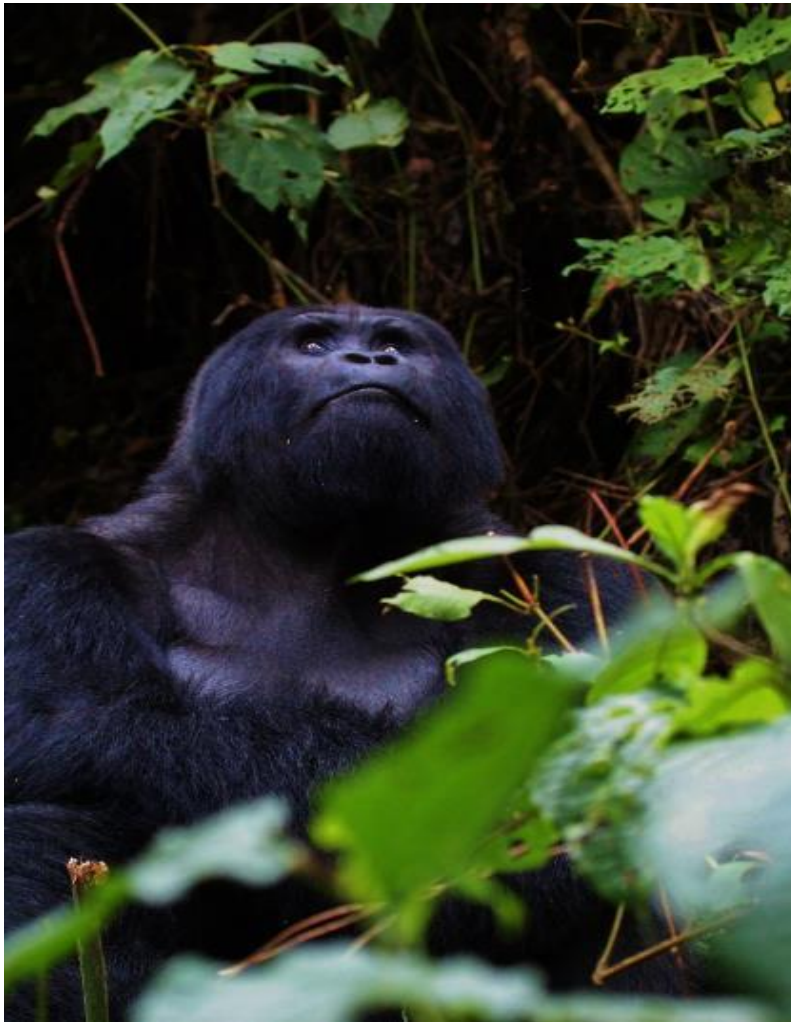




UGANDA HIGHLIGHTS

Gorillas, Chimpanzees & Shoebills

June 16 – July 5, 2027



A male Mountain Gorilla looks skyward in Bwindi Forest. © Dion Hobcroft

Uganda is where the East African savannah meets the bird-rich West African jungle. Where else but in this impossibly lush country can one observe Lions prowling the open plains in the morning and track chimpanzees through the rainforest undergrowth the same afternoon, then the next day navigate tropical channels teeming with Hippopotamus and huge Nile Crocodiles before setting off into the misty mountains to stare deep into the eyes of a Mountain Gorilla? Certainly, Uganda is the only safari destination whose range of forest primates is as impressive as its selection of plains antelope.

This tour is designed for people who would like a comfortable highlights package to this fascinating country. We will travel in land cruisers with pop-up roofs and spend two to three nights at all of our destinations. While the focus is on Gorillas, Chimpanzees and the Shoebill, we will witness a huge diversity of birds and mammals. We have chances to see both Leopard and Lion, herds of African Elephant, Giraffe and Hippopotamus, Cape Buffalo, zebra and a tremendous diversity of hoofed mammals and primates. The birding is extraordinarily diverse with hornbills, parrots, kingfishers, bee-eaters, turacos, bustards, trogons, hornbills and an array of dazzling sunbirds and weavers leading the charge. We expect to encounter close to 450 species of birds.



Uganda is safe and delightfully friendly. As a country it has undergone astonishing changes in recent decades. Infrastructure improvements to the roads, lodges and development programs for the local guides have made wildlife touring in Uganda one of the best experiences possible in the natural history world.

