The 1978km² Queen Elizabeth National Park is one of Uganda’s oldest protected areas. Originally gazetted as the Lake George and Lake Edward game reserves in 1925, it was upgraded to create one of Uganda’s first national parks in 1952.

Queen Elizabeth lies directly on the equator. A pair of concrete hoops marks the spot where the 0° line crosses the Kasese road.

The park is home to over 95 mammal species and over 600 bird species.

The park’s highest point, 1,350m above sea level, is found in the Katwe Explosion Craters while the lowest point is 910m on the shore of Lake Edward.

An abundance of magnificent vistas include the jagged backdrop of the Rwenzori Mountains; rolling hills pocked with extinct volcanic craters; open, rift valley grasslands at Kasenyi and Ishasha; the hippo-lined Kazinga Channel; and the Mbuta mountains in Congo rising above the distant, western shore of Lake Edward.

Queen Elizabeth National Park and its surroundings are also of cultural and historical interest. There are many opportunities for visitors to meet the local communities and enjoy storytelling, dance, music and more. The park was initially named Kazinga National Park in 1952, but was renamed two years later to commemorate a visit by Queen Elizabeth II.

WILDLIFE

QENP’s various habitats support a wealth of wildlife with more mammal species (95) than any other Ugandan park and over 600 bird species – a phenomenal number for such a small area. Expect to see safari favourites such as elephants, buffaloes and hippos. The chances of finding lions on the plains of Kasenyi and Ishasha are good, especially with a ranger guide, while leopard sightings are frequent, though unpredictable, around Mweya and the nearby Channel Track.

Classified as an Important Birding Area by Birding International, QENP is a superbly varied destination for birdwatchers with species representing the park’s varied habitats. Its location at the overlap of East African savanna and Congo forest also means that species from both biomes are present.

LOCAL PEOPLE

Bunyaruguru people live on the Kichwamba Escarpment to the southeast of QENP. The area to the north of the park is the home of Basongora pastoralists while Bakonzo farmers cultivate the slopes of the Rwenzori mountain beyond.

ACCESS

Roads

Two routes run from Kampala to Mweya, the primary tourism hub in QENP. The most scenic route passes through Fort Portal (410km) and offers detours to Kibale, Semuliki and Rwenzori Mountains national parks. The alternative (420km) runs through Mbarara and Bushenyi and passes Lake Mburo National Park.

QENP’s southerly Ishasha sector is directly on the main route to/from from Buhoma, the main mountain gorilla tracking trailhead in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, which lies 62km south.

Air

Charter flights can be arranged to airstrips at Kasese, Mweya and Ishasha.

CLIMATE

Daytime temperatures average 18–28°C. Nights can be cool.

WHEN TO VISIT

All year round

ACCOMMODATION

A range of accommodation in and around the park caters for up-market, mid range, budget and self-catering visitors. At Mweya, UWA offers 4-5 bedroom bungalows equipped with cooking facilities and utensils and affordable one–two bedroom cottages. Campsites are found at Mweya and Ishasha. Please visit the UWA website for more information.
Launch trips on the Kazinga Channel provide the most picturesque views of this spectacular brackish water channel, lined with resident hippos, crocodiles and waterbirds and visited by elephant, buffalo and antelopes. The 2-hour return voyage offers a splendid way to view game in Queen Elizabeth National Park. Launch trips on the Kazinga Channel; spectacular seasonal congregations of flamingos on the Kazinga Channel and Kazinga soda lakes; careful selection of resident and migratory waterbirds on the Kazinga Channel; spectacular seasonal congregations of flamingos on the Kazinga Channel, spectacular seasonal congregations of flamingos on the Kazinga Channel; spectacular seasonal congregations of flamingos on the Kazinga Channel, spectacular seasonal congregations of flamingos on the Kazinga Channel, spectacular seasonal congregations of flamingos on the Kazinga Channel, spectacular seasonal congregations of flamingos on the Kazinga Channel.