Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (BINP) covers an area of 321 km² between 1,160m and 2,607m above sea level.

Bwindi was gazetted as a National Park in 1991 and declared a UNESCO Natural World Heritage site in 1994. The Mubare gorilla group at Buhoma was the first to be habituated for tourism in Bwindi in April 1993. A total of fifteen groups have now been habituated for tourism and are tracked from four trailheads.

Uganda's foremost tourist attraction, and indeed one of the world's most remarkable wildlife encounters, is tracking mountain gorillas through the remote Bwindi Impenetrable forest of south-western Uganda. These magnificent apes are both rare and endangered; their total population numbers less than 800 animals divided between the forests of Bwindi Impenetrable and the nearby Virunga volcanoes. With fifteen groups habituated for tourism, the Impenetrable Forest is the world's primary mountain gorilla tracking destination.

There is however much more to Bwindi than gorilla tracking. Forest trails lead to scenic waterfalls and rift valley viewpoints while community walks through local villages provide insights into the lives of the Batwa (Pygmy) and Bakiga people living beside the forest. Bwindi is also one of Uganda’s top birdwatching destinations with many Albertine Rift endemics present, notably in the high, draughty Ruhija sector.

**WILDLIFE**

One of Africa’s oldest and richest forests – one of few that predate the arid conditions of the last ice age, 12,000-18,000 years ago – the Bwindi Impenetrable has been weaving itself into tangles across the fissured and folded margin of the Albertine Rift Valley for some 25,000 years. In the process it has accumulated a remarkable biodiversity, thanks also to an 1147m altitudinal range that accommodates habitats ranging from lowland forest at 1,160m to rare Afromontane vegetation above 2,600m. Species counts include 310 butterflies, 88 moths, 200 trees, 51 reptiles and 120 types of mammal. The latter includes several primates, among them chimpanzees, blue monkeys, L’Hoest’s monkey, and, the star of the Impenetrable show, the mountain gorilla.

Birdlife is also exceptionally rich with 357 species dominated by forest birds. These include 25 endemics (90% of all Albertine Rift endemics) such as the short-tailed warbler, Shelley’s crimson wing, African green broadbill and the blue-headed sunbird, and seven IUCN Red Data List species. Fourteen species, including the brown-necked parrot and the white-bellied robin chat, occur nowhere else in Uganda.

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The Ultimate
Gorilla Experience

Bwindi receives up to 2,390 mm of rain per year. It can be cold, especially in the morning and at night; the annual average temperature range is 7°C - 20°C with the coldest period being June and July. As well as warm clothing, wet weather gear is essential since

CLIMATE

ACCESS

The main trailhead at Buhoma is about 460kmms from Kampala and can be reached by road from several directions. The main safari circuit approaches from the north through the Ishasha sector of Queen Elizabeth National Park (QENP), providing a chance to see a variety of large mammals, birds and primates along the forest edge.

WHEN TO VISIT

The park can be visited any time of the year.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation facilities at all four trailheads cater for up-market, mid range and budget visitors. Ruhija trailhead can also be reached from hotels in Kabale and Lake Bunyonyi, while visitors to Rushaga and Nkuringo have the option of staying in Kisoro or Lake Mutanda.

ACTIVITIES AND ATTRACTIONS

Mountain gorilla tracking

The highlight of a visit to Bwindi – and the climax of the long journey to the Impenetrable Forest by air, car and steep, forest trail – is a magical hour in the company of a family of mountain gorillas. Tracking the gorillas can last from a few hours to a whole day, depending on how far the group has moved since it was observed nesting up the previous evening. Bwindi has fifteen habituated gorilla groups that are tracked from four trailheads. Three of these groups are found in the vicinity of Buhoma in northwest Bwindi; four at Ruhija in the east; and eight in the park’s southern trailheads at Nkuringo. Eight permits are available to track each of the fifteen habituated groups, giving a daily maximum of 120 permits. Permits must be booked in advance through the UWA Booking Office in Kampala. Registration commences at 07.30 hours followed by a briefing at 08.00 hours. Tracking starts at 08.50.

To protect the gorillas and visitors, a number of rules and guidelines have been set and must be adhered to. Ensure you get a copy of these rules from the reservations office or at the park. Note that participants visiting gorillas must be aged 15 or over.

Birding

Bwindi’s four trailheads all offer excellent birding opportunities with the prospect of checking off forest rarities. The River Ivi Trail between Buhoma and Nkuringo is recommended, as is Buhoma’s forest-edge Munyaga River Trail. Ruhija’s Bamboo Trail, leading to the 2607m Rwamunyoni peak, and Mubwindi Swamp Trail are renowned for Albertine Rift endemics including the localized green broadbill.

Nature walks

Though gorilla tracking is the main attraction, other walks provide many relaxed opportunities to explore one of Uganda’s loveliest rainforests. The following walks can be arranged to depart in the morning at 09.00 and in the afternoon at 14.00.

Munyanga River Trail; in the valley below the Buhoma trailhead, provides a short walk to view birds and primates along the forest edge.

Waterfall Trail leads through one of Uganda’s most pristine tracts of rainforest, passing beneath tree ferns, epiphytic ferns and orchids to visit three sparkling crystal clear waterfalls.

Rushura Hill Trail provides expansive views across the plains of the Albertine Rift Valley and (on clear days) to Lake Edward and the Rwenzori Mountains to the north.

Muzababwire Loop Trail climbs to the summit of Rukubira Hill for breathtaking views of Bwindi forest, the Albertine Rift Valley and the Virunga volcanoes.

Riverv Trail follows an old road through beautiful forest emerging near Muko the southern end of the forest.

Community walks

Community walks through forest edge villages at Buhoma and Nkuringo provide insights into the lives of the local Batwa (Pygmy) and Banyankole peoples. The Bwindi Forest Trail at Nkuringo is conducted by Batwa guides who demonstrate their traditional forest lore.

Muntanya


CONTACT INFORMATION:

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+256 (0)312 355000
Fax: +256 (0)414 342291
Email: info@ugandawildlife.org
Website: www.ugandawildlife.org

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park
P.O.Box 186 Kabale Uganda.
Tel: +256 (0)392 902 803

Gorilla rules

Visa. Twenty percent of all park fees are shared with communities in park boundary parishes to share the benefits of ecotourism and generate local support for conservation.

TARIFFS & PAYMENT

For information on park entrance and activity fees, please refer to the UWA tariff sheet at www.ugandawildlife.org. Payments can be made using Uganda shillings, US dollars, British pounds, Euros and Visa. Travelers’ cheques are not accepted. A 10% discount is shared with communities in park boundary parishes to share the benefits of ecotourism and generate local support for conservation.

ACTIVITIES AND ATTRACTIONS

Waterfall Trail

Mountain gorilla tracking

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