

Free POCKET
GUIDE

A group of five African children are posing with a large, realistic gorilla statue. The children are smiling and appear to be of various ages. They are standing on a concrete ledge or platform. The background is a dense, green forest. The gorilla statue is the central focus, with the children interacting with it. One child is standing behind the gorilla's head, another is standing next to it, and three others are in the foreground. The overall mood is joyful and natural.

Gorilla Highlands

THE ESSENCE OF AFRICA

Phrasebook

English	Kinyarwanda / Rukumbira	Rukiga (Kabale in Uganda)	Kiswahili (Eastern Congo)
How are you?	Umezute / Uraho?	Ni gaabe / Agandi	Habari yako?
I'm fine	Ndaho / Meze neza / Yego	Ndi gye/ Nimarungi	Niko salama / Habari njema
How was your night?	Waraye / Waramutseho neza?	Oraire gye?	Umelala aje?
How's your day been?	Wirwi / Wirwiweho?	Osibire gye?	Umeshindaje?
Good day	Umunsi mwiza	Osibigye	Siku njema
Good night	Urare neza / Uramuke	Oraaregye	Lala salama / Usiku mwema
Goodbye	Ngaho/ Urabeho	Ogumeho	Kwaheri
Thank you (very much)	Wakoze / Urakoze (cyane)	Yebare (munonga)	Asante (sana)
Yes	Yeego / Yee	Yeego	Ndio
No	Oya	Ingaaha	Apana
OK	Kare/ Nibyo	Kare	Sawa
Sir	Mutware	Sebo	Bwana
Madam	Mubyeyi / Mucyara	Nyabo	Bibi
Friend	Nshuti / Mugenzi	Munywani / Mugenzi	Rafiki

Webare Kwija! Murakoze Kuza! Asanteni Kwa Kuja!

Welcome to the draft 7th edition of the Gorilla Highlands Pocket Guide (see page 11 for advertising information), a booklet helping a unique private-sector initiative achieve the following objectives:



photo by Marcus Westberg

- to position the term “Gorilla Highlands” as a universally accepted name for a transboundary region shared by Rwanda, Uganda and Congo
- to establish the region as a destination by itself
- to expand the perception of the region beyond gorillas
- to promote the region as an essential bucket list item
- to protect the culture and wellbeing of the region’s disadvantaged people



Places in
Rwanda



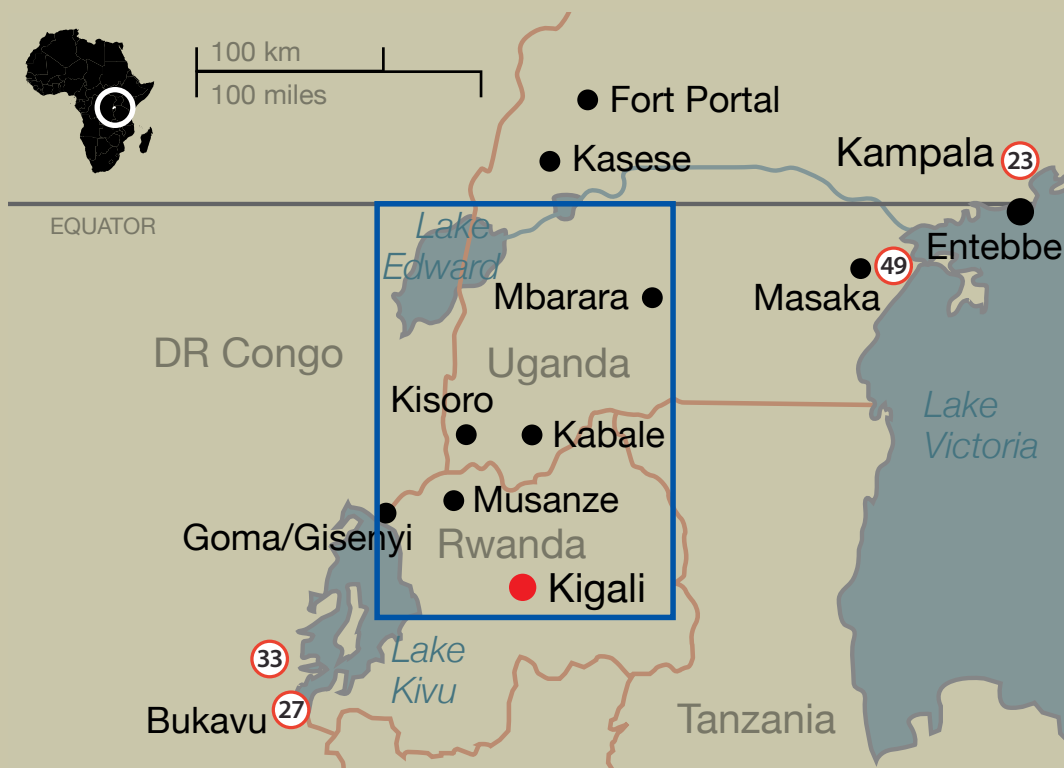
Places in
Uganda



Places in Democratic
Republic of the Congo

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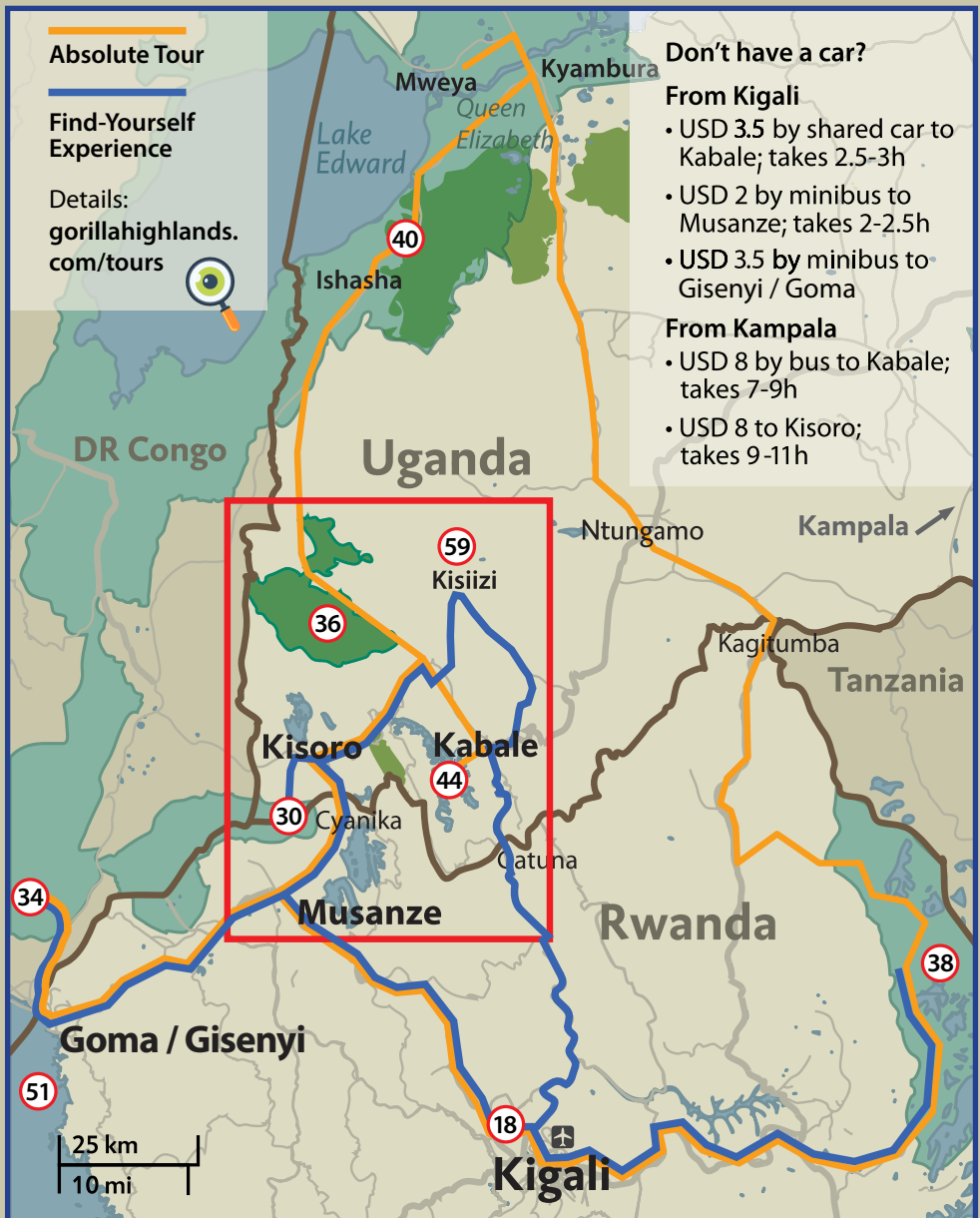


About Our Region

Positioned at the heart of Africa, Rwanda is an exemplary country: safe, orderly, clean and rapidly developing. Its endangered mountain gorillas can be visited on the slopes of the Virunga volcanoes (p30) while the savannah of Akagera NP (p38) is a pleasant Big 5 surprise. Relaxing on the sand beaches of Lake Kivu (p51) will give you a real seaside feel.

