



Rwanda - Gorillas & hiking the Bisoke Volcano

Trek the gorillas and hike the Bisoke! The Virunga volcanoes are a range of six extinct volcanoes and two active volcanoes (Congo). The Virunga volcanoes, with their altitudinal vegetation zones are probably one of the most beautiful mountains of the world. They are a paradise for hikers. Rwanda has 5 volcanoes, and the Bisoke (3.711 m) is an extinct volcano, with a beautiful crater lake. Fantastic views in all directions!

- Min. 2 participants. For Gorillas the min. age is 15 years.
- You can choose from 2 hotel categories. see the hotels proposed in the day by day program, itinerary)
- Only the Park Authorities will assign you a gorilla group. Communicate your wishes to our driver-guide he will make some arrangements for you! The Sussa group leaves at the Karisimbi volcano and is more challenging with much longer hiking times!
- Flash photography is not permitted when tracking the gorillas.
- What is included?

Tour Includes: Airport transfers, accommodation, all meals, plenty of mineral water, the services of a driver-guide, all park and entry fees, all activities as per programme: visit of Kigali including the Genocide Memorial Centre at Gisozi, 1 gorilla trekking, hiking the Bisoke volcano (3.711 m).

Excludes: Airline ticket, beverages, tips, visas and personal expenses.

■ What to bring with you?

Money for your personal expenses (average of \$ 50 p.p.), outfit with adapted colours for wildlife observation, good walking shoes, raingear, a few long-sleeve shirts, slippers, sweater for cool evenings, sun protection: hat, sunglasses, sun cream, video/photo camera, a 200 mm or longer lens is very useful, reserve batteries, films and a torch.

- **WARNING:** Gorilla permits are in high demand and need to be booked and paid in advance! Book your gorilla safari accordingly and avoid disappointment!

Duration : 4 Days

Travel styles : Road Safaris, Private Safaris, Lodge Safaris

Activities : Gorilla Trekking, Guided Nature Walks & Hikes.

Parks & places : Genocide Memorial Centre - Gisozi & others, Volcanoes National Park

Itinerary

Day 1 : Arrival and transfer to Kinigi (Volcanoes NP)

Meet and greet at the Kigali International Airport by your driver-guide. Depending on your arrival time, your driver-guide may propose you a visit of Kigali city which includes the Genocide Memorial Centre at Gisozi.

Transfer to Kinigi at the foothills of the Volcanoes. Diner (D) is included in the package. Hotel accommodation at your choice.

Flights: There are daily flights to Kigali out of Nairobi with Kenya Airways and Rwandair Express. This makes it easy to combine your short gorilla safari with another East-African safari.

Day 2 : Gorilla Tracking

After breakfast, you will depart for the Headquarters of the Park where your driver-guide will accomplish the necessary formalities for you. You will meet your ranger guide's for a briefing about the greatest animal experience ever!

We will drive you to the slopes of one of the Virunga volcanoes for your trekking. After the trekking, if time allows lunch at Ruhengeri and an excursion to explore the beautiful lakes in the region (Lake Bulera & Ruhondo). Overnight at Kinigi. Your guide will make the necessary arrangements for the next day. (B-L-D)

Activities : Gorilla Trekking

Parks & places : Volcanoes National Park

Day 3 : Hiking the Bisoke (3.711 m) - Kinigi - Kigali.

Hiking the Bisoke is organized as a one day hike and starts early in the morning. A park ranger will escort you to the top of the volcano. On a clear day you will enjoy the beautiful crater lake and the views of the other virunga volcanoes. Fantastic views in all directions, lushly forested slopes, shady bamboo forest and an exhilarating climb! After your excursion transfer to Kigali for overnight at your hotel (B-L-D)

The Bisoke with an altitude of 3.711 m is the fourth highest mountain of the virunga chain and has a beautiful lake on the top. The crater lake is the greatest of the virunga chain.

Activities : Guided Nature Walks & Hikes.

Parks & places : Volcanoes National Park

Day 4 : Kigali Visit and Departure

Pick up at your hotel, depending on your departure time and if you missed the opportunity on the first day, you will have Kigali city trip including the visit of the Genocide Memorial Centre at Gisozi. Transfer to the Airport for your departure. (B)

Genocide Memorials: In Rwanda you will find all over the country Memorials to remember the genocide of 1994. The most important Genocide Memorials are those of Kigali (Gisozi) and Murambi (Gikongoro) where the history of the genocide is explained. A visit to the genocide memorial is for most visitors an emotional event.

Important: Before you travel please check your Tour Voucher and Arrival Information for the latest joining instructions. This will be sent to you upon receipt of final payment.

All itineraries are subject to change without prior notice.

