trading centre to the Sipi Falls, a series of four pretty waterfalls culminating in a 99m drop at an altitude of 1.775 m, along the river Sipi, which originates from Mount Elgon.