



## Rwanda

### Pre-Departure Information



*Although your journey with us may end  
Africa will forever be inscribed in your heart.*

**Rwanda** is best known now for the 400 mountain gorillas living within its borders, in the 'VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK', on the north western border. The other reason Rwanda was in the world's news was for the infamous genocides that took place in 1994, when a cycle of pent-up tribalism, going back two hundred years unleashed a terrifying massacre of Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The memorials to this are a sober reminder of the fragility of life in central Africa! Today the country is a role model of reconciliation and progressive policies, and the current government has managed miracles. The country is stable, safe, clean, well managed and a pleasure to visit!

Rwanda is a beautiful country, bordered by jungle-covered mountains in the west, and swampy plains and lakes to the east. The whole country is only 10 169 square miles, (similar to Maryland) but it has one of the densest populations in Africa - 11 million people squeeze into this small but feisty country. With such a dense population, subsistence agriculture is a daily pursuit, but that has been outstripped and people import food now. The soils are all volcanic in origin and therefore very fertile, and lakes and rivers make for great farming providing water for irrigation.

The country has one of the densest populations of humans in the world, composed primarily of two tribal groups. The HUTU and the TUTSI peoples are the majority and the diminutive Ba'TWA make up the rest. There are very few refugee groups inside the country. In fact the two main 'tribal' groups were originally composed of a wealthy cattle-owning tribe, the TUTSI who exacted a feudal labour toll from the HUTU peoples in return for the latter group living on their land. The Tutsi's were tall, elegant and had a royal dynastic lineage going back centuries, which gave them a significant social advantage when the Belgian colonialists arrived. The Hutus had nothing like this social stratification, and were hence 'down-graded' in the colonial opinion. The Tutsi's were quick to learn and adopt many western cultural behaviour, but not so much the Hutu's. This led to resentment and conflict.

Kigali is the capital, and located in the centre of the country, where the KIGALI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT is located. Rwanda means, 'Land of a Thousand Hills', and although this scenically positive, it has caused a number of headaches for telecommunications and transport ministries.

The country is totally landlocked, and lies in a corner between Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania and the DRC. What is interesting is that the mountains that lie west and central in the country form the watershed for the Nile and the Congo rivers.

Tourism now is recognized as the country's main foreign income generator and in 2008, an estimated USD\$214 million was earned, and mainly through the gorilla trekking fees! A positive aspect of this figure is that a good percentage of this money goes back into the park and gorilla management.

The other two national parks are AKAGERA and NYUNGWE FOREST, which are rich in primates and of course birds species too. Rwanda has an interesting avifauna, with 650 species recorded to date, and 12 of these are Albertine endemics.

## CLIMATE

The climate is comfortably tropical and temperate due mostly to the altitude effect and the mountainous nature of the country. None of the country lies below 3300 feet asl and the tallest volcano peak is Karisimbi, 14,787 feet! Kigali has daily temperatures typically between 54°F and 81°F. The Park is made up of the six volcanoes lying along the north western border and this is where the gorillas live. Rains are a daily occurrence here, but light showers, which pass quickly.



There are **two rainy seasons**, the Long rains from February to June, and the Short rains from September to December. There are two dry seasons in-between.

<b>East Africa</b>		<b>Temperature: These are the average lows and highs</b>											
	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>	
<b>°C</b>	18 <b>30</b>	18 <b>31</b>	20 <b>31</b>	20 <b>29</b>	19 <b>28</b>	18 <b>27</b>	17 <b>27</b>	17 <b>27</b>	18 <b>29</b>	20 <b>29</b>	20 <b>30</b>	21 <b>30</b>	
<b>°F</b>	64 <b>86</b>	64 <b>88</b>	68 <b>88</b>	68 <b>84</b>	66 <b>82</b>	64 <b>81</b>	63 <b>81</b>	63 <b>81</b>	64 <b>84</b>	68 <b>84</b>	68 <b>86</b>	70 <b>86</b>	

rainy months

### CURRENCY - RWF

The Rwandan Franc (RWF) is the local currency, and is valid only in the country. This is available at any bureau de change at the airport and in Kigali as well. The porters at Sabinyo, where you trek for gorillas, find it easier to receive local currency than USD, otherwise USD may be used at the local craft shops in Kigali.

### CREDIT CARDS

**When traveling in Rwanda, VISA or MASTERCARD is widely accepted.** DINERS and AMERICAN EXPRESS are NOT recommended. Gratuities in the form of US dollars are preferred, in smaller denominations like \$20's and less.

