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UGANDA: GORILLAS, CHIMPANZEES, SHOEBILL, ALBERTINE RIFT ENDEMIC, GREEN-BREASTED PITTA, MURCHISON FALLS AND MORE

14-30 July 2024



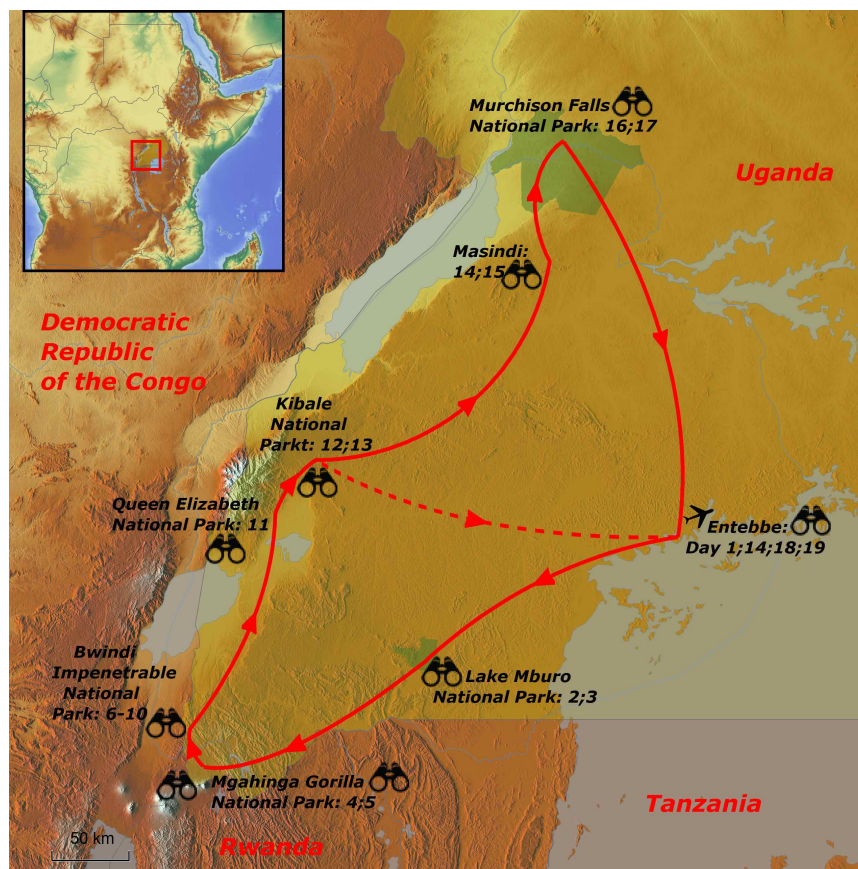
Mountain Gorilla (photo: Masa Wang) and Shoebill are two of our targets

Overview

Uganda! The Pearl of Africa! On our tour, you can experience “the Best of Uganda”. The essential birds of Uganda are Shoebill (this is the easiest country to see this amazing species), the 20-plus Albertine Rift endemics (including African Green Broadbill), and finally other birds tough to locate elsewhere, such as Green-breasted Pitta.

This tour focuses on the Ugandan “must-see” birds although we’ll certainly also look for a lot of widespread spectacular species such as Great Blue Turaco, Ross’s Turaco, amazing barbets and so many others. We also expect to see other star species such as Red-faced Barbet, along with incomparable Mountain Gorillas, encounters with troops of Chimpanzees, and a host of other primates. We also hope to see many of Africa’s megafauna including Lion and with luck Leopard, White Rhinoceros, Zebra and all the others.

We’ll also see spectacular scenery, including Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, Africa’s largest lake—Lake Victoria—and Murchison Falls where the Nile plummets 141 feet through a narrow gap of only 23 feet! An unforgettable wildlife adventure and birding extravaganza!



Tour map



Green-breasted Pitta is one of our targets

Highlights

- Wonderful birds including Shoebills and Albertine Rift endemics
- Gorilla, Chimpanzee and Rhino trekking
- Spectacular scenery from Lake Victoria and the tropical lowlands to Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and Murchison Falls

Itinerary (17 days/16 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in and birding Entebbe

Our Uganda birding tour starts with our arrival in Entebbe. Time-permitting, we can do some birding around the garden city of Entebbe, away from the hustle and bustle of Kampala. Entebbe is on the shores of Africa's greatest lake, Lake Victoria, and we may have the chance to bird the grounds of our hotel, the beautiful botanical gardens, and other sites. The town has many specials including African Hobby, striking Black-headed Gonolek, Broad-billed Roller, a plethora of weavers, and a host of others. You will already start getting a good sampling of Uganda's massive bird diversity.