June 16-17, Days 1-2: Travel to Uganda; Arrival in Entebbe

Tour participants should make plans to arrive in Entebbe (airport code EBB) no later than the evening of June 15. Upon arrival and clearing immigration and customs, you will be met at the airport and transferred to our nearby hotel. The lovely Boma Hotel is set amidst delightful gardens with lots of birds. Many of our participants find it worthwhile to arrive in Entebbe the day before the first official group activities, allowing time to relax and recover from the overnight flight and the time change before launching into early mornings in the field. Those wishing to arrive early will have plenty of birds to keep them occupied until the start of the tour. Upon request, the VENT office will be happy to assist with any additional lodging arrangements.

NIGHT (June 16): In transit (overnight flight)

NIGHT (June 17): The Boma Hotel, Entebbe

June 18, Day 3: Mabamba Wetlands and Entebbe Botanic Gardens

After an early breakfast we will head out to Mabamba Wetlands, about 50 kilometers from Entebbe on the shores of Lake Victoria. This is one of the few large swamps remaining in the country protected by the local communities. This extensive papyrus swamp with its labyrinth of channels and lagoons is classified as an IBA (Important Bird Area) by Birdlife International. It is home to several pairs of Shoebills—Uganda's most famous avian resident. This charismatic species, the only representative in its family, is certainly



A close-up of the extraordinary Shoebill at Mabamba © Dion Hobcroft

among the most sought-after birds in Africa and we will make special efforts today to find it while boating through the channels. There will be a good selection of classic East African waterbirds: Pink-backed Pelican, Long-tailed Cormorant, Goliath Heron, African Fish-Eagle, Yellow-billed Duck, African Black Crake, Gray Crowned-Crane, African Jacana and Malachite Kingfisher. There is also a host of more local species such as Long-toed Lapwing, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Blue-headed Coucal, Papyrus Gonolek and with luck, the rare Montane Blue Swallow and nomadic Weyn's Weaver.

After some success with the Shoebill (we hope) and lunch, we will return to Entebbe for a siesta. In the afternoon we will make a visit to the excellent Entebbe Botanic Gardens. Here big trees attract large numbers of spectacular birds like the Black-and-white Casqued Hornbill, Great Blue Turaco, Eastern Plantain-Eater and African Gray Parrot. We have a chance for the elusive Bat Hawk, the scarce Orange Weaver and even the rarely seen White-backed Night-Heron.

NIGHT: The Boma Hotel, Entebbe

June 19, Day 4: Drive to Lake Mburo

After breakfast we will drive to a protected forest called Mpanga near Kampala. This is a good location for some elusive birds like the White-spotted Flufftail, African Pied Hornbill, Fire-crested Alethe and shy Green-backed Twinspot. Heading south and crossing the equator, we will make another stop at Kaku Swamp. This extensive wetland is a productive location for a variety of ducks like Hottentot and Red-billed teal, Fulvous and White-faced whistling-ducks, and Spur-winged Goose plus other large wetland birds like African Swampphen and Saddle-billed Stork. The beautiful Lilac-breasted Roller is often located here. We will arrive in the afternoon at Lake Mburo National Park, enjoying a game drive as we enter the park.

NIGHT: Kigambira Safari Lodge, Lake Mburo National Park

June 20, Day 5: Lake Mburo National Park

Lake Mburo is a superb wetland and Acacia savanna sanctuary. Birding and mammal-watching here is a delightful experience, with great scenery and a markedly different fauna from other reserves we will

visit. This is the best place in the country to see mammals such as Eland as well as Boehm's Zebra, Topi and Impala. The lakes within the park are home to Hippopotamus and Nile Crocodiles and a variety of waterbirds, while fringing swamps hide secretive papyrus specialists such as Sitatunga. There is a chance for Leopard, Spotted Hyena and Jackals. Birding is excellent. Among the many possible species are some real global rarities like White-backed Night-Heron, African Finfoot and the range-restricted Red-faced Barbet. Among a huge list of other bird species recorded in the park are African Marsh-Harrier; White-backed, Lappet-faced and White-headed vultures; Brown Snake-Eagle; African Hawk-Eagle; Coqui and Crested francolins; Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove; Brown Parrot; Red-chested, Pied, Levillant's, Klaas's and Dideric cuckoos; Bare-faced Go-away-bird; Striped Kingfisher; Broad-billed Roller; African Gray Hornbill; Green Woodhoopoe; Common Scimitarbill; Blue-naped and Speckled mousebirds; Spot-flanked Barbet; Nubian and Bearded woodpeckers; White-browed Scrub-Robin; Trilling, Tabora and Siffling cisticolas; Yellow-throated Longclaw; Chinspot Batis; Yellow-breasted Apalis; Red-faced Crombec; Lead-colored Flycatcher; White-winged Black Tit; African Penduline-tit; Black-headed Oriole; Tropical Boubou; White-crested Helmetshrike; Brubru; Black Cuckoo-shrike; and Greater Blue-eared and Wattled starlings.