### \*United States Dollars

Please note that ONLY POST 2006 notes are accepted; so only bring the newer notes, in small denominations, fifty dollar notes and less.

The bigger banks and Automatic Teller Machines (ATM's) will advance local currency against a credit card, converted at the daily exchange rate.

### TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

It is up to the guest to ensure that passports and visas are valid for six months beyond the intended length of stay. There should be SIX blank VISA pages for any visa as well as for entry stamps on arrival. Please note these are visa pages, NOT endorsement pages. This is important as IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS WILL BE STRICT about this, especially if you are travelling between several countries during your trip.

All passport holders should verify with their travel agent or relevant consulate concerning visa entry requirements. If you are extending your journey to other countries, please establish entry requirements for those countries as well.

There is a collective visa that allows entry into KENYA, TANZANIA, UGANDA & RWANDA. It is the EAST AFRICAN TRAVEL VISA and is available only at the main ports of entry into anyone of these countries and their respective Consulates and Embassies.

Please ensure that you have all the necessary visas prior to departure (unless available on entry).



Travel in East Africa is normally conducted in English and it is therefore beneficial for guests to have knowledge of English and be able to communicate in that language.

### **EMERGENCY "Paper work".**

**Photograph the Face page of your Passport, Credit Cards and any other vital travel documents, with your cell phone, so that you have a copy of these on you.**

Scan air tickets as above.

Leave a copy of these documents at home as well, with a contactable friend.

### **LANGUAGE**

KINYARWANDA is the national language widely spoken here with Swahili as a less common language.

English is widely spoken by younger citizens and it is taught in the schools. French is also widely spoken but becoming less popular.

### **TIME & INTERNATIONAL DIALING CODE**

Rwanda is 3 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT).

Telephone code: +250

ALL PLASTIC SHEETING OR BAGS ARE BANNED IN RWANDA. IF YOUR LUGGAGE IS PLASTIC WRAPPED, CUSTOMS WILL CUT IT OFF IN THE AIRPORT WITH NO REPERCUSSION.

### **SAFETY**

Visitors arriving in Kigali by air are met at the airport and transferred to either their hotels. Kigali is one of the safest and cleanest cities in Africa, under the government of Paul Kagame. Nevertheless traveling in any City carries safety risks. Please exercise the same caution as regards personal safety as you would when traveling in any foreign city anywhere in the world. When traveling by vehicle, always lock your doors, and place handbags, tablets, laptop computers, cell phones etc. out of sight, in the trunk or on the floor. In the rural areas and bush there is no risk to be concerned about.

As regards personal items, most lodges and camps either provide safes in the rooms, or a central safe in 'the office' to secure passports, tickets and money.

### **NB: DIETARY REQUIREMENTS**

We do ask that on making your booking you inform us of any special dietary requirements. The camps can cater for special diets when given prior notice. Due to the camps remote locations, prior notification is important.

### **MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS**

When making your booking with us we need to know if there are any medical conditions or allergies that may affect your safari or that we need to be aware of to facilitate transfers and movements between camps. Many of the camps and lodges are located in remote areas, so prior notice is required for particular medical needs.

### **SPECIAL OCCASIONS**

Please advise us if you will be celebrating any special occasions, such as a birthday or anniversary during your trip.



## **IMPORTANT**

There is a significant difference in the luggage weight allowance on International flights (44 lbs, excluding hand luggage) and internal flights. (33 lbs INCLUDING hand luggage). If one is not exiting through the same airport, then the problem exists to recover any items you have to leave behind before you board any internal flights!

### **LUGGAGE ON SCHEDULED FLIGHTS - 44lbs EXCLUDING HAND LUGGAGE**

Scheduled airlines in EAST AFRICA generally carry a weight restriction of 44lbs /20kg's on checked luggage per economy class traveller, and a carry-on, which may include your photographic equipment. Please ensure that you comply with the applicable restrictions (further details regarding number of luggage pieces and exact dimensions, for the particular carrier can be obtained from your ticketing agent).

Please note when combining scheduled airline flights and air transfers (as specified below), then restriction will apply unless alternative arrangements have been made for the storage or separate transfer of excess luggage, which will be at an additional cost.

Sufficient locks or baggage ties for baggage safety, is advised. Sometimes a colored ribbon will identify YOUR luggage more easily if it is just a black bag!

