

## **UGANDA'S UNIQUE TOURIST ATTRACTIONS**

Uganda with an area of 236,060 kilometers lies along the equator; her climate is therefore equatorial, moderated by altitude. Temperature variations are minimal, with a maximum of 30 Degrees Celsius and a minimum of 21 Degrees Celsius but at times especially at night, temperatures might go below 21 Degrees Celsius. On the whole however, you have a wonderful summer all the year round.

In the last decade, Uganda has had to diversify its travel and tourism products because the main tourist pull, linked to seeing leopards, elephants, lions, giraffes and rhinos has been over-marketed by the neighbouring countries. We emphasize eco-friendly tourism with participation of local communities.

Diversification of its offering has included venturing into and emphasizing a number of new tourism attractions, some of which I briefly describe below.

Ecologically, Uganda is where the East African Savannah meets the Central African jungle. Located in the geographical heart of the continent, it is not your ordinary safari destination. A big portion of the land is between 900 and 1500 metres high. Therefore one can have the advantage of viewing both the low land (mentioned above) and high land animals (Mountain Gorillas Chimpanzees etc).

### **Mountain Gorillas:**

Nestled among the steep, cultivated hillsides of southwest Uganda, Bwindi Park supports half of the world's population of 700 endangered mountain gorillas in a remote pocket of lush rainforest. Two of the park's 23 gorilla families have been habituated to accept daily visits by small tourist groups.

Some of the remaining mountain Gorillas can be found in Mgahinga Gorilla National Park located in the southwestern corner of Uganda. The Park is about 10 km south of Kisoro and is bordered to the south by the Republic of Rwanda and to the west by the Democratic Republic of Congo. Each of these countries protects its own portion of the Virungas. Mgahinga Gorilla National Park is 33.7 sq. km and consists of the partly forested slopes of three extinct volcanoes. From far away, the huge cones of the Virunga volcanoes dominate the landscape and beckon you as you approach. Here you can view the habituated gorilla family in this park called Nyakagezi, which consists of 9 members; 2 silverback, 3 adult females, 2 juveniles and 2 infants.

## **Water Sports:**

For tourists wishing to raise their adrenaline through sports like water rafting, Kayaking and Bungee jumping then Uganda is the absolute destination; these sports are done on River Nile. There are camps at the source of the River Nile which enable the intrepid traveler an excellent opportunity to combine water rafting on the River Nile with a myriad of other outdoor activities.

## **Mountaineering:**

If you like mountaineering, then the (5,119 m) high, snow covered Rwenzori Mountains also known as the '**mountains of the moon**' declared a World Heritage Centre - will offer you the unique experience you've been looking for. The mist-shrouded peaks provide stunning backdrops to this magnificent mountain. A trip into the Rwenzoris is an exhilarating and rewarding experience. The few who have climbed this mountain have promised to come back, if you are an excellent hiker, looking for a lifetime adventure, please make your reservation now.

It is not just the Rwenzoris alone where you can hike in Uganda; there is the famous Mount Elgon National Park. At this Park, mountaineering can be experienced on this volcanic mountain which is (4,321 m), the 4th highest mountain in East Africa, located in the eastern part of Uganda on the border with Kenya. The park boundaries contain 1147 Sq. km of mountain. Most of this area is covered with typical afro-montane vegetation, complete with giant groundsels and bamboo forest. Many travellers find Mt. Elgon an exciting alternative to some of the more strenuous climbs in East Africa. It has many of the same attractions, with milder climate and lower elevation. Climbing the peaks requires no special equipment or technical climbing experience. It is possible to summit the mountain in as little as three days, but a slightly longer visit will permit a more thorough exploration of all Mt. Elgon has to offer.

## **Bird Watching:**

Uganda is a true African birding destination. Located at the center of the continent, Uganda attracts migrant birds from the North and South. Uganda is the richest country for birds in Africa. It has almost half the species known on the African continent and over 10% of those recorded throughout the entire world, some of which are rare and endangered species like shoebill storks.

Over 1,000 species of birds have been recorded to exist in the country. Some of the exciting species you will view include birds of water and land shore, birds of scrub and woodland, forest birds and birds of the open plain.

Most of our National parks have a diversity of bird species; however, Queen Elizabeth, Murchison Falls, Bwindi Impenetrable and Semliki National parks are the most famous

If you are a bird lover, then Uganda is the destination that will make your dream come true. There are excellent guides who will add flavor to your own experience on birds.