Kigali (p18) is the prime entry point for more than just Rwanda. Beyond its borders lie the bounties of Uganda and the adventures of Eastern Congo. Bwindi NP (p36) is a mysterious rainforest teeming with mountain gorillas while Kahuzi-Biega NP (p33) is the last sanctuary for Grauer's gorillas. Idyllic Lake Bunyonyi (p44) boasts the highest number of islands; the story of one of them mournfully links to Kisiizi Falls (p59), the most attractive waterfall in the region. Finally, nothing beats a climb to Mt Nyiragongo to sleep next to a glowing lava lake (p34).

While in the region, it makes a lot of sense to see Queen Elizabeth NP with its tree-climbing lions (p40), spend a night at Lake Nabugabo (p49) and experience the proper African bustle of Kampala (p23) before flying home. Conditions permitting, a check on the prettiest town of Central and Eastern Africa, Bukavu (p27), will be the icing on your travel cake.



VISA INFORMATION: The East African Tourist visa covers Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya and costs USD 100. If you wish to visit DR Congo, prepare for your East African Tourist visa to be voided — do it in the beginning or at the end of your journey, in combination with a single-entry Rwanda visa (USD 30). The best way to obtain a DRC visa (USD 100) is online through Virunga National Park in combination with gorilla tracking or Nyiragongo hiking. More info: gorillahighlands.com/visas

Different colours refer to different routes of all-inclusive guided hiking trips in Uganda and Rwanda. Trek directions can be reversed, adjusted and combined. Overnight stays at all levels of accommodation, from camping in villages to luxury lodges.



gorillahighlands.com/trails



Thriving Countryside | \$90

\$105 | ##### \$125 | ## \$165 | # \$250

length: 1 day; difficulty: 4

start: Cyanika/Kinigi

Get a taste of Rwanda's rural development while you trek along the Virunga volcanoes and admire Lake Burera views



Valley of No Living | \$190

\$230 | ### \$290 | ## \$390 | # \$550

length: 2 days; difficulty: 2

start: Bunyonyi/Rushaga (Bwindi)

Walk where no tourists walk and spend a night camping at a model mountain health centre



Parks Reunited | \$250

\$290 | ### \$360 | ## \$470 | # \$810

length: 3 days; difficulty: 3

start: Mgahinga/Bwindi

Canoe through the raw beauty of Lake Mutanda as you connect two grand national parks



Volcano Quest | \$250

\$290 | ### \$360 | ## \$470 | # \$810

length: 3 days; difficulty: 3

start: Bunyonyi/Mgahinga

Substitute awe-inspiring trekking at the base of volcanoes for one of the Three Upland Lakes



Three Upland Lakes | \$340

\$390 | ### \$470 | ## \$610 | # \$980

length: 4 days; difficulty: 3

start: Bunyonyi/Rushaga (Bwindi)

Led by a Batwa "Pygmy" leader, cross timeless Echuya Forest and sleep at incredible lakes



Rainforest Ramble | \$420

\$480 | ### \$590 | ## \$770 | # \$1270

length: 5 days; difficulty: 4

start: Bunyonyi/Buhoma (Bwindi)

Upgrade your Three Upland Lakes trek with canoeing across Lake Mutanda and traversing Bwindi



Ultimate Hike | \$550

\$630 | ### \$770 | ## \$990 | # \$1670

length: 7 days; difficulty: 5

start: Bunyonyi/Buhoma (Bwindi)

Are you strong enough to combine Volcano Quest, a day in Mgahinga, and Parks Reunited?



HAVING... DOUBTS?

Let's be honest with each other, our reader. Africa tends to be portrayed as a dangerous continent, and our region can sound particularly intimidating. The Democratic Republic of Congo is almost a symbol of insecurity (you would however be amazed by its peaceful cities — like Bukavu on this spread), Uganda is still associated with Idi Amin (overthrown in 1979) and Rwanda makes people think about the genocide (happened in 1994).

Foreign countries publish travel advisories that are meant to protect their writers more than travellers. Nobody would want to be liable for anything, so they definitely prefer that you stay home, no matter what.

The actual situation on the ground can easily be mind-blowing. You are very likely to feel shockingly safe and secure, kinda liberated in fact... You will wonder what all that fuss was about...



But most importantly: by visiting the Gorilla Highlands, you will support people and organisations building a brighter future for Africa. When you leave excited and happy, you will be our best ambassador.

Mind you, we are not saying every part of our region is heavenly (do you feel comfortable walking alone by night in each and every part of your home country?). We have created a special page that will update you on what is really happening:



gorillahighlands.com/security

And no, we of course take absolutely no responsibility for your travel decisions, and indecisions. ;-)



CHEF RAMA, FIRST RWANDAN SILVERCHEF

The central gathering of the Gorilla Highlands initiative is the Silverchef cooking competition and networking event. Its fourth edition took place at the Kigali Marriott Hotel on 28-29 April 2018, and made the hosts very pleased: their chef Ramadhan Sindayigaya won!

On our website you can read more about him, and how we came up with the idea for his chicken and beef roulade:

gorillahighlands.com/silverchef





The 7th edition of the Gorilla Highlands Pocket Guide is a huge step for our popular booklet. We are adding fresh content to the practical information we have been printing since 2013, setting the Pocket Guide for more regular publishing. 10,000 copies once a year has proven insufficient — and how many editions there will be depends on advertiser support.

Will you be part of it? You can choose from:

- Classified (text ad) at USD 1 per word. Once we know your budget we will help you improve your text within the desired amount. USD 30 (30 words) is the minimum charge, and the following are free of charge: the name of the business, 2 phone numbers, 1 email contact and 1 website address.
- Illustrated Classified at USD 1 per word + USD 50 for the photo (one image possible). USD 80 (30 words + image) is the minimum cost.
- Full-Page Ad, A6 size (10.5 x 14.8 cm) at USD 500 if designed by your team. USD 1,000 if you wish to have your ad on the back cover or on any other specific page.

Deadline: **15 June 2018**

Prices exclude VAT.

pocketguide@gorillahighlands.com

+256 776 558 123

gorillahighlands.com



Cultures

Batwa “Pygmies” are one of the oldest peoples in Africa. For centuries they roamed the forests looking for fruits and honey, and hunted with bows and trained dogs. As the woods were cut down by the Bantu, Batwa numbers dwindled. In the 1980s and 1990s they were evicted from national parks in Rwanda and Uganda without compensation; recently the authorities have shown more understanding and progress has been made. The ideal for Batwa involvement remains Congo’s Kahuzi-Biega NP where the Batwa are main gorilla trackers (the photo showcases one of the team, Bakongo).

Please be cautious when offered to “see the Pygmies” and avoid exploitation of the Batwa. There are three recommended activities that resemble each other and show their history in the forest, involving costumes and drama: Batwa Experience at Buhoma, Buniga Forest Walk at Nkuringo and the Batwa Trail in Mgahinga. A different approach is offered through Batwa Today in Echuya Forest (p58).



gorillahighlands.com/batwa

The Bantus—the people of Rwanda, Congo and southern Uganda—are primarily mixed crop and livestock farmers. Their traditional settlement was a compound with separate houses for wives and their children; each wife had her own livestock and fields. Nowadays high population density and land fragmentation has led to heavy migrations.



Mammals

Mountain gorillas evolved with the rise of the volcanoes half a million years ago, adapting to the terrain by becoming larger than western gorillas and with thicker, darker fur. They are herbivores who sometimes eat ants and termites. Not even 1,000 mountain gorillas exist in the world but thankfully the number is increasing. They can be visited in four parks: Rwanda's Volcanoes NP, Uganda's Bwindi and Mgahinga NPs and Congo's Virunga NP.

Eastern lowland gorillas (also known as Grauer's) are even bigger than mountain gorillas. Today there are estimated to be 3,800 of them; Congo's Kahuzi-Biega NP is the only place where they are habituated.