Overnight: Entebbe



The national bird of Uganda, Grey Crowned Crane

Day 2. Mabamba Swamp, Lake Mbuo National Park

We embark on a morning boat trip on Mabamba Swamp, likely the world's most famous site for Shoebill. We should also see a great variety of other birds on the lake, including Lesser Jacana, lapwings, several water-associated weavers, and Red-chested Sunbird (also usually near water). We might find specials such as Orange Weaver, the massive and weird Great Blue Turaco, the beautiful Ross's Turaco, Eastern Plantain-eater, and Double-toothed Barbet. Later we leave for Lake Mbuo National Park. Birding and wildlife viewing here is one of the highlights of a birding trip to Uganda. Here we look for the highly localized Red-faced Barbet (found only in a small part of Uganda and nearby Tanzania), Spot-flanked Barbet, Nubian Woodpecker, African Finfoot, Bare-faced Go-away-bird, Blue-naped Mousebird, Brown-backed Scrub Robin, Tropical Boubou, Fork-tailed Drongo, and Golden-breasted Bunting. We could also encounter numerous mammals such as Eland, Zebra, Impala, Bohor Reedbuck, Bushbuck, Topi, Defassa Waterbuck, Common Duiker, Buffalo, and Hippo.

Overnight: Rwakobo Rock, Lake Mbuo National Park, or similar.

Day 3. Lake Mbuo National Park

In Lake Mbuo National Park, we will take a boat trip to look for the African Finfoot. From the boat we sometimes see overwintering Malagasy Pond Heron and Papyrus Gonolek in addition to an array of kingfishers including Malachite, Giant, Pied, and the rare Shining-blue Kingfisher. This park also gives us an excellent opportunity to see a lot of arid-country birds, which can include Blue-naped Mousebird, Bare-faced Go-away-bird, Golden-breasted Bunting, and another chance for the Red-faced Barbet, along with a more widespread East African species, the Spot-flanked Barbet. This is the only place where we're likely to see Plains Zebra during our Uganda birding tour, and there are a lot of other mammals as well, such as Hippopotamus, African Buffalo, Defassa Waterbuck, Bohor Reedbuck, Topi, and Common Eland.

Overnight: Rwakobo Rock, Lake Mbuo National Park, or similar.

Day 4. Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, birding Ruhija

We drive to the high altitude Ruhija section of the fabulous Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, arguably Africa's greatest forest for birds (and gorillas), looking for Albertine Rift endemics en route. This is a sprawling forest covering beautiful hills. We'll start birding the forest-covered hills as soon as we arrive, looking for the beautiful Black Bee-eater and also trying to find Grauer's Swamp Warbler at a roadside site.

Overnight: Ruhija, upper Bwindi

Day 5. Bwindi Impenetrable National Park: birding Mubwindi Swamp

After breakfast we spend the whole day doing a strenuous walk to Mubwindi Swamp, where we look for African Green Broadbill and other species such as Mountain and Yellow-streaked Greenbuls, African Hill Babbler, Mountain Illadopsis, Yellow-eyed Black Flycatcher, Mountain Yellow Warbler, Red-faced Woodland Warbler, Chubb's Cisticola, Mountain Masked Apalis, Chestnut-throated Apalis, Ruwenzori Apalis, Stripe-breasted Tit, Ruwenzori Batis, Bar-tailed Trogon, Blue-headed and Regal Sunbirds, and Grauer's Swamp Warbler, an amazingly localized species in its limited habitat. The walk down to the site (and back) takes a large part of the day, but this is one of the best birding days of the entire tour. Trip participants usually end up getting a constant stream of life-birds throughout the day.