### **NB: LUGGAGE ON INTERNAL AIR TRANSFERS - 33lbs, INCLUDING HAND LUGGAGE**

There are strict weight restrictions in place on any itinerary, which includes light aircraft transfers for the following reasons:

- The aircrafts are designed with a maximum bodyweight and luggage weight allowance.
- Most of our airfields are over 3300ft. asl /1000 metres above sea level and are located in the tropics, and therefore the permissible aircraft carrying capacity is reduced.
- The aircrafts also have physical space restrictions.

### **Some important issues must please be noted for air transfers:**

Luggage, including hand luggage, is restricted to 33lbs per person. Only soft bags will be accepted, no hard suitcases can be transported, as they physically cannot fit into the aircraft. The maximum dimensions of the soft bags that can be accommodated are as follows: 10 inches wide x 12 inches high and 24 inches long. Please keep in mind that the baggage compartments on the light aircrafts are only 10 inches high, so the pilots must have the ability to manipulate the bag into the compartment.

**Passengers** weighing 220lbs or more, or two guests travelling together whose combined weight is 440lbs, must please advise us in advance as an extra seat for the additional weight will have to be costed into the package for safety purposes. If we are not advised of this information prior to arrival, this can cause a problem on the ground and could result in a private charter, which will be billed directly to the guest.



***PLEASE NOTE: IF YOUR CAMERA EQUIPMENT IS EXCESSIVE, THEY WILL NOTICE AND ASK TO WEIGH IT, AND LIMIT YOU ACCORDINGLY.***



## **LOST LUGGAGE**

Luggage that goes missing on scheduled flights is beyond our control or the airline concerned. The airport Baggage Handling company controls what happens to passengers' luggage from when it is checked in or out until it is put on or taken off the aircraft.

We suggest that you take the following precautionary action: pack a small bag with your essentials including **any life sustaining medication, which can be carried with you as hand luggage**. If your luggage goes missing, you will still have your essential items on hand to see you through the first couple of days while we try and recover your lost baggage.

## **LOSS OF ARTICLES**

Please note that we cannot accept any responsibility for the misplacement of any articles whilst on your travels. Naturally, we will endeavor to reunite you with your misplaced items.

## **CLOTHING AND ACCESSORIES**

### **\*CAMOUFLAGE CLOTHING IS FORBIDDEN IN MANY AFRICAN COUNTRIES\***

We suggest that when in Safari Camps/lodges you wear 'bush' colors such as olive green, khaki, gray and brown. Bright and light colors should be avoided, except at night. Some properties do require men to wear long trousers to dinner. It is advisable to wear light colored clothes at night, as insects tend to avoid light clothing. Avoid wearing black and dark blue during the day as these absorb heat & attract insects.

### **Remember to pack the following items:**

Generally, most folk only need 4 changes of clothing for a safari.

- Long sleeved shirts for day and evening can reduce sunburn and insect bites; however short sleeves are fine as well.
- Pants, with zip-off legs ideal; alternatively shorts are great for daywear. Bush colors for daywear, light colors for night wear.
- Underwear and sleeping attire or tracksuit
- Scarf/Pashmina/Buff for keeping the neck warm
- Personal toiletries and medication (most camps do supply reputable branded shampoo & conditioner)
- Insect repellent is provided by the camps
- Comfortable closed walking shoes like trainers (Avoid big heavy boots) x 1 pair.
- Light shoes or sandals. X 1 pair of each.
- Warm layers for cold evenings, and lightweight water proof/wind proof jacket
- Sunglasses & hat with brim or peak cap
- Sun block and lip balm (Recommended to bring minimum factor 30 SPF)
- Anti-malarial prophylactics are essential all year round
- Last of all take a pen for those important postcards home

Do not bring any jewelry and perfumes

## **LAUNDRY**

Most of the Hotels, Lodges and safari camps provide a daily laundry service. Some camps will require travellers to wash their own underwear, and provide soap in the rooms for that purpose.



## ELECTRICITY

Camps and Lodges in the more remote areas have permanent electricity. These usually rely on generator or solar power for lighting and charging electrical equipment. Please be aware that you may not find plug sockets in your room or tent. It is recommended that guests bring their own international adaptors. Generally, electrical outlets in East Africa are the SQUARE BRITISH 3-pin type. ALL countries in southern and East Africa use 220/240 Volt AC.



## NB: YELLOW FEVER

**If you are traveling to RWANDA & UGANDA you WILL require a Yellow Fever certificate. Please ensure you are in possession of one. Keep it with your passport.**

## HEALTH

There are a few basic health matters that require care and attention. The following points are recommended guidelines only. Please consult your doctor and also check with your health department prior to departure for any changes in health regulations.