Golden monkeys share the same environment and are also endangered but are much less researched. They spend much of their time in the bamboo zone eating bamboo shoots. You can see them in Mgahinga, Volcanoes and Virunga NPs.

Also present in the area: elephants, buffalos, chimps, baboons, blue and redbell monkeys, zorillas (skunk-like creatures), otters and many other animals.



gorillahighlands.com/wildlife



Love Affair with Grauer's Gorillas

Amy Porter's relationship with animals is deep and intriguing. In 2016, with an Anthropology PhD and plentiful monkey research experience, she went to Kahuzi-Biega NP. She stayed for 20 months and took part in groundbreaking research by the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund.

How did you end up coming to Congo?

I had always been fascinated by Congo, for its gorillas, for its history and for its impact on people – everybody holds their breath when you mention it. I was always eager to visit but since I worked so long in South America I thought it was going to remain my niche. Then an opportunity came up...

What is the biggest difference between mountain gorillas and Grauer's?

Grauer's gorillas are bigger but it is not a noticeably huge difference. They are also less hairy and live at lower elevations. In mountain gorillas you can find a group with more than one silverback but with Grauer's there is always only one silverback. We are still in the beginning stages of studying how they differ in social behaviour.

How does it feel to be with gorillas almost every day for a year and a half?

They are like family to me. One day when I was with Chimanuka [silverback gorilla] I started thinking about my time in the field ending and I cried. It was not only about being attached to the work, I know those animals as individuals and they all have different personalities.



Read the whole interview at gorillahighlands.com/love-affair

photo by Marcus Westberg



Birds

On Planet Earth there are few destinations with over 600 bird species: Queen Elizabeth NP is one of them. Together with Akagera's 490 species, Bwindi's list of 350 species and 295 different birds recorded in Volcanoes NP, it makes our region among the richest birding areas in the world.

Bwindi with 24 Albertine Rift Endemics and Mgahinga NP with 13 are the most accessible sites for endemics such as Handsome Francolin, Rwenzori Turaco and the highly localised African Green Broadbill. Volcanoes NP is one of the best sites to see Ladgen's Bush-Shrike, together with 16 more endemics.

Akagera has many birds reaching their northern limit here, such as Arnott's Chat, Purple-crested Turaco and the Sousa's Shrike. Also worthy of special mention is the Shoebill, which should be searched for in Queen Elizabeth and Akagera.

AFRICAN NIGHTS

Every **Friday night**, come enjoy a market-like culinary experience featuring the **best flavors and favorite dishes** from **across Africa**.

Soko Restaurant
7pm - 11pm

Price: 35,000 RWF
per person

RESERVE YOUR TABLE TODAY

+250 222 111 111



MARRIOTT
KIGALI

Capital Cities

photo by Akagera Aviation

KIGALI



Population 1,200,000; elevation 1,567 m/ 5,141 ft

Kigali is a sparklingly-clean and highly organised city that few international visitors expect to find in the centre of the African continent. Smooth tarmac with countdown traffic lights connects brand-new buildings here, like the Kigali Convention Centre in the right of this spread.

The must-see attraction is the beautiful memorial museum that bears witness to the genocide against the Tutsis that shook the country in 1994. While it also features similar crimes against humanity elsewhere in the world, its primary message is the power of Rwanda's reconciliation, resilience and potential.



gorillahighlands.com/kigali



Vision 20

Genocide Memorial

Nyabugogo, Musanze, Uganda

KGL

Police HQ

US Embassy

Kigali Public Library

Immigration

South African High Commission

KACYIRU

RUGENGE

Step Town Motel

Kigali City Tower, Cinema

City Market

Preet Fast Food

Mille Collines

German Embassy

French Embassy

Ubumwe Grande Hotel

KIYOVU

Belgian Embassy
Swiss Embassy

Chinese Embassy

Kigali Marriott Hotel

Russian Embassy

New Cactus

Kigali Serena Hotel

Camp Kigali

Discover Rwanda

Shokola

Repub Lounge

Papyrus

Mamba Club

KIMIHURURA

University of Rwanda
College of Business and Economics

NYAMIRAMBO



2020

• K-Club

Golf Hills Residence

KG15

GOLF COURSE

KG13

KG9

KG10



KIBAGABAGA

CasaKeza

• Ugandan High Commission

MTN Centre

Green Hills Academy

Kenyan High Commission

Swedish Embassy

British High Commission

Centenary Park

• Rz MANNA

KG8

Amahoro Stadium

Parliament

Kigali Heights

Meze Fresh

• RDB

Radisson Blu

Kigali Convention Centre

KG8

REMERA

Sole Luna

• Chez Lando

Kigali Airport

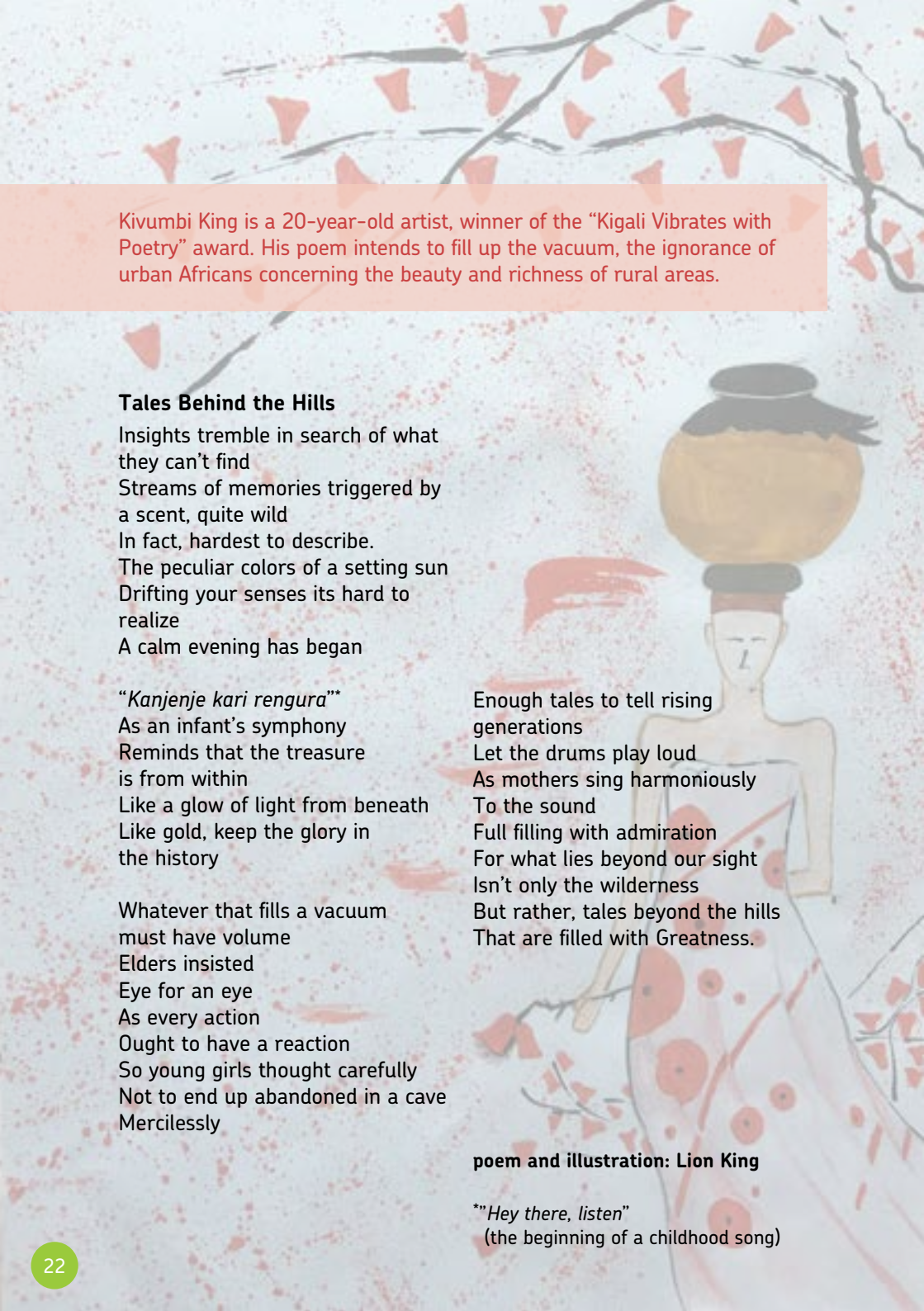
Grand Legacy Hotel

• Romalo Guesthouse

Inilak

Map of Kigali

5mi
10km



Kivumbi King is a 20-year-old artist, winner of the “Kigali Vibrates with Poetry” award. His poem intends to fill up the vacuum, the ignorance of urban Africans concerning the beauty and richness of rural areas.