Overnight: Ruhija, upper Bwindi

Day 6. Bwindi Impenetrable National Park: birding The Neck and Buhoma

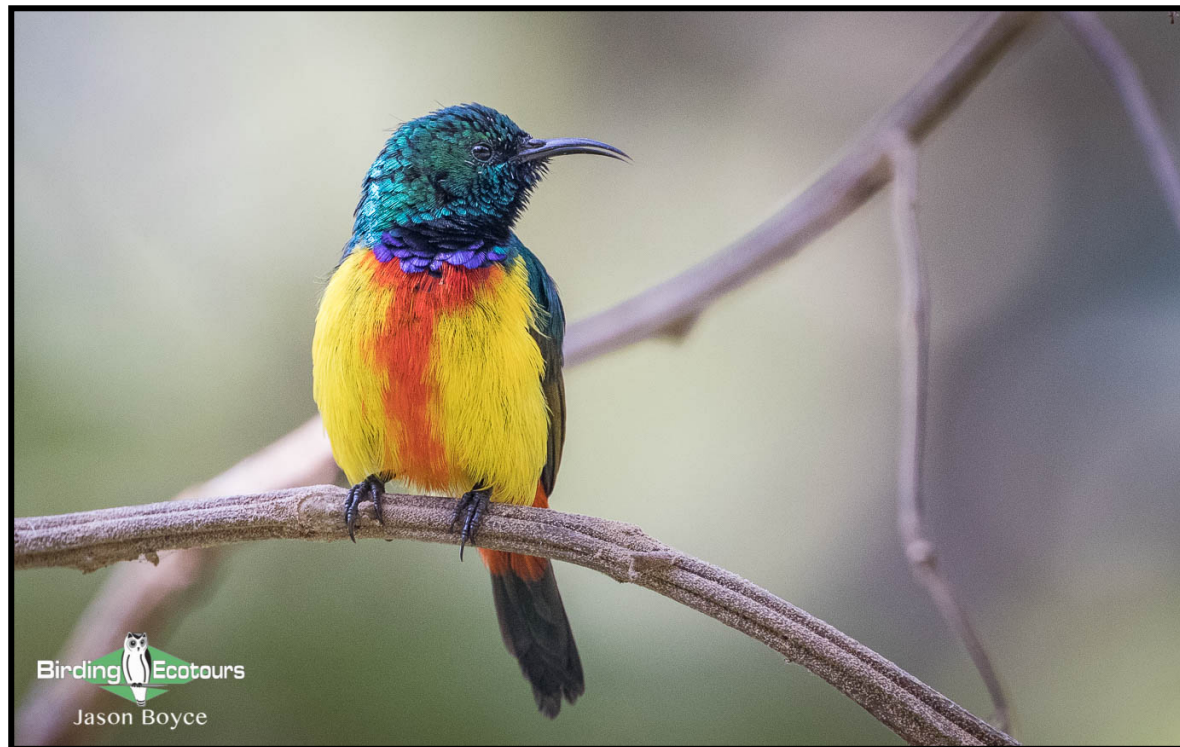
We bird en route to the Buhoma section of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. We travel via "The Neck," a well-known birding area. On our way we are looking out for species such as Augur Buzzard, Ross's Turaco, Cinnamon-chested and Black Bee-eaters, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, Grey-throated Barbet, Red-throated Wryneck, African Grey Woodpecker, Mountain Wagtail, Red-tailed Greenbul, Red-faced Woodland Warbler, Chubb's Cisticola, Banded Prinia, Mountain Masked Apalis, Chestnut-throated Apalis, Cassin's Flycatcher, Black-and-White Shrike-flycatcher, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, African Blue Flycatcher, several sunbirds including Bronzy, Olive and Grey-chinned, Mackinnon's Shrike, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Baglafaecht Weaver, White-breasted Nigrita, Yellow-crowned Canary, and Yellow Bishop.

Overnight: Buhoma section of Bwindi

Day 7. Bwindi Impenetrable National Park: birding Buhoma

After an early breakfast, we enter the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, looking for species such as Black Bee-eater, barbets and tinkerbirds ("mini-barbets"), woodpeckers, African Broadbill, a host of greenbuls, White-bellied Robin-Chat, Red-throated Alethe, Chapin's Flycatcher, Red-faced Woodland Warbler, Mountain Masked Apalis, Bocage's Bushshrike, Lühder's Bushshrike, Pink-footed Puffback, Petit's Cuckooshrike, starlings, sunbirds, and Black-billed and Brown-capped Weavers.

Overnight: Buhoma section of Bwindi



Regal Sunbird, a localized Albertine Rift endemic

Day 8. Bwindi Impenetrable National Park: Gorilla trekking or birding Buhoma

After breakfast we start our Gorilla trekking (optional) or continue birding (for those who opt not to do the gorilla trek) in the fabled Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. We recommend you wear sturdy walking boots and carry a good rain suit and enough drinking water in a backpack. Trekking can be tough and challenging, and therefore a reasonable level of fitness is required. You will carry a picnic lunch with you, and you will be thrilled to see these rare apes (no guarantee, although rarely missed). We can spend an hour right next to these gentle giants (again, no guarantee, but probable).

Overnight: Buhoma section of Bwindi

Day 9. Transfer to Queen Elizabeth National Park

After breakfast we set off for Queen Elizabeth National Park. Queen Elizabeth National Park is the second-largest national park of Uganda, covering an area of 1978 sq. km. The park has the most incredible ecosystem, from its habitats to the animals found here. It features an impressive bird list with over 600 avian species and is said to have more bird species per square kilometer than any other protected area on the African continent. In addition, it has close to 100 mammal species.