NIGHT: Kigambira Safari Lodge, Lake Mburo National Park

June 21, Day 6: Drive to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park

After breakfast we will enjoy another game drive as we make our way out of the park, while keeping a lookout for any additional mammals like Defassa Waterbuck, Cape Buffalo, Bushbuck, Warthog, and Dwarf and Banded mongoose. We will then head towards Bwindi Impenetrable Forest. The Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is home to approximately half of the world population of 1,000 Mountain Gorillas. This vast reserve offers some of the most productive montane forest birding in Africa and supports 23 of Uganda's 24 Albertine Rift endemic bird species. Once part of a much larger forest that included the Virunga Volcanoes in neighboring Rwanda, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park is now an ecological island within a sea of human cultivation, and therefore, of immense conservation importance. Excellent forest birding, not least the prospect of numerous rare and localized Albertine Rift endemics, makes this a true birding mecca.

NIGHT: Gorilla Mist Camp, Ruhija

June 22, Day 7: Gorilla Trekking in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest



A bull African Elephant with fine tusks decorates his back with grass in Queen Elizabeth National Park. © Dion Hobcroft

There can be little doubt that this may be the most anticipated day on the tour. We will set off to the park headquarters, arriving at 8:00 a.m. for a briefing prior to gorilla trekking. We will be led by park guides through wet forests with a dense understory of Wild Nettles and Giant Celery, often on steep terrain, to a group of Mountain Gorillas. These groups have been habituated

by researchers and park staff to daily visits by wildlife enthusiasts. The park guides vocalize to the gorilla groups as we approach to make them aware of our arrival. These huge apes are amazingly placid and tolerant of our presence. It is usually possible to get to within a few meters of them as they play and feed. It is sensational to stare into the eyes of these gentle giants and watch them in awe as they go about their daily activities. Each encounter is different and has its own rewards; you are undoubtedly going to enjoy the close views of adults feeding, grooming and resting as the youngsters' frolic and swing from vines in a delightfully playful display. It will be an unforgettable experience.

SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT GORILLA VIEWING: The demand for permits to view the gorillas is enormous. Permits are expensive, currently \$1,000 USD. It is therefore essential if you wish to accompany a gorilla trek (the only realistic way to see these magnificent animals) during your visit, that when you sign up for the tour you clearly state that you want to pay for a gorilla trek. Permits are non-refundable. We anticipate that not everyone will want to accompany a gorilla trek, so we have kept this cost separate from the tour. You will need to be reasonably fit to undertake the gorilla viewing

walk, although the pace is kept appropriate to the participant's fitness. Normally the walk involves three to six hours but occasionally, if groups are on the distant edges of their territories, it may take up to ten hours. Porters are available to assist participants, helping them with their packs and assisting them on the walk. Quite often the gorillas can be found within an hour, with some luck. On rare occasions it is possible to miss the gorillas completely. You will have more information available on the group's whereabouts during the briefing.

For those who choose to opt out of the Gorilla trek, we will organize birding in the excellent community forest with local guides. It is also possible to enjoy a village walk around the Ruhija community and enjoy a bit of shopping and a cup of tea or coffee.

NIGHT: Gorilla Mist Camp, Ruhija

June 23-24, Days 8-9: Bwindi Impenetrable Forest

We will spend two days exploring the roads and trails in this forest, one of the most bird and mammal rich sites in East Africa. Among some of the primates possible are L'Hoest's Monkey, Black and White colobus, and Red-tailed and Blue monkeys. Some other mammals possible include both the Black-faced and elusive Yellow-backed duikers, plus Carruther's, Boehm's and Alexander's squirrels. Birding, while at times may be slow, will reward the patient observer with an incredible variety of species. Among the many species possible are Black Goshawk; Bronze-naped Pigeon; Olive, Dusky and Barred Long-tailed cuckoos; Bar-tailed and Narina trogons; Cinnamon-chested and Black bee-eaters; Blue-throated Roller; Gray-throated Barbet; Willcock's Honeyguide; Tullberg's and Elliot's woodpeckers; African Broadbill; Ansorge's, Little, Slender-billed, Cabanis's, White-throated, Red-tailed and Kakamega greenbuls; Red-throated Alethe; Equatorial Akalat; Blue-shouldered and White-bellied robin-chat; Black-faced Rufous Warbler; Short-tailed Warbler; and Slender-billed, Waller's, Narrow-tailed and Stuhlmann's starlings. At higher altitudes, if the weather permits, we will try our luck with Handsome Francolin, Double-toothed Barbet, Doherty's Bush-Shrike, the beautiful Purple-breasted Sunbird, Dusky Twinspot and, with luck, the Kivu Ground Thrush, to mention a few.