### **1) Malaria**

Malaria is common within Africa. Although not widespread, it is encountered anywhere where wet conditions prevail and settlements exist. It is also strongly affected by seasonal conditions; therefore it is best to be prepared any time one travels to Africa.

#### ***Malaria prophylactic recommendations for travellers:***

Expert opinion differs regarding the best approach to malaria prophylaxis. It is important to bear in mind that malaria may be contracted despite chemoprophylaxis, especially in areas where chloroquine resistance has been reported. Both chloroquine-resistant and normal strains of malaria are prevalent in Africa.

Please remember that the best precaution is the preventative kind:

- Avoid being bitten by using mosquito repellents liberally.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and trousers/slacks in the evenings.
- Please use the mosquito net over your bed where supplied/available.
- If staying in a bungalow or tent, spray with a suitable insecticide to kill any mosquitoes that may have flown into your room.
- Mosquito coils are also effective.

### **2) Tick Bite Fever**

Ticks can be found in the wilderness of Africa, tick bites can possibly lead to tick bite fever. Symptoms of tick bite fever include, headache and painful, enlarged lymph glands in the area of the bite. If you experience any of these symptoms after returning home from your travel, please visit your doctor and advise them of the possibility of tick bite fever. Precautions can be taken to avoid being bitten when going on bush walks; these precautions include wearing long trousers tucked into socks and boots.

**LYMES DISEASE DOESNT PRESENT A THREAT IN AFRICA... YET!**



### 3) Water

It is very important that you drink plenty of water especially during the warmer months. It is generally recommended that guests drink at least 4 to 6 pints (2 to 3 litres) of water per day to limit the effects of dehydration. This excludes tea, coffee and alcoholic beverages, which act as diuretics and therefore can actually contribute to dehydration. It is recommended that you drink bottled water throughout Africa.

### 4) Medical Conditions

Please make us aware of any medical conditions you have prior to your arrival. This includes any allergies e.g. bee stings, nuts, shellfish etc.

### 5) Inoculations

Please consult your doctor or local travel clinic with regards to any other suggested inoculations for your travels. We suggest Hepatitis A&B and Tetanus, any others are at your own discretion.

***Remember to keep a 'Yellow Book' recording of these inoculations.***

## INSURANCE

It is a condition of booking, that the sole responsibility lies with the guests to ensure that they carry the correct comprehensive travel and medical insurance to cover themselves, as well as any dependents/travelling companions for the duration of their trip to Southern Africa.

## RESPECTING WILDLIFE & SAFETY WHEN STAYING AT SAFARI CAMPS/LODGES

Safety is of utmost concern to us and we request you take note of the following guidelines:

- The wild animals found in and around safari lodges and camps are not concerned about human scent and movement. THIS does NOT mean they are tame or tolerant of close approach by humans. They are still wild. Elephant, warthogs, monkeys and baboons particularly.
- Most of the safari camps are unfenced and dangerous animals wander through the camps. Many of the animals and reptiles you will see are potentially dangerous. Attacks by wild animals are rare. However, there are no guarantees that such incidents will not occur.
- Never attempt to feed or approach any wild animal on foot. This is especially important near lodges or in campsites where animals may have become accustomed to human visitors.
- Please listen to the camp staff and guides. The safety precautions need to be taken seriously, and strictly adhered to.
- Never walk on your own without a guide, particularly at night – even to your rooms. After retiring to your rooms at night, **do not** leave them.
- Observe animals silently and with a minimum of disturbance to their natural activities. Loud talking on game drives can frighten the animals away.
- Never attempt to attract an animal's attention. Don't imitate animal sounds, clap your hands, pound the vehicle or throw objects.
- Please respect your driver-guide's judgment about proximity to lions, cheetahs and leopards. Don't insist that he take the vehicle closer so you can get a better photograph. A vehicle driven too close can hinder a hunt or cause animals to abandon a hard-earned meal.
- Litter tossed on the ground can choke or poison animals and birds and is unsightly.
- Smoking is generally not permitted on game drives. Apart from the anti-social aspect, discarded cigarettes are considered a fire hazard.



## **COMMUNICATION IN THE CAMPS/LODGES**

Telecommunications in the urban areas is possible, and even some cell phone access is found. BUT in the less accessible areas do not expect there to be cell phone coverage. Many camps and lodges do have satellite-link Internet access on a restricted basis however. If this is important, enquiries should be made beforehand.

