

# UGANDA - THE PEARL OF AFRICA

Africa is for many a dream destination full of exotic animals, a great share of primates, cats, reptiles, scenic nature, and rich cultures. For a long time, it has been Serengeti and Masai Mara that come to peoples' minds when talking about a safari in Africa, but this is rapidly changing with security and tourism infrastructure developing across the continent. A great example of this is Uganda, nicknamed "the Pearl of Africa" by Winston Churchill.

**After troubled past, Uganda has now enjoyed a long time of peace that has allowed road networks to improve, investors to put money into lodges and tourists to start discovering this beautiful country.** A safari in Uganda offers adventures both in the jungle and on the savannah. More than half of the population of the world's mountain gorillas is found in Uganda, so the highlight of a Uganda safari for most visitors is to spend one hour with the mysterious mountain Gorillas in the impenetrable forest.

These great apes being the magnet that draws tourists to Uganda, then beautiful nature, friendly people and a chance to tick off the big 5 is an amazing bonus that many don't know about before they start researching information about Uganda.

Among the 10 national parks in the country, 4 offer great savannah grasslands, each standing out from the rest in some way, so a safari in Uganda gives you more variation. Queen Elizabeth National Park is lying on the bottom of the Great Rift Valley, with lakes, forests, Kazinga channel, and Ishasha. The southern Ishasha sector is one of only two places in the entire world where lions regularly climb trees, truly an amazing sight to see these great cats lazily resting in branches of fig-trees. In the northeast of Uganda there is the Kidepo Valley National Park known for its untouched wilderness which listed it as the 3rd top national park in Africa. Kidepos' setting with seasonal rivers, valleys and rocky outcrops yield game viewing with great buffalo herds, the maneless zebra, cheetah, caracal and regional endemic birds from unreachable habitats of Sudan, Ethiopia, and the Sahel region.

Uganda's biggest conservation area Murchison Falls National Park exceeding over 5000 km<sup>2</sup> with Budongo forest block, vast woodlands, palm forests, vast grasslands, dissected by the mighty River Nile offers a cruise including great sights of hippos, crocodiles and colorful birds along the river banks and towering cliffs towards the bottom of the mighty Falls.

One of the aims of the visitors during a Uganda safari can be completing the Big 5 by visiting Ziwa rhino sanctuary where they are successful in reintroducing rhinos to Uganda. At the sanctuary you are escorted on foot by rangers to trek the southern white rhinos, which is a safe experience since the rhinos have bad sight.

For visitors interested in mountaineering, entomology, herpetology, birding or culture Uganda offers great opportunities. Rwenzori mountains towering at 5110m capped with glaciers offer everything from beautiful day hikes that fits most - to the more challenging 7-days hike taking you to the highest peak.

Birding Uganda is a true highlight for anyone with a bird-watching interest. Here you have a chance to tick off the African Green Broadbill, Great shoebill stork, Green-breasted Pitta, and Great Blue Turaco. The birding community in Uganda is growing and a specialized guide will be there to take you around when you travel with an experienced tour operator like **Mamaland Safaris**. During your safari, you can get to know Uganda's varied culture. Community walks to see life in the countryside,

dance performances, visit with Batwa people to see how they lived in the forest with heritage dating back to prehistory or a visit to the Karamojong people to see how they live up to today with their cattle in remote parts of northern Uganda are just a few of the possibilities.

With Uganda, you really have the chance to experience a destination before it develops into a busy tourist spot, but make sure to travel soon because the word is getting out that Uganda is a place to put on the bucket list.

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