NIGHTS: Mahogany Springs, Munyanga River, Bwindi

June 25, Day 10: Bwindi to Queen Elizabeth National Park

This morning we will make our way from the Bwindi Forest to Queen Elizabeth National Park, always on the lookout for more bird sightings. Queen Elizabeth National Park protects varied habitats ranging from open savannah to rainforest, from dense papyrus swamps and crater lakes to the vastness of Lake Edward. It is little wonder that QENP boasts one of the highest biodiversity ratings of any game reserve in the world. Almost 100 mammal species and a remarkable 600 bird species make this superb safari territory. African Elephant, a profusion of hippos and handsome Uganda Kob with some good chances for Lion, Leopard, Spotted Hyaena and the rare Giant Forest Hog are all possible. We will drive through the Ishasha section (if conditions permit), which is famed for the presence of tree climbing Lions. If lucky, we may have a view of these magnificent felines as they bask in the trees. This afternoon after checking into the Mweya Safari Lodge, we may have an evening game drive in the park to try for some nocturnal birds and mammals. The lodge boasts a marvelous waterfront setting in the shadow of the Rwenzori Mountains.

NIGHT: Mweya Safari Lodge, Queen Elizabeth National Park



A lioness attempts to bring down a male Uganda Kob in Queen Elizabeth NP. © Herbert Byaruhanga

June 26, Day 11: Game Drive in the Park and Boat Cruise on the Kazinga Channel

We will start early at dawn and go for a drive to look for the big game (African Elephant, Cape Buffalo, Leopard, Lion, Topi are all possible) and many excellent birds amidst great scenery. Special birds include African Crake, Marabou Stork, Lesser Flamingo, Bateleur Eagle, Black-bellied Bustard, Red-necked Spurfowl, Senegal Lapwing, Collared Pratincole, Temminck's Courser, Small Buttonquail, Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Red-throated Bee-eater, Square-tailed Nightjar, Western Black-headed Batis and Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike, to mention a handful. This afternoon, after our lunch at the lodge, we have a boat cruise on the spectacular Kazinga Channel that runs through the park connecting Lake George and Lake Edward. Beyond the hippos and crocodiles are more classic wetland birds including such stunners as Great White Pelican, Little Bittern, Saddle-billed Stork, Black Crake, African Jacana, Water Thick-knee, African Skimmer, African Pygmy Kingfisher and Black-headed Weaver.

NIGHT: Mweya Safari Lodge, Queen Elizabeth National Park

June 27, Day 12: Drive to Kibale National Park

After the final morning of wildlife watching in QENP, we will drive to Kibale National Park. Kibale's major attraction is the opportunity to observe troops of chimpanzees. These incredible apes, more closely related to humans than to any other living creature, are tremendous fun to watch as they socialize and vocalize noisily in fruiting trees. A network of shady forest trails provides much to delight botanists and butterfly lovers, while birders are in for a treat with 335 species recorded in the forest. The elusive African Forest Elephant, smaller and hairier than its savannah counterpart, are resident in the park. In the afternoon it will be possible to have a nature walk at Bigodi wetland which is managed by the local community, a successful story of the benefits of ecotourism. It provides a good chance to look for such beautiful birds as Yellow-billed Barbet and Red-headed Bluebill, and monkeys like the Central Africa Red Colobus and Gray-cheeked Mangabey.

NIGHT: Chimpanzee Guest House, Kibale National Park

June 28, Day 13: Chimp Tracking at Kibale National Park

After an early breakfast we will go to the forest for birding and chimp tracking. Tracking the chimpanzee is a very interesting experience; the way they feed, climb trees, respond to humans, and care for their young ones is just phenomenal. This is a daily drama of life in a rainforest and a rare chance to look back into a window of our evolutionary history. This park is notable for its primate population, with the chimpanzees being the most famous. Birding in Uganda is astonishingly rich and Kibale is no exception. If we are very fortunate, we may be able to track down the elusive Green-breasted Pitta. We have chances of finding a variety of birds with some of the notables including African Crowned Eagle, Black-billed Turaco, Narina Trogon, Black Bee-eater, White-headed Wood-Hoopoe, African Emerald Cuckoo, Pink-footed Puffback and Petit's Cuckoo-shrike.

NIGHT: Chimpanzee Guest House, Kibale National Park



An alpha male Chimpanzee rests on the ground very close to us at Kibale Forest. © Dion Hobcroft

June 29, Day 14: Kibale National Park to Masindi

After some early morning birding and mammal watching, we will travel north to Masindi. The roads are all currently undergoing extensive construction with significant stretches improved and almost the entire way on a sealed road surface. We will make several birding stops along the way in both forested and farm bush environments and guarantee some good bird sightings on this travel day.