## **TIPPING / GRATUITIES**

Tipping is customary, but not compulsory. If, however, you want to tip because you have received good service, we have enclosed a brief guideline to assist you:

- **The General Safari Camp / Lodge Staff**  
We recommend about US\$10 per guest per day for safari camps. This should be placed in the communal tipping box to be distributed equally amongst all the staff.
- **Transfer Driver for long transfers**  
US\$10 per person
- **Camp/Lodge Guides**  
US\$15 to US\$20 per person in the group, depending on performance.
- **Personal Butler (Only in &Beyond camps)**  
US\$10 per person per day
- **Private Guides**  
Normally these individuals make all the difference to a safari, and their roles are more involved than just guiding. Guests generally use their own judgment in this regard.
- **Porterage**  
We recommend about US\$1 per bag, per movement.
- **Restaurants / Hotels**  
15% is customary on meal accounts if you are satisfied with the service.

## **FLIGHT CHECK-IN TIMES**

Please check in early at all airports (at least one and a half hours prior for domestic flights, two hours prior for regional flights and three hours prior for all international flights) due to additional security which now affects international travel around the world.

Please be aware that during peak season, delays are often encountered on scheduled flights. Remember that you are on holiday... relax and enjoy the ambience, which sometimes has no sense of urgency at all!

## **RECONFIRMING FLIGHTS**

Please ensure that your onward flights are reconfirmed, when applicable, at least 72 hours prior to flying. The camp managers will be responsible for reconfirming your local onward flights between camps, but INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS should be your responsibility.



## **RECOMMENDED READING**

We recommend the following books for all travellers to East Africa:

- Scramble for Africa - Thomas Pakenham
- A Thousand Hills – Stephen Kinzer
- The State of Africa - Martin Meredith
- The Rebels’ Hour – Lieve Joris
- West With the Night – Beryl Markham
- Lost Lion of Empire – Edward Paice
- Shake Hands with the Devil – Brigadier Romeo Dallaire
- Gorillas in the Mist – Dianne Fossey
- Uhuru – Robert Ruark

### **Birds**

1. Birds of East Africa – Fanshaw et al. eBirds of East Africa.
2. Birds of Kenya & Northern Tanzania – Zimmerman & Dale

### **Mammals**

1. Behavioural Guide to East African Mammals – Richard Estes
2. Field Guide to East African Mammals – Chris & Tilde Stuart
3. The Kingdon Guide to African Mammals App.

### **Films**

1. Out of Africa
2. The Last King of Scotland
3. From a Whisper
4. Gorillas in The Mist
5. Virunga

Most Safari companies carry a set of reference material on all their vehicles. However, if you are a keen birder we recommend that you bring your own bird book. (Everyone should bring their own pair of BINOCULARS in order to get the most out of the safari.)

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

Please note that photography of government buildings, many airport buildings, State House and officials in uniform is normally strictly prohibited. Be courteous, polite and always ask permission.

Please be advised that the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (Drones) is not allowed in many of the conservation areas, due to their use in poaching operations and the disturbance caused to the wildlife and other guests.



## POACHING

**PLEASE BE AWARE: POACHERS ARE USING SOCIAL MEDIA OUTLETS TO TRACK AND POACH ENDANGERED WILDLIFE (RHINOS & LARGED-TUSKED ELEPHANTS). SO PLEASE DO NOT POST PHOTOS OF THESE ANIMALS ON YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS. POACHERS WILL USE EVERY MEANS POSSIBLE TO FIND THESE ANIMALS, INCLUDING USING THE GEO TRACKER AND LOOKING THROUGH EVERY PHOTO TO DETERMINE THE LOCATION.**

**Example: If a photo of a rhino or a larged-tusked elephant is posted on social media, the poachers will look at every photo in that particular photo album to determine what reserve that animal is located on. Therefore, even if the geo tracker is turned off, a photo of the lodge or any mention of the lodge in the post will give away the location of the photographed animal.**

## CAMERAS & BINOCULARS

### WHAT CAMERA SHOULD I HAVE ON SAFARI?

Cameras are a way of ensuring that we can record a moment in time. Sights and scenes of persons, places and in our case, wildlife and safari camps!

We take a photo as a form of a non-violent benevolent trophy. A reward and proof of a successful chase. Photographs tell it in colour! 100% of our safari guests bring a camera on safari.

Choosing a camera is fraught, as the camera industry has thrown itself into this arena wholeheartedly and made it difficult. ***This short brief is to try and help you make the right choice.***

Any safari to Africa is a significant investment of thousands of dollars. It seems worthwhile to invest a few hundred in a camera that will record the event for life!

Although camera choice is a *personal one*, I have included some pointers to assist with this choice.

There are frankly FOUR main types of camera.