Tales Behind the Hills

Insights tremble in search of what
they can't find
Streams of memories triggered by
a scent, quite wild
In fact, hardest to describe.
The peculiar colors of a setting sun
Drifting your senses its hard to
realize
A calm evening has began

“Kanjenje kari rengura”

As an infant's symphony
Reminds that the treasure
is from within
Like a glow of light from beneath
Like gold, keep the glory in
the history

Whatever that fills a vacuum
must have volume
Elders insisted
Eye for an eye
As every action
Ought to have a reaction
So young girls thought carefully
Not to end up abandoned in a cave
Mercilessly

Enough tales to tell rising
generations
Let the drums play loud
As mothers sing harmoniously
To the sound
Full filling with admiration
For what lies beyond our sight
Isn't only the wilderness
But rather, tales beyond the hills
That are filled with Greatness.

poem and illustration: Lion King

“Hey there, listen”
(the beginning of a childhood song)

KAMPALA



Population 1,500,000; elevation 1,190 m/ 3,900 ft

The city also known as “crazy crazy” Kampala is the party capital of East Africa. An urban sprawl touching Lake Victoria, Kampala is a bustling, freedom-loving city.

Be it a weekend, a holiday or the middle of the night, enterprising Kampalans are ready to feed your stomach with cheap roadside food and your soul with bumping Afrobeat. Mushrooming shopping centres and second-hand markets are two dimensions of a place that sells anything from anywhere, at any price.

But not so far from the organised chaos of the Old Taxi Park — an actual attraction — there is serenity in Kampala’s green areas and religious sites. The only Baha’i temple in Africa, the Kampala Central Mosque and the Makerere University campus are three sites you should definitely consider visiting.

Uganda’s international airport lies 40km/26mi from Kampala, next to Entebbe.

photo by Ciril Jazbec



Make

Kubiri

MULAGO

Rwanda
High Commission

MAKERERE

WANDEGEYA

NANKULABYE

Wandegaya
Market

Italian Embassy

Indian High
Commission

Urban Hotel

Norwegian
Embassy

Arirang Ho

Nigerian High
Commission

KAGUGUBE

Wandegaya
Flats

BAT VALLEY

Sudanese
Embassy

South African
High Commission

BUKESA

Aga Khan
School

French
Embassy

Danish
Embassy

Rwenzori
House

Namayiba
Bus Park

Hotel Triangle

Central
Police
Station

OLD KAMPALA

Namirembe GH

Old Kampala
Secondary

Kampala
Central
Mosque

KIKUBOO

Already Hotel
New Taxi
Park

City Square
Hotel

Grand
Imperial

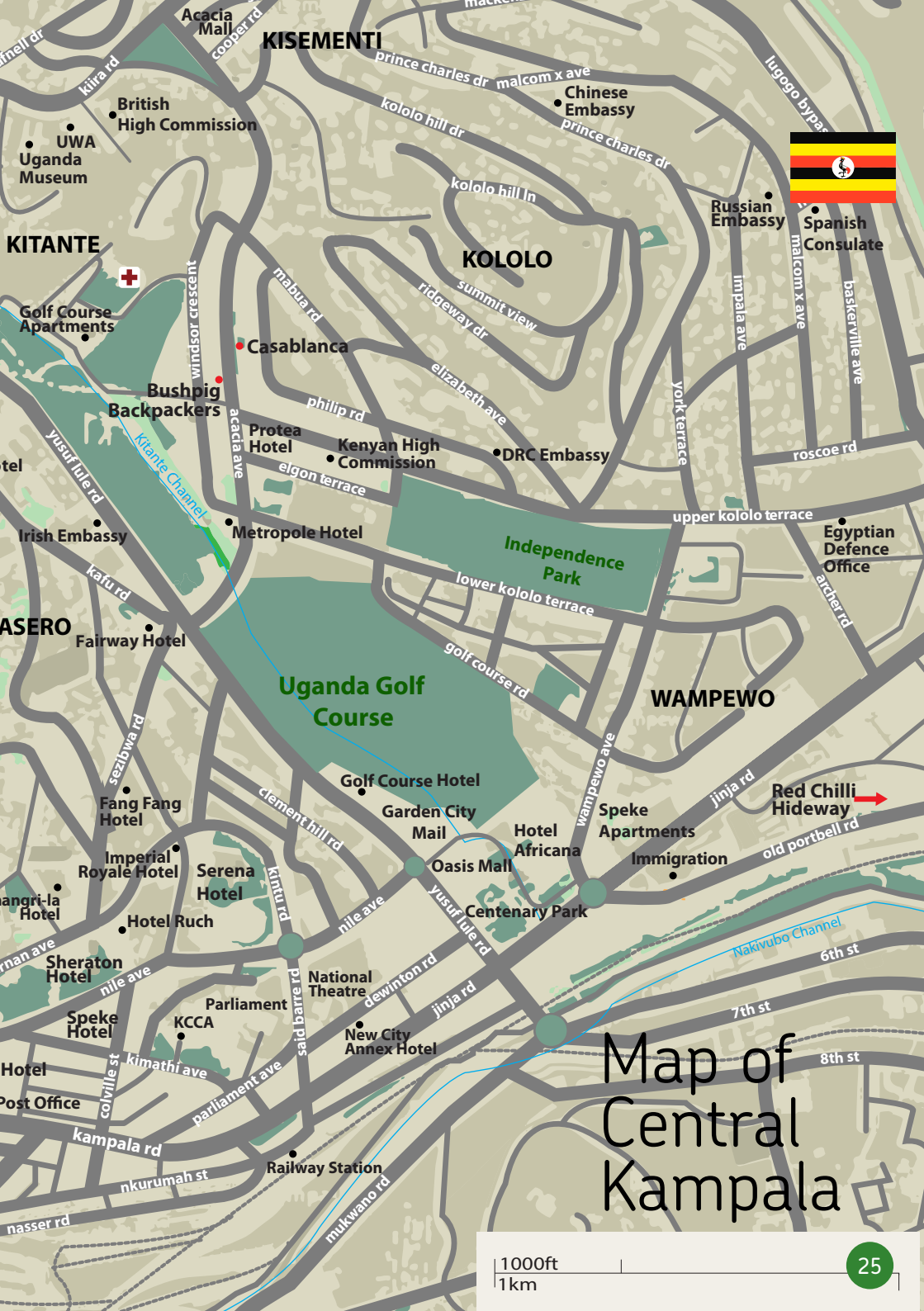
BAKULI

KISENYI

NAKIVUBO

Owino
Market

Shoprite
Supermarket



Spanish Consulate

Russian Embassy

Chinese Embassy

KISEMENTI

KOLOLO

KITANTE

Golf Course Apartments

Bushpig Backpackers

Irish Embassy

ASERO

Fairway Hotel

Imperial Royale Hotel

Sheraton Hotel

Speke Hotel

Post Office

kampala rd

nkurumah st

nasser rd

mulkwano rd

devinton rd

jinja rd

6th st

7th st

8th st

old portbell rd

Red Chilli Highway

WAMPEWO

Speke Apartments

Immigration

Hotel Africana

Oasis Mall

Garden City Mail

Golf Course Hotel

Uganda Golf Course

Independence Park

lower kololo terrace

upper kololo terrace

archer rd

egyptian defence office

roscoe rd

bakerville ave

malcom x ave

impala ave

prince charles dr

kololo hill dr

summit view

ridgeway dr

elizabeth ave

philip rd

casablanca

protea hotel

kenyan high commission

drc embassy

metropole hotel

acacia ave

windsor crescent

acacia mall

cooper rd

kiira rd

prince charles dr

malcom x ave

luggo bypass

ukraine consulate

british high commission

uua uganda museum

golf course apartments

bushpig backpackers

irish embassy

fairway hotel

fang fang hotel

imperial royale hotel

serena hotel

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parliament

kcca

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serena hotel

hotel ruch

sheraton hotel



	km	miles	hours by car	(mini)bus/truck departure	price
from Kigali to:					Rwf
Akagera NP	110	69	2.5	throughout the day	/
Musanze (Ruhengeri)	85	53	2.5	throughout the day	1,750
Gisenyi (Rubavu) / Goma	158	98	3.5	throughout the day	3,000
Rusizi (Cyangugu) / Bukavu	235	146	5	hourly until 4pm	5,700
Kabale	106	66	2.5	throughout the day	3,000
Kisoro	135	84	3.5	border open till 6pm	2,750

