

## **Mountain Gorilla tracking Guide - What you need to know 2024-2026**

Contact between groups is inevitable for, unlike chimpanzees and humans, gorillas are not territorial. Each family roams a defined 'home range' that typically overlaps with the ranges of 2-3 other groups.

Gorillas were only discovered in 1902 by Captain Robert von Beringe. Decades later, they gained global attention through the work of Dian Fossey, who dedicated her life to researching gorillas, particularly her bond with the gorilla Digit, as depicted in the film *Gorillas in the Mist*.

The Virunga Mastif & Greater Virunga Landscape

This region is the richest in endemic and threatened species in the Albertine Rift and includes:

- 8 national parks- 4 forest reserves- 3 wildlife reserves

It spans Uganda, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), home to all the world's mountain gorillas, Grauer's gorillas, and chimpanzees.

### **Gorilla Parks in Uganda**

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (BINP): A UNESCO World Heritage Site, housing over 400 mountain gorillas, 350 bird species, 120 mammals, and dense rainforests.

Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (MGNP): Home to the Nyakagezi gorilla group and endangered golden monkeys. Also culturally significant to the indigenous Batwa pygmies.

Other Notable Parks in the Virunga Mastif:

- Volcanoes National Park (Rwanda): Known for Dian Fossey's research and the annual Kwita Izina baby-naming ceremony.
- Virunga National Park (DRC): Africa's oldest national park, home to mountain gorillas, Grauer's gorillas, hippos, and lions.

### **Gorilla Groups in Bwindi**

Bwindi Impenetrable Forest is divided into four main sectors, each home to habituated gorilla groups:

- **Buhoma Sector**

- - Rushegura (~17 gorillas)
- - Mubare (~9 gorillas)
- - Habinyanja (~17 gorillas)
- - Katwe (~9 gorillas)

### **Ruhija Sector**

- - Oruzogo (~23 gorillas)
- - Mukiza (~12 gorillas)
- - Kyaguliro (~20 gorillas)
- - Bitukura (~13 gorillas)

### **Rushaga Sector**

- - Mishaya (~10 gorillas)

- - Shongi (~18 gorillas)
- - Bweza (~12 gorillas)
- - Kahungye (~17 gorillas)
- - Bikingi (~15 gorillas)
- - Busingye (~10 gorillas)

#### **Nkuringo Sector**


- - Bushaho (~12 gorillas)
- - Nkuringo (~12 gorillas)
- - Christmas (~9 gorillas)

Note: Bwindi is also home to over 26 unhabituated gorilla groups whose ranges remain unknown.

Unlike humans and chimpanzees, gorillas are not territorial. Each family occupies a 'home range' that overlaps with others, leading to occasional inter-group encounters.

#### **Gorilla Permit Fees (Bwindi & Mgahinga)**

Visitor Category	Gorilla Tracking	Gorilla Habituation
<b>Foreign Non-Resident (FNR)</b>	\$800	\$1,500
<b>Foreign Resident (FR)</b>	\$700	\$1,000
<b>Rest of Africa (ROA)</b>	\$500	\$1,000
<b>East African Citizen (EAC)</b>	UGX 300,000	UGX 750,000

 Includes park entrance, guide fee, and community contribution.

Permit = 1-hour visit (tracking), 4 hours (habituation).

#### **Other Activities & Fees**

##### **Bwindi Impenetrable NP (BINP)**

Activity	FNR	FR	EAC
<b>Birding / Day Nature Walks</b>	\$40	\$30	UGX 30,000
<b>Long Walk (Rushaga–Nyabaremba / Buhoma–Nkuringo)</b>	\$60	\$50	UGX 50,000
<b>Rushura Hill / Bamboo Walk (Ruhija)</b>	\$40	\$20	UGX 10,000
<b>Batwa Experience (<i>excl. entrance</i>)</b>	\$40	\$40	UGX 40,000

##### **Mgahinga Gorilla NP (MGNP)**

Activity	FNR	FR	EAC
<b>Gorge Walk</b>	\$30	\$15	UGX 15,000
<b>Volcano Climb</b>	\$100	\$80	UGX 50,000
<b>Golden Monkey Tracking</b>	\$60	\$50	UGX 40,000
<b>Golden Monkey Habituation</b>	\$100	\$80	UGX 100,000
<b>Mgahinga Platform Walk</b>	\$10	\$10	UGX 10,000
<b>Birding / Day Nature Walks</b>	\$40	\$30	UGX 30,000
<b>Batwa Trail (includes entrance)</b>	\$80	\$70	UGX 50,000

- ROA Same as FR
- Ugandan students pay as low as **UGX 5,000** for volcano climbs.

## **Permit Booking & Payment Guidelines**

Within 6 months: 100% payment required.

Beyond 6 months: 50% deposit, balance due 90 days prior.

Failure to pay balance = cancellation and forfeiture.

### **Permit Rescheduling**

One free change if requested at least 14 days prior.

Additional reschedules: 25% surcharge.

Must occur within 12 months of the original date.

No reschedules for: complimentary permits, downgrading habituation to tracking, or pre-paid park/non-primate activities.

### **UWA Refund Policy**

100% Refund: Illness confirmed by warden or if gorillas cross to another country (e.g., MGNP).

75% Refund: No sighting after full-day tracking.

### **Accommodation**

Maleng Travel recommends staying near your designated gorilla family location to **minimize travel on tracking day.**

### **What to Bring Trek kit**

- Hiking boots
- Rain gear, hat, sunscreen
- 1L water & packed food (provided)
- Refillable bottle
- Optional porter-\$30
- TREK KIT Essentials: gaiters, gloves, sanitizer wipes, string bag, water cooler, mobile fan, disposable rain mac, baseball cap \$40

### **Start Time: 8:00 a.m. sharp!**

Late arrivals forfeit permit and fee.

### **Gorilla Etiquette & Health Rules**

- Maintain 5-meter distance
- No flash photography, no pointing or sudden movements
- Speak softly, stay in tight group
- No eating, drinking, or smoking near gorillas
- Mandatory Masks: Masks must be worn when near gorillas to reduce disease risk
- Crouch if charged, avoid eye contact, don't run
- One-hour visits, can end early if gorillas are stressed
- Take out all trash
- If sick: Stay behind; refunds or alternate visits possible

- Sneeze/cough into elbow, away from gorillas
- Defecation in forest: ask guide to dig/refill 30cm hole

#### **Sedan Chair Option for disabled access**

- For injured or mobility-challenged guests
- USD 300 per sedan
- Carried by trained porters safely through the forest

#### **Sustainable Tourism**

10% of net profits from trek kits go to community projects and conservation.  
Help preserve gorillas by following guidelines and booking ethically with Maleng Travel.

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