NIGHT: Masindi Hotel, Masindi

June 30, Day 15: Budongo Forest

The Budongo Forest is one of the most celebrated forest birding sites in all of Africa. An extension of the inaccessible forests of the Congo that just cross into Uganda, it is a unique location for a selection of rare forest birds. We will make a day out of taking in the best this forest has to offer. Birds we will search for include Nahan's Francolin, Blue Malkoha, Cassin's Spinetail, African Dwarf Kingfisher, Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, White-thighed Hornbill, Buff-spotted and Golden-crowned woodpeckers, Chestnut and Jameson's wattle-eyes, Ituri Batis, Green Hylia, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher, Rufous-crowned Eremomela, Brown and Pale-breasted illadopsis, Forest Robin and Red-tailed Ant-Thrush. In the afternoon we will return to our comfortable hotel in Masindi.

NIGHT: Masindi Hotel, Masindi



Rothschild's Giraffe pose symmetrically in Murchison Falls NP. © Dion Hobcroft

July 1, Day 16: Drive to Murchison Falls National Park

We will drive through the Budongo Forest and enter a new faunal zone as we enter the tropical savanna woodlands of Murchison Falls National Park. Depending on the rain, we will begin by exploring the Butiaba Escarpment, an area where we may find some special birds like the Black-billed Barbet, Mocking Cliff-Chat, White-rumped Seedeater and Foxy Cisticola. We will later cross the Victoria Nile River and check-in at Paraa Safari Lodge. Murchison Falls Conservation Area (MFNP) is comprised of Bugungu and Karuma Wildlife Reserves. It derives its name from Murchison Falls where the mighty Victoria Nile River explodes through a narrow gorge and flows down to become a placid river whose banks are thronged with hippos, crocodiles, waterbucks and buffalo. The vegetation is characterized by savannah, riparian forest and woodland. Wildlife includes Lions, Leopards, elephants, Giraffes, buffalo, hartebeest, oribis, Uganda Kob and Patas Monkey.

NIGHT: Paraa Safari Lodge, Murchison Falls National Park

July 2, Day 17: Game Drive in Murchison Falls National Park

After an early breakfast we will go for a full morning game drive in the delta area, followed by lunch and a siesta. Birds to be on the lookout for include Beaudouin's Snake-Eagle, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Senegal Thick-knee, White-crested Turaco, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Abyssinian Ground Hornbill, Pennant-winged Nightjar, Yellow-billed Oxpecker and Silverbird. After our rest we will take an afternoon boat cruise, bringing us up close to the base of these magnificent falls. The bizarre Palm-nut Vulture, African Fish-Eagle, Rock Pratincole, spectacular Black-winged and Northern Red bishop plus the peculiar Piapiac are on the radar of possibilities this afternoon.

NIGHT: Paraa Safari Lodge, Murchison Falls National Park

July 3, Day 18: Murchison Falls National Park

After breakfast, we will have another boat trip, this time down the Nile River to its delta at Lake Albert. This will provide another chance to enjoy viewing the big game in the largest conservation area in Uganda. It is also excellent as a backup chance to see the Shoebill in case we missed it earlier.

In between mammal sightings, there are still a huge variety of birds to keep searching for, including at least four species of sunbird, eight species of cisticola and a confusing array of starlings, weavers, seedeaters, and Giant Kingfisher. After a relaxed lunch at the Lodge followed by a break, we will enjoy a drive to the top of Murchison Falls to see the power of one of the world's most turbulent stretches of water.

NIGHT: Paraa Safari Lodge, Murchison Falls National Park

July 4-5, Days 19-20: Drive to Entebbe and Departure for Home

Today we will make the return drive to Entebbe to freshen up before boarding our flights home. Evening departures (after 8:00 p.m. on July 4) will make connections with flights to the USA, which will arrive home on July 5.

DAYROOM (July 4): The Boma Hotel, Entebbe

ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Geoff Lockwood (assisted by a local leader)



Geoff Lockwood's interest and involvement with birds dates back to his early years at school and forms part of a wider interest in the biodiversity of the Southern African sub-region. After leaving school, he began a career as a bird artist, illustrator, and author. In 1981, he published *Garden Birds of Southern Africa* and later also contributed half the illustrations to the 5th and 6th editions of *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa*. Geoff is currently based at the Delta Environmental Centre in Johannesburg where he acts as part-time manager and education officer, working to instill an environmental ethos in teachers and school groups that visit the Centre. For the past 30 years he has been involved with local birding organizations and has served on the Council of the Southern African Ornithological Society—now