1. The small '**POINT & SHOOT**' variety. They are small, palm size and convenient to carry in a pocket or purse with essentially an automatic function that guarantees a good picture - in a room, a car, or when taking fairly close-up pictures of friends and family.
2. The second variety are the typical **DSLR** (Digital Single Lens Reflex) cameras that can take interchangeable lenses and photographic enthusiasts will use these. They come now with a full gamut of electronic settings to facilitate taking photos in a variety of light conditions and generally have a video setting as well. There are a number of really good brands and models on sale, BUT the lenses come at a price.
3. The third variety is '**COMPACT**' cameras. These have been built to bridge the gap between the Point & Shoot, and the DSLR's! These incredible cameras weigh about 30% of the DSLR's, and yet have built-in lenses that easily rival the 'big' lenses used typically for sports and wildlife photography. They are truly amazing!

These cameras have *the same range* of adjustments seen on the heavier, semi- and professional cameras, AND, the lens 'reach' of the heavy glass lenses too! There is a built in flash, movie facility, screen view, viewfinder, 'Intelligent' options, Automatic, S, M, P, and A parameter functions as well. The lenses range from X20 to X60 in magnification, giving the user equivalent 300mm to sometimes 500mm! A small number of manufacturers are producing an innovative camera without all the moving parts of a typical camera.



4. **'MIRROR LESS'** cameras. These cameras will in time compete with the traditional DSLR cameras. There is a digital viewfinder. One may see the image through the rear screen. There is no internal mirror and complex moving parts...hence the term 'mirror less', and significant weight reduction. These cameras are lighter, have lighter lenses, without any loss of image quality. Interchangeable lenses are available in some brands, up to 250mm, but rarely larger.

The LENS is another important factor in selecting a camera. The small 'Point & Shoot' cameras will have small, retractable lenses that work well in a room or a close setting. These will collect very poor wildlife images taken at a distance because they lack the necessary 'zoom' ability, which magnifies the object onto the sensor plate.

The DSLR gives one the option to fit a zoom lens of different sizes to magnify the image in the camera. Essentially the greater the zoom numbers the bigger the image. Example, a 18 – 150 zoom, is going to be a poor lens for wildlife photography, but great for photographing houses or portraits! A 70 – 300 zoom is far better suited for wildlife, as is any lens from 300mm onwards.

The better Compact cameras now have lenses that have a x10 up to x60 ability! These are significant 'zoom' numbers and will certainly give the user a wonderful result. We recommend a camera lens with an equivalent zoom of at least 300mm.

PLEASE BEAR IN MIND ONE CAN HIRE LENSES NOW FOR A FRACTION OF THE RETAIL COST.

#### **Other Factors to consider:**

1. Weight
2. Quality of camera
3. Who is going to use the camera?
4. What do you want to spend on this camera?
5. What are you going to do with the pictures?

#### **NOTES ON PHOTOGRAPHY DURING YOUR GORILLA TREK**

FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY is not allowed when with the gorillas. So set the ASA on the camera as high as needs be, and open the 'f-stop' to maintain good shutter-speed, without compromising depth of field. PLEASE ensure you have spare batteries and flash cards.

Videos are a good thing to capture movement and sound (and therefore ambience) of the visit.

Small compact digital cameras are often surprisingly good in these conditions; otherwise a digital SLR with a 'fast' f2.8, 70 – 200 or 300mm zoom is best. The animals are often half hidden in the under-growth, or in poor light conditions, so digital cameras have the advantage.

Please ensure that you have enough memory cards, film and batteries for the duration of the trip, as these are not always available locally. Recharging facilities for video and camera equipment is generally available at most camps and lodges. It is advisable to bring your own adaptor and re-charging equipment. Ensure your equipment is in a padded, dust and heatproof case, as dust will get 'in' everywhere!

#### **WHAT BINOCULARS SHOULD I TAKE ON SAFARI?**

Binoculars are a vital part of every safari, and should be considered as important as a camera or decent hat. Most game viewing is carried out from a vehicle and so the game will commonly be within 150 feet of the vehicle. Larger animals, birds (even for non-birders) and small animals form a main part of the wildlife seen on a safari.



Many people regard binoculars as an unnecessary piece of equipment, used once and forgotten. *Bino's* as they become known, may be used on safari, again on the second safari, your kids safari, at the local 'ball game', on hunting & fishing trips, and for birding from the ease of your verandah. Choosing which to have needs professional help. Let me try!

**FOR SAFARIS, we recommend 7x40, 7x50; 8x40; 8.5x42**

10 x 42 is recommended for serious birders, those with a 'steady hand' and more sedentary use from a vehicle, a hide or on a tripod.