from Kampala to:					US\$
Kabale	414	257	7	throughout the day	25,000
Kisoro	494	307	9	throughout the day	30,000
Buhoma (via Rukungiri)	472	293	10	morning and night	45,000
Mweya (Queen Elizabeth NP)	442	275	8	throughout the day	40,000 to Katunguru

from Bukavu to:					USD
Kahuzi-Biega NP	32	20	1.5	/	/
Lwiro	47	29	1.25	throughout the day, shared car + bike	2.5
Goma (by ferry)	/	/	2.5	morning and afternoon	50

from Kabale to:					US\$
Buhoma (via Ruhija)	95	59	5	Tue, Fri; daily (minus Sun) to Kanyantoro	15-20,000
Buhoma (via Kanungu)	112	70	5	Tue, Sat	15-20,000
Ruhija	49	30	2	Mon-Fri	9-13,000
Rushaga	73	45	2.5	Tue, Sat	10-20,000
Nkuringo	91	57	3	Tue, Sat	12-20,000

from Kisoro to:					US\$
Rushaga	35	22	1.5	Mon, Thu	5,000
Rubuguri	27	17	1.5	Mon, Thu, Fri	5,000
Nkuringo	33	20	2	Mon, Thu	6,000

from Mweya (Queen Elizabeth NP) to:					US\$
Ishasha	96	60	3	/	/
Buhoma	160	99	4.5	/	/
Ruhija	206	128	6.5	/	/

BUKAVU



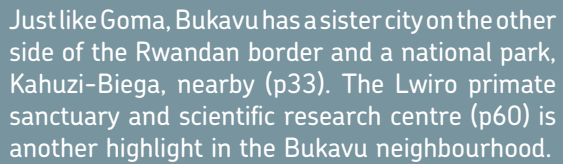
Population 900,000; elevation 1,498 m/ 4,915 ft

Unlike Kigali or Kampala, Bukavu is not really a capital city. In the minds of most people, it would even come after Goma (p51) as the most important city of Eastern Congo. It is, however, the intellectual and cultural capital. Architecture buffs can admire over 100 buildings of the Art Deco style here. Today, a different building style prevails, colourful and with elaborate soaring rooflines.



photo by Marcus Westberg

SECURITY SITUATION: Bukavu and Goma, connected by modern speedboats and ferries, are safer than the rest of Eastern Congo. Nevertheless, we advise you to follow the news and check out our security page before visiting them: gorillahighlands.com/security

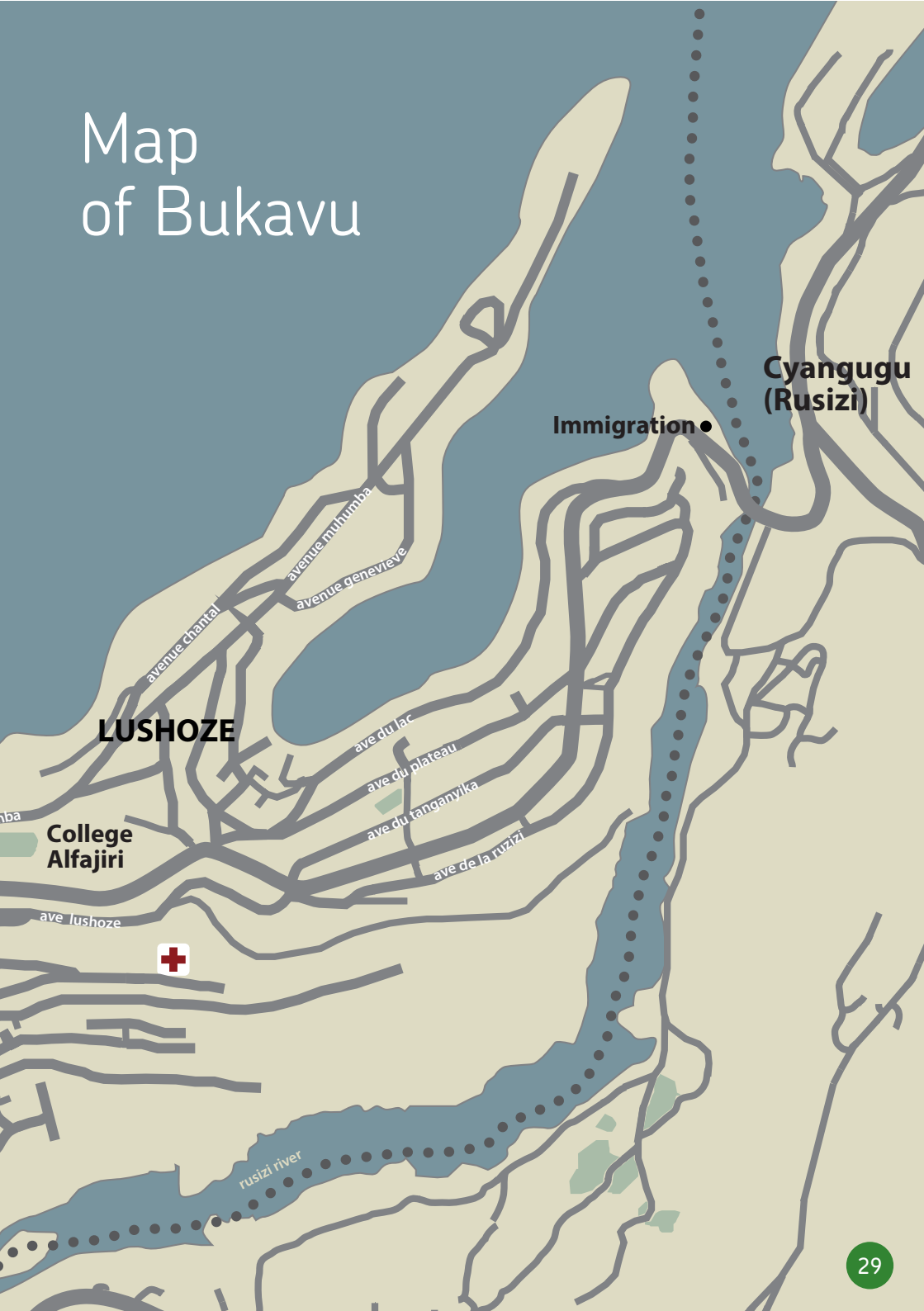


Cathedral Notre Dame

Kahuzi-Biega Info Office

NYOFU

Map of Bukavu



Cyangugu
(Rusizi)

Immigration •

LUSHOZE

College
Alfajiri



rusizi river



MGAHINGA NP

The smallest, but possibly greatest, of Uganda's national parks boasts three Virunga volcanoes: Muhavura (4,127m/13,540ft) with a lake at the top, Mount Gahinga (3,474m/11,398ft) with a swamp-filled crater, and Sabinyo (3,669m/11,959ft) where three countries meet.

If you track mountain gorillas here (USD 600) you are a member of a special club. One habituated gorilla group means only eight visitors per day.

Other activities:

- tracking of endangered golden monkeys
- the Batwa Trail (p13)
- hiking into Sabinyo Gorge, to all volcanoes and more

Gorilla
National Parks

VOLCANOES NP



Volcanoes National Park shares three volcanoes with Mgahinga and adds two more: Karisimbi (4,507m/14,787ft) and Bisoke (3,711m/12,175ft). It has 10 habituated mountain gorilla groups (USD 1,500).

Additional things to do:

- golden monkey tracking
- climbing Karisimbi (2 days), Gahinga and Muhavura (can be combined into 2 days) or Bisoke
- trekking to the former Karisoke Research Centre to visit the grave of Dian Fossey, the famous researcher who popularised mountain gorilla tracking and died as a conservation martyr



VIRUNGA NP

The oldest national park of Africa has a staggering environmental variety: from the Virungas through the savannah up to the permanent snow of the Mountains of the Moon, the Rwenzoris (5,109 metres/16,762 ft). Of the volcanoes it includes Sabinyo, Karisimbi, Bisoke, Mikenso (4,437m/14,560ft), Nyamuragira (3,058m/10,031) and Nyiragongo (3,470m/11,400ft). Tourists can visit six mountain gorilla groups here, a tracking permit costs USD 400.

Other activities:

- Nyiragongo climbing (see p34-35)
- chimp habituation walk
- Tchegeza Island overnight (Lake Kivu)

KAHUZI-BIEGA NP



Named after two dormant volcanoes, this park near Bukavu (p27) is known worldwide for Grauer's or eastern lowland gorillas. Three habituated groups reside in the highland sector of the park. All are well protected, as are the over 1,100 plant species and 350 species of birds. Gorilla tracking costs USD 400.