We will take a two-hour boat trip on the Kazinga Channel to see a variety of wildlife, including hundreds of hippos, crocodiles, and an array of bird life. We look for Great White and Pink-backed Pelicans, Striated Heron, Saddle-billed Stork, African Spoonbill, Martial Eagle, Kittlitz's Plover, Senegal Plover, Wattled Lapwing, and various kingfishers and larks. We'll also watch for mammals like Uganda kob, Bushbuck, Defassa Waterbuck, African buffalo, African elephant, warthog, and, if we're lucky, a Leopard among other carnivores like Lion and Spotted Hyaena. A very special find indeed would be the uncommon and shy Giant Forest Hog, a Queen Elizabeth National Park mammalian specialty.

Overnight: Queen Elizabeth National Park



Black-and-white Colobus Monkey is common in Uganda.

This photo is by Masa Wang who joined an earlier trip to Uganda with us

Day 10. Transfer to Kibale National Park

After breakfast we drive to Kibale National Park and the Chimpanzee Forest Guesthouse. We drive through Queen Elizabeth National Park, cross the Equator, and travel along the foothills of the Rwenzori Mountains through Kasese, birding en-route.

Overnight: Kibale National Park

Day 11. Kibale National Park

Today we bird Kibale National Park and do chimpanzee trekking! After breakfast, we bird the vicinity of Kanyanchu, looking for the spectacular Green-breasted Pitta and other species such as Yellow-billed Barbet, African Emerald Cuckoo, Black-billed Turaco, Narina Trogon, Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat, Sabine's Spinetail, Chestnut Wattle-eye, and Narrow-tailed Starling, among others. Then we look for Chimpanzees nearby. We may actually also encounter a number of other primates here in addition to chimpanzees; Uganda Red Colobus, Guereza Black-and-white colobus, Grey-cheeked Mangabey, Olive Baboon, Red-tailed Monkey, and L'Hoest's Monkey all occur in this park. What a day!

Overnight: Kibale National Park



We expect to see Chimpanzees!

Day 12. Masindi

After morning birding, we'll head to Masindi, which is the best site for the fabulous White-crested Turaco and which is close to the fantastic Budongo Forest. We should have some time for birding this area today already (otherwise tomorrow morning!).

