

WILDLIFE, BIRDING & Gorillas





20 DAY SAFARI - WILDLIFE, BIRDING AND GORILLAS

Day One

Arrival

This is a day for optional birding depending on the time of arrival. Some may choose to rest while others may go birding in and around Entebbe or Kampala.

Accommodation: The Boma Entebbe





Day Two

Birding tour to Mabamba Wetland
Transfer to Lake Mburo National Park

After an early breakfast, we commence our trip by driving to the Mabamba Swamp, 50km west of Kampala, the capital of Uganda. Stop en route at Mpigi Swamp for papyrus rarities. Open your eyes for a White-winged Warbler, Papyrus Gonolek, Yellow-backed Weaver, Northern Brown-throated Weaver, Blue-headed Coucal, and other swamp specialties.

At the swamp, most of the birding is done on a canoe, paddled by our local site guides. Look out for the Shoebill both in the sky and down on the marsh. Also watch out for the Swamp Flycatcher, African Purple Swamp hen, African Water Rail, Common Moorhen, Lesser Jacana, African Jacana, African Pygmy Goose, White-faced Whistling-duck, Squacco Heron, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Winding Cisticola, Goliath Heron and Black Crake.

Accommodation: Rwakobo Rock



Day Three

Whole day birding and game drive in the park

Today, we begin very early with a game drive on the various tracks found within the park. You have chances of viewing large herds of mammals like Impalas, Elands, Topi and Buffaloes. The bird population here is also rich hence birders will have chances of Green-backed Woodpecker, Brown-chested Plover, Southern Ground Hornbill, Spot-flanked, Yellow-billed Ox pecker, Northern Brown-throated Weaver, Red-faced and Black-collared Barbets.

Later in the afternoon, we have a boat trip where you will have good views of hippos yawning and splashing in the water. Also of interest here is the African Fin foot, White-winged Warbler, Papyrus Yellow Warbler, Carruthers Cisticola, Papyrus Gonolek.



Day Four

Birding to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park

Today, we shall spend most of the day driving to Bwindi. Bwindi Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is home to approximately half of the world's endangered population of Mountain Gorillas.

Forest birding at Bwindi ranks as one of the best bird watching experiences in Uganda and Africa as well, having been voted as the number one birding hot spot in Africa. It is home to over 23 highly-localized Albertine Rift endemics. Once part of a much larger forest that included the Virunga Volcanoes in neighboring Rwanda, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park is now an ecological island within a sea of human cultivation and therefore of big conservation importance. Buhoma lies in the valley of the Munyaga River at 5100ft and is bordered with steep, forested hills.

Excellent forest birding and the prospect of sightings of numerous rare and localized Albertine Rift endemics makes this a true birding paradise.

Accomodation: Gorilla Forest Camp / Nkuringo Gorilla Lodge





Day Five

Whole day birding in the forest

On this day, we set out for a whole day birding in the forest. Special birds you have chances of seeing include Black-faced Rufous Warbler, Grauer's Warbler, Banded Prinia, Black-faced Apalis, Black-throated Apalis, Mountain Masked Apalis, Red-throated Alethe, Yellow-eyed Black-Flycatcher, Ashy Flycatcher, Dusky-blue Flycatcher, Chapin's Flycatcher, Chin-spot Batis, Rwenzori Batis, Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher, White-bellied Crested-flycatcher, Pale-breasted Illadopsis, Mountain Illadopsis, African Hill-Babbler, Dusky Tit, Blue-throated Brown Sunbird, Blue-headed Sunbird, Northern Double-collared Sunbird, Grey-headed Sunbird, Mackinnon's Fiscal, Sooty Boubou, Pink-footed Puff back, Doherty's Bush-shrike, White-naped Raven, Montane Oriole, African Golden Oriole, Stuhlmann's Starling, Narrow-tailed Starling, Waller's Starling, Strange Weaver, Brown-capped Weaver, Black-billed Weaver, Dusky Crimsonwing, Yellow-bellied Waxbill, Magpie Mannikin, Yellow-crowned Canary, Thick-billed Seedeater, Streaky Seedeater, African Green Broadbill, Shelly's Crimsonwing, Oriole Finch, Mountain Buzzard, Ayre's Hawk-eagle, Handsome Francolin, Black-billed Turaco, Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo, African Wood-Owl, Rwenzori Nightjar, Scarce Swift, Bar-tailed Trogon, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Black Bee-eater, (Western) Bronze-naped Pigeon, Red-chested Owlet, Tullberg's Woodpecker, Elliot's Woodpecker, African Broadbill, Western Green Tinker bird, African Green Broadbill, Lagden's Bush Shrike, Petit's Cuckoo-shrike, Grey Cuckoo-shrike, Archer's Ground Robin, Toro Olive-Greenbul, Ansorge's Greenbul, Equatorial Akalat, White-bellied Robin-chat, Olive Thrush, White-tailed Ant-Thrush, Grauer's Rush-warbler, Short-tailed Warbler, Neumann's Warbler and Red faced Woodland-Warbler.