The small 10 x 25 binoculars, often touted as 'convenient' by sales people are of little functional use on safari as they are too small to use in a vehicle quickly and for extended periods, and limit the amount of light coming into the binocular.

**Brands**

There are a number of very good value brands, but the better reviews mention CELESTRON GRANITE, MINOX, NIKON, BUSHNELL, PENTAX and at the top of the pile are LEICA, LEITZ and SWAROVSKY, but these are expensive.

Naturally your personal considerations such as budget and availability will play a big part in the selection process.

Again, any safari to Africa is a serious investment of resources and it seems rather shortsighted to limit ones' enjoyment of the trip by not purchasing or borrowing decent equipment to facilitate getting the most out of the safari!

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE MOUNTAIN GORILLA & TREKKING**

This experience will possibly eclipse any other wildlife encounter you may have had. In most other national parks in Africa, one may see game from a vehicle, boat, horseback or on foot as well. But seeing those animals at a distance is possible only because one is in savanna country generally, with visibility of several hundred yards, which creates a 'safe' distance to see the game.

Here, the jungle foliage restricts visibility to possibly 30 feet and less at times, and so not only are you on foot in the jungle, but you get to see a family of very large apes at very close quarters. At times the gorillas will venture too close for comfort and the guides will move travelers back. There is nothing like staring into the eyes of a gorilla and seeing yourself in their eyes. Remember, these gorillas have been habituated to humans and so are used to your close proximity.

**Permits**

Daily access to the gorilla families is controlled by permits that must be enforced, so that visitors do not overwhelm the gorillas. Each permit is registered at the parks office, and allows the holder ONE HOUR only, per visit, per day. It may take several hours to find the gorillas, but visitors are only allowed 1 hour **with** the animals.

\* These permits are paid for by AFRICA INSCRIBED on confirmation of your safari, often as far as a year ahead of time.



## **Gorilla Families**

On some days a couple of gorilla families are out of contact in the Congo, so the Parks rangers use only those families in Rwanda.

There are currently a large number of known gorilla families in the Park, but normally 12 that are habituated for commercial viewing. If you purchase two permits, then you will visit a different family on those two trek days.

## **\*Health and Children Restrictions - AGE RESTRICTION: 15 YEARS**

Gorillas are susceptible to human diseases, and so to protect these rare animals, anybody who has any form of colds and flu, measles, chicken pox, mumps and any other contagious disease is prohibited from trekking to see the gorillas. Such a visit by an infected person may result in the annihilation of that family of gorillas! What a tragedy that would be!

Therefore there is an age restriction of 15 years, on children who may trek, as children can be carriers of these diseases.

## **Physical Fitness**

It is advisable that some preparation is carried out by individuals coming on a trek. Walking up long flights (50 stairs at least) of stairs several times a week is good exercise. Walking up and then down is part of the exercise. Start slowly and then increase it, as you feel more comfortable.

IF YOU ARE IN ANY DOUBT, PLEASE CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR FIRST.

Knees and legs are important to fitness too, apart from heart rate and stamina.

\*IT IS UNFAIR TO YOURSELF AND THE GUIDES TO ARRIVE AT THE GORILLA PARK HQ, KNOWING FULL WELL THAT YOU HAVE A MEDICAL CONDITION LIKE EMPHYSEMA, HEART ISSUES, OR SOMETHING SIMILAR AND EXPECT THEM TO COMPROMISE THE EXPERIENCE FOR OTHER GUESTS IN YOUR GROUP.

## **Trek Protocol**

1. One meets at the park office at 07:00am to register and check-in. Here the parks officials put you in groups of 8 persons, with two park guides. YOU NEED YOUR PASSPORT FOR REGISTRATION.
2. The guides then brief your group of 8 about the particular GORILLA FAMILY you are going to see.
3. Depart to the trek departure point by vehicle with the Parks guides.
4. Meet and hire porters to assist carrying your daypack / camera bag, and collect walking stick.
5. Start the trek up the mountain.
6. The guides are in radio contact with the trackers who you have not met. They set off early in the morning to locate the gorillas before they leave their overnight nests.
7. Just prior to arriving at the gorillas, the guides will inform you to collect your cameras ONLY, (and spare battery and film/ memory card) from the porters. No FOOD allowed.
8. The porters remain with your pack and walking stick.
9. The guides will then walk you to the gorillas, and you spend 1 hour with them.
10. The guides are familiar with every individual gorilla in the group and their genealogy. They will ensure that you have good visuals of the animals and tell you about them too.
11. At the end of 1 hour you withdraw, collect the porters with your kit and after a brief break to drink and snack, return to the vehicles at the start point.
12. Return to either the Park HQ or Gorilla Centre to collect your Certificate of Accomplishment!
13. Return to your lodge.