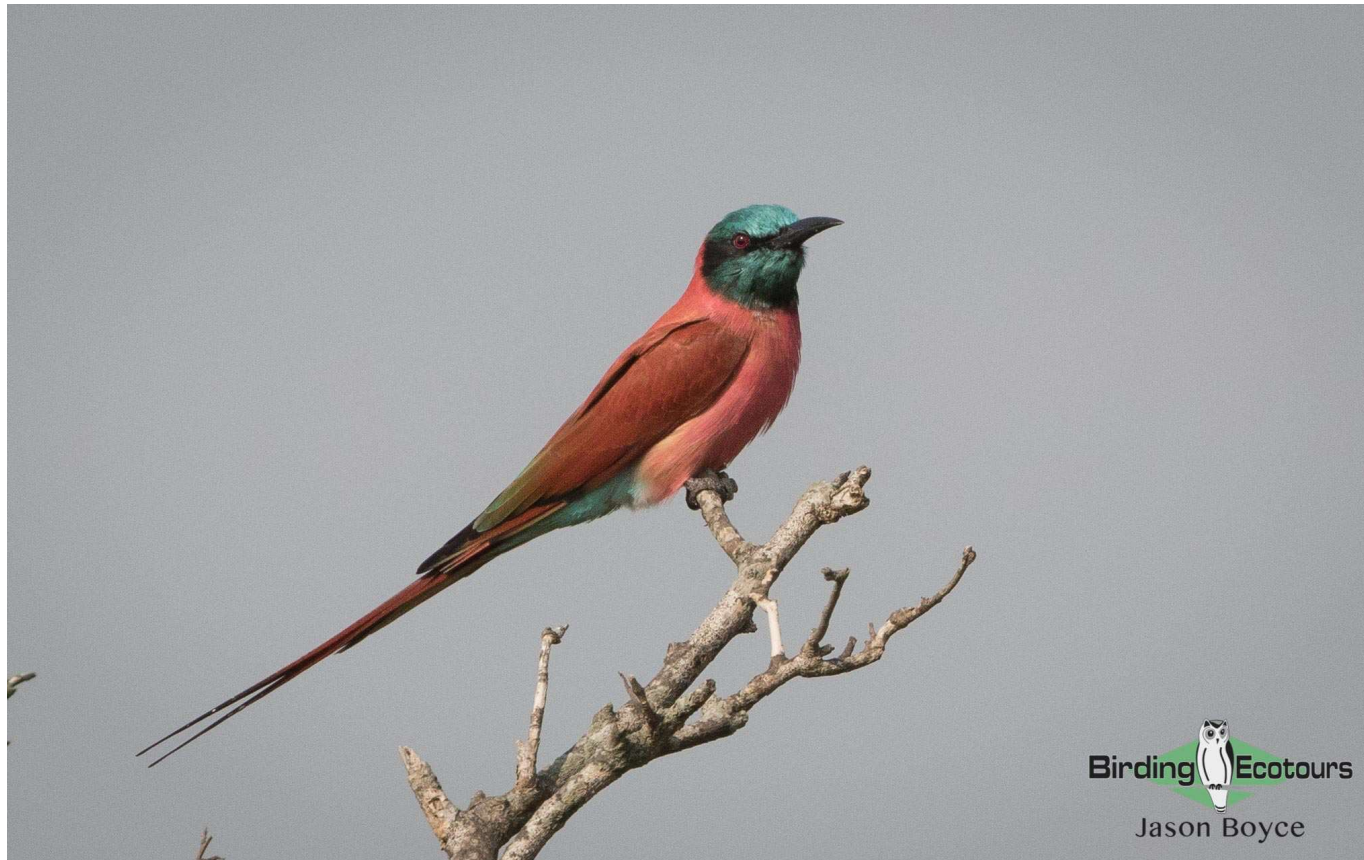
Overnight: Masindi

Days 13-15: the famed Royal Mile, then proceed to a nice lodge at Murchison Falls for our last three nights

After an early breakfast, we will proceed to bird the Royal Mile, looking for birds like Crowned Eagle, Heuglin's Francolin, Blue-breasted and Chocolate-backed Kingfishers, African Dwarf Kingfisher, White-thighed Hornbill, Speckled and Yellow-rumped Tinkerbirds, Hairy-breasted Barbet, Yellow-crested and Brown-eared Woodpeckers, Little Grey, Plain and Spotted Greenbuls, Fire-crested Alethe, Red-tailed Ant Thrush, Rufous-crowned Eremomela, Whistling Cisticola, Black-throated Apalis, Fraser's Forest Flycatcher, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher, Black-headed Oriole, and Purple-headed Starling. In the afternoon, we'll drive the couple of hours to Murchison Falls and visit the viewpoint at the top of the falls. After a short walk around the top of the falls, we can walk down a steep path to the river's edge and see how the waters of the majestic Nile narrow, as they are forced through a rocky cleft only 23 feet wide to plunge down 141 feet in a majestic cascade. Birds we might encounter are several raptors, Rock Pratincole, Crested Francolin, White-crested Turaco, White-headed Barbet, Narina Trogon, Red-throated Bee-eater, Rufous-sided Broadbill, Silverbird, Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, and a number of waxbills, finches, sunbirds, and canaries, among others.

For the next couple of days, we'll explore this magnificent park. One morning after an early breakfast we will have a game drive during the morning, getting back to the lodge in time for lunch. After lunch we will enjoy a boat trip on the river Nile up to the bottom of the falls, during which it is possible to view hundreds of hippos and crocodiles as well as a large variety of bird life. We hope to find birds like Northern Ground Hornbill, Black-headed Lapwing, Rock Pratincole, Swallow-tailed and Red-throated Bee-eaters, Black-billed Barbet, Spotted Palm Thrush, Speckle-fronted Weaver, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, and more. Look out for mammals like the graceful Rothschild giraffe, Jackson's Hartebeest, Uganda Kob, Oribi, Defassa Waterbuck, African buffalo, African elephant, Common Warthog, Hippo, and perhaps a Leopard or Lion. It is also possible that we might encounter the uncommon Patas Monkey here.

Overnight: Twiga Safari Lodge near Murchison Falls National Park for three nights



We expect to see Northern Carmine Bee-eater on this tour

Day 16. Transfer to Entebbe

We check out of our lodge and drive to Entebbe via the famous Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary where we will look for White Rhinoceros and new birds. We usually spend about two hours rhino trekking, after which we plan to have lunch before driving back to Entebbe.

Overnight: Entebbe

Day 17. Departure

Your flight can leave any time today.