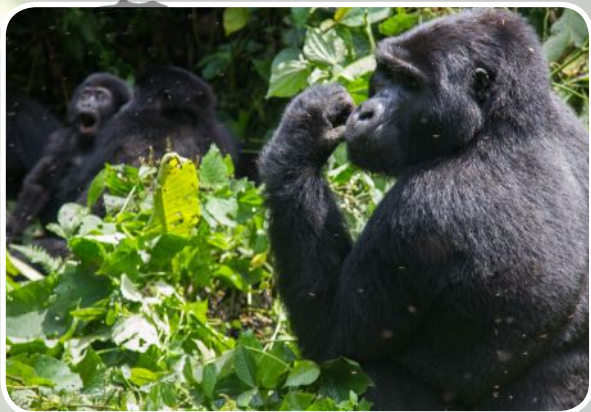


Day Six

Gorilla tracking

This morning, after breakfast, we shall assemble at the park offices for briefing prior to this historic event. Gorilla tracking is a very captivating activity; it involves walking in the wilderness in search of these great apes. It can be a physically challenging activity, therefore ensure physical fitness.

Eight people are permitted per group per day. It can last from 20 minutes to hours in a day. On occasions the Gorillas prove elusive but often can be found within an hour by the tracker guides. Gorilla tracking itself is wonderful experience; staring in to the eyes of these gentle giants; watching them in awe as they play and go about their daily activities. It is indeed a "once in a lifetime" experience that you must never miss each time you visit Uganda. Each encounter is different and has its own rewards, but you are likely to enjoy the close view of adults feeding, grooming and resting as the youngsters frolic and swing from vines in a delightfully playful display.





Day Seven

Birding Safari to Queen Elizabeth National Park

Today, we shall start early after breakfast and drive to Queen Elizabeth National Park. Due to the unpredictable rainy seasons that sometimes make the roads impassable, we may either drive through Ishasha sector popularly known for its tree climbing lions or drive through the beautiful sceneries of Rukungiri district. Queen Elizabeth National Park which is named after the Queen of England who visited it in 1954 is the second largest national park in Uganda. In terms of diversity this park ranks among the best birding destinations in Uganda with over 610 species recorded, and a one day record of 296 species. Hard-core birders will be treated to special birds of this park that include Harlequin Quail, Blue Quail, Small (Common) Buttonquail, African Crake, White-winged Warbler, Martial Eagle, African Skimmer, Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Papyrus Gonolek, Amur Falcon, Ovampo Sparrowhawk, Lowland Akalat, Greater and Lesser Flamingo, Shoebill, Black Bee-eater, Caruthers's Cisticola, Terek Sandpiper, Secretary Bird, and Temminck's Courser. Mammals include African Elephant, Spotted Hyena, Leopard, Lion, Ugandan Kobs, Side-striped Jackal, Baboons, Chimpanzees, Bush and Water Bucks, Warthogs, Giant Forest Hogs to mention but a few.

Accommodation: Katara Lodge/ Pumba Safari Cottages



Day Eight

Whole day birding and game drive in the park and boat trip on Kazinga Channel

After breakfast we set out for a whole day game drive as we continue bird watching in the park. Later in the afternoon you have an exciting boat cruise on the Kazinga channel. This is a narrow neck of water that connects Lakes George and Edward, with excellent photographic opportunities for waterside birds and abundant Hippopotamus. Amongst the birds you are likely to encounter are the African Skimmer, Striated Heron, African Spoonbill, Water Thick-knee, Three-banded Plover, Marsh, Green, Wood and Common Sandpiper, Gray-headed Gull, Plain Martin Lesser Swamp-Warbler and Yellow-billed Ox pecker.





Day Nine

Birding Safari to Maramagambo Forest and transfer to Kibale forest

After an early breakfast, we head for Maramagambo forest. A few specialties at Maramagambo forest include the Yellow-bellied and Jameson's Wattle-eyes, Black Bee-eater, White-tailed and Red-tailed Ant-Thrush, Brown and Grey-chested Illadopsis, Shinning Blue Kingfisher, Brown-eared Woodpeckers, Narina Trogon, Least Honey guide, Grey Greenbul, Brown-chested Alethe, and the African Fin foot.