### Day Pack

You should carry bottled water, some food (packed lunch, power bars, an apple), waterproof jacket, spare camera batteries, film & sun block. Energy bars are a very good idea!

### Duration

The trek will last as long as it takes for the trackers to locate their allocated gorilla group in the jungle and guide your group of trekkers in to the scene. This may take from 1 to 6 hours. Be prepared to walk a long way and back! Generally the Rwanda gorillas are far more accessible than the Ugandan families.

### Porters

The porters are all local men who are registered by parks to be porters. Their English is sometimes limited, so they will give you a name, but may not be able to converse in English. Some speak French. The porter will assist you up and down the trail, carry your pack and give you a walking stick for the trek. Return the stick to him at the end of the trek.

Their recommended fee for assisting you for the morning is currently US\$10. If you feel the fellow has been of greater value to you, then pay him a little more, but be guided by the parks ranger if you are not sure.

### Clothing

**\*IT IS ILLEGAL TO WEAR CAMOUFLAGE CLOTHING.**

Sober colored clothing is important. Olive greens, browns, beige and khaki are fine. Grays, and neutral colors are good. Black and dark blue are NOT advisable, as these colors absorb heat, attract insects and are out of place.

Long sleeves and long pants are a must.

A hat or cap is a good idea, particularly if it rains.

Light gardening gloves are a good idea, as nettles are found along the trail.

Sturdy, lightweight, closed walking shoes are necessary. *Sandals and slippers are NOT allowed.*

Lightweight, water-resistant clothing is advisable, as it rains often and sodden clothes are NOT fun to walk in (Denim jeans are the worst).

The long pants will be tucked into your socks before you trek, to prevent ants and other insects climbing up inside your trousers.

### Insects

There is a soldier ant in the jungle known locally as, 'SIAFU'. This ant marches in columns about 60 feet long, and will not hesitate to bite any soft flesh put in its' way. So, tuck your trouser bottoms into long socks to prevent the ant climbing up your bare leg and sampling your soft flesh. They do so in scores, not just in small numbers!

The only effective way to rid yourself of this creature is to take your trousers off immediately. Awkward, with strangers watching.

There are not many other hazardous insects to be concerned about, apart from keeping a look out for wasp's nests and perhaps spiders. The guides are very good at being careful.



### First Aid Kit

**Take your own medication (PEN) if you suffer from ANY allergenic reactions to bee stings, wasp stings, stinging nettles, and any skin irritations brought on by sweat and exertion and excitement. Medical help is far away and primitive.**

### Climate

The mountains are cooler than the rest of the country, and so a warm sweater or light jacket is always a good thing. A lightweight waterproof jacket is essential, and will suffice with warm layers underneath.

Out of season, daily showers are generally light, and rain tends to fall in the early mornings and afternoons. In the rainy season however, massive storms are common and impressive to watch.

Temperatures are cool to mild during the day, falling a bit in the dawn but warming with the morning. Kigali daily temps: 54°F to 81°F.

### Gratuities for the trek (Customary, not compulsory)

Porter fees are separate.

Park scouts and trackers: US\$20 – US\$30 for their group (They stay with the gorillas)

Your two park rangers: US\$20 – US\$30 each (Depending on their communications and care of you)

### Summary

**Mountain gorillas** are found only in these volcanoes and have been subject to human harassment for a hundred years. Only in the last 80 years has it become possible to see them without the animals bolting terrified into the jungle. The local people have also accepted them as 'cash cows' for the area as they benefit hugely from them through tourism. Most of the lodges have created funds that build schools, clinics, sponsor kids for school etc. and all those same lodges employ and train local people to staff their lodges, and of course the porters are local men (some former poachers) who daily earn some money from helping tourists up and down the mountain.

We hope you enjoyed this unique opportunity to sit and watch these amazing animals. Your park fees have helped to save them from the abyss of extinction from which there is no return.

### QUALITY & FEEDBACK

We pride ourselves in running quality itineraries and offering the best experience.

If you have a problem, please bring it to our attention at the time, thereby giving us a chance to try and rectify it immediately on site, as it will be more difficult to resolve later on.

YOU have chosen a fabulous way to have a holiday, and you will never forget it.

Have a wonderful safari!