The sought-after, very localized, Grauer's (African Green) Broadbill should be seen

Duration	17 days/16 nights
Limit	The price is based on a minimum of 5 paying participants, and we take a maximum of 6 paying participants
Dates	14-30 July 2024
Start and end	Entebbe, on the shores of Africa's largest Lake, Victoria

Price US\$9600 per person sharing, which includes a \$300 fee to GGAS. The single supplement (if you opt for a single room or we can't find you a room-sharer), is an additional \$715. Optional gorilla trekking costs \$700 per person, and optional chimp trekking costs \$200.

Price includes

- All accommodation and meals
- Unlimited bottled water in the vehicle (which you can also take from the vehicle for the evenings; more pricey bottled water from restaurants is on your account though)
- Ground transport
- Park fees
- Guide fees
- Boat rides in Queen Elizabeth National Park and on the Nile
- Boat fees for Shoebill at Mabamba Swamp

Price excludes

- Optional gorilla trekking permit US\$700
- Optional chimpanzee trekking permit US\$200
- Flights
- Travel Insurance
- Visa if applicable
- Drinks
- Gifts, laundry and other items of a personal nature
- Gratuities (see <https://www.birdingecotours.com/tipping-guidelines/>)

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Please read the Center for Disease Control website on Uganda (<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/uganda>) very carefully, noting that anti-malarial drugs are needed and that a yellow fever vaccination certificate is needed to enter the country. Insect repellent and quick-drying long-sleeved shirts are a good idea, not only to help prevent mosquito bites but also to protect against other (simply pesky) insects such as biting flies.

Avoid travelers' diarrhea by never drinking tap water or eating salads or unpeeled fruit. Unlimited bottled water is provided free of charge throughout the tour in the vehicle (we purchase this inexpensively at grocery stores; bottled water bought at restaurants is not covered).

In Uganda large animals such as elephants, hippos, lions, leopards, gorillas, chimpanzees, and crocodiles pose a risk and need to be treated with extreme respect. Small animals such as spiders and snakes can also, of course, pose a safety risk.

You'll find the people of Uganda to be extremely friendly and helpful, but (like in most parts of the world) crime is possible (especially in the big cities). Always watch your valuables (although we have never had any problems on any of our tours to Uganda).

Steep trails (see for example the part on gorilla trekking below) can also be a hazard.

GENERAL

Uganda, "the Pearl of Africa" is about the same size as the state of Oregon, yet boasts over 1000 bird species and Africa's greatest concentration of primate species. This spectacular faunal diversity is partly explained by the dramatic variety of habitats that change constantly (and sometimes rapidly) as one drives across the country. This diversity of terrain and habitats also means that birders visiting Uganda need to be prepared for all kinds of different temperatures and weather patterns. At arrival in the hot and humid Entebbe airport one does not necessarily realize that a couple of days later one will likely be wearing fleeces high in the volcanic mountains straddling the border with Rwanda and the DRC; despite being equatorial, it can get cold at Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (not usually quite as low as freezing, though). It's best to bring many layers; while quite often conditions will be unpleasantly hot and humid, at other times people get surprised at how cold it is. Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (especially its higher-altitude Ruhija section) often leave people feeling markedly chilly.

The country of Uganda is full of water and has vast papyrus swamps (inhabited by an exciting variety of spectacular birds including Shoebill), shares a large part of Africa's largest lake (Victoria) with its neighbors, and has some verdant forest thanks to the good amount of rain it receives. This also means that one has to be prepared for the possibility of rain, drizzle, and mist, although often this does not pose a major problem as we do run our set departure Uganda tours in the dry season, which covers the months from June to August. This is also when birds are in breeding plumage and singing and the intra-African migrants are present.

The message is to bring layers, including waterproofs (which hopefully you won't actually need, but which you certainly should carry, just in case, while gorilla trekking or on long birding walks). A nominal fee can be paid to porters for carrying gear during the longer

birding walks and gorilla/chimp trekking. A waterproof day backpack is advised (whether you carry it or the porter does, during the birding and primate walks). In case it does rain, waterproof bags for placing cameras, cell phones, etc. into are recommended.

Accommodation is not luxurious, and “load-shedding” is common – this is when the electricity supply is interrupted because of Uganda’s limited capacity for power generation. At some hotels electricity will be from generators that are switched off at certain times (e.g. between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.). The guides will advise on the exact details/generator times during the tour. Rooms are not always heated and can get chilly at night up in the mountains. At other times heat and humidity will of course be more of a problem.

Electricity in Uganda is 220 V and with UK-type plug sockets – full details are shown at <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com/uganda/>. Please do bring adapters (and in some cases a currency converter in order not to damage camera or other equipment, noting that voltage is twice that in North America).