The trail through the forest leads past a bat cave, which is rather impressive, and if we are lucky we may come across a Python that lives in the cave and feasts on the bats. Later in the afternoon, we drive to Kibale Forest National Park.

Accommodation: Ndali Lodge/Kibale Forest Camp



Day Ten

Chimp tracking and birding safari in the forest

On this day, we set off for the towering forest very early, driving towards the Park's visitor center for briefing and thereafter, chimp tracking. The activity may last from a few hours to several hours. Birding in the afternoon along the main road may be productive.

Depending on the weather predictions, birding Bigodi wetland is also productive with riverine forest birds. Kibale National Park is a good site for a number of birds that are hard to find elsewhere including Speckle-breasted Woodpecker, Cabanis's Greenbul and Joyful Greenbul as well as White-spotted Fluff tail, Dusky and Olive Long tailed Cuckoo, Lesser Honey guide, Blue-shouldered Robin Chat, White-chinned Prinia, Grey Apalis, Olive-green Camaroptera and White-collared Olive back.



Day Eleven

Whole day birding in the forest

After breakfast, we have another chance for birding in the forest. The results of the previous day will help us to choose either birding Sebitoli Section or birding Kanyanchu area.



Day Twelve

Birding Safari to Budongo forest

Take a long drive to Budongo arriving in Budongo area late in the afternoon. If time allows there may be chances for birding along the way at Busingiro Section of Budongo forest. Budongo forest is the largest natural forest area in East Africa. We can expect to find a wide range of other bird species such as the crested guinea fowl sporting their punk "hairdos", White Crested Turacco, Chestnut Crowned Eremomela, Yellow and Gray Longbills, Olive-bellied Crombec, Yellow-browed Camaroptera, Little Green Sunbird, and Red-headed Blue Bill among others. There are also many other special birds with a West African origin: White-thighed Hornbill, Green-breasted Pitta, Rufous-sided Broadbill, Blue-breasted, Dwarf & Chocolate-backed Kingfishers, Yellow-crested & Brown-eared Woodpeckers, Yellow Bill, Western Black-headed Oriole, Yellow-spotted, Hairy-breasted & Yellow-billed Barbets, Green Hylia, Buff-throated, Black-throated & Black-capped Apalises, Black-eared Ground-Thrush, Rufous-crowned Eremomela, the elusive Lemon-bellied Crombec, Crested & Red-headed Malimbe and also various forest starlings among others. We will also be in a prime area for a wide range of primates such as Blue & Red-tailed Monkeys and Black and white Colobus – and if lucky Chimpanzees. There is also a wide variety of butterfly species in the forest. Budongo forest has recorded over 200 butterfly species hence you will also be in for a treat as we look out for these butterflies.

Accommodation: Masindi Hotel/Court View Hotel



Day Thirteen

Whole day birding in the Royal Mile

A short birdwatching drive from the hotel at dawn will take us to one of the best of Uganda's birdwatching spots, the Royal Mile. This is Uganda's historically known leisure spot for the traditional King, hence the name Royal Mile. Here the forest has been cut back a few meters along the sides of the main trail, which makes it a particularly good viewing area in this excellent forest.

Uganda Special Bird species in Budongo include White-thighed and Black-and-white-casqued Hornbills, Yellow-spotted and Yellow billed Barbets, Western Black-headed Oriole, along with Red-tailed and Blue Monkeys. Overhead, Sabine's and sometimes Cassin's Spine tails soar over the clearings.

As we walk quietly along the trail, Red-tailed Ant-Thrushes skulk in the shadows, as do Red-tailed Bristle bill, Scaly-breasted, Pale-breasted and Brown Illadopsis. Greenbuls are always a challenge and include Cameroon Sombre, Slender-billed, Honey guide and Spotted Greenbul, whilst other regular species are Speckled Tinker bird, Yellow-crested Woodpecker, Green Crombec, Rufous-crowned Eremomela, Yellow-browed Camaroptera, Buff-throated Apalis, and both White-breasted and Grey-headed Negro finches. Lower down we should see Chocolate-backed and African Dwarf Kingfishers. White-spotted Fluff tails and the elusive Nahan's Francolin, believed to be one of the most handsome of all Ugandan birds. Other possibilities here are Great Sparrowhawk, Cassin's Hawk-eagle, Crested Guinea fowl, Tambourine Dove, Grey Parrot, African Emerald and Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoos, Yellow bill, White-throated Bee-eater, Yellow-throated Tinker bird, Yellow-spotted Barbet, Yellow-crested Woodpecker, Dusky Tit, Western Nicator, Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat, Forest Robin, Black-throated and Black-capped Apalis, Yellow-browed Camaroptera, Brown-crowned Eremomela, Lemon-bellied Crombec, Sabine's and Cassin's Spine tails, Wilcock's Honey guide, Yellow and Grey Long bills, Jameson's Wattle-eye, Blue-throated Brown and Little Green Sunbirds, Rufous Flycatcher Thrush, Yellow-mantled Weaver, Red-headed Malimbe, the Uganda Woodland Warbler and the Ituri Batis.