BirdLife South Africa, for most of that time. He travels widely in the region, presenting lectures, talks, and courses on bird identification, ecology, and behavior, and was also involved in the training of local bird guides as part of a BLSA initiative to give communities a vested interest in the conservation of their local birds. With 892 species listed within southern Africa, Geoff is amongst the region's top birders. He has led tours to many destinations in Southern and Central Africa, as well as Kenya and Israel.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: \$20,695 per person based on double occupancy or \$22,495 for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 through dinner on Day 19, accommodation as stated in the itinerary, all ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does **not** include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the "TIPPING" sub-section below. If the minimum group size is not met, each participant will be charged a small-group supplement—shared equally and communicated in advance—to allow the tour to proceed.

NOTE: The cost of the optional gorilla trekking permit is \$1,000 (subject to change and non-refundable once purchased) and MUST be purchased on your behalf by VENT at the time of booking. It is important to note that the gorilla permits are subject to availability and therefore it is imperative that you book early and inform the VENT office that you require a permit.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The initial deposit for this tour is \$1,000 per person. At 180 days VENT will collect a second deposit that brings the total deposit amount to 40% of the tour price. We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days (February 14, 2027) prior to the tour departure date.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TIPPING: An important part of the value of a VENT tour is knowing that tips for local service providers at our destinations—restaurant staff, hotel staff, drivers, local guides, and various other support staff—are included in your tour fee. If you would like to offer any of your local guides an additional tip, \$5 to \$10 a day is a common amount.

Tips for your VENT tour leader(s) are **not** included, but it is customary to tip one or both if you feel that you have received exceptional service. To assist in your planning, we recommend tipping your VENT tour leader(s) \$15 to \$20 per day, or the equivalent of approximately 2–4% of the tour fee.

If you plan to give tips by cash, they should be given directly to your tour leader at the end of the tour and **not** sent to the VENT office. Some of our tour leaders use mobile payment applications such as Venmo, PayPal, and Wise. If you would like to use this method, please ask your tour leaders directly whether they can accept tips through such an application.

We emphasize that tipping is optional and that these amounts are only recommendations. The amount you decide to tip is based entirely on your experience and at your discretion.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:

CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:

- **More than 120 days prior to the tour start date:** A refund of all monies paid will be issued, less 50% of the deposit (including initial and second deposit)
- **120 days or fewer prior to the tour start date:** No refund will be provided.
- **Optional add-ons:** Some tours offer optional add-ons that are designated as non-refundable. Any such add-ons are clearly identified as non-refundable at the time of booking. By selecting and purchasing an optional add-on, the participant acknowledges and accepts its non-refundable status. Fees paid for non-refundable add-ons are not refundable under any circumstances, regardless of when the tour is cancelled.

This cancellation policy applies to all participants and all tours (Pre-Tours and Extensions are considered self-contained tours separate from the main tour). Because unexpected events can occur, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance.

CANCELLATION BY VENT:

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement.

A “**Force Majeure**” event means any act beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may NOT be available. For this reason, travel insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour. This coverage is included in the Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™ program. Through Ripcord, “emergency evacuation” can be purchased as a stand-alone benefit or as part of a comprehensive travel insurance policy. If you choose not to purchase insurance through Ripcord, you are required to obtain it through another provider.

SUGGESTED OPTIONS: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with **Redpoint Travel Protection** as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its comprehensive Ripcord plan, which includes a medical evacuation benefit. With this in mind, it is important to note that medical evacuation is not offered by Redpoint as a stand-alone policy or benefit. For travelers not interested in comprehensive travel insurance, VENT recommends **Medjet** and its **MedjetAssist®** plan. Medjet is not an insurance company, and Medjet Assist is not an insurance product; rather, Medjet is a membership-based air-medical transport company specializing in moving hospitalized travelers from an admitting hospital to a medical facility of choice. Medjet does not provide medical evacuation service from the point of injury or illness; yet, the MedjetAssist plan offers robust enough travel protection to satisfy the medical evacuation insurance requirement in place for many VENT tours.

About Redpoint Travel’s Ripcord Plan

Ripcord is a completely integrated travel insurance program with single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims. Critical benefits include comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: [Ripcord Travel Insurance](#); or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help > Preparation and Insurance > Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, second deposit, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip costs in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

About Medjet’s MedjetAssist Plan

MedjetAssist is a membership program that functions like AAA for motorists. The company’s primary service is air medical transport. Critical benefits of MedjetAssist include a staff on call and ready to provide assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; all-expenses-paid air medical transport in the United States and internationally to medical facility of choice, regardless of medical necessity; repatriation of remains; and no exclusions for pre-existing conditions.