Other activities:

- trekking Mt Kahuzi (3,300 m/ 10,827ft)
- hike to Tshibati Falls near Lwiro (p60)
- several nature trails

photo by Marcus Westberg



9 Things

You Should Know before Hiking Nyiragongo

In March 2018 two Gorilla Highlands volunteers climbed to the the world's largest bubbling lava found atop Mt Nyiragongo (3,470m/11,380ft) in Virunga National Park. Their trip gives us a chance to update our Nyiragongo advice:

1 The experience is out-of-this-world

The feeling of standing on the edge of a gigantic volcanic crater and staring at the red-hot lava lake cannot be captured with a camera. If you can do it, definitely do it. It is likely to be among the highlights of your life.

2 Trust people on the ground

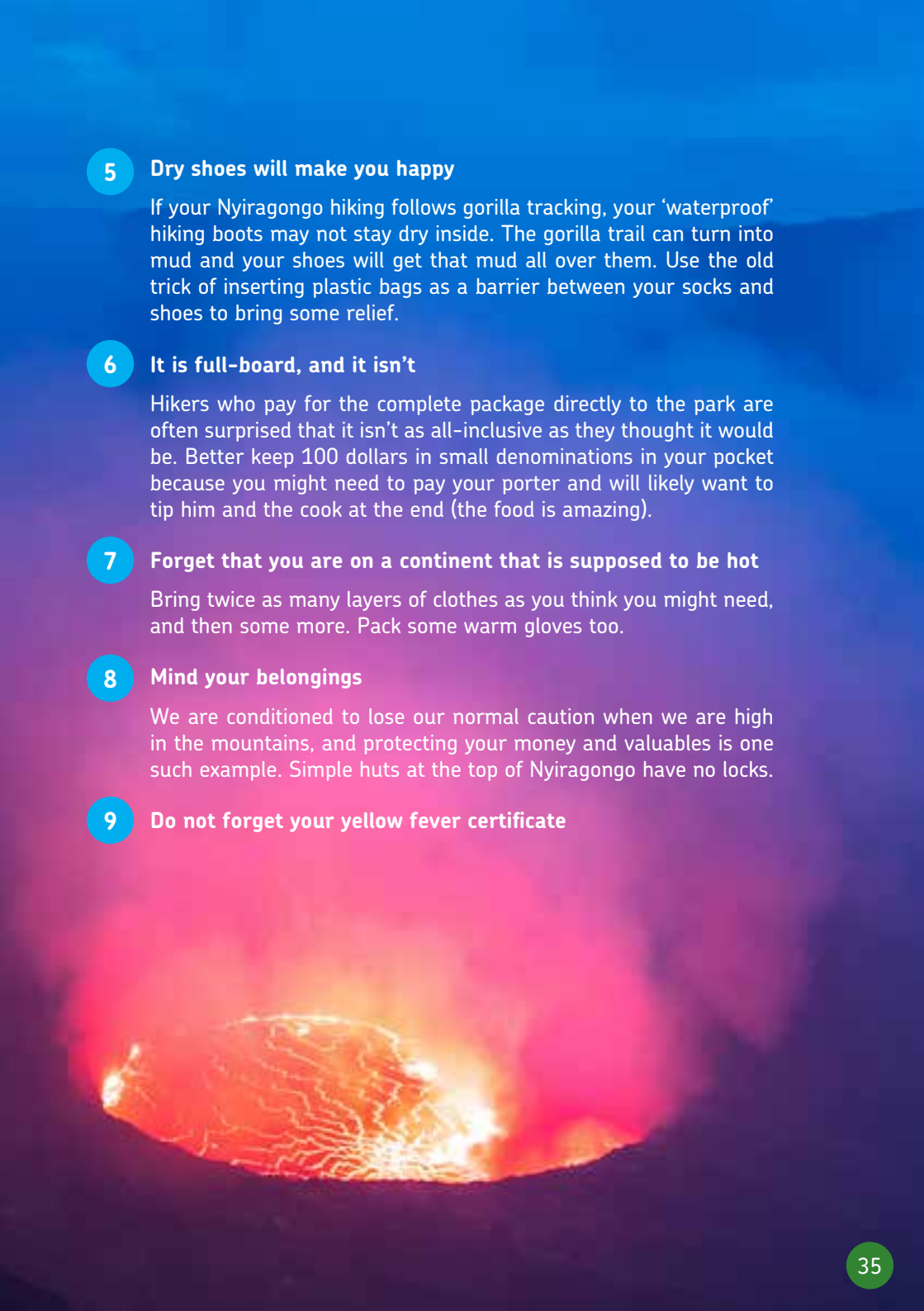
Do not rely on travel advisories put together by bureaucrats in capital cities far away. Focus instead on what the authorities of Virunga National Park have to say. Their interest – possibly higher than your own government's – is to make sure nothing happens to you.

3 You do not need to be extra fit

The two days of Nyiragongo hiking are demanding. The most tiresome element are volcanic rocks that wobble under your feet but there is also the sheer distance and altitude factor. Luckily the trek is timed in a way that allows even a slow person to make it. You might take 7h instead of 4h but that is fine.

4 Get yourself walking sticks

Get a stick, or better two. Besides helping on the descent, you get a full body workout on the way up. Local artisans make handmade wooden sticks for purchase right there at the base of the mountain. They are very artistic, with burnt in etched designs.

The background of the page is a photograph of a volcano. The upper portion shows a blue sky with some clouds. The middle portion shows the dark, silty slopes of the volcano. The lower portion is dominated by the volcano's crater, which is filled with bright orange and yellow lava, with some white smoke or steam rising from it.

5 Dry shoes will make you happy

If your Nyiragongo hiking follows gorilla tracking, your 'waterproof' hiking boots may not stay dry inside. The gorilla trail can turn into mud and your shoes will get that mud all over them. Use the old trick of inserting plastic bags as a barrier between your socks and shoes to bring some relief.

6 It is full-board, and it isn't

Hikers who pay for the complete package directly to the park are often surprised that it isn't as all-inclusive as they thought it would be. Better keep 100 dollars in small denominations in your pocket because you might need to pay your porter and will likely want to tip him and the cook at the end (the food is amazing).

7 Forget that you are on a continent that is supposed to be hot

Bring twice as many layers of clothes as you think you might need, and then some more. Pack some warm gloves too.

8 Mind your belongings

We are conditioned to lose our normal caution when we are high in the mountains, and protecting your money and valuables is one such example. Simple huts at the top of Nyiragongo have no locks.

9 Do not forget your yellow fever certificate



BWINDI



Impenetrable National Park

The steep valleys and high ridges of Africa's oldest rainforest hide much more than just mountain gorillas (USD 600). Some of the highlights of different Bwindi gates:

- **Buhoma:** most accessible gorillas, nature walk to three waterfalls, Batwa Experience (see p13), tour of the groundbreaking Bwindi Community Hospital
- **Nkuringo:** spectacular views of the Virunga volcanoes, Buniga Forest Walk (see p13)
- **Ruhija:** nature walk to the bamboo zone or the big swamp that gave Bwindi its name, best birding
- **Rushaga:** largest number of habituated gorilla groups, the longer gorilla habituation experience (USD 1,500), occasional visits of elephants

When were gorilla groups habituated?

BUHOMA	
NAME	YEAR
Rushegura	2002
Habinyanja	1998
Mubare	1993

NKURINGO	
NAME	YEAR
Bushaho	2017
Nkuringo	2004

RUHIJA	
Mukiza	2017
Oruzogo	2011
Bitukura	2008
Kyaguriro	research

RUSHAGA	
Busingye	2011
Bweeza	2011
Kahungye	2011
Mishaya	2010
Nshongi	2009
Bikingi	on going





AKAGERA NP

The lake environment of Akagera National Park in northeastern Rwanda is magnificent and its campsites with electric fences are unique in central Africa.

The park's specials in terms of fauna are the zebra, the giraffe and the rare roan antelope. Lions were introduced in 2015 and had their first offspring in 2016 while black rhinos returned in 2017 restoring the Akagera's "Big Five" status. There are also elephants, leopards, hippos, buffalos, eleven species of antelope and almost 500 different bird species. Akagera's wildlife is on the rise under the management of an international non-profit conservation organisation, African Parks, who are responsible for the total management of Akagera.