The Ugandan Shilling (see <http://www.xe.com/currency/ugx-ugandan-shilling> for exchange rate, etc.) is the currency. You can draw this local currency using major credit cards (especially Visa and Mastercard) at ATMs (which can be found at the airport and in towns along the way – please do ask the guides a couple of days in advance when you need another ATM stop to replenish cash). Major credit cards can be used for some purchases and to buy drinks and get laundry done at some hotels – but a supply of local cash is also essential, as some of the accommodations are remote and do not take cards (and neither do folks selling gifts and souvenirs along the route). US dollars are easily exchanged for local currency. Traveler’s checks are no longer used much, are extremely difficult to cash, and are not advised.

The Birds of East Africa field guide and the associated app (detailed at <http://birdingecotours.com/field-guides-to-africa-what-to-take-into-the-field/>) are highly recommended for Uganda. Merlin also works—upload the pack before you leave home.

PARTICULARS OF THE SHOEBILL AND ALBERTINE RIFT ENDEMIC TOUR

Most of the trip is not very strenuous. However, several walks take at least half a day, sometimes the whole day. Gorilla trekking can take 2 to 14 hours, depending on where the gorilla family is on the day you do the trekking (it’s all about luck, or lack thereof!) Gorilla trekking is in a mountainous area, so expect to walk up and down a lot. Most of the time one has to leave the trail completely to get to where the gorillas are. This can involve some serious bush-bashing through the undergrowth; proper hiking boots with good grip are essential. Snakes and forest elephants lurk in the area; this is wild Africa. So be prepared, with proper clothing. For those folks who have problems walking, if you’re willing to pay at very least double the price of the gorilla trekking, you can be carried on a stretcher to see these great apes! If money is less of an issue, even this day does not have to be strenuous as the porters will prepare a stretcher for you on the spot. Strictly one hour is spent with the gorillas after meeting up with them – this is to keep disturbance to a minimum.

The birding hike down to Mubwindi Swamp is one of the most exciting birding walks of the entire trip, as one often sees a constant stream (kept up through much of the day) of Albertine Rift endemics, the top one being African Green Broadbill, which is unfortunately right at the bottom around the swamp. One spends the whole morning slowly walking down; some people then struggle, as the entire afternoon is spent walking back – a long uphill for several hours!

The chimpanzee trekking is not nearly as difficult since the terrain is much flatter. But it can still be humid.

Those folks who are unfit (or who prefer just to have more of a vacation) can certainly feel free to opt out of the strenuous activities. The lodges are pleasant places to spend the occasional day relaxing, and we have found that photographers sometimes get quite good bird pictures by staying behind at the accommodations while the others embark on long walks. Some folks also opt out of pre-breakfast birding or night owling if they want a less tiring trip. We have found that a mix of hardcore birders and relaxed birding spouses have thoroughly enjoyed this trip to Uganda in the past since it is, on most days (except when driving between sites), easy to opt out of activities (for the less hardcore folks) and to enjoy off time around the hotels.

There are some boat trips on this tour. The trip to look for Shoebill at the Mabamba Swamp is in small dugout canoes (due to limited space in each “mokoro,” the group splits up into different canoes, which, however, stick close together as they travel out onto the water to seek Shoebill). Other wildlife-viewing boat trips such as on the Nile at Murchison Falls are on larger boats with cabins.

Sun protection (sunglasses, sunblock, hats/caps) are essential on the boat trips and on some of the walks.

A change of shoes is always good in case your boots get soaked from rain or walking through damp areas – a pair of lighter walking shoes is good to have along on the trip as a backup and for shorter walks. A third pair of shoes in the form of flip flops is nice to have for longer vehicle journeys and for relaxing around the lodges.

There might be swimming pools available, so swimwear can also be packed.

There are a few long drives during the tour that can take half a day or more between sites. Road work has been ongoing for several years in Uganda, so be prepared to travel along unpaved roads for many miles at times – this gets dusty.

SOME THINGS WE RECOMMEND YOU BRING

Please see <https://www.birdingecotours.com/what-to-bring/>

TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is imperative that you have proper medical insurance while travelling (through your regular health insurance plan and/or through a short-term travel insurance policy). Trip cancellation or interruption insurance is also vital – we find that people sometimes cancel due to last minute illness or other unforeseen circumstances. <https://www.allianztravelinsurance.com/> is a good place to start.

Expectations and rules for group tours

Thank you for joining a small group tour, and we trust you will have a truly wonderful experience.