For travelers under 75, MedjetAssist may be purchased as Short-Term Memberships of 8, 15, 21, and 30 days, or Regular Annual Memberships from 1 to 5 years. For travelers 75–84, Medjet offers a Diamond Membership that is the same program but with a few additional conditions.

For a price quote or to purchase MedjetAssist, please visit: Medjet.com/VentBird or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

AIR TRAVEL: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.

*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

BAGGAGE: While on this tour you will be travelling in high clearance, air-conditioned land cruisers with large windows that can be opened. Space in the land cruiser is quite good but on travel days the luggage will take up much of the back seat area. We try to ensure everyone has a seat with a window to make the most of all the wildlife viewing. To ensure your comfort and that of your companions, please limit yourself to one medium-sized soft-sided wheeled suitcase or duffel bag and one carry-on bag. Laundry services are available everywhere and we spend more than one night, so you need only a few changes of clothing. Please use the VENT luggage tag that will be sent to you, as it helps immensely in identifying our group's baggage.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

PASSPORTS: A passport valid for at least six months with at least one blank page for entry stamp and a visa are required for United States citizens to enter Uganda. It is very important to have your passport and money with you at all times. Suggestions for doing so are a money belt or a pouch with a shoulder strap to be worn on your side or around your neck. It is also wise to carry a copy of your passport information pages in a separate piece of luggage or photographed on your mobile phone.

VISAS: Non-U.S. citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions. All visa (E-Visa) applications must be completed via the Government of Uganda's website: visas.immigration.go.ug. Under the new application process, you must apply online for your visa at least two weeks prior to travel. The cost at the time of publication is \$50 USD. A current certificate for Yellow Fever Vaccination is required in order to obtain your visa for entry into Uganda, and you may be asked to show your YFV certificate upon arrival at the airport. Please be mindful not to apply too early for your Uganda visa as they expire 90 days from the date your visa is approved.

CLOTHING: Long-sleeved and light-weight shirts and pants are appropriate, with a sweater or light jacket for the evening, and a thermal top for "layering." Neutral colors such as gray, khaki, and tan are best for field wear (bright colors and patterns, including white, can spook the birds and animals). Please note Tsetse flies are attracted to bright blue so this is not recommended in the narrow zones where they are a nuisance. Clothing that can be easily rinsed out and dried quickly is helpful. Dress will be casual throughout the tour. There is no need to bring formal dinner attire. The hotels are not heated, so bring something warm to sleep in. On some days, shorts will be appropriate, and a few of the hotels have swimming pools. Please remember that luggage space in the bus is limited, and laundry can be done at every lodge.

FOOTWEAR: You will need good, solid but comfortable walking boots as we will be walking quite a bit in forest areas, albeit mostly along level or slightly rising and falling terrain.

EQUIPMENT: You should have a pair of binoculars that are in good condition, along with a daypack for carrying books, sunscreen, etc. Your tour leader will have a spotting scope; however, you are welcome to bring your own if you desire. You should bring all the camera equipment and spare batteries that you will need as they will be difficult to obtain once we leave Entebbe. And yes, do bring a folding umbrella and/or rain jacket, as we may well encounter mist or rain on a few occasions.

Other items that will be useful are a hat and sunscreen for sun protection, small flashlight or headlamp, alarm clock, and a small amount of non-aerosol insect repellent (insects are remarkably few, but the best way to avoid any chance of disease is not to get bitten). You may also want to have a small supply of snacks. Moist towelettes are also refreshing to have. Pepto-Bismol is recommended in case of mild stomach upset. Bottled water is available throughout Uganda, so a water bottle is not necessary. All participants should bring a good supply of all of their medical/pharmaceutical supplies, as they will be very difficult to obtain anywhere on the tour.

Binoculars: We strongly recommend you bring a pair of good binoculars of 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. Please do not bring mini binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. You will find that 8x32 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes: Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: The temperatures will be warm to hot (80's) during the day and pleasantly warm to cool (60's) at night. Night temperatures are cooler at a few places, reaching the low 50's, while midday temperatures may locally reach into the 90's. We can expect some showers and misty-foggy weather, especially in the mountains.

CONDITIONS: This tour does not require a high level of fitness, but participants should be in good general health as much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. On just a few occasions, we may be walking on narrow and/or steep forest trails (entirely optional) to find a few special birds. Our pace will, however, be slow as we bird in the forests. There will be a few lengthy drives and many of the days will be long with early starts; however, we retire for a siesta during the heat of the day when possible. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.

The optional gorilla trek at Bwindi Impenetrable Forest (see Day 7) can involve several hours of potentially strenuous walking on steep slopes, often off trail. The chance of finding the gorillas is very

high, but on some occasions in the past the trackers have not been able to locate the mobile family groups.