The park's former reputation for "vegetarian safaris" is a matter of the past and it can surprise you in a most positive way. Along with the park's successful conservation story, the diversity in wildlife and environments – a string of lakes to the east and rolling grassland hills to the west – make Akagera well worth visiting.

photo by Marcus Westberg

Savannah

National Parks





QUEEN ELIZABETH NP



This park is a wonderful addition to a Gorilla Highlands holiday, popular due to abundant wildlife thriving in its diverse ecosystem of sprawling savanna, humid forests and sparkling lakes. Rare tree-climbing lions live in the Ishasha sector, the part closest to our region, and there are many other species: antelopes, buffalos, crocodiles, elephants, hippos, leopards, primates and more.

Some of the attractions:

- Kazinga Channel launch trip with plentiful birds and other animals visible from the boat
- chimp tracking in Kyambura Gorge
- equator circles at the northern tip of the park





photo by Marcus Westberg

WHY ARE LIONS BEING KILLED?

Uganda is fortunate to watch its wildlife population grow. Even the elephant, the magnificent creature being decimated across the continent, is thriving in Uganda's parks.

But there is a worrisome sub-story too — the poisoning of lions by cattle keepers. A recent loss of 3 lionesses and 8 cubs in Queen Elizabeth NP is part of that.

The underlying problem is agricultural encroachment, a result of environmental degradation. Cultivators push pastoralists into the protected area where they graze their cattle illegally. They also poach on the park edge, decreasing lions' access to prey.

Read more: gorillahighlands.com/lion-killing



BirdNest Resort

LAKE BUNYONYI

Our lodge is a Lake Bunyonyi landmark, a culinary pride of the region, a tasteful environment, and a place of uncompromising excellence.

Find us right as you reach the lake, admire the views from all rooms and the spacious terrace, let your kids play with our donkeys, jump into an ecological swimming pool and await the night at the outdoor fireplace.

For budget-conscious travellers we can also offer BirdNest Eco Overseas cottages in a private forest on a peninsula just in front of the main lodge.

Fantastic meals start from USD 10, accommodation from USD 95.

**reservations@birdnestresort.com | www.birdnestatbunyonyi.com
+256 758 402 585 | +256 776 252 560**

Lakes

photo by Marcus Westberg

LAKE BUNYONYI



Lake Bunyonyi was formed 10,000 years ago when a river was dammed by lava. This “place of many little birds” is one of the safest lakes in Africa and has a great number of islands: 29. Some of their histories:

- Akampene (Punishment Island): Until the 1940s, unmarried pregnant women were left here to starve to death or drown trying to swim to the shore; they were often saved by poor men or slaves who could not afford the regular bride price.
- Bwama: In 1914 it was an anti-colonial rebel base of a famous leader, Katuregye. In 1921, Dr. Leonard Sharp, a missionary, founded a leprosy hospital here. After anti-leprosy drugs were introduced in the 1980s, it became a boarding secondary school.
- Njuyeera (Sharp’s Island): Dr. Sharp’s family lived on this island when he was not on duty in Kabale Hospital and converted it into a gorgeous botanical garden with a tennis court, boat house, guest cottage and windmill.



gorillahighlands.com/lakebunyonyi



Bucuranuka
Side Down
Island

overnight
**Tom's
Homestay**

BirdNest Resort

Overland Resort

Edirisa

Little Zanzibar

Kyabahinga
Primary School

Nature's Prime Island

Bugombe Island

Bushara

Akampene

Bwama

Itambira

Sharp's Island

Ha'buharo Island


Karembe Hill
(2487m / 8130ft)

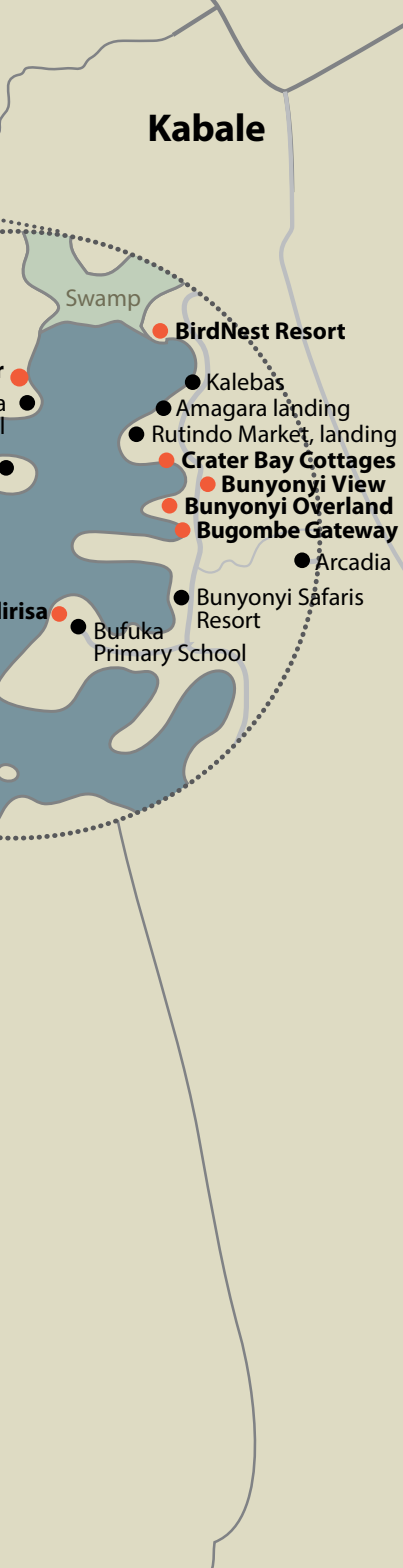
overnight
Mama Bena's place

Kyevu

Map of Bunyonyi

1km
1mi

• see p52



Touch of Bunyonyi \$15 ##### ##### \$20 | ### \$25 | ## \$35 | # \$55

length: 2 hours; difficulty: 1
Slide in a dugout canoe over the lake surface to visit its lushest island Bushara



Culture on the Crest \$40 ##### ##### \$50 | ### \$60 | ## \$80 | # \$140

length: half a day; difficulty: 2
Get friendly with a traditional healer and a craftmaker as you admire superb views



Islands of Miracles \$90 ##### ##### \$105 | ### \$125 | ## \$165 | # \$250

length: 1day; difficulty: 2
Add Bunyonyi's most famous islands to the program of Culture on the Crest



Mama Bena's Bonus \$180 ##### ##### \$200 | ### \$250 | ## \$320 | # \$520

length: 2 days; difficulty: 3
Get floored by Bakiga hospitality as you paddle and hike around the lake



Mother of All Treks \$230 ##### ##### \$270 | ### \$320 | ## \$410 | # \$690

length: 3 days; difficulty: 3
Add a tented island homestay and a craftmaker session to Mama's Bena's Bonus

Bunyonyi in numbers:

size: 25 km (15 mi) x 7 km (4 mi)
area: 61 km² (24 mi²)
altitude: 1,950 m (6,400 ft)
depth: 44 m (144 ft)
number of islands: 29
max. surface temp.: 25 °C (77 °F)





CRATER LAKES

To swim in the highest crater lake of the region, you will have to climb Mt Muhavura, while the other six are more easily accessible.

On the Rwandan side, Lakes Burera and Ruhondo are separated only by a narrow band of land crated by lava that erupted from the Virungas. There is a primary school on the biggest of Burera's six islands, happily welcoming visitors.

One of Lake Mutanda's six significant islands, Kyangushu, used to be a burial site to avoid bringing bad luck to the mainland - bones remain visible from the lake surface. Lake Murehe nearby is as long as Mutanda is wide, with two islands and many more fish.

The twin lakes of Chahafi and Kayumbu to the southeast have swamps with many bird species recorded and sport fishing opportunities. During WWI the Germans fought the Anglo-Belgian coalition at Lake Chahafi; trenches can still be seen.

photo by Miha Logar



LAKE NABUGABO

The distance between the Gorilla Highlands and Kampala is big enough that it is worth considering a sleepover on the way. Lake Nabugabo east of Masaka delights with its laid-back atmosphere and safe swimming. Merely 4 km (2.5 mi) of sand separates Lake Nabugabo from Lake Victoria, the barrier visible from the shore.



gorillahighlands.com/nabugabo



FROM QUEEN TO NYABINGI REBELLION

Muhumuza (c. 1870–1944/45)

Muserekande was one of the wives of King Rwabugiri of Rwanda. On his death in 1895 she changed her name to Muhumuza (“She who gives rest from tyranny”) and attempted to make her son, Bulegye, king.

Her rebellion was initially successful but the arrival of European invaders changed the dynamics. The Germans captured her and interned her in Bukoba. She then proclaimed herself queen of Ndorwa (an area historically as far north as Kabale) and instructed her followers to search for the sacred drum. She announced that upon finding it Bulegeye would become king and all her followers would receive cows from underground. She predicted that bullets would turn to water.