If you are on a group tour with more than 2 or 3 participants, then kindly take heed of a few simple rules we follow to keep everyone in the group happy and ultimately maximize enjoyment of the tour for the group:

- 1) Once a day we swap seats in the vehicle. Those at the front one day go to the back the next day and then move forwards each day until the process is repeated. Usually tour members sort this out automatically, but the tour leader will help after the first couple of days if there are problems.
- 2) On narrow forest trails and even on broader trails, kindly swap your position every 10 minutes. If you are walking at the front, please drop to the back every 10 minutes allowing the next person time near the tour leader. Both the local guide and the tour leader are often at the front, especially when communication between the two is necessary – one of these leaders may also sometimes be at the back of the group at times to help birders not near the leading guide at the time.
- 3) If you have any concerns or problems, please speak to the tour leader so we can solve the problem – that is our job but we do need to hear from you as soon as possible if you have any concerns. The longer you leave it, the more difficult it often becomes to solve.
- 4) Please be very quiet whenever birding. If you need to talk, please whisper and only to the person next to you. When we use playback, kindly keep absolutely quiet and focus on trying to see the bird approaching. We discourage talking on the trails, especially on forest trails, but whispering to the person next to you can be acceptable if done discreetly. The tour leader will sometimes say when it is even more necessary than usual to be quiet. The tour leader may also occasionally say if it is OK to talk freely. The guide may occasionally shout if he or she wants to get the group rapidly onto a bird that is already flying away – but this does not mean that it is OK to become noisy! 😊 The guide uses his/her discretion and aims to get everyone onto all the birds – but this usually means the group needs to stay very quiet whenever birding.

- 5) On forest trails, only the front two or three people usually hear what the tour leader or local guide is saying. We therefore ask that you whisper what is being seen or what the guide is saying, from the front to the back, so that the people at the back can be kept informed of what is being said and what the guide has found. Otherwise, it can get very frustrating for the people currently at the back.
- 6) We emphasize communication. If anyone has missed a bird, it is critically important that this is communicated to the tour leader, who then needs to make sure you get onto the bird at some stage. Also, the guide sometimes ignores birds that the whole group has seen well, so please say if you want to see something again. While we love studying each species, we often don't have the luxury of spending as much time with each species as we'd like. For those who want to spend extra time photographing or studying fewer species, we recommend a photography or a special trip—in some cases a private trip.
- 7) Scope—we ask that all participants have a quick look in the scope. Once everyone in the group has had a quick look, further saturating views can then be obtained by those who feel like it. Don't spend long at the scope when others in the group have not seen the bird through it.
- 8) Please be aware at all times of where you are standing relative to other people. Taller people should generally allow shorter people to stand in front of them, or at very least to ensure they aren't in other people's way.
- 9) It is always good to wear neutral colors and to try and avoid fabrics that make a lot of noise when walking.
- 10) Opinion varies as to whether pointing chases the bird away – the guide will advise on this. Sometimes you might be advised not to point directly at a bird. Importantly, control your excitement and don't shout out when you see a bird – it happens all the time!
- 11) During any trip there will be activities that are optional and participants are welcome to sit out on these for various reasons—ill health, tiredness, difficulty of said activity etc. Please do not feel obliged to partake in every activity. These will often be highlighted in your itinerary. In some trips and on some days, there might not be opportunities to opt out, though – please try and speak to us in advance if you plan to opt out.
- 12) When on a group tour, remember, the guide make decisions in favor of the majority of the group. This might not always suit every individual but it is important to keep in mind that the group's needs take precedence over individual needs.

- 13) At certain stops there are invariably curios for sale; we might not always have time to do shopping and when we do please try to keep it brief unless otherwise indicated by the guide.
- 14) Safety always comes first so if for example stopping along a freeway is deemed by the driver/guide unsafe, then we might in some cases have to forfeit stopping and seeing a bird.
- 15) We use playback with great care. If we are going to use playback (ideally only once we've failed to see the bird without this tool), please gather around and see the bird; to protect the bird's interest we usually only call it in once.
- 16) Group dynamics on a birding tour can sometimes be tough because of personality clashes. We recommend keeping spirits up and making the most of a trip and compromising as much as possible to maximize enjoyment for everyone on the trip.
- 17) Get excited about the birds – it keeps the guides motivated – just don't make it noisy though otherwise you'll chase the birds away! 😊
- 18) For specific destinations, we like to warn people about what to expect. For example, some countries are strenuous (e.g. Madagascar and Cameroon), some have times when we are restricted to the vehicle (e.g. some parks in South Africa), some have substandard accommodation in parts, etc. We strongly advise you to ask as many questions as you can before the tour, to avoid nasty surprises! 😊 We'd prefer you to be pleasantly surprised, rather than the other way around.
- 19) If you have never joined a birding tour, we highly recommend speaking to us in detail first to find out which trips we recommend you start with (e.g. South Africa which is a very easy destination), what to expect, etc.