The American naturalist Diane Fossey (Author of *Gorillas in the Mist*) dispelled the myths and revealed that gorillas are in fact shy and gentle creatures, intelligent, sociable and given to aggression only as a means of defence. We owe Diane Fossey a great debt for bringing the gorillas to public attention and inspiring the governments to introduce laws for their protection. She also contributed largely to set out the basic rules for gorilla viewing. Today the International Gorilla Conservation Programme covers all three countries, and it is most certainly a great privilege to be able to visit these mountain gorillas (gorilla gorilla beringei).

The entire world population is found in 2 only conservation area. The volcanic Virunga Mountains, which straddle the common borders of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, and in South Western Uganda's Impenetrable Forest. Both conservation area give a different gorilla experience. The habitat in Bwindi Impenetrable NP is a dense rainforest while in Kinigi, Volcanoes National Park (Rwanda) and Mt Mgahinga (Uganda) the habitat of the gorillas is part of the Virunga, the famous chain of volcanoes located in Congo, Rwanda and also partially in Uganda.

A typical gorilla trekking starts with assigning the visitors to the respective habituated gorilla groups. In Bwindi the groups are assigned when buying the gorilla permit while in Rwanda the Park Authorities will assign them on site the day of the trekking.

After this formality the Rangers will give you a briefing of the way they will conduct this fantastic guided nature walk to the gorillas. They will give you extensive information on the environment, the gorilla family you will visit and the way you should behave with them. The so named "gorilla rules" will be clearly set out because it's a corner stone in the conservation of the gorillas. There is not only a high risk of disease transmission to gorillas and vice versa, but the daily visits can cause behavioural disturbance and stress to gorillas. Please respect the rules!

After the briefing we will drive you to nearest location outside the park and from there your rangers will guide you to the gorillas. Gorilla trekking is unpredictable and it's difficult to foresee how many hours you will hike. In Bwindi the hiking time are generally much challenging. The terrain is usually more difficult in the rainforest and hiking times are longer because when looking for food Bwindi gorillas tend to travel longer distances per day. In Rwanda the gorilla trekking is usually easier except for the challenging Sussa group located at the Karisimbi volcano.

This doesn't mean that you don't need a good physical condition in Rwanda. We have seen several times that visitors had some problems during their trekking. Rain can get you by surprise and during the dry season gorilla tend to climb higher for their preferred bamboo shoots. It has to be said that the park rangers and the porters are extremely helpful and will do everything they can to make sure that visitors can see the gorillas. We therefore strongly advise not to hesitate to take a porter. Porters can not only be very efficient but in return you help local communities to benefit from tourism! There is also a very efficient rescue team available in the parks for visitor getting in trouble!

For conservation purposed the time spend with the gorillas is limited to one hour. The daily visits have an impact on gorilla activity patterns. The daily visits are a source of animal stress and less feeding are a strong justification for the one-hour rule.

Gorilla trekking is the strongest animal experience ever! Tracking the gorillas is a unique experience - it leads you to meet unusual creatures on their own terms and it's a very intense and thrilling experience! You will be rewarded with a certificate of the National Park!

GORILLA RULES

Eco-tourism is nature-based tourism that meets conservation objectives and favours sustainable development. Gorilla tourism depends largely on the conservation of these magnificent animals. Some rules have been developed to protect the gorillas and the park rangers will brief you before the trekking. Please respect them.

PHOTOGRAPHY

- You will have excellent photo opportunities in Rwanda.
- When photographing people we advise you to respect their privacy. Be discreet when taking pictures or ask first. Some will refuse, some will accept and some will ask you for money.
- Special photographic film conditions are applicable to professionals, a non-professional video camera will be allowed during the visit, without additional charge.
- Flash photography is not permitted when tracking the gorillas!

WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU?

- Money for your personal expenses: Us Dollars or Euro!
- Outfit with adapted colours for wildlife observation, good walking shoes, rain gear, gloves (nettle stings), a few thick long-sleeve shirts, slippers, sweater for the cool evenings!
- Sun protection: hat, sunglasses, sun cream.
- Mosquito repellent
- Video camera/ photo camera, a 200 mm or longer telephoto lens will be very useful, reserve battery, films (with a few high speed films – 800/1600 ASA)
- Binoculars, if you can. Highly recommended!
- A torch

Note that due to the altitude the mornings, evenings and nights are quite cold. During the trekking you can expect both sun and rainfall (raining season) and we recommend long trousers and long sleeve shirts to avoid nettle stings. Waterproof raingear is essential for your trekking!

VISA AND INOCULATIONS

Visa: A valid passport is mandatory. Visas are required by all visitors except nationals of the USA, UK, Germany and Canada. Nationals of countries without an embassy can obtain a visa on arrival by prior arrangement.

Inoculations: Yellow fever is required! Ask your physician for malaria protection.

Security: There are no security problems in Rwanda. After the tragedy of the genocide in 1994, Rwanda has now stabilised and welcomes visitors.

Safari guide: Your guide is an experienced person speaking English and the local language. He will be your guide from your arrival till your departure.

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