She was captured by the English instead. The Governor ordered her deportation to Kampala, with four servants and some cows. She was not a prisoner; by 1931 she had 15 courtiers and servants and ‘admitted’ to 70 cows.

Muhumuza claimed to be a personification of Nyabingi, the traditional goddess of fertility, and her followers would visit her in Kampala for consultations.

Read her whole story: gorillahighlands.com/muhumuza

LAKE KIVU, GOMA AND GISENYI

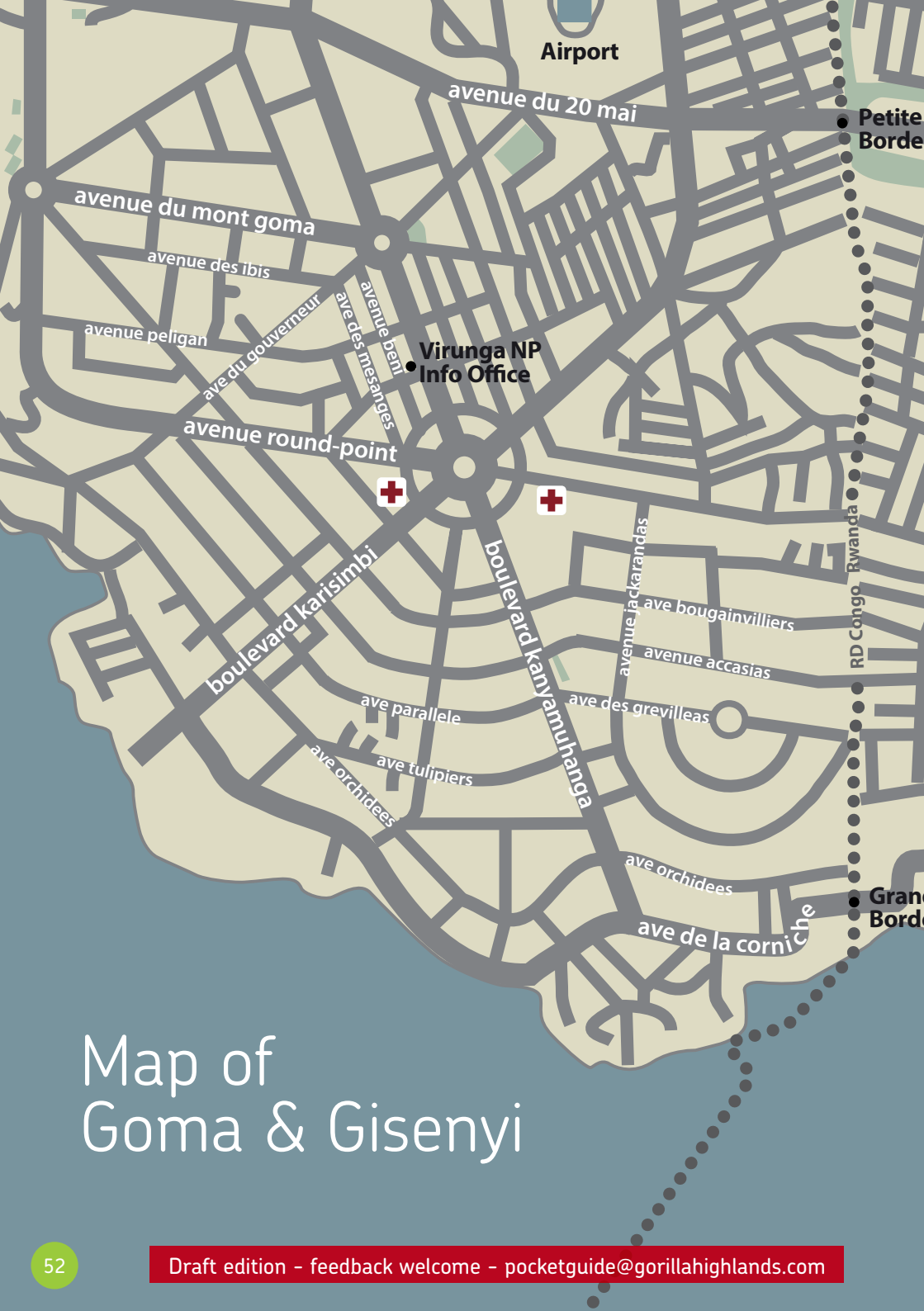


Only lack of salt in the water may hint that Kivu is a lake; the sandy beaches, tropical vegetation and relaxed vibe are all suggesting it could be a sea. Safe for swimming and up to 480m/1,575ft deep, Lake Kivu is unusual for its methane concentrations that are actually used for power generation.

Goma and Gisenyi on its northern shore are practically one city, the former on the Congolese and the latter on the Rwandan side of the boundary. The relaxing beach life is more pronounced in Gisenyi (Rubavu) while Goma is louder, bigger and more expensive.

The Congo Nile Trail starts in Gisenyi and can take you 227 km/141 miles down the Rwandan shores of Lake Kivu. A hike to Kibuye (Karongi), a major town on the way, would take about four days.





Airport

avenue du 20 mai

Petite
Borde

avenue du mont goma

avenue des ibis

Virunga NP
Info Office

avenue peligan

ave du gouverneur

avenue bent
ave des mesanges

avenue round-point



boulevard karisimbi

boulevard kanyamuhanga

avenue jackarandas

ave bougainvilliers

avenue accasias

ave parallele

ave des grevilleas

ave tulipiers

ave orchidees

ave orchidees

ave de la corniche

RD Congo, Rwanda

Gran
Bord

Map of Goma & Gisenyi

Barriere
r Crossing

Bus Station
nr 18

Airport

Police



avenue de l'umuganda

musanze (ruhengeri) - rubavu (gisenyi) road

avenue de l'indépendance

de Barriere/Corniche
er Crossing

Rubavu District HQ







If you are visiting Volcanoes National Park and prefer urban environments, Musanze (also known as Ruhengeri) is your choice.

A tidy town surrounded by volcanoes, it offers accommodation solutions for all budgets, good eating, and international banks. Kinigi village (northwest of the town, 12km/7.5mi) is where the park HQ are, and many more lodges.



KISORO

Kisoro, the region's prettiest town, is in an idyllic setting below the Virunga volcanoes. It hosts colourful cross-border markets on Mondays and Thursdays and has a strong beekeeping community. It is a handy base for adventures in Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (see p22) and has an airport with regular internal flights.



photo by Blasio Byekwaso and Jiro Ose





KABALE

The major town of Uganda's Gorilla Highlands provides all you may expect, including an impressive selection of banks, a challenging 9-hole golf course and the Bakiga Museum, an amazing recreation of a traditional home with unique tools and inventions (see p48).



photo by Marcus Westberg



ECHUYA FOREST WITH BATWA TODAY

Located between Kabale and Kisoro, Echuya is a montane rainforest, the third remaining part of the extensive ancient woods that covered most of the region. A remarkable birding destination, it is also home to blue monkeys, colobus monkeys and a group of baboons you might run into on the tarmac.

On a hill overlooking the forest and Lake Bunyonyi on the other side lives the Batwa “Pygmy” community of Rwamahano. They prepare Batwa Today (p13), an activity that starts with a nature walk in Echuya and ends with a community visit that is unlike anything else offered in the Gorilla Highlands. It emphasises discussion between the Batwa and their guests. A special kids’ version of the walk is available, with children “hunting” using traditional Batwa bows and cardboard targets.



gorillahighlands.com/echuyaforest

photo by Marcus Westberg



KISIIZI FALLS



This pretty waterfall has gory history: pregnant unmarried girls used to be thrown over it as a punishment (see p45 for a similar story from Lake Bunyonyi). Oral history says that the practice stopped after one of the victims pulled her father and brother down the cliff.

An impressive monument and a visitor centre have been erected. A suspension bridge takes travellers closer to the waterfall, and a 3-stage zip line ride entertains them. A couple of guesthouses are available.

The falls and the tourism proceeds power astonishing work by a nearby rural hospital: an extensive health insurance scheme, a rehab unit for children with cerebral palsy, a school of nursing and more.





LWIRO RESEARCH CENTRE & PRIMATE SANCTUARY

Who would expect a grand natural science library, a cultural museum and high-tech enclosures in a Congolese village? Lwiro is a must stop on the way to Kahuzi-Biega but with a nice colonial guest house it also offers sleepovers.

The primate rehabilitation centre hosts 77 chimps and 95 monkeys of 11 different species. These are mostly victims of poachers who kill adult primates for bush meat and sell their babies as pets.