While some roads in Uganda are remarkably good, many areas still require work (such as various sections of road between Masindi to Kibale). We will also be driving on dirt tracks such as Queen Elizabeth National Park and Lake Mburo National Park, and at times some of those roads will be bumpy.

CURRENCY: Uganda Shilling (US\$); currency can be exchanged at the airport banks and major hotels upon arrival. MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted, while American Express has limited acceptance. ATMs may be available at a few select stops if you need additional cash. U.S. currency notes need to be in mint condition and printed after 2013, otherwise they are difficult to exchange.

ELECTRICITY: 240 volts, 50 cycles. British standard square three-pin plug.

INTERNET ACCESS: Available at The Boma Hotel in Entebbe and most of the hotels we stay in, generally in the lobby only. Wi-Fi is often fairly slow. Mobile phone coverage is very good, and you can text from most locations.

LANGUAGE: English and Swahili are the “official” first and second national languages.

TIME: 8 hours ahead of EST

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Available at all lodges.

HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH: A current certificate for Yellow Fever Vaccination is required for entry into Uganda. VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up to date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over the counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or

packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

for proper health and hygiene: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

Food standards are high in Uganda, and few people experience any problems. We recommend drinking only bottled water (available everywhere) or filtered water provided by the lodges.

Insect Repellents – There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- **DEET** (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- **Picaridin**: A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- **Herbal insect repellents**: Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

An insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- **Permanone®** (Permethrin) is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for pre-treatment of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment has to be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.

- **Insect Shield® apparel:** Clothing pre-treated with Permanone is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The US EPA offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/which-insect-repellent-right-you>

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). You can check the CDC website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html> (click on Travel Health).

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

Birds (Field Guides):

Stephenson, Terry, and John Fanshawe; Illustrated by Brian Small, Norman Arlott, and John Gale. Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa. Princeton Field Guides, Second Edition. A comprehensive field guide to all the birds of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda. It includes concise text on identification and illustrations from three of the best bird illustrators working today. One of the best bird books ever written! Also available as an app.

Field Guides (other topics):

Blundell, Michael. Wild Flowers of East Africa. HarperCollins, 1994. Good field guide with high-quality photos.

Dorst, Jean and Pierre Dandelot. Collins Field Guide to Larger Mammals of Africa. London: HarperCollins, 1998. Adequate alternative to Jonathan Kingdon's guide.

Kingdon, Jonathan. The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals. Academic Press Inc., 1998. A complete and informative guide to all of the mammals. All the known species of African land mammal are covered in a concise text providing full information on identification, distribution, ecology, evolutionary relationships, and conservation status.

Williams, John George and R. Fennessy. Collins Field Guide to the National Parks of East Africa. HarperCollins Inc., 1998. Very useful guide with background information and simple maps for each park and reserve, plus a section on mammal identification and the more conspicuous birds.

There is a wealth of reading material available for this region, and the following are just a few selections from various topics. A personal favorite is *The Tree Where Man Was Born/The African Experience* by Peter Matthiessen and Eliot Porter. The results of several long-term studies of mammals have been published as popular books. The best includes *Among the Elephants* by Iain Douglas-Hamilton, *The Serengeti Lion* by George Schaller, and *Portraits in the Wild* by Cynthia Moss. Especially if you have never been to East Africa, you may enjoy some of these "light" books about the region, history and wildlife: *Out of Africa* by Isak Dinesen, *Flame Trees of Thika* by Elspeth Huxley, *I Dreamed of Africa* by Kuki Gulman, and *A Bird Watcher in Kenya* by C. van Someren. *Nine Faces of Kenya*, compiled by Elspeth Huxley, is a good introductory primer to East African history and settlement.

CLO Apps

eBird. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Among the largest and most successful citizen science projects in existence, eBird is an essential tool in promoting bird study and conservation. Among a range of benefits, eBird allows users to keep a variety of lists in a single application. When taxonomic splits are incorporated, lists are automatically updated. Additionally, trip leaders can share daily lists, so one only need accept a shared list and it will upload to your files. Highly recommended.

Merlin Bird ID. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate birdwatchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions about his or her bird sighting, including date and location, and color, size, and behavior of a

bird. Merlin then processes the viewer's responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely bird. Species profiles include a brief physical description, photographs, and sound samples. The Photo ID feature allows anyone with a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of suggestions. Merlin's Sound ID feature allows identification of birds through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app and the appropriate regional "pack." Highly recommended.

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, "VENT") act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on September 10, 2026, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT

also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "Airline") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

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