Day Fourteen

Whole day birding in Budongo (Busingiro section)

After breakfast, we will bird in Busingiro section. Key species here include African Dwarf and Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, Chestnut-crowned Eremomela, White-spotted Fluff tail, Yellow and Grey Long bills, Olive-bellied Crombec, Brown-eared Woodpecker, Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo, Blue-breasted Kingfisher, Crowned Eagle, Forest Flycatcher, Yellow-browed Camaroptera and Cabanis Bunting, Brown-backed Scrub- Robin, Narina Trogon, Rufous Flycatcher-Thrush, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher, Black-headed Paradise Flycatcher, Little Green Sunbird, Green Sunbird, both Negro finches, Western Black-headed Oriole, Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo, African Emerald Cuckoo, Red-tailed Ant-Thrush, Yellow Long bill, Gray Long bill, Forest Robin, Scaly-breasted Illadopsis, Rufous-crowned Eremomela, the elusive Lemon-bellied Crombec, Yellow-mantled Weaver, Yellow-browed Camaroptera, Green Crombec, Crested Malimbe and Red-headed Bluebill. Cassin's Hawk Eagle might be circling over the canopy and it is also our chance to sort out an array of challenging Greenbuls, amongst them Little Greenbul, Slender-billed Greenbul, White-throated Greenbul and Plain Greenbul, Spotted and Toro Olive Greenbul.



Day Fifteen

Birding Safari to Murchison Falls National Park Uganda

After breakfast, we drive northwards to Murchison Falls National Park birding through the Escarpment. Special birds include Cliff Chat, Yellow Fronted Tinkerbird, Gray-headed Bush Shrike, Singing Cisticola, African Fin foot, Namaqua dove, Green Winged Pytilia, Red Backed Shrike, Crested Francolin, Black Headed Bush Shrike, Northern and Black winged Red Bishops, Black Bellied Fire finch, Black faced Waxbill and March Tchagra.

Accommodation: Twiga Tales lodge/Pakuba Lodge/Murchison River Lodge.



Day Sixteen and Seventeen

Birding and Game Drive

We start birding after an early breakfast. Depending on the information available from our site guides, we may choose to take a boat ride along the Victoria Nile or game drive to the delta.

You have chances of seeing Oribi, Rothschild Giraffe, Buffalo, Uganda Kob, Jackals, Lions, Bohor Reedbuck, fine groups of giraffe, Water and Bush Bucks.

Special birds to look out for include Shoebill, Secretary Bird, Abyssinian Roller and Ground Hornbill, Pied Kingfishers, Red-throated Bee-eaters, Goliath Heron, Saddle-billed Stork, Sacred Ibis, Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Senegal Thick-knee, Water Thick-knee, Black-headed Lapwing, Long-toed Lapwing, Little Bittern, Osprey, Red-necked Falcon, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Vinaceous Dove and Grosbeak Weaver. Other specialties include Buff-bellied Warbler, Yellow-fronted Tinker bird, Bar-breasted Fire finch, Red-winged Grey Warbler, Spotted Morning-Thrush, Marabou Stork, Red-throated Bee-eater, Silver bird, Beautiful Sunbird, Black-headed Gonolek, Speckle-fronted Weaver, Golden-backed Weaver, White-rumped Seedeater, Pels Fishing Owl, White Crested Turacco, Vinaceous Dove, Senegal Thicknee, Bruce's Green Pigeon, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow Weaver, Carmine Bee-eater, Night jays (Pennant-winged & Standard-winged), White rumped Canary etc.



Day Eighteen

Birding south of the River and Budongo Kanio Pabide

After an early breakfast, we bird through the woodland southwards to Budongo Forest at Kanio Pabide section. Birding in the forest and along the Masindi Road is satisfactory. Special birds at Budongo here include, Rufous sided broadbill, Puvell's Illadopsis, Red tailed ant thrush, Yellow and Grey Long bills, Whistling Cisticola, Black Bishop, Red headed and Red Billed Quellas, Magpie Mannikin, Blue Throated Roller, Yellow Billed Shrike, Pigmy Sunbird, and the forest is home to chimpanzees.

Accommodation: Masindi Hotel/Court View Hotel

Day Nineteen

Birding in Kampala

Accommodation: The Boma

Day Twenty

End of the birding tour/departure