### **Fishing:**

Uganda is an ideal fishing destination. One third of the country is covered by water. There are many lakes; the biggest is Lake Victoria, which is the second largest inland fresh water lake in the world (after Lake Superior of the USA). There is great opportunity for sport fishing. Nile Perch of up to 108 kg have ever been caught. Other fish you can catch include Tilapia, Tiger fish, ferocious fighter, Ngara (Genus alestes), catfish and barbel. Despite Nile Perch being a predator of tilapia, there is still abundance of tilapia fish.

### **Nature Walks:**

In most of our National parks and Wildlife Reserves, there are magnificent trails for guided nature walks. If you are interested in a true African walk, Uganda is the right place for you. For those interested you can have Night Walks, Forest Walks, Hiking, Primate Walks, or hot Spring / Falls walk.

### **Friendly and hospitable people:**

As said earlier on, Uganda lies in the warm heart of African continent. It is therefore not surprising that the country has been and is a cultural smelting point, where the Sudanic/Nilotic cultures in the north meet the Bantu cultures in the South. Five main linguistic groups are found in Uganda, giving raise to over 30 languages. Each of the five ethnic Groups possesses rich cultural background and has a lot to offer in the form of cultural artifacts, music, dance and drama to a culture-loving tourist.

Some of the cultural objects are those involved in traditional performances like religious rituals, hereditary succession of Kings and family life. The unique

material from a ficus tree, known as bark cloth is for example a multi-purpose utility. This material can be used in many crafts from tablemats, to modern fashion costumes and handbags.

Ugandan public is very hospitable to strangers and they will go a long way to welcome and entertain visitors. This includes music and dance performances as well as all forms of refreshments. The visitor has many cultural centres to choose from to visit. Starting with the school of fine art, and department of Music, Dance and Drama (MDD) at Makerere University, to the new modern cultural centre at Ntinda, a Kampala suburb, to Nommo Gallery on Nakasero Hill, and lastly but not least the Uganda Museum, the Kasubi Tombs, and the very impressive Bahai Temple. The Uganda National Theatre has a lot to offer as far as plays and drama are concerned. There are also small and local theatres which stage interesting comedies and musicals.

In all these centres one finds unique Ugandan crafts like floor mats made of palm tree leaves with colourful designs, jewellery made from bead work and cattle horn, musical instruments, leather articles-particularly the Uganda drums, baskets, and of course different batik painting and colourful Ugandan prints. These can be bought as souvenirs. The visitor has the opportunity to listen to Uganda music and to buy music CDs. There are also a number of craft shops right in the middle of Kampala city.

Uganda being predominantly an agricultural country, the visitor has an opportunity to visit the numerous open-air markets, which sell farmer produce. These markets offer a large range of tropical fruits and vegetables. These are brought in the cities fresh every morning. In the countryside, the rural landscape offers an alternative to the crowded towns. The settlements are scanty and banana gardens stretch along the main travel routes giving a serene and peaceful atmosphere. To the southwest, the open savannah grasslands, the long horned Ankole cattle are an impressive sight. This is in contrast to the very steep hills of southern Uganda with their terraced gardens. Uganda is indeed a land of contrasts.

### **Accommodation:**

Over the years conscious effort has been applied to up-lift the hotel service sector that all guests can be assured of smooth delivery of service wherever they may stay in the country. Over the last 5 years, hotels and other smaller forms of

accommodation have been established all over the country. For accommodation therefore, one can give a wide range including – budget (1 Star Hotels), mid-range (3 Star) and Luxury Hotels (4 Star & 5 Star). Also available are safari lodges, Resorts, Apartments, Guest Houses and bed and breakfast accommodation.

### **Infrastructure:**

The above is coupled with an excellent transport infrastructure which makes getting to your destination easy in the country. Entebbe Airport has daily flights overseas and many domestic and regional flights each day, along with reliable buses, affordable car rentals and convenient communal taxis-“kamunye”.

### **Political Stability:**

You are therefore invited and requested to bring over tourists to Uganda for them to enjoy unique opportunities and to experience new cultures, adventure and challenges. A wonderful weather location combined with wildlife and scenic beauty, warm people and endless varieties of touristic features makes Uganda the pearl of choice of your next tourism destination.

Once again, you are most welcome to the Pearl